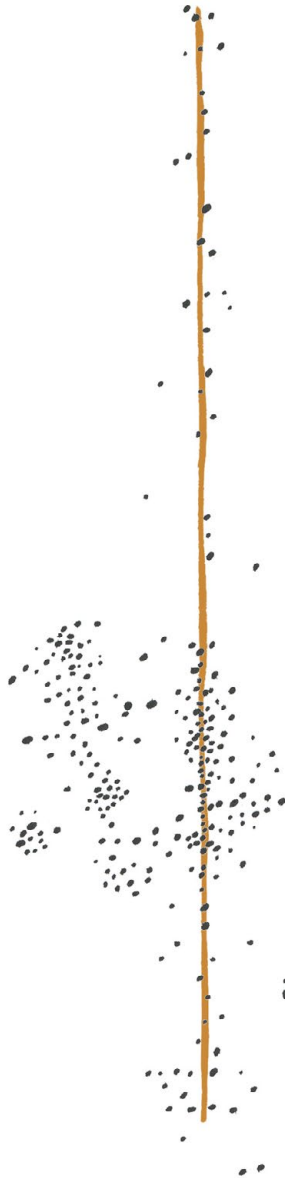


# pertinent matters

exploring relational practices  
in the process of designing  
learning spaces with children



IDA KROKSTRÖM

# pertinent matters

exploring relational practices in the process of  
designing learning spaces with children

IDA KROKSTRÖM



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June 2020



## abstract

*I want to listen, feel and respond to the natureculture I am part of. There's something liberating about being a small human on a big planet; a focus can be placed to my sphere and the encounters in my daily life. I like the human scale that I am no bigger than, a scale that I can take in.*

These personal thoughts are a reflection on the pertinent matters that this thesis will explore. Through participation, it is seeking to unfold the bodily relation between us and the world around us, as well as discover how architecture can give agency to its participants.

This thesis is anchored in an ongoing project and is seeking to explore and develop a methodology addressing the role of the architect and what architecture can be beyond its aesthetic significance. The project is situated in Cornwall, England, where Soweni, a local school, is developing from a grass roots community. In my thesis I will encounter the children and their families for a collective exploration of how to develop and share ideas and skills in the early stages of the design process for the Soweni school. Locally produced knowledge has grown from interactive and collaborative practices, which I have called interventions. The interventions derive from a relational practice where architecture is a shared activity and where, in the process, the children are encouraged to become agents themselves.

Each intervention is an endeavour to tap further into the invisible and non-articulated. It is the artistic research staged in an event. The five interventions are designed to complement each other to render a more profound relation with the spatial environment and portray a vivid understanding of the child's perspective. They are grounded in artistic research and take inspiration from educational theories. The knowledge unfolding in each intervention is twofold. Through *insights*, a glimpse of what materialised during the intervention, resulting in methodological awareness. *Interpretations*, my understanding of the child's perspective, created to discuss the user knowledge revealed.

This is an open-ended journey. Guided by empathy, conveyed through architecture.

## key words

relational practice, agency, designer-child collaboration, embodied methodology



## acknowledgments

I would like to thank everyone I have met during this journey.

Firstly, for collaborations and knowledge sharing I wish to thank Maisy, Lowen, Seren, Raya, Lox, Tristan, Xavi, Roland, Konrad and Morts. Your patience and curiosity has been irreplaceable. It has been a pleasure. Also my warmest thanks to Kathryn Pratt, Richard Pratt, Abby Waters, Katie Knight and Tessa Fergusson for your valuable insight and reflections, as well as indispensable help carrying out the interventions and trusting me with the children.

I would like to thank Annelies Vaneycken and Anna Maria Orrù for conversations about their practice, research and reflections which helped me move forward. It was a great honour.

Thank you also, Lena Persson and the children at Marks konstgrafiska verkstad for letting me be part of your arts and drama activities, giving me insight and inspiration.

I wish to thank my supervisor Cecilia Oldenqvist and examiner Morten Lund for constructive input and believing in the project.

Most warmly, I thank my family and friends for always being there.

## student background

Master programme in Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability  
CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
2018 - 2020

Studios:

Planning and design for sustainable development in a local context  
Sustainable architectural design

Matter, space, structure

History, theory and method:

Building Climatology for Sustainable Design

Crash Course:

Beyond Sustainability

Bachelor programme in Architecture  
CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
September 2015 - June 2018

## preface

### thoughts around my encounters

Children are of a different size; they climb up on the chairs. Children are of a different energy; they do what they *feel*. Children are of a different mind; they are present in the moment. Children have small hands; they pick up their glass with two. Children have a brilliant recollection of what just happened; play a memory game with them. Children have an incredible imagination; they can create new worlds as real as this one.

I want to talk to children about architecture. I want to understand their world so I can expand mine. I am interested in uncovering our bodily relation with what is around us. I am curious about embodied methods because they focus on and train our sensitivity and perception to materiality and space. The connection I am looking for can be found in a quote from Anna-Maria Orrù (2017, p. 90).

‘Space impacts on the body. That impact can be or can *do* something with the body. The body is shaped by space, it has a tacit choreography and negotiation with the space. The space gently encourages the body on movement and behaviour. The body in Butoh\* helps in listening to this underbelly of the space. A bodily atmosphere. This input can be utilised to choreograph empathetic urban-making that connects to the notion of environmental ethos.’

In other words, in the act of doing, when the body is fully engaged a certain relationship to our environment, both natural and constructed, is established. When a relationship stems from engagement, I think you are more likely to create empathy and compassion. Both of which can be assumed to be a vital force for a sustainable future (Falkheden, 1999). Empathy is the ability to share someone else’s feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that situation. How can I train myself at this?

Children are our future, but the future of their environment is uncertain. With the environmental crisis we are beginning to ask for change. Politicians need to change the policies, companies their procedures and scientists develop new technological solutions. We are asking for systemic changes, but are stuck in our daily routines. We see all the signs of our planet suffering, but we act as if we don’t feel it. Why don’t we feel it?

When policies moderate our behaviour, we feel stripped of our freedom. When consumption attempts to *go green* it often results in environmental gentrification. Believing that technology will solve the environmental crisis risks alienating ourselves from nature. We know that protecting the environment will require moderation. We’ve just witnessed a substantial response to the Covid-19 virus. In only a matter of days, companies have come up with many creative solutions and governments passed emergency legislation. We are sociable over distance, maybe involuntarily, but it’s a way of showing that we care. We are slowing down, and are capable of living this life even though the system around us struggles to hold up. We are truly adaptable. There seems to be a great difference in when we *want* to and when we *have* to. It is interesting that the response to Covid 19 also seems to be mitigating some of our environmental problems. While there is surely no single

---

\* a choreographic approach, also described as a form of Japanese dance theatre.

solution to these problems and we won’t know the outcome until afterwards, I want to explore a possible part of it; the process in which we create architecture. Is there a different way of viewing the world through a different way of making it?

I chose to study architecture because it is part of everyday life. A profession where you can design for prerequisites, we will always need a home, public spaces and to renovate existing buildings. I thought of it as designing space, not consumption. I saw that as potential in a world where moderation is imperative. But I don’t believe I can live up to my own expectations. When I heard Shigarū Ban (2013, May) in a TED talk he said:

‘Architects mostly work for privileged people, people who have money and power. Power and money are invisible, so people hire us to visualize their power and money by making monumental architecture. I love to make monuments, too, but I thought perhaps we can use our experience and knowledge more for the general public, even for those who have lost their houses in natural disasters.’

It was easy to resonate with this sentiment and I aspire to incorporate it into my work. I want to take inspiration from the discussions about the relationship between the architect and the user, I want to explore what possibilities lie within a collaboration with the *illegal architect*; the user that by appropriating the space also becomes an architect.

I wonder how this can be extended to the non-human and our relation to nature. But how well equipped am I to enter this discussion? How can we implement theoretical concepts such as agency and empowerment? Whose agency and who is to empower whom? Do they want to be empowered? How did architecture come to be about everything?









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## describing whilst reading

attempts to clarify the terminology

This is a compiled list of terms that have been of importance to clarify for myself during the process. They have added an understanding and given me words to describe and discuss the explorations. All of the terms are quotes from literature I have been reading.

### ambiguity

*The quality of being open to more than one interpretation; inexactness. [...] In my research ambiguity is seen as an engine for promoting critical debate and exchange within the plurality of voices and the meanings generated. In particular, it focuses on how the inclusion of children's voices and meanings – especially those that differ from adults – enable the designer, as well as adults in general, to learn from children's experiences and make them question existing meanings which in turn contribute to generating new meanings, perspectives, and possibilities.*

Anneliese Vaneycken  
(2017, p. 70)

### intervention

*An important part of my research practice is in the staging of interventions which are the artistic practice itself as workshops, performance, writing and choreography. [...] I see intervention as a form of intervening and contacting space. To intervene is to enter in-between which is a critical component of working from the feminist corporeal practice. [...] the intervention is deliberate, planned, staged and with a purpose.*

Anna Maria Orrù  
(2017, p. 15)

### agency & relational practice

*If the potential of agency might first be understood as the power and freedom to act for oneself' and if, for an architect, this power usually means 'the power to act on behalf of others', we have chosen instead to not act for ourselves or on behalf of others but to act with others, by empowering them to become agents themselves and to take collective responsibility. We valorise in this way the contribution of the other in this otherwise acting of our architectural agency. Rather than an elitist profession, architecture becomes as such a shared activity and a relational practice."*

Doina Petrescu  
(2012, p. 136)

*My research explores the roles that ephemeral interventions can play in long-term participatory processes. In such an approach, the focus is not only on the specific qualities of a given intervention, but also on how it is embedded in a larger narrative. This is the case when an intervention is iterated with the participation of different people over an extended period of time, being not a one-off event but an evolving participatory action; or when ephemeral interventions are made at specific moments in a long trajectory as a way of consolidating the engagement of people. Following this approach, we cannot understand interventions as separate entities, but as part of – an affecting – broader systems that extend over time and space.*

Pablo Calderón Salazar  
(2017, p. 21)

### mapping

*To map is in one way or another to take the measure of a world, and more than merely take it, to figure the measure so taken in such a way that it may be communicated between people, places or times. The measure of mapping is not restricted to the mathematical; it may equally be spiritual, political or moral. By the same token, the mappings record is not confined to the archival; it includes the remembered, the imagined, the contemplated.*

Denis Cosgrove  
(1999, p. 2)

*The mapping process itself worked for us like a plug-in; an activity that was added to the project to help us make visible to and discuss with others the facts and things that would have otherwise remained invisible and non-articulated.*

Doina Petrescu  
(2012, p. 139)

### natureculture

*Natureculture is a synthesis of nature and culture that recognizes their inseparability in ecological relationships that are both biophysically and socially formed. Natureculture is a concept that emerges from the scholarly interrogation of dualisms that are deeply embedded within the intellectual traditions of the sciences and humanities (e.g., human/animal; nature/culture).*

Malone & Ovenden  
(2017)

### participatory design & collaboration

*In participatory design, the designer opens up his or her design process to work 'together' with 'others', usually non-designers. The 'others' that participate in the design process may be the ones that eventually gain from the design outcomes, but in order to get there, their particular experiences, knowledge, or 'expertise' are needed in the design process. In turn, the designer depends on the qualities and cooperation of the participants – only 'together' they are strong and capable to produce. Even though these collaborations can be seen as forms of mutual exchange, issues of inequality need to be addressed e.g. differences in power levels and profit.*

Anneliese Vaneycken  
(Hamers et al., 2017, p. 70)

### pertinent *adjective*

Relevant or applicable to a particular matter; apposite.

### origin

Late Middle English from Old French, or from Latin pertinent- 'having reference to', from the verb pertinere.

1. Be appropriate, related, or applicable.
  - 1.1 Belong to something as a part, appendage, or accessory.
  - 1.2 Be in effect or existence in a specified place or at a specified time.

Oxford Online Dictionary 2020

### situation-based action

*In participatory design, the designer opens up his or her design process to work 'together' with 'others', usually non-designers. The 'others' that participate in the design process may be the ones that eventually gain from the design outcomes, but in order to get there, their particular experiences, knowledge, or 'expertise' are needed in the design process. In turn, the designer depends on the qualities and cooperation of the participants – only 'together' they are strong and capable to produce. Even though these collaborations can be seen as forms of mutual exchange, issues of inequality need to be addressed e.g. differences in power levels and profit.*

Anneliese Vaneycken  
(Hamers et al., 2017, p. 70)

## background

This thesis begins with the notion that small actions and our daily routines really matter. It is a search for how I, as a fellow human, can merge with the role of being a professional. Find a way into architecture through my foundational values. I want to listen, feel and respond to the natureculture I am part of. There's something liberating about being a small human on a big planet. Not to diminish the grand challenges we are confronting but I want to care for and believe in everyday matters, place a focus to my sphere and the encounters in my daily life. I like the human scale that I am no bigger than, a scale that I can take in.

I want to take inspiration from Petrescu's (2012, p. 137) writing about their method in urban making. 'We do not "plan" but "act" sometimes without permission and against the rules that we estimate inappropriate or unfair, all this subversion being an "art" which involves inventivity, time and passion.' The acting that is our everyday life can be a powerful tool in relational practice and how we shape and view our environment. In relational practice architecture becomes a shared activity between agents, rather than an elitist profession. The user of the space is acknowledged as a key contributor in the design process.

Relational practice needs to be experienced through participation, I am fortunate to have family in Cornwall, England with ambitious plans for a new school, Soweni. Soweni is growing from the local homeschooling community who are challenging mainstream education and seeking to develop the site for their new school. This has given the opportunity for a collective exploration of what a learning space could look like. Through collaborative interventions, where architecture is a shared activity, the children are encouraged to become agents themselves.

This thesis is addressing the role of the architect through a hands-on approach. Aiming to develop a methodology that through practice, will give one answer to; 'What is the architect's role in producing, instigating an architecture whose quality does not reside in its aesthetics but in the model of sociability it produces?' (Petrescu, 2012, p. 135) It takes point of departure in a much larger discourse concerning the environmental impact that architecture has on the world. But instead of addressing the measurable it addresses the relationship between us and the world around us.

## hypothesis

When working from a human scale on a personal level pertinent, everyday matters can be addressed. A relational practice encourages relations, more so than a conventional practice that seeks material value for profit. When creating and adapting our surroundings, it can create new narratives from which new understandings can arise and bring about meaningful ways to relate to the world, while creating joy and caring communities in the process.

## aim and purpose

To embark on a journey with the children and their families for a collective exploration. What are to us, new ideas and skills, will be developed and shared in the pursuit of designing learning spaces. Through collaborative interventions and personal documentation, the method can be reflected upon and evaluated. The purpose of this is to explore different ways to communicate and interact, as well as to discover the possibilities and limitations of a relational practice. Hopefully the locally produced knowledge will be applicable to other contexts by other students, architects, designers, artists, institutes, or collectives and contribute to the discussion about the role of the architect.

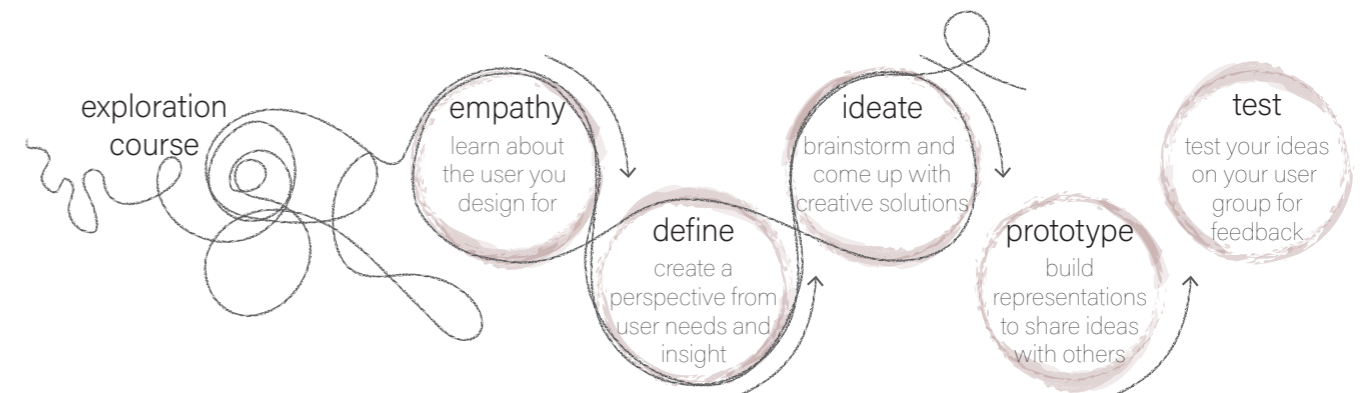
## research questions

What can children teach us about a relational practice in architecture?  
How can embodied methods reinforce the design process?

## delimitations

The focus in this thesis is through a hands-on approach and reflection-in-action to develop a methodology. Embodied methods in combination with a relational practice allow for an exploration of spatial qualities from an intimate perspective. This thesis has grown from personal discussions and connections. The practical approach of working with an individual community is likely to provide a relatively homogeneous group of children and adults as well as predetermine the geographical location. I consider the children my main collaborators, but I can't and don't want to neglect, the big part their parents play in their life. Therefore, I address the children and their families. The parents and teachers surrounding Soweni have been helpful and a big part of this thesis, through the different steps of designing, executing and reflecting, with emphasis on the executing. The pedagogies that are used for reference resonate with the thesis but are intrinsic to Soweni.

The Design Thinking model based on Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University is a helpful framing for this thesis. This model structures the design process into five steps; empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test. The two concepts of intervention and interpretation explored sit within the first three steps. The intent is not to design a complete school or a fully finished design.



This thesis will deliver ideas on how to work with the users, the children, their families and how the knowledge produced can be iterated together with the participants to further explore and reinforce the design process. It aims to investigate learning spaces reinforced by the agency of the children.

The goal of relational practice is to incorporate the community, yet the account given in this thesis is my own. I will not try to tell their story rather convey the story of my experience and my interpretations of what we discovered together.

## method

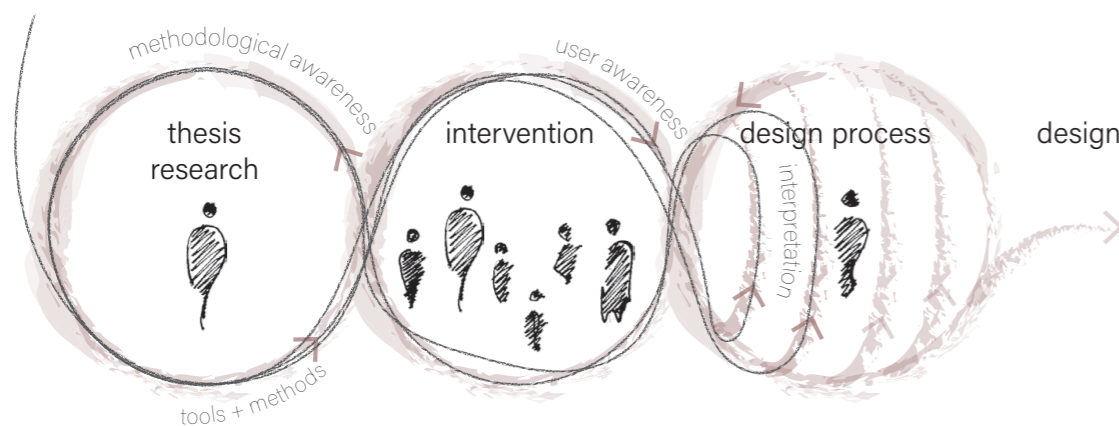
The goal of this thesis is to explore an architectural methodology, this is a description of the method behind the methodology.

Through a series of interventions, an understanding of how to collaborate with children and their families in the design process developed.

Each intervention is studying a carefully chosen learning situation and examining what lies therein. In the interventions, relationships and knowledge are derived from the *doing* with small sized groups of participants. In order to appreciate the architect's impact in a relational practice, my role varied in the interventions, from full participation to observation or even just reviewing post intervention materialization. The interventions were designed with four main parameters in mind under the umbrella of ambiguity. By changing space, people, task and tools the different situations were explored.

Experience from one intervention feeds into the next. This was taken into account when planning the order of the interventions and the knowledge the children would build in each intervention as well as it affected my approach in the following interventions.

The interventions also worked as a way of contacting space, they grew the awareness of the child's perspective and relations. To convey this knowledge interpretations are used to explain, map and show my understanding of user which awareness unfolded.



Looping between the different levels of exploration in this thesis is intertwined. The thesis research tools and methods are brought into the intervention. The body of knowledge developed can be split into two categories, methodological awareness and user awareness. The user awareness brings the design process forward and the methodological awareness is reflected upon. Both are used to create new interventions.

## reading instructions

1

This master thesis is composed from my perspective telling the story of a collective exploration. This wasn't a choice as much as a necessity since observations, selection of material collected and presented, is subjective. So I do not attempt to project the child's point of view. The understandings and interpretations are by their nature incomplete, and by acknowledging this fact the research takes responsibility of the authenticity of the content.

2

The booklet is unfolding in two main chapters: interventions and interpretations. The chapter containing the interventions describes them in chronological order based on when the first step happened. Each intervention has three parts. The setting up of the intervention. Followed by insight, a glimpse of what materialized during the intervention. The third part describes the methodological awareness gained. Between each intervention are coloured pages giving a reflection upon a pertinent topic for the thesis, not necessarily linked to the preceding intervention. The next chapter is interpretations, these are created to discuss specific user knowledge revealed by the interventions, this is not meant to summarize everything rather highlight parts in the exploration.



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## interventions

### what can I learn from children

The layout of each intervention can be seen as a string of events that will unfold a story. An attempt to ask the children what to ask for. It has allowed for different ideas, narratives and unexpected reactions, I've tried to embrace ambiguity.

### data collection and analysis

I have done this thesis on my own, this has often left me with the choice of where to be present, documentation or participation? It has not always felt right to bring out a camera and take pictures of the children, I preferred to have a conversation with them. Sometimes I have been present in one conversation and missed the bigger picture of what all the children have been up to. This has affected the documentation and the material you see in the insights of what happened during each intervention.

It has been interesting to have a dialogue with the parents and pedagogues that have brought other things to my attention. Sometimes they have introduced the intervention, sometimes they have helped me document it and sometimes they have helped me collect information from the child. This is another filter added to the knowledge extracted. Having said that, I think that their information is valid. Knowing their child makes it possible for them to clarify a situation from a different perspective and put it in a bigger context. A parent, an adult or other children can influence the child to act in a certain way, give them confidence to do something or restrain them from doing something they know they should not. This will be applicable in all situations and manipulate the outcome of the moment in all situations. Just like the content presented in this chapter is presented by me, manipulated by me.

### reflection of my position and how I influence the children

I design the intervention, I create the framework, I give them tools, I ask the participants to join, I decide where we are and I give them a task to do. Even when I try to ask the child to decide or design something to their liking I am the one asking.

Instead of ignoring my presence the aim is to be transparent about it. The idea has not been to be passive through the interventions. I have been active and tried to work with the children like I would in a design process with any other. Ideas have been tested and the child have had the chance to turn them down. When asking questions they have been phrased with *How* and *What* instead of *Why*. There is no need for the child to feel like they have to justify their action. Instead the intent is to be curious and ask how they did it and what made them come to that conclusion.

### steps in interventions

Each intervention is divided into four steps: design, execute, reflect and interpret. During the design of the intervention it helped to clarify the intention of that step. Now it can help you navigate between the interventions and compare them.

	design	execute	reflect	interpret
free play				
<i>rope</i>	●	⊙	●	( )
<i>cliffs</i>	●	⊙	●	( )
daydreaming				
<i>inside</i>	●	⊙	⊕	●
<i>outside</i>	●	⊙	●	( )
clay depiction				
<i>clay</i>	●	⊙	●	( )
<i>stop motion</i>	⊙	⊕	●	●
co-researcher				
<i>create booklet</i>	●	⊕	⊕	●
<i>interview</i>	⊙	⊙	⊕	●
<i>personas</i>	●	⊕	●	( )
den				
<i>inside</i>		⊙	⊕	( )
<i>outside</i>	●	⊙		

me ●

children ⊙

together ⊕

not done ( )

## learning categories

The interventions are anchored in four different ways in which learning takes place based on the book *From the Campfire to the Holodeck* by David Thornburg (2003). The book describes a world in which the child acquires knowledge through all four areas seamlessly. To trigger the design process, three of the learning categories have been isolated and play a central role in the shaping of each intervention. By imagining activities that could take place within these categories spatial characters are triggered.

Campfires are described by David Thornburg (2003) as 'home of the lecture'. It is storytelling that communicates a deeper understanding of our world as well as apprenticeship that through demonstration pass on practical skills. Thornburg states; 'The question is not What is the answer? The question is What is the question?' (p. 15) It is about discovering things on your own, to guide the students in formulating their questions so they take agency in their own learning.

Watering holes, places for social learning among peers, mainly driven by conversations. It is the more dominant activity in society. It is more important to encourage conversation than that you are in a specific place. Through conversations cross disciplinary projects can thrive. The challenge lies in scale since real conversations typically involve four or fewer people. The cell phone connects people and places across the world creating virtual watering holes. (Thornburg, 2003)

Caves are places where solitary reflections take place. Thornburg (2003) states that 'this process involves self-directed meaning making that can be facilitated with outside resources' (p. 23), while dependent on the learner it is often a solitary space. In traditional school environments the library is often the only space to offer the spatial qualities to support this process. 'Cave time' is challenging to achieve yet it is crucial among our learning spaces and needs to be built into the school day.

Life is the place where what has been learnt can be applied, a place where new knowledge can be tested, and the feedback is direct. (Thornburg, 2003)

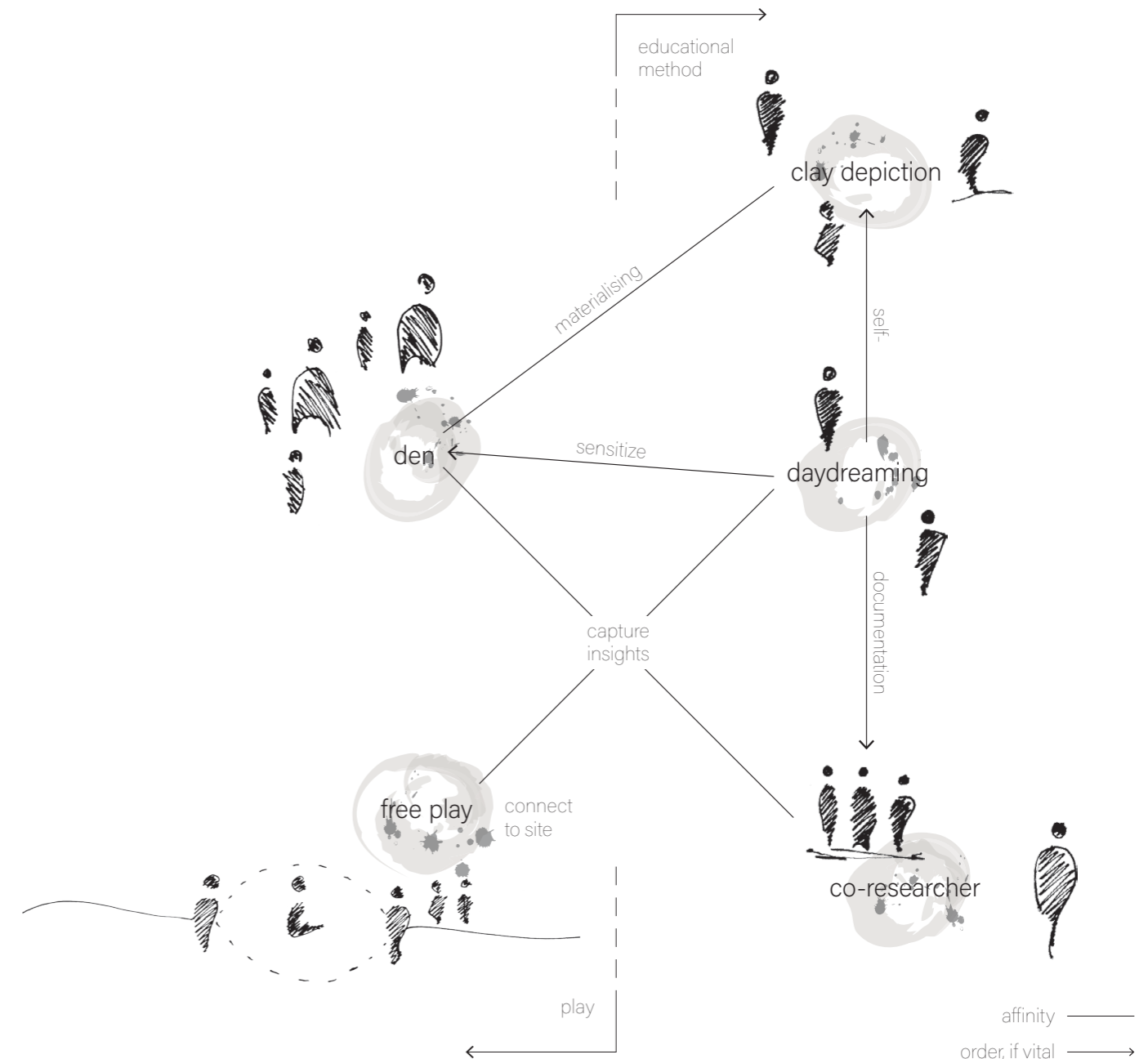
## each intervention

Each intervention is defined by my curiosity in one theme. The theme can be a method or a question I wanted to ask the children. One intervention can be seen to work towards a goal that is reflected in the tasks that the children were given. Part of how I framed the goal for myself was to never ask a particular question, rather to design with the parameters; space, people, task, and tools and elaborate on who was in charge of the different steps; design, execute, reflect and interpret.

A part of the interventions have been to see what works for these children and how we can collaborate. Therefore we have tried different approaches, each intervention has its own methodological source of inspiration, as opposed to perfecting one approach.

## relations between interventions

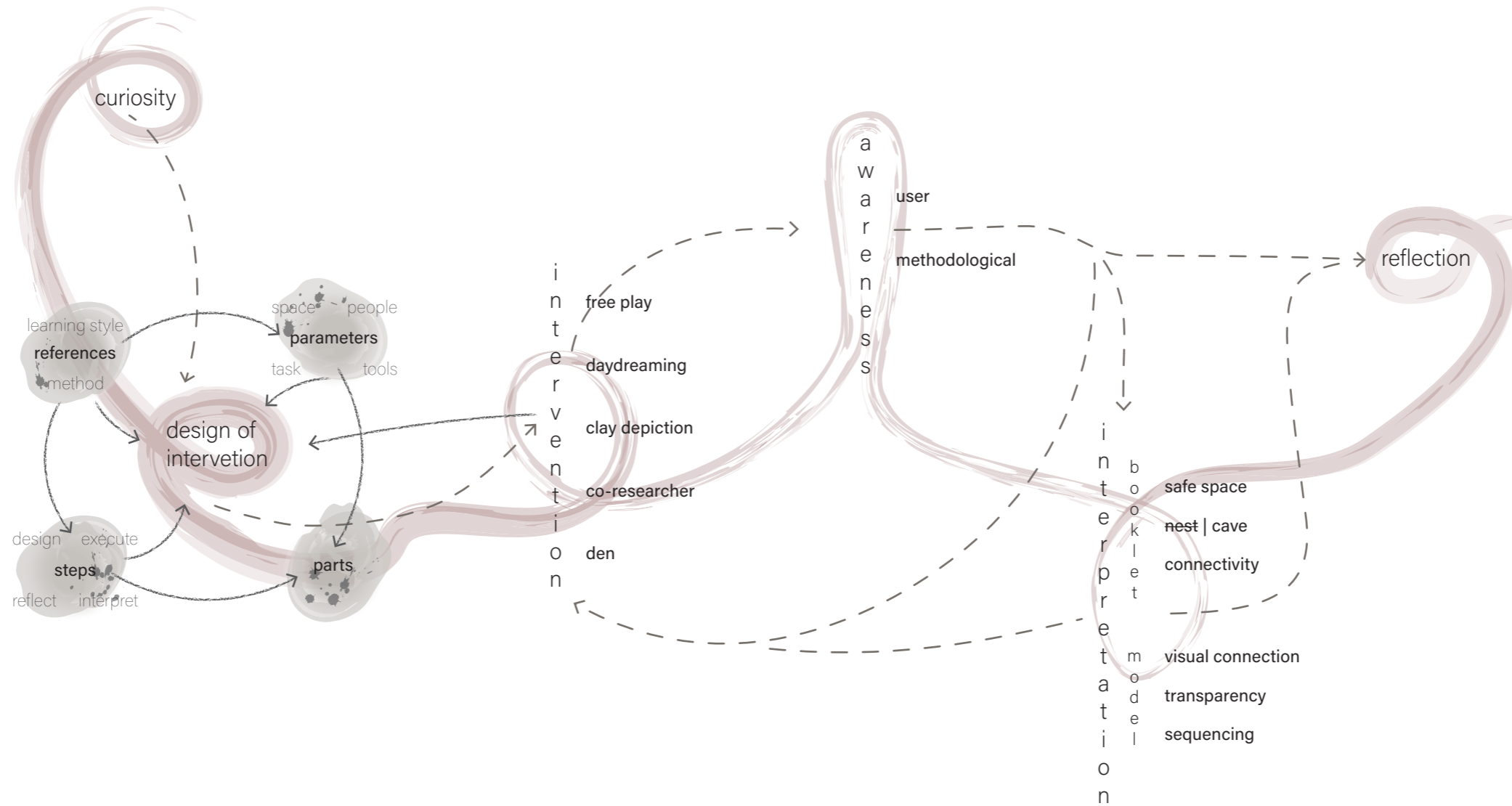
An overview of the interventions and how they relate to one another. The lines show affinity and arrows show the chronological order if it is vital. The interventions fall into two categories play and educational method. This is an indication of the direction in the execution part of the intervention. On the lines are indicators describing what particular focus area I wanted the child to gain knowledge in.



process map

The process map is an overview to show connections and flow between the different explorations within the thesis.

The brush stroke symbolises a simplified route through the main sections of this thesis. The dashed lines show the practical iterations in the work flow. The solid lines show the main elements within the design of each intervention.





intervention one

*free play*  
watering hole

Children, in the act of playing, produce knowledge through active experiments. Playing together is an almost magical way to build connection. It is about respect towards others and self-regulation. It is a balance between being a part of the group and still maintaining one's own sense of identity. Free play is initiated by the children themselves, unstructured and voluntary. It is the spontaneous play sparked by the child's natural curiosity, love of discovery and enthusiasm. It stretches the imagination through explorative acts that help us make sense of the world around us.

steps



- me ●
- children ⊙
- together ⊞
- not done □

methodological inspiration

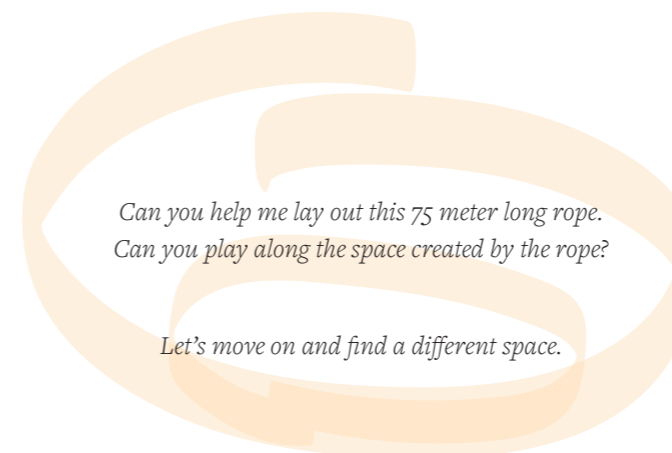
This intervention is inspired by 'The Car Wrestlers' by Annelies Vaneycken (2020), a workshop with children. Using a rope the children measured out the circumference of a car and laid it out on the street to play within the space as an answer to the questions; 'What is the size of a car? How much space does a car take up? What would you like to do with the space if there wasn't a car there?' (p. 96-97). The children also drew/wrote with coloured chalk within the bounds of the rope, depicting how they like to use the space.

parameters



Behind the sand dunes sheltered from the wind. Where ocean, beach and cliffs intersect.

task

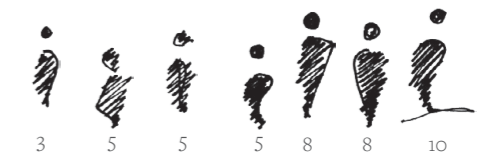


learning category and spatial qualities

How do children collaborate around the watering hole? Exploring how play can be used to trigger conversations and show how this place is suited for social learning. Where will conversations take place?

The site for Soweni is a big field on the edge of Towan valley. The building will be situated in one corner of the field. The stretch from the drop off zone to the building is approximately 150 meters. There are similarities between the beach and the site; the wind, the abrupt edge to the cliff or the shoreline and the monotonous surface that is a relatively flat area of sand or grass.

people



friends



pedagogue parent me

tools



Five ropes of different lengths were tied together into a 75 meters long rope. 3 large child sized spades. Sand.

play

unhurried

fun

digging a hole  
in the sand

make-do

natural

sincere

dangerous

peachy

making culture

relational

comprehensive

place making

contextual

alive

running  
in the wind

tolerating

provisional

limitless

raw

everywhere

*insight*

'Can you help me lay out  
this 75 meter long rope.'



time to try  
a different space



'Can you play along the  
space created by the rope?'



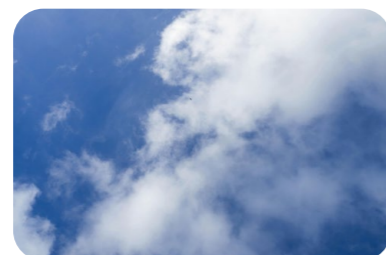
the kids didn't stay



in one place for long . . .



it was a very windy day  
the tripod fell over . . .



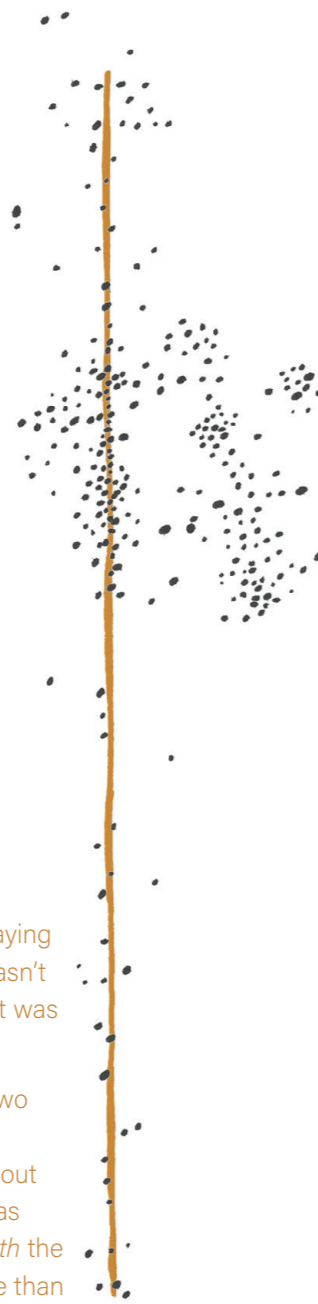
reflection-in-action

No hesitation, everyone was in on the task of laying out the rope. Why we did it, no one asked, it wasn't of importance. We were there, we had a rope, it was windy, it was fun, we were going to play!

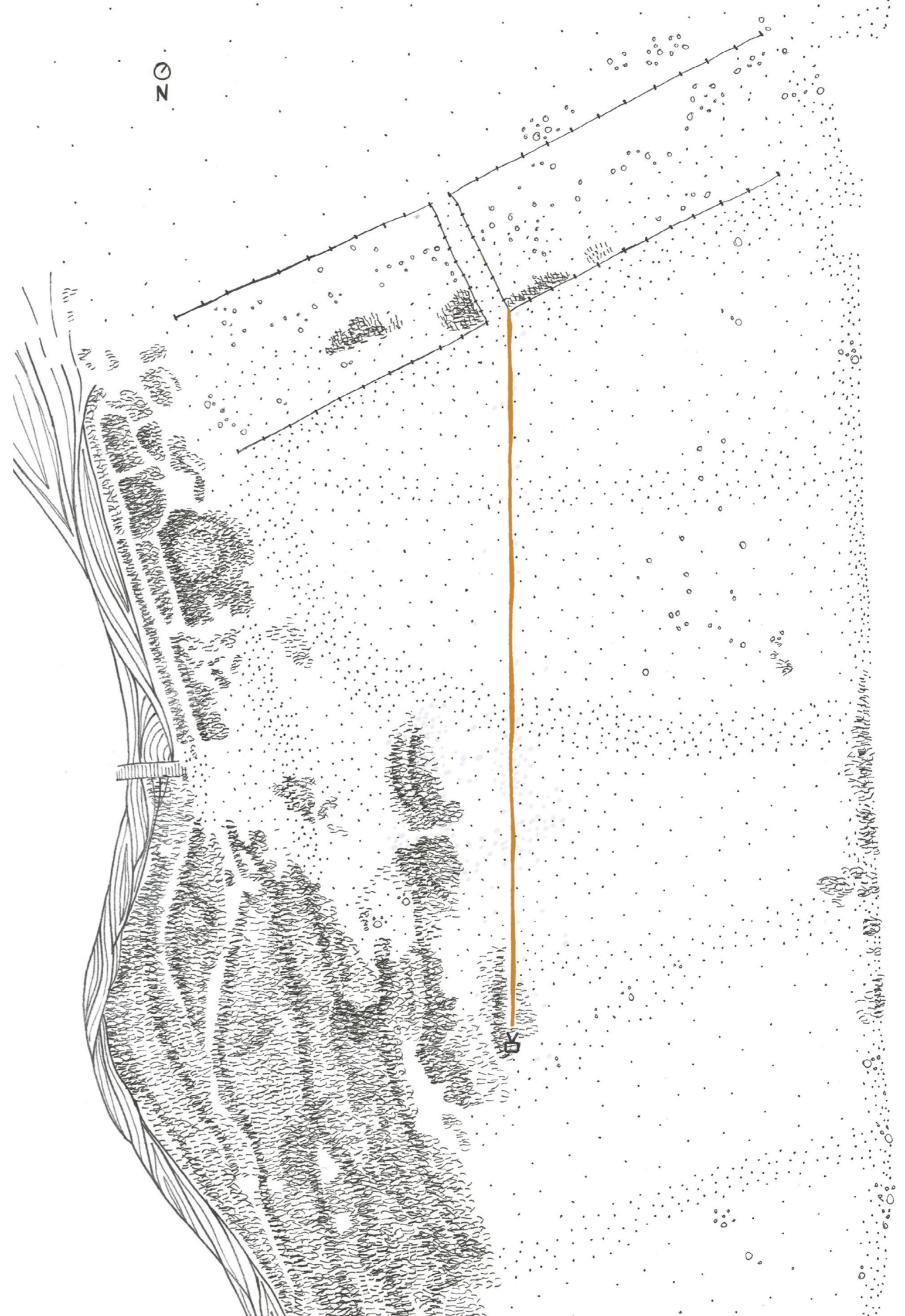
Voices drowned in the wind and we split into two independent groups with the same goal. Once the task was achieved, the rope was stretched out and secured; the play could start. The game was elongated and concentrated around playing *with* the rope in one big group. It was limited to no more than 15 meters, 30 meters of the rope got utilized only when folded double.

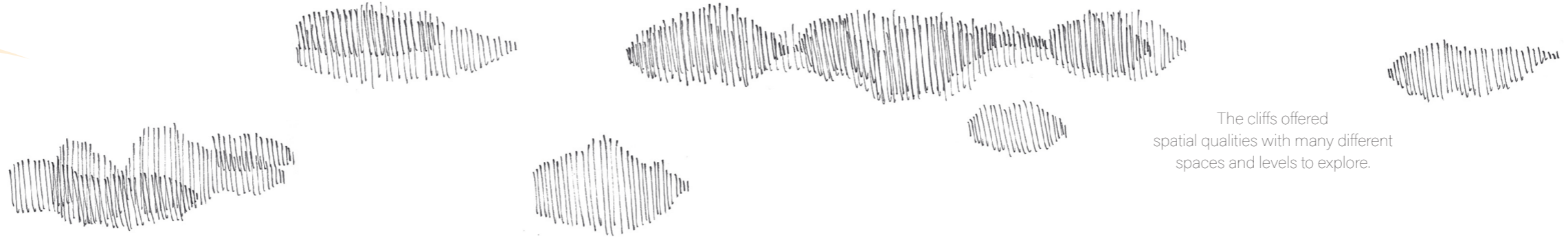
The spades were used to dig holes, a solo game that allowed mainly the younger children to play alongside the primary group.

Two bubbles became apparent, one playing with the rope the other playing next to the rope, using the topography to shape their game.



Bounded by the sea in the northwest, the road in the northeast and the river in southwest is the place behind the sand dunes. The camera was set up at the end of the rope framing the sand, sea and cliffs. Each dot on the translucent paper represents the placement of a child and has been placed with an even distributing in time, based on the pictures taken.





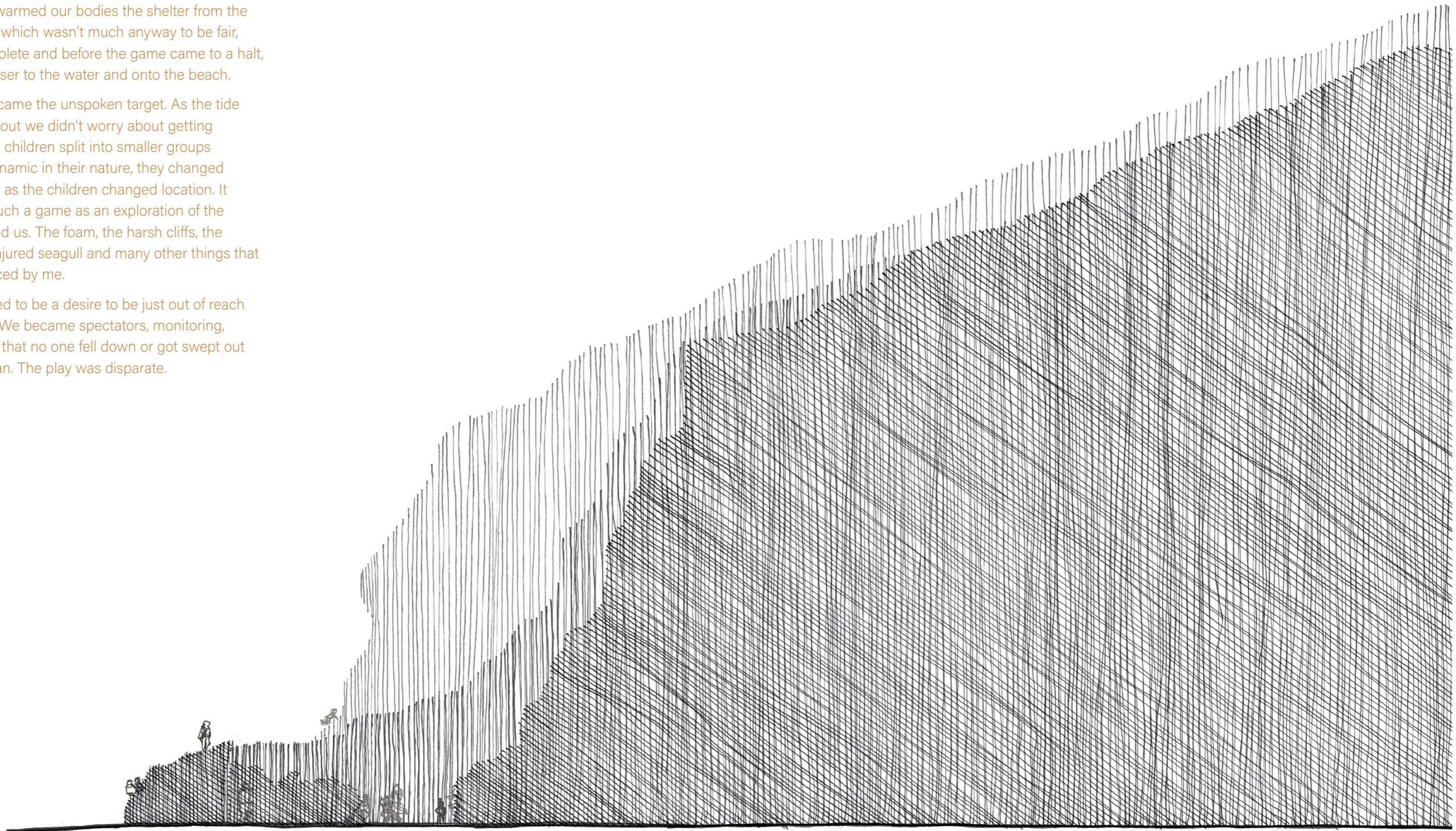
The cliffs offered spatial qualities with many different spaces and levels to explore.

### reflection-in-action

As the play warmed our bodies the shelter from the sand dunes, which wasn't much anyway to be fair, became obsolete and before the game came to a halt, we move closer to the water and onto the beach.

The cliffs became the unspoken target. As the tide was moving out we didn't worry about getting trapped. The children split into smaller groups that were dynamic in their nature, they changed constellation as the children changed location. It wasn't so much a game as an exploration of the nature around us. The foam, the harsh cliffs, the waves, the injured seagull and many other things that went unnoticed by me.

There seemed to be a desire to be just out of reach from adults. We became spectators, monitoring, making sure that no one fell down or got swept out into the ocean. The play was disparate.



## methodological awareness

### findings

This intervention is based on free play which comes naturally to the child. The children participating in this intervention already knew each other well and they were looking forward to having fun together. The excitement in the air from just being in each other's presence helped this intervention to quickly progress into an enjoyable play. The number of children and the nature of the location meant that many things happened at once, everything from small findings in the sand to physical challenges and meaningful conversations.

Worth reflecting upon is the fact that no matter how much it is called free play, the freedom was limited in this intervention. The child who asked if they were allowed to use the rope in the play is an indication of this. The desire from the thesis point of view was that the children would alter the space to their needs, maybe with the spades provided using the qualities of the sand. Perhaps the children felt unsure about the situation or were having too much fun, but the game didn't change until the suggestion came from an adult to move location. While breaking up and rolling up the rope the game became focused around one activity that had been happening on the side. From this point onward, something closer to free play took shape.

### adaptations

Two things can be stated about the division of roles and the development of play in this intervention. Firstly, a rough way of describing the division is to say that the child was playing and the adult observing. Secondly, the *free play* developed within the framework of this intervention, a silent agreement that only became obvious through reflections. Maybe all that was needed for this to happen were a few words from the parent in the car on the way there explaining what would happen. There is no way of finding out why the nature of the game took this turn. As a contrast to these two statements it would be especially interesting to observe the game from within. One can play *with* the child, if you are all equal in the game the development of the game can be challenged from within.

### relations to other interventions

- The intervention Den Discovery is designed to let the child's own curiosity and ability to explore drive the discovery, taking inspiration from this intervention where play is a tool to discover spatial possibilities.



The cliffs, high and steep, lent themselves to climbing. The child challenged its physical strength but was never far from a helping hand. The parent watched from the ground and trusted the other children to reach out.



The glass on the beach was found while walking back towards the restaurant to get some hot chocolate. Out of disgust for littering and with concern for the environment the child put the pieces in their pocket and carried on walking.

Min barndoms träd stå höga i gräset  
 och skaka sina huvuden: vad har det blivit av dig?  
 Pelarrader stå som förebråelser: ovärdig går du under oss!  
 Du är barn och bör kunna allt,  
 varför är du fjättrad i sjukdomens band?  
 Du är bliven människa, främmande förhatlig.  
 Då du var barn förde du långa samtal med oss,  
 din blick var vis.  
 Nu ville vi säga dig ditt livs hemlighet:  
 nyckeln till alla hemligheter ligger i gräset i hallonbacken.  
 Vi ville stöta dig för pannan, du sovande,  
 vi ville väcka dig, döda, ur din sömn.

Edith Södergran

The trees of my childhood stand tall in the grass  
 and shake their heads; what has become of you?  
 Rows of pillars stand like accusations: unworthy  
 you walk beneath us!  
 You're a child and should know everything,  
 why are you caught in the trap of illness?  
 You've become a human being, strange, hateful.

When you were a child, you conducted long  
 conversations with us, your gaze was wise.  
 Now we'd like to tell you your life's secret:  
 the key to all secrets is in the grass on the hill of  
 raspberries.  
 Sleeper, we wanted to rattle you,  
 we wanted to wake you, you dead one, from  
 your sleep.

Translation Malena Mörling and Jonas Ellerström  
 from The ECCO Anthology of International Poetry

## why children

more than future adults

I imagine that children are much better at knowing the world through their bodies. It opens up for me to (re)explore their sensory experiences and making of place. There is an art to being present while life happens. Talking about children often makes you think about your own childhood and sometimes comparing it to where you are today. The child's world might be a lot smaller in a spatial context, but I think of it as richer in most other aspects. It is easy to think that just because you once were a child you know what it is like to be a child, when we jump to a conclusion like this our adult framework gets projected on the child (Hammers, Bueno de Mesquita, Vaneycken, & Schoffelen, 2017, p. 83).

'There is not such a thing as the child; or what is the child?' As an answer to her own question Vaneycken (2017, p. 23) discusses three child 'forms'. The child as subject, group and culture. We can never know from what mindset the child operates but we can be specific about the child and take the whole situation into account.

Notions of *being* and *becoming* are both part of the childhood. I have not tapped far into childhood research but this duality felt important to acknowledge. The child is an active, competent social being. At the same time as *looking forward* to what a child *becomes* is an important part of *being* a child. Often a part which the child itself identifies with. Both should be considered. I believe that Uprichard (2008, p. 303) is right when she argues 'that understanding the "child" as both "being and becoming" increases the agency that child has in the world'. This duality makes the child a social actor constructing their everyday life and the world around them, both in present and the future.

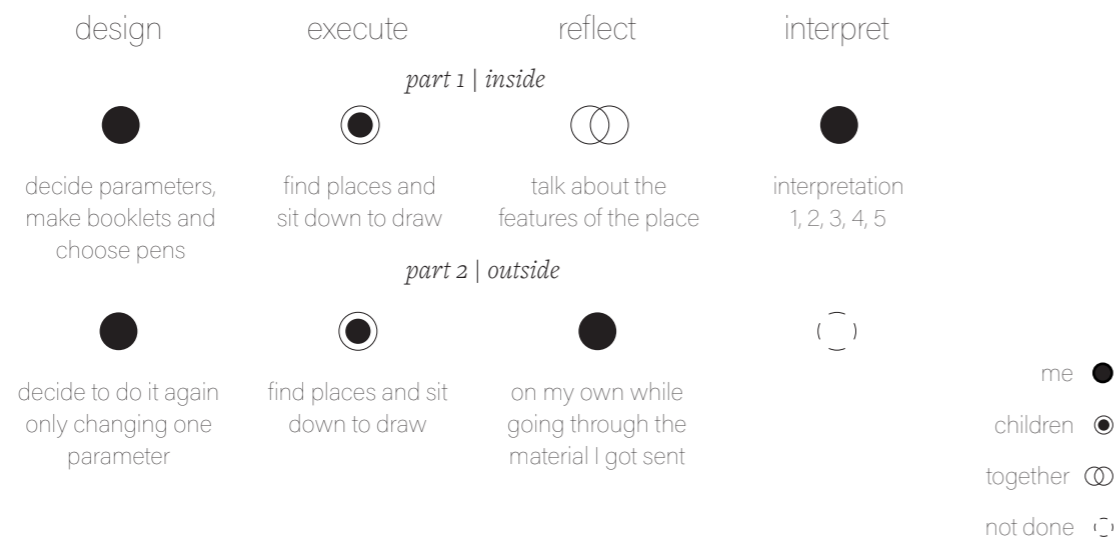
## intervention two

# daydreaming

cave

As the mind wanders, it takes you places you haven't been, makes connections you weren't aware of and lets insight emerge. When the mind wanders, it does so with the promise to bring you along. An activity or non-activity, but however we look at it, something fruitful arises from letting the mind drift. The reality created through our perceptions, imaginations and aspirations gets incubated through the (non-)action of letting go. Intentional or unintentional, whether it is self-reflection, mentally time travelling or other internally focused states of mind; we spend time daydreaming. It is a unique, cognitive experience linked to meaning-making. Daydreaming helps us find meaning in life.

### steps



### methodological inspiration

This intervention is inspired by the 'self-documentation practice' as described in the Designing For Children's Rights guide (n.d.). The intention is to collect information about the child's understanding of where they feel safe. The emphasis is to visualise the *cave space* so they can relate to it. In an attempt to get the child's first-hand experience, they were given the task to document in their space. The drawing was intended as a tool for them to express themselves, become attentive to the space and give them a purpose to spend time there.

### learning category and spatial qualities

Where do we make space for daydreaming? Reflecting upon what you've learnt is essential. The quiet place for reflection supports a solitary process that takes place where we feel comfortable and safe. Here the learner can embody new knowledge through experimenting and reflecting on observations. This process is essential for problem solving and this space is vital in our learning environment. Thornburg refers to these spaces as caves (2003). What does a cave space look like?

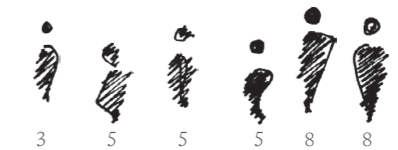
### parameters

#### space



A familiar place for all the children. Home to 3 of them and one of the parents.

#### people



friends

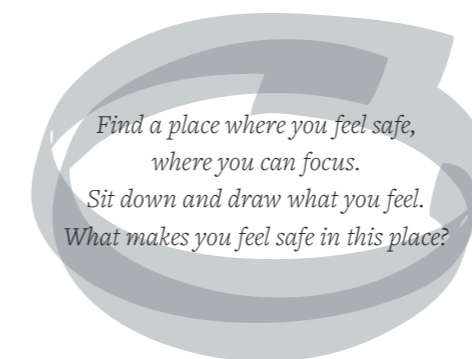


parent

parent

me

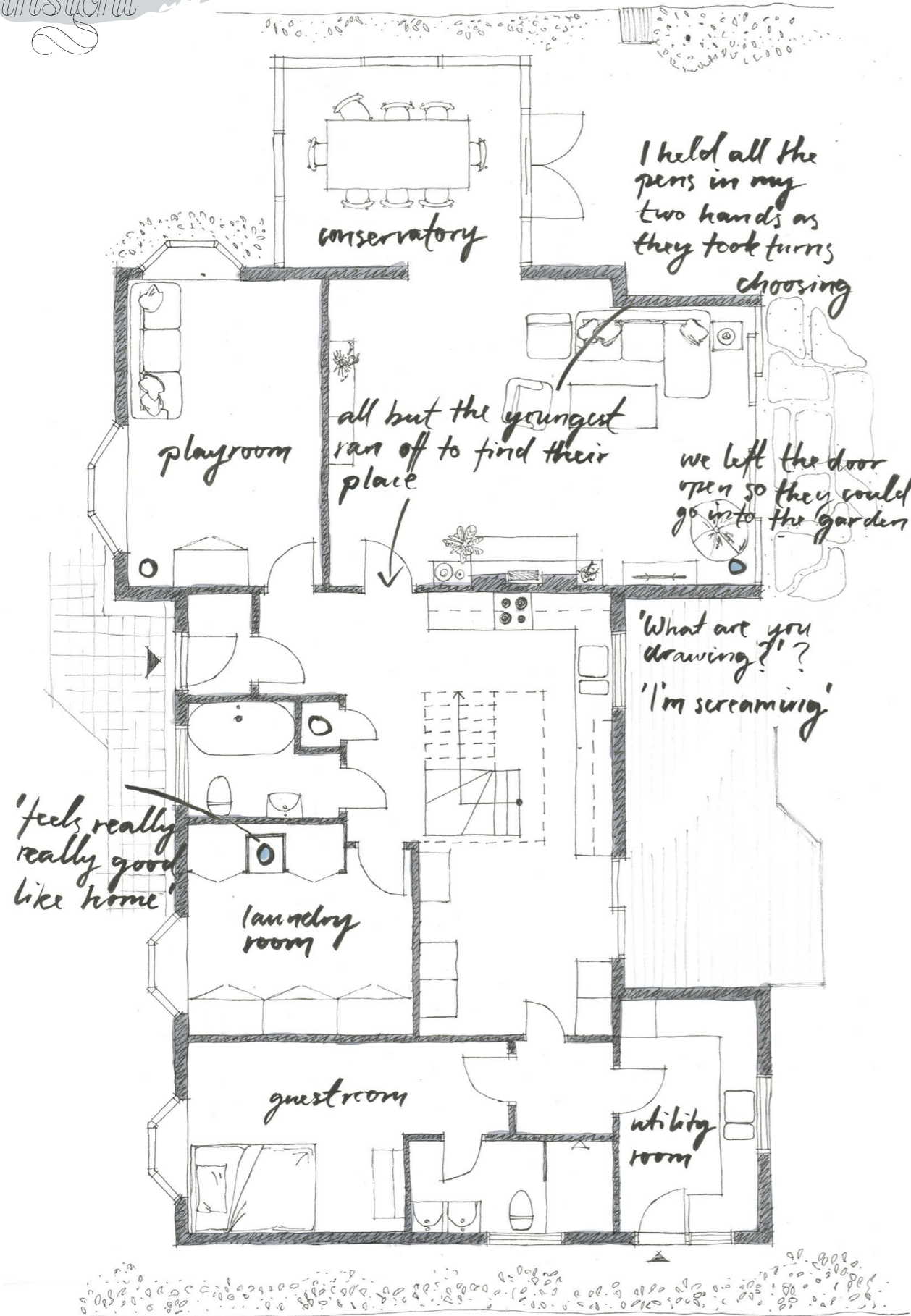
#### task



#### tools



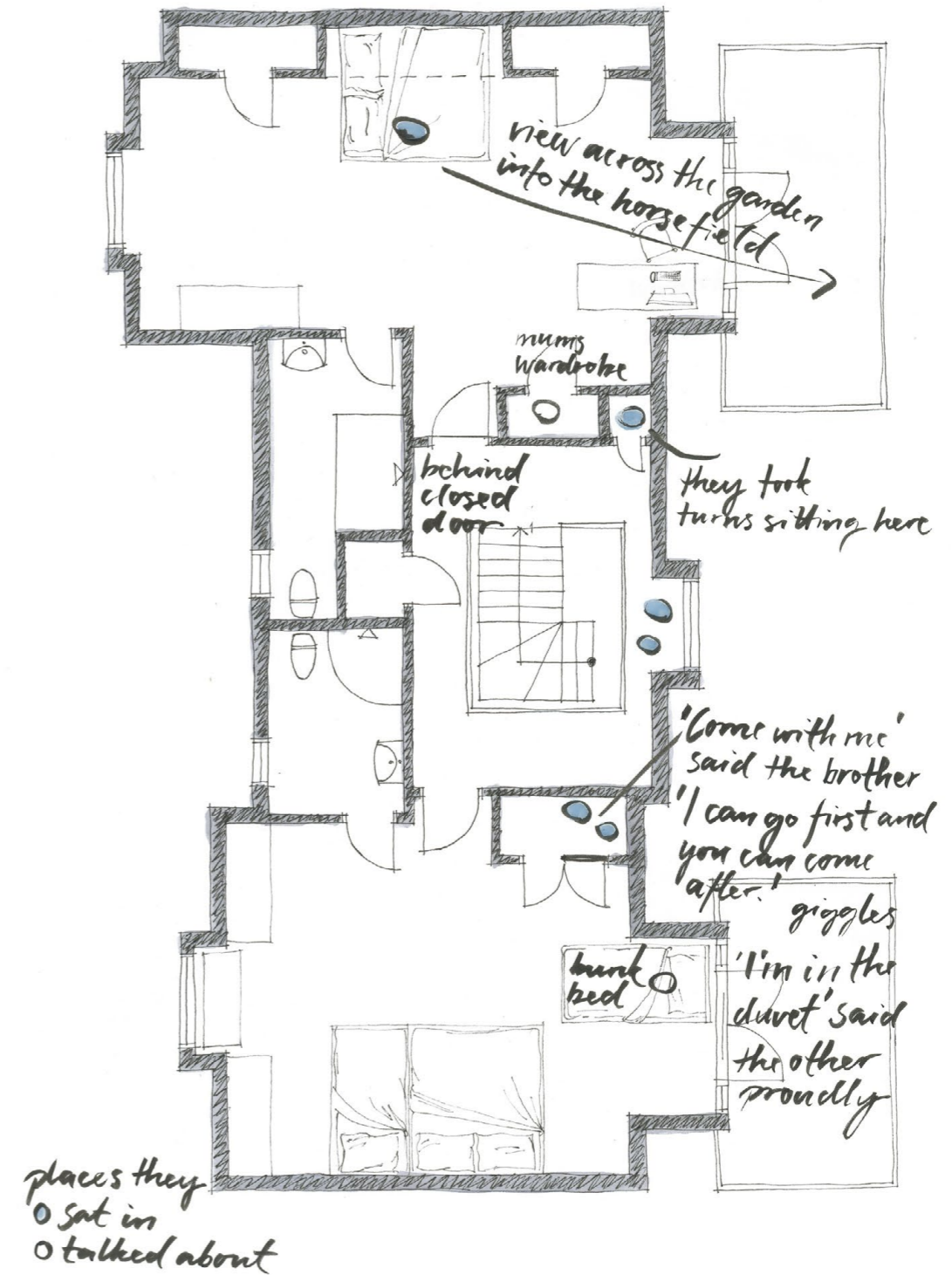
Each child was given a booklet made of watering colour paper and stitched together with yellow thread. Taking turns, they choose two colours at a time from the watering colour brush pens till they had six each.



reflection-in-action

They wanted to run off, eager to find their place, so quickly that we barely had time to introduce the pens and booklets. Very soon and quite spontaneously they came back to report where they'd been and we could talk about it only to go and find a new place. They sought interaction, an appreciated invitation to go and find them in their places. They talked among each other and some of them swapped places,

some sat next to each other. The use of having the mothers around was indispensable. As a mother you know your child and can help them express themselves, you're curious and supportive, the first person someone would let into their most sacred space. The children used their mothers to create safe spaces within other places.





Where daydreaming brings you depends on where you've been. Doing the same thing again can shed a different light on the same answer. I've been contemplating, maybe I see new nuances. They've been contemplating, maybe their answers are more finetuned. We met at a crossroads, now we are back in the same spot but with a different past. Bringing new perspectives to the already known.



reflection-in-action

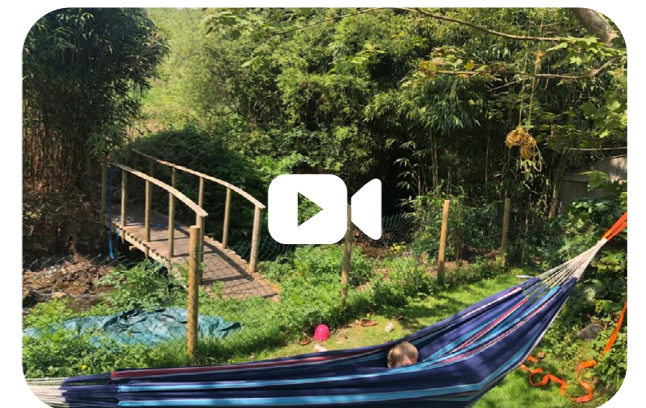
I'm here. On my chair, in my house. My sky is grey. My phone vibrates. I have received a video.

They are there. In their garden. Their sky is blue. A familiar voice 'What are you drawing Xavi?' Silence.

The water is running fast in the stream, present in my headphones. I've never thought of it being so loud before. The pen scrapes the paper, I can't see but I can hear the drawing come to life. Spring is in full bloom, or is it summer already? It's hard to know when you can't feel the wind and the sun doesn't kiss your skin. Movement. I get taken around the hammock. The body weighs it down, it is an almost secluded part of the garden. The fabric reaches just over halfway and the garden is still present in this safe space. The hammock has a soothing motion the way it hangs in the air. Like living in a cocoon.

The sound in the video brings me closer, the movement makes me feel present. They are not allowed to leave their house. If I am in Cornwall or Sweden doesn't matter anymore. I am as close to them as their neighbours are.

I look out the window. It is early spring.



## methodological awareness

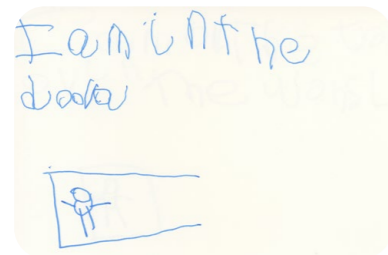
### findings

Through this intervention it became apparent that the child has very strong preferences about their safe spaces and they are willing to share it if asked under the right circumstances. In this case the parent became a key figure and the child wanted to show them their place. Trusting someone you know well with sensitive information about where you feel safe was easier for the child than telling me.

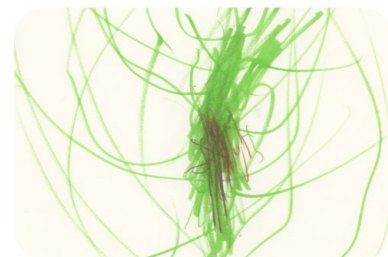
The intention was for the child to find a place and sit down to draw. This is what the child more familiar with the house did, while the child less familiar with the house tried different locations, they also tried each other's spaces. This felt more like an exploration of space than showing a place, though both are intertwined.

During the intervention, the booklet functioned as a conversation starter. What they drew varied between the children from a reflection of what was associated with the space to an emotional state of mind. On one occasion what drawing meant to the child became a tool to access the meaning of the safe space.

When designing this intervention it was impossible to imagine that it would become a key intervention to unlock the exchange of knowledge. Thanks to the nature of it being one of the first interventions the common ground we gained through the experience became vital.



This child described the safe place through an elevation and a short caption. In the booklet there are multiple places all described with the same technique. A reflection from the parent was that writing is a skill recently acquired. The elevations accurately describe the situation.



When the child was asked what the drawing represented. The reply was, 'I am screaming.' In a discussion with the parent later that week the conclusion was that this child often deals with emotions alone. The safe place is a space to deal with oneself.



'I like to draw. If you make a mistake with doodle characters you just turn it into something.' This quote showed how the child chose a drawing style that correlates with what the safe space represents.



Diagram of where the change happened between the two parts in this intervention.

In this thesis the design of the intervention is explained through four parameters. From the child's perspective what they do is determined by place, task and tools. For the second part of this intervention only one of those parameters was changed. This second part of the intervention happened during the Covid -19 restrictions and the families were not allowed to leave their houses and I was not allowed to visit. The collection of data was limited to pictures and videos. Important to note is that video captured the atmosphere much better than only photographs.

### adaptations

The assignment was easy to do and could be varied by not just changing place but also the method for the child to document their space and feelings and through describing different scenarios in which the child will find a place to suit their needs.

The second part of the intervention was a repetition of the first but started outdoors. The result was that the children stayed outside. The children used the same pens and the same booklets as in part one. On this occasion an overall theme was that the drawings were more elaborate, and more colours were used. Maybe this was because they had already started drawing in the booklet or because they knew what to expect. Or perhaps the child was simply more inspired to draw when outside or that fewer children made the child more focused on the drawing. To know why is not so important, but the variables that varied can be used to adapt other interventions.

### relations to other interventions

- The intervention Clay Depiction became a tool for the child to reflect upon what they had experienced in this intervention.
- The intervention Co-researcher was very dependent on this intervention. The experience in this intervention worked as a base to have in common and refer to when explaining different situations and comparing scenarios.
- The intervention Den Discovery is designed so that the children get to build their own safe space. The concept of safe space was clarified with the help of this intervention.

*A relational practice has a different temporality and a different goal than a commercial practice: rather than seeking for material value and quick profit making, it critically creates the conditions for an emancipatory experience which changes in time both the space and its subjects; it 'conjugates in terms of "being"'.  
(Petrescu, 2012, p. 139)*

*You stitch memories into your knitting. When you look at them you often vividly remember what was happening in your life when you were making them and how that made you feel. I think when we wear our hand-knitted clothes those memories are still with us. When things are handmade they become real treasures, they become living things in our history that tell so many stories, certainly for the person that made them, and sometimes for the person who receives them as well, if you give them away.*

*They're unlike any other clothes in our wardrobe.  
(L. Johnson, personal communication, January 12, 2020)*

## about the doing

the acting that is our everyday life

We often try to force what we do in the pursuit of change. If change is initiated by attachment and personal experience I believe that it is more likely to endure.

my knitting served as a simple analogy to what I want to explore

In the process of knitting, when hundreds of meters of yarn slides through my fingers and the knit stitch is repeated thousands of times, I create a relationship to my garment. It means I will treat it with care, mend it when it wears and carry it with content. The connection seems simple enough, yet it is powerful in its consequence. As an architect, if giving agency to others can open up for the same relationship between the user and their space, if this is within my power to give, then that's what I'll strive for.

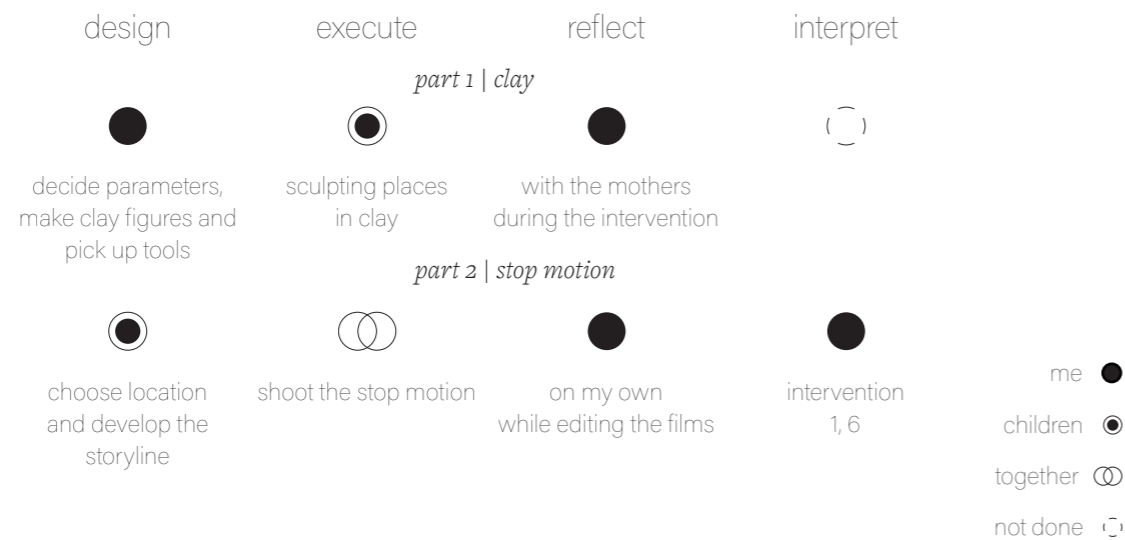
intervention three

# clay depiction

wateringhole

For the artist, the experience of working with clay is distinctly sensory. It can give the feeling of building *something* out of what appears to be *nothing*. The creative process becomes rewarding and no matter the creator's style or skill level, there's a creation. The malleability of the clay, the way it can be bent and shaped into almost any form makes the hand building of *places* particularly expressive. The place, a specific space intended for someone and filled with meaning. A story is being told through the hands of the creator.

steps

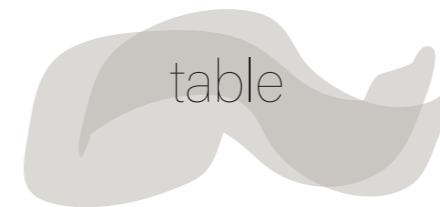


methodological inspiration

This intervention is inspired by 'materialising' as described in the Designing For Children's Rights guide (n.d.). The intention is to use the process of building places in clay as a tool to help define the child's perception of space. As a close follow up to daydreaming, with the same children, the aspiration was that they would be sensitized to their awareness of space. The purpose of the stop motion was to give a specific task while keeping a lot of freedom as well as a tool to find out more about the clay places.

parameters

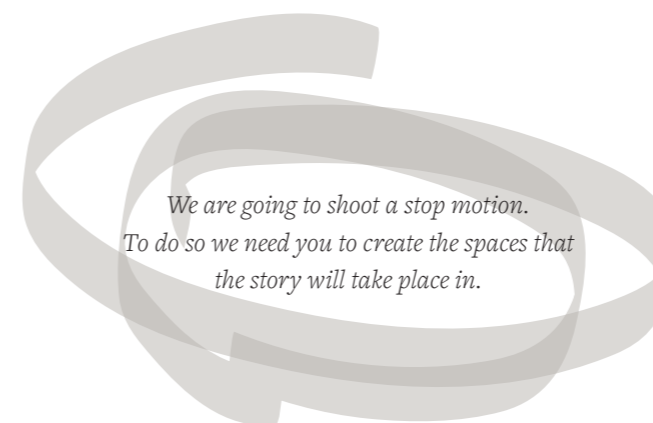
space



A rustic table with space for all of us so the children could work independently but next to each other.

A table with a back drop and alone time with them, one on one, to make the stop motion.

task



learning category and spatial qualities

How do children collaborate around the watering hole? Hoping that the children's conversations around the table will shed light on the spaces they build. How will they influence each other? Will they be inspired by their safe places?

How can I meet the children at their watering hole? Collaborating on the production of the stop motion will let their story be told and my understanding of their place will grow. Will they be open to my interpretations of their narrative? What details and meaning lie in their clay depiction?

people



friends

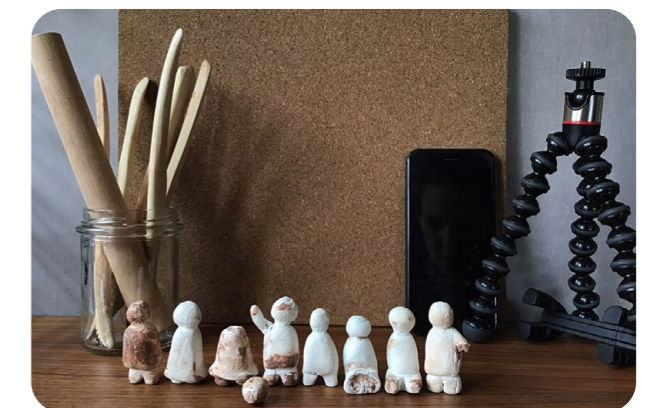


parent

parent

me

tools



12 kilos of British clay for the children to use without restrictions. A cork board 30 x 25 cm. Wooden tools to help sculpt with. Clay figures to set the scale. Mobile phone. Tripod. Backdrop to shoot the stop motion.

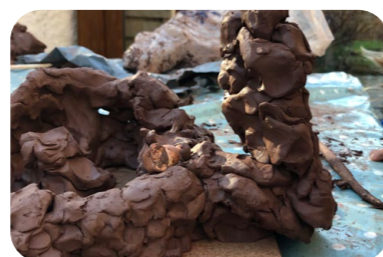
reflection-in-action

The excitement of building. With the goal of creating a fiction. Imaginary people, events and places taking shape – being realized – becoming alive.

testing the demon drop slide



and again



sculpting it to perfection

While doing the stop-motion, none of them wanted to change the details of their design. What they had made was what it was. The process of making something together allowed me to ask for more details. They happily told me all about their design. Sometimes the answer was elaborate, like when Lox drew and explained to me what brickwork 'actually looks' like. Sometimes the answers were simple along the lines of 'cool' or because 'that's the way it is'.



... I could have asked them more questions. Now, listening to the audio files makes me think they really wanted to tell me about their characters, their spaces. Maybe I was a little too passive?

## methodological awareness

### findings

This intervention has shown that children with different levels of skill work well with clay. It is a material they can express themselves through and the level of detail is adjusted to the child's ability. During the process of building the spaces they were creative but stayed within the tools that they were given, for example, all of them stuck to building on the foundation they were given without questioning. The scale figures were important to give the children a scale to refer to, which was desired in this intervention. Almost all children used the clay figures to test their space, they pushed them through openings and developed the narrative through the characters. The youngest child didn't build a place as much as he used the clay as a place for roleplay with the figures.

Using the stop motion as a goal for the first part of this intervention focused the children's work on the spaces and what activities they facilitated. It was a good motivator. During the shooting of the stop motion it was important for the child to get the same clay figures as they had used when they designed the space. The scale figures were used in two different ways when making the stop motion. Firstly, they were given a specific role and the same clay figure kept that role throughout the story. Secondly, one role could take on different expressions by changing the clay figure. In this instance it was important to place the clay figure in the same space when changing expressions as well as that they looked alike. The clay figure that had more brown clay on it was given a wash.

### adaptations

When letting children work with clay the outcome can be guided with simple changes in the setup, for example:

- How much clay is provided.
- Provide scale figures or coloured clay.
- Teach the children a specific technique to utilise in combination with the tools at hand.
- Giving them a goal beyond the finished clay sculpture.

During the process of sculpting in clay, collaboration can be a useful tool to get insight in the process. The conversations between children are a useful tool to access information one might not know to look for. If collaboration is desired it needs to be encouraged, maybe even a prerequisite as part of the setup.

In this intervention the children were free to create their desired place in clay. Worth noticing is the close correlation to what was done earlier that day and the places they sculpted. The intervention Daydreaming was carried out in the morning and after a lunch break this intervention was introduced. The child that described the safe place as a place where 'I know what happens' and sat with an overview of the main part of the house sculpted a sky scraper for the stop motion. Many of the children described their places as familiar places and that they often were places that could become scary. Two of the narratives that developed had strong influences from both these concepts where something scary happened in the home.

This could be used in a different way by providing a context through reading a story or stage an activity before or during the sculpting.

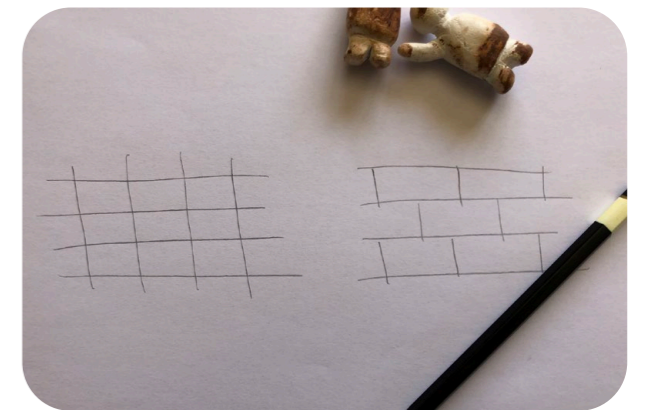
When the stop motion was created it was intended as a collaboration between the child and adult. Through suggesting different ideas, the child had a chance of accepting or turning down new narratives, alter their characters or change the features of the place. None of which were accepted by the children. To alter the meaning of the place or let the child change the narrative it might be necessary to make a change such as be given someone else's characters or combine multiple stories into one. Suggestions of how the recording could take place and become more alive were highly appreciated by the children. Overall, it was a very relaxed and fun way of asking the children to further explain what they had created. Questions about the space and narrative were appreciated. The children had a clear goal for their stop motion and the adult became more of a tool to achieve the stop motion than a collaborator.

### relations to other interventions

- This intervention became a tool for the children to reflect upon what they had experienced in the intervention Daydreaming.
- The child's ability to understand a small scale and experience the space through roleplay became inspiration for the design of the intervention Den Discovery.



The work around the table was independent and focused on the task. Two children had to leave before finishing, although they didn't want to. The solution was to let them bring some clay and a figure home so they could continue their work.



While shooting the stop motion Lox explained how he had created the brick work in clay to mimic what it looks like in real life (on the right) and not like one might first think of it (on the left). He had learnt this from carefully observing his surroundings.

*There are two occupations of architecture: the activities of the architect and the action of the user. The architect and user both produce architecture, the former by design the latter by use. As architecture is experienced, it is made by the user as much as the architect. Neither are two terms mutually exclusive. They exist within each other. Just as the architect is also a user, the user can be an illegal architect. (Hill, 1998, p. 6)*

*Architects have a choice to use their imaginative power not to feed the unbridled desires of economic elites and creative classes, but to imagine 'other worlds'. Architectural education serves as an important locus for nurturing this skill to imagine other worlds. Students are in that sense to be encouraged to develop design skills, but also solid historical and societal understandings of the world in which they operate and of their own discipline. Historical and societal contextualisation, all too often side-tracked by architectural education's emphasis on design, is crucial in that respect. (Doucet, 2017, p. 17)*

## the architect

what is my role

One might think of a building as static, that when it has been built the process is over. Another might say that the process of breaking down has just begun and that it needs to be renovated after a while, therefore it is still undergoing change. I like the way in which Orrù captures not just the activities of the architect that results in a physical building, but the relation that anyone who walks into a space establishes with it.

Neither space nor relation is static, and both condition one another. They are in a constant dynamic interaction according to a supposed 'encounter' with one another. (2017, p. 225)

Can this encounter start already as the space is being created? I believe it can, by inviting the user into the process the relation is enhanced. It gives the chance for it to grow into something more than would otherwise be possible. A more reciprocal relationship that offers greater security for both the user and the space. I hope that by enabling and nurturing these relations they can become something more empathic and sustainable.

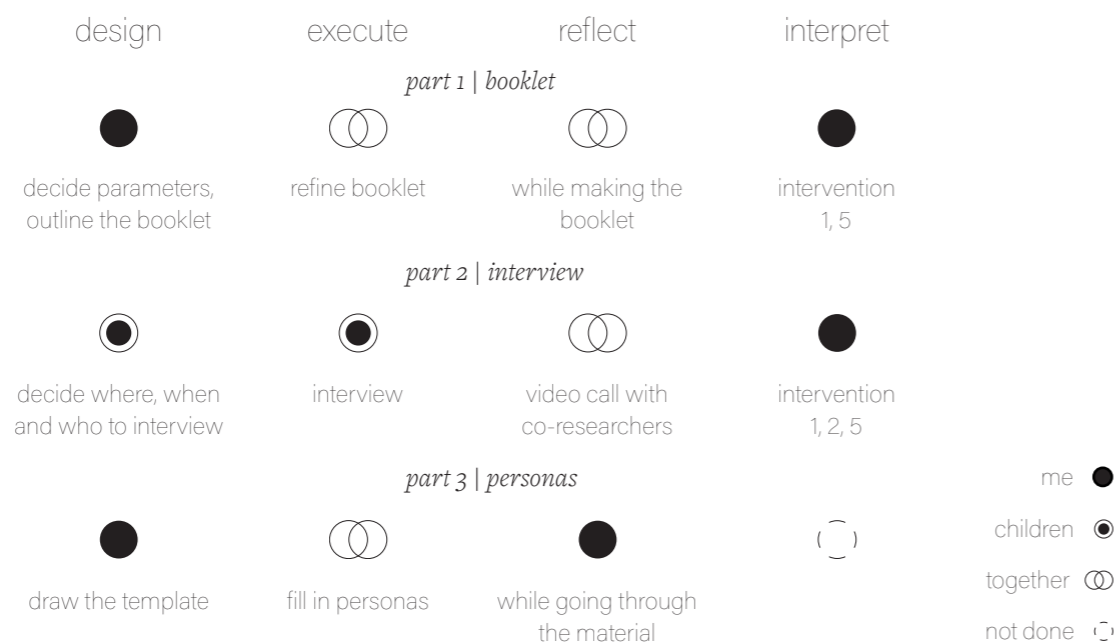
## intervention four

# co-researcher

watering hole | campfire

Children are experts at being children. They understand each other as only children can. As friends, thinking alike, they can encourage each other to express insight and knowledge about their experiences. What do they ask each other? How do they ask it? Inviting the children to become active key figures taking control of the research into *creating learning spaces with children*. By embracing other roles within the process, predefined roles and power structures are exposed. Children as active agents help to re-think, through dialogue and action; How can learning spaces be otherwise?

### steps



### methodological inspiration

This intervention is inspired by the PhD Children as Co-Researchers in Design by Fenne Van Doorn (2016). Through her work I gained knowledge of how to set up this intervention as well some insight into what to expect. It was planned using the same format as she developed with some adjustments due to time constraints. In the first part we developed a research booklet together that they used to fill in during the interviews, part two. The third part, feedback, was done by reflections upon different personas.

### parameters

#### space

sitting on the floor

We used the floor space for informal meetings when we together developed the material.

#### task

Do you want to be my co-researchers and help me develop research material as well as carry out interviews?

### learning category and spatial qualities

The research booklet developed in this intervention is outlined with three main chapters; cave, watering hole and campfire as defined by Thornburg (2003). Instead of using these names, the learning situation was described and we came up with a title.

The intention is to ask the children how to ask the question and what to ask for. As co-researchers they are, as Van Doorn describes it, '*super participants, who know more about their own needs, wishes, desires and activities by studying others*'. They also help to access knowledge about the interviewee by knowing them well, suggesting answers and ask the question the right way.

#### people



8 8 10

co-researcher



participant



me

#### tools



Computer and printer to create the research notebook. Research booklet, pen, phone and tripod to conduct the interviews. Material from the interviews and the research booklet as a base for the personas template.



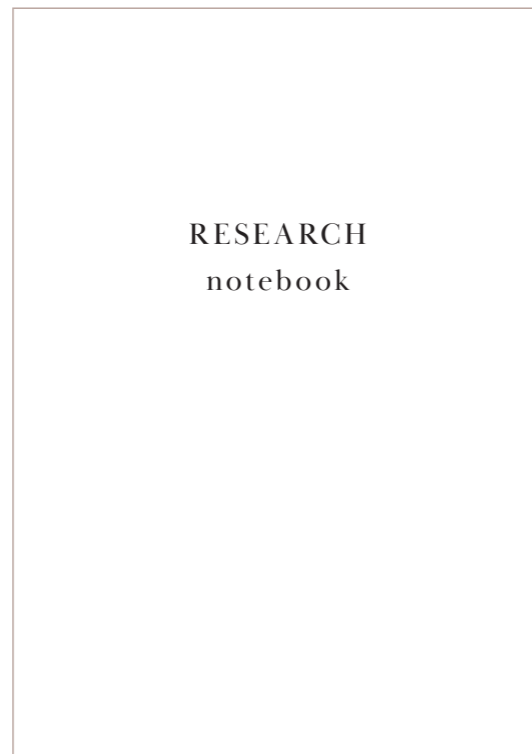


research booklet

During our first meeting we improved the research booklet that I had made the outline for. The booklet has six sections.

1. Introduction and informed consent
2. This space
3. Play
4. Safe zone
5. Show your talents!
6. Find the place in this building

Through conversations we tested the questions and tweaked them until they were suitable for the interviews the co-researchers were going to host. We agreed that it was good to have a warmup section, 'This space', that would make the interviewee comfortable and then move on with the three main topics. We discussed titles and what the different sections in the booklet could mean. Feedback about interview techniques and practicing the questions also took place during this session.



<p><b>Intro</b></p> <p>Today is _____ and it is _____ o'clock</p> <p>My name is _____</p> <p>I am here today with _____</p> <p>How do we know each other?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>I am a co-researcher and part of a research project in Sweden, we are looking into what spaces children like. This will be helpful when the architects are designing Soweni.</p> <p><b>Informed consent.</b> The answers given in this interview will be used in the research to understand what spaces are useful to children. By answering the question you will help to create inspiration for the architects that will design the buildings.</p> <p>Is this ok with you?</p> <p>1</p>	<p><b>This space</b></p> <p>Where are we now?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What colours are in this space?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What materials are in this space?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>How does it feel to be here?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>2</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p><b>Play</b></p> <p>What do you like doing when you play?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Who are you with when you play or do you prefer to play on your own?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What things do you play with?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>3</p>	<p>What is the perfect place to play in?</p> <p>big      small light     dark</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Can you tell me about your favourite memory of playing?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>4</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

interviews

Interviewee: Tristan  
 Interviewer: Lox  
 23 February 2020  
 Location of interview: Mum's bedroom  
 Regarding section four in the research booklet.

[Begin Transcript 00:04:14]

Lox: Where do you feel safe?  
 Tristan: Where do I feel safe? Umm... I feel safe  
 [silence]  
 in the trash.  
 Lox: Be serious.  
 Tristan: Yes.  
 Lox: [annoyed] Be serious. Where do you feel safe?  
 Tristan: In the trash. I swear I feel safe in the trash.  
 Lox: No, you don't.  
 Tristan: I do.  
 Lox: Ok, we've never been in the trash. You feel safe  
 in the wardrobe, don't you?  
 Tristan: No, I don't feel safe in the wardrobe.  
 Lox: What about the cupboard?  
 Tristan: Cupboard.  
 Lox: In the cupboard.  
 Cupboard.  
 [silence]  
 Yeah. And I feel safe  
 [silence]  
 in the house.  
 Lox: Do you?  
 Tristan: Yeah. Lox, when is it going to be finished?  
 Lox: In a sec. [while writing] Cupboard. Umm...  
 and... house... Perfect.  
 Some time passes while Lox writes in the research notebook.  
 Tristan entertains himself by pulling faces for the camera.  
 Tristan: [whispering to the camera] Hi, there.  
 Lox: Who are you with when you feel safe?  
 Tristan: Umm... I feel... Who I feel safe with?  
 Lox: Yeah.

Tristan: I feel safe with... Umm... Laura, [crosstalk]  
 and my friends too.  
 Lox: Laura.  
 Ok. What do you do in your space?  
 Tristan: What do I do in my space?  
 [silence]  
 I feel like a old man drinking coffee and  
 dunking a soggy biscuit in my coffee.  
 Lox: So, you are playing old people?  
 Tristan: Ehh... Yes.  
 [00:06:12]  
 Humming to himself a slightly bored Tristan slides out of  
 the picture. Lox is concentrating on writing in the notebook.  
 [00:06:45]  
 Lox: Tristan come back into the shot please.  
 Tristan: [impatient] Why?  
 Lox: What does the place you feel safe in look like?  
 Tristan is coming back into the shot bringing the curtain  
 with him behind his back. As the conversation follows he  
 wrap himself completely in the fabric.  
 Tristan: Umm.. It looks [muffled] and dark.  
 Lox: Ok... Small and dark or big and dark?  
 Tristan: Umm.. Big and scary and dark.  
 Lox: What materials?  
 Tristan: What materials? I am actually wrapped in a  
 material right now.  
 Lox: I know. But what materials are in your safe  
 place?  
 [End Transcript 00:07:34]

personas

During the assignment of filling in the template different personas were created to allow for different kinds of knowledge to come together and be shared. It worked as a base for discussions about the interviews and interviewees without having to become too personal.



This shows one example of how the template was filled in by one child.

## methodological awareness

### findings

This intervention showed that the child can reveal useful information about a situation by participating as a co-researcher. It also became very clear that sensitizing the child to a specific area gave them confidence and made the outcome better. The children were much more receptive to topics we had already covered in previous interventions. The satisfaction of a deeper understanding of a concept made them motivated.

During the first part of this intervention, when the booklet was refined, and the children practiced interviewing each other, their discussions were nuanced and challenging. This part gave a lot more insight than anticipated. The children felt free to think outside the box and question what the concept meant to themselves as well as others. It was helpful that they knew each other from before as well as that they had friends in common. In this step the children showed enthusiasm and seemed to enjoy the process.

By listening to the children's interviews, an understanding of what children are like can be developed. The second part of this intervention didn't leave the children as willing to think outside the box. They followed the booklet carefully and didn't want to skip ahead or linger at any question to find out more. When a younger sibling interviewed an older sibling, the roles became unclear as the older reached out to help write or read. The confusion was created with the best intentions. Even though the co-researchers were interviewing close friends and siblings they said that they learnt new things about the interviewee. Using the camera to record the interview was appreciated by the child as well as gave a better understanding of the situation when listening to the interview. A good example of this is when one child got intimidated by some of the questions in the research booklet. The video answered the questions about the child's safe space without words, by wrapping a curtain around their body the child had created a safe space. Nothing in the audio record could have explained this. Throughout the interview the children talked to the camera and it made them seem like they thought what they did was important and didn't make them shy. When carrying out the interview it is important that the child is confident about what to do, any uncertainty or part that is too hard to read was skipped. The interview took just over 15 minutes for most children to get through. This was slightly too long for the five year old interviewee, but worked well for the older children.

It is important to be clear on what the personas template is meant for. If confused by what to fill in, the child can feel overwhelmed and give up. The discussion around the personas were important for motivation. When the children realised they could draw in the bubbles it became more fun.

All the steps in this intervention require a lot of concentration from the child, each session needs to be carefully planned, both time and timing is required. The children needed time between the meet ups to carry out the interviews but when the time was too long, they forgot what had happened and lost interest. No more than one week seemed to work.

### adaptations

When carrying out this intervention the meeting places were very casual. More importance could have been given to the role of the child by having the meetings somewhere special.

The children responded well to editing the research booklet on the laptop. Maybe modern techniques could be utilized more, and the children would learn some new skills at the same time.

During the interview the child filled in key words in the research booklet. This was intended to help highlight what the co-researcher thought was important in the conversation with the interviewee. In most cases it slowed down the conversation and it would have been more interesting to hear a flowing conversation with the research booklet as a guide rather than an assignment to fill in.

When filling in the personas one child got confused and filled it with personal information. This turned out to be a very honest way of discussing preferences and get the chance to be proud of who you are in a supportive environment. Getting to know the template by filling it in as yourself or a person you know well might work as a way of getting to know the different areas within the template.

### relations to other interventions

- This intervention became a tool for the children to reflect upon what they had experienced in the intervention Daydreaming.
- The intervention Den Discovery is designed so that the children get to build their own safe space. The concept of safe space was clarified with the help of this intervention.

connection nature value safe trust agency purpose freedom

Soweni's 'corner stones'



The field that Soweni is looking to develop for their new school.

## education unbound

learning spaces and their presence

What role can architecture play in reshaping education? To move away from education as we refer to it today, from a system that is hierarchical and linear to a dynamic education taking place in a social and participatory environment.

Soweni

Soweni is challenging the concept of a classroom with its four walls, a white board, tables and chairs with everyone learning in the same manner on the same topic, at the same time. Their education approach builds on the basic understanding that children should learn from curiosity. A project based approach where children are free to choose from topics, ask questions, pick the way in which they investigate and an appropriate method for practicing their new knowledge. The project becomes concept and inquiry driven, transdisciplinary and open ended. The traditional, more linear, curriculum is perceived as a tool used by the mentors to identify nudges and next steps. Soweni will have educators in order for children to learn in social groups and without their parents. Though Soweni do desire a place that is accessible to learners whenever they need it and parents are welcome. There is no reason why learning should be confined to traditional work hours and parents are welcome to participate.

intervention five

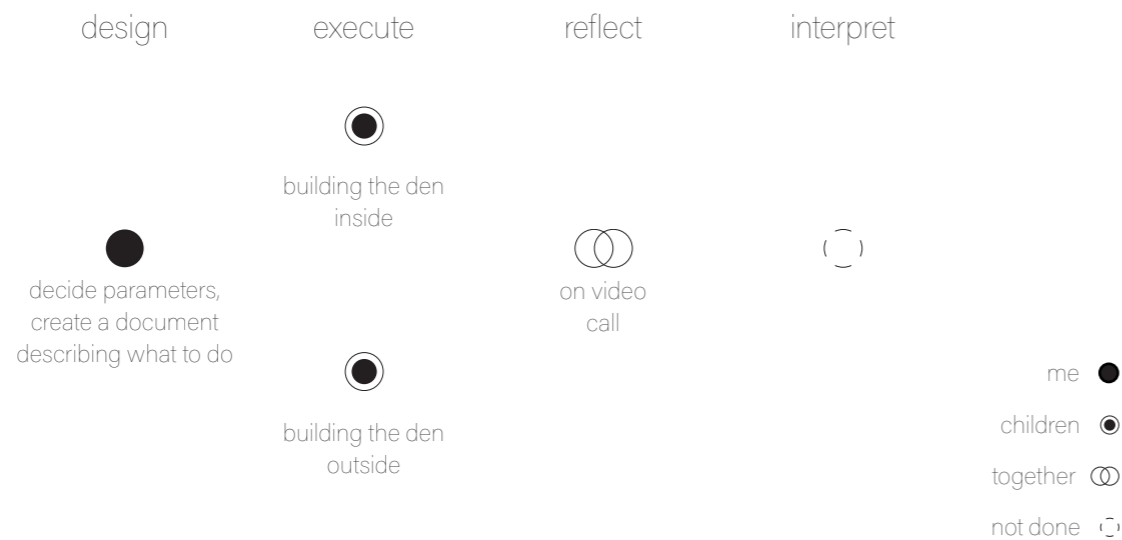
# den discovery

cave

It is a place for special games, or a secret place of retreat. It can be constructed with intent and designed for a purpose or the creation itself is the goal of the game. It can be temporary. It is contextual. It is about resources, what you can use and what you choose not to use. It is about what you bring and who. It is about how you get there and when.

Once the den has been built; a whole world of opportunities open up. It's a place of importance and just being there is an experience in itself.

steps



methodological inspiration

This intervention is inspired by the two interventions: Den Depiction and Free Play. In Den Depiction the children showed their ability to play in the model scale and reflect what we had done previously that day. Free play is drawing on the child's curiosity and freedom to explore their own needs, something desired in this intervention too.

The intention is to re-invite the children into the design process. The interpretation Transparency is used to ask the children how transparency affects their safe space. The aim is a reply that is the physical object; a den.

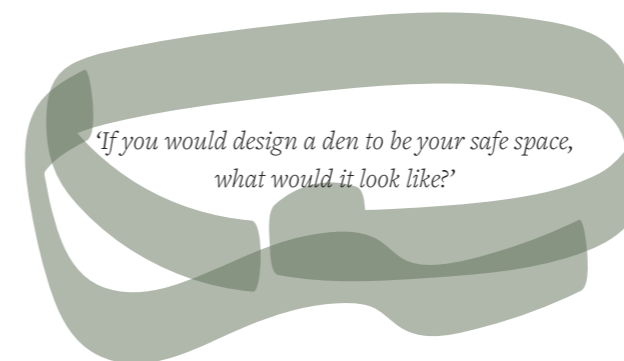
parameters

space



We used the floor space for informal meetings when we developed the material together.

task



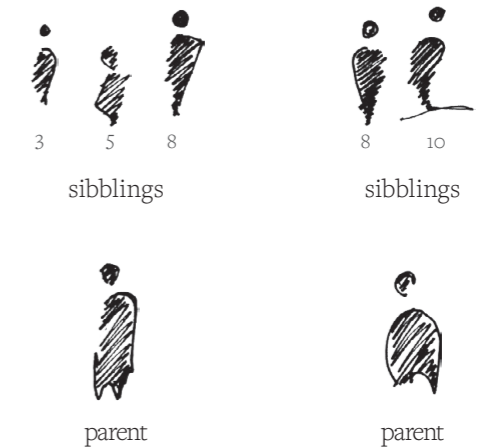
The task of building a den was introduced over video call when we looked at the models in the interpretation Transparency. As well as introduced by the parents on the day that they built the den.

learning category and spatial qualities

The purpose of building a den is often to get a place for yourself or your close friends. It's often seen as a secret place, owned by the child and free of adults. It's a safe place to explore feelings and thoughts about the world around us. It is what Thornburg refers to as caves (2003).

A den can tell the story of a child's understanding of something, either in its construction and placement or through what's going on inside. Children are so imaginative in their creations it enables them to use what is around them. By giving them two locations the resources they use will be different and they get a chance of discovering new features in their dens.

people



tools



Instead of giving the children places to choose from they build one to suit their own needs. With different prerequisites; inside and outside, the nature of the den will differ as well as the materials available.

den discovery #1

You can build a den to be a safe space for someone else.

April 2020  
 Location: Under the central staircase.  
 Captured on video by parent as Tristan is building.  
 [Begin Transcript 00:01:01]

Parent: What is the important bit about this den  
 Tristan: That no one can see in?  
 [silence]  
 Parent: [commenting to the camera] It is right in the middle of the house.

*Cothan, the toddler bother, crawls into the den and points up at the camouflage net that was found in the garage and inspired the creation of this den.*

Tristan: The ceiling  
 [Toddler response]  
 Tristan: I made it all for Cothan.  
 Parent: Did you?  
 Tristan: Yeah  
 Parent: I think he loves it Tristan

*Tristan crawls around on the floor arranging the blanket to cover all corners of the den.*  
 [End Transcript 00:01:52]



den discovery #2

Being a child, you are sometimes limited by your own reach. A parent is good to have at hand.

April 2020  
 Location: In the living room.  
 Captured on video by parent as Tristan is building.  
 [Begin Transcript 00:00:00]

*The construction is in full swing. Building a space where adults don't fit, children are in charge. Are there any secrets? Using the broom as a cantilever takes a dedicated labourer.*



[Toddler sounds and some soothing humming from a child outside the shot.]

[00:00:20]  
 Tristan: Mum, could you hold that. Could you hold that there.  
 Parent: Yeah.

*This is a pertinent matter that cannot wait. There is simply no other choice than to stop the recording.*  
 [End Transcript 00:00:23]



den discovery #3

When the den in the living room was finished they made the lovely decision of giving me a video call. As the late-lunch snack was going on in there I got a glimpse of how they used the spaces inside the den. Three little pockets had been built, one for each child. It was a little hard to ask question, the screen between us was limiting. It made me feel close, yet so far away. The video call got interrupted by an accident and the need for a parent to hug the pain away.



den discovery #4

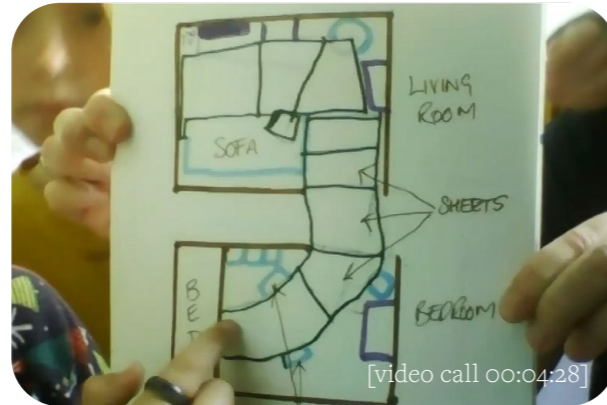
April 2020  
 Location: In the far corner of the back garden.  
 Captured on video as Lowen is showing his den.

[Begin Transcript 00:00:00]  
 Parent: This is Lowens den that he built all by himself and this is much smaller and much more concealed. Alright Lowen, are you going to crawl down and show them how to get in.  
 Lowen: Ok.  
 Parent: Ok, I'm going to hold it and Lowen is going to show you, you see he has to get right down on his belly. But once you are inside, you've actually got quite a lot of space in there. And what other nice things are in there?  
 Lowen: There's a window here.  
 Parent: He made a little window and through there you can see the view of the town. You can sort of spy on people can't you?  
 Lowen: [giggle] Yeah.

*Lowen crawls towards the camera eager to bring us inside. The snapping branches makes it hard to hear, but the gist is that he will show us the view. It's dark inside the den. The camera is aimed at the opening, the light makes us blinded for a second. As it is adjusting the view becomes clear.*

[End Transcript 00:01:00]



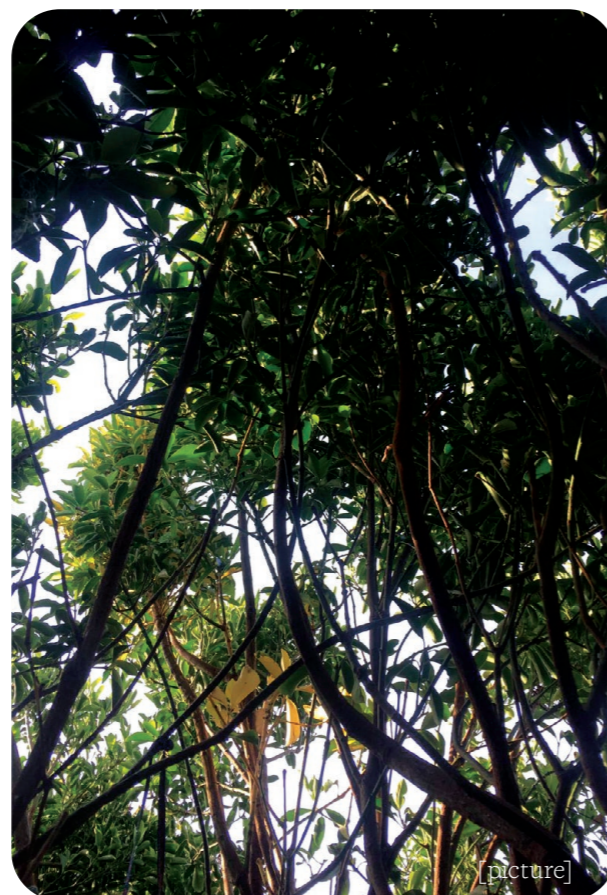
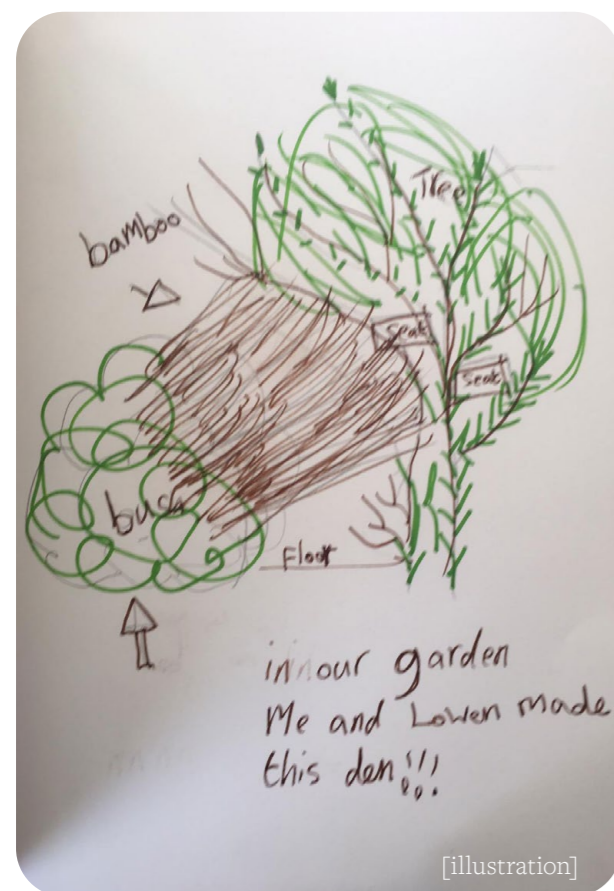


den discovery #6

The den is a passage between the living room and the place underneath the raised-up bed. It allows for the child to crawl between the rooms unnoticed. You can peak out from inside the blankets and bed sheets arranged to create the den but no one can see in.

den discovery #5

The baskets were tied to the bush and created a space for each of the siblings to retreat to. It is a place used for play and conversations. Here you can capture the world through pictures and look at the leaves while the wind makes them dance about your head.



den discovery #7

For the child, den building is contextual. Inside or outside have important differences.

When asked about preference for building dens, one child answered, 'because you can hammer things into the grass, but inside you can't hammer things'. Another child said the den inside was safer than the garden one. Simply because the den in the garden wouldn't protect you from rain and it had a weaker structure.



den discovery #8

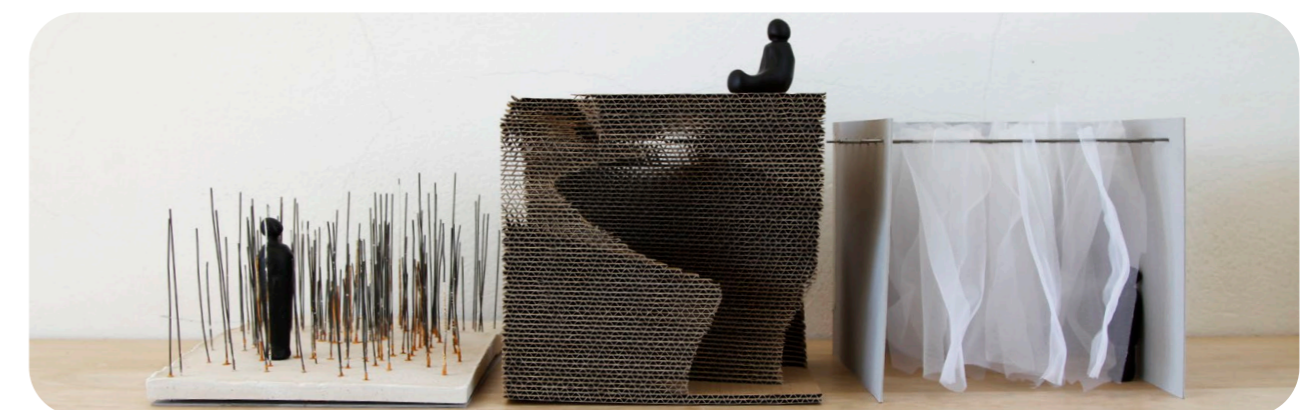
All dens that we've built as a collaboration for multiple occupants were constructed with a specific place for each person. Three compartments, if it was three children. Or two baskets if it was built for two. It also seemed like it was a way for the child to take ownership of one part of the den, contribute and invite oneself to the process and space.



den discovery #9

When we talked about the models from the interpretation Sequencing, they were put into the concept of safe place and reflected upon. The children were good at reading actions and motions into the models. Some of their reflections were linked to their dens, some were honest and linked to the model itself: 'What happens if you sit on it? Will you get spikes in your butt?' 'Oh, that's cool. Did you make that out of cardboard?' Reflections of the models going from left to right:

'Ones we had made the entrance on one side, we thought we should have made it on the other.'  
 'It's like a maze, it's good way of hiding from someone.'  
 'It's a way of experimenting how to get to each other.'  
 Many of them really liked the combination of danger and safety as well as the physical challenge of climbing. 'So you can basically climb up there and get to the top.'  
 'I prefer the cardboard, the shape and how you see out.'  
 'Can many people get lost in it? /.../ I would feel basically safe in all of them, but mostly the material one, cause no one can figure out where you are.'



## methodological awareness

### findings

This intervention showed how responsive the child is to what you talk about as well as the enthusiasm around a challenge, such as constructing their own den. Multiple dens were built over a couple of weeks after introducing this intervention in a video call. The majority of the dens were collaborations between the siblings. The parents became useful when the child needed to reach or achieve something outside their physical capability.

During this intervention, the Covid -19 virus restricted any travel from happening as well as forced the families to carry out the intervention in their respective homes. To reflect on the findings for this intervention it can be explained with the help of four stages, introduction, construction, explanation and reflection.

The first stage was to introduce this intervention as well as show pictures and videos from the interpretation Transparency, the format of video call worked but wasn't optimal. On this occasion both families dialled in and it was multiple children in each room. This resulted in a conversation aimed more towards the parents to confirm their understanding and had similarities with a lecture being held.

For the purpose of this thesis and to capture user awareness during the second stage, constructing the den, being present is essential. As experienced in the previous interventions it is hard to experience the intervention, understand what is going on and at the same time document it. The parents used videos and photos but it was hard for me to get an overall picture from that.

During the third stage of this intervention the children chose their way of documenting what they had built. This was achieved in multiple ways, through videos, drawings, photographs and even calling me when the den was constructed and they had a lunch-snack in it. When the dens had been finalised they were communicated well. The outcome of this part is that the children got to show the den from their point of view which was much appreciated by all of us.

For the final stage, reflecting through conversation, video calling was used, this time with fewer children dialling in at the same time. With just one child on screen they stayed focused and had a chance to express themselves without interruption. This meant a stronger connection and the conversation didn't feel limited. In this stage the child saw pictures and videos from the interpretation Sequencing. The response came immediately and felt honest. The initial idea was to let the child explore the model through role play. But with the circumstances they had to find words for what they saw instead. Materiality was important to most of the children and they were curious about how the models had been constructed. They were good at reflecting upon the den from the safe space point of view. Comparing the den and the models from the interpretation Sequencing was hard for the younger children. It worked better to ask them about the den and the models separately. For the older children it worked well to ask them about reflections upon the model and their den. It made the conversation deeper and more meaningful.

### adaptations

There are a lot of things that can be said about the method used in this intervention. For the purpose of this thesis two strong points can be made.

To not be present during the construction requires multiple adults present to document what is going on. It also requires that the documentation happens throughout or it feels incomplete. Videos worked best to convey the feeling of the place, but missing out on conversations made it hard to follow the storyline. Maybe there needs to be multiple cameras to capture the overall action as well as the conversations.

Talking to the children one on one using video call was an excellent way of strengthening the relationship that had been created during the previous interventions. Using video calls for a continuous connection during the design process could prove to be beneficial for both parts.

### relations to other interventions

- The intervention Daydreaming helped to clarify the concept of safe space which has been further explored in this intervention but this time through collaboration.
- Through the intervention Clay Depiction the child's ability to understand a small scale and use roleplay to experience the space became apparent and that worked as inspiration for this intervention.
- The intervention Co-researcher put words to and gave multiple understandings of the concept safe space, in this intervention the child has embodied new knowledge through building their own den.



This video showed exactly what I was hoping for. The child is making sense of the world by explaining aloud while sitting in the den that was built in the garden.





A panorama stretching from the beach where free play took place and up the valley. Capturing the context of the field where Soweni is planned to be built.

Interpretation is the act of explaining, reframing or otherwise showing your own understanding of something. I will work as an interpreter, but instead of translating languages I will translate what I found interesting in the interventions into something that can reinforce the design process.

There are two forms of interpretations;  
booklet and model.

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interpretation one

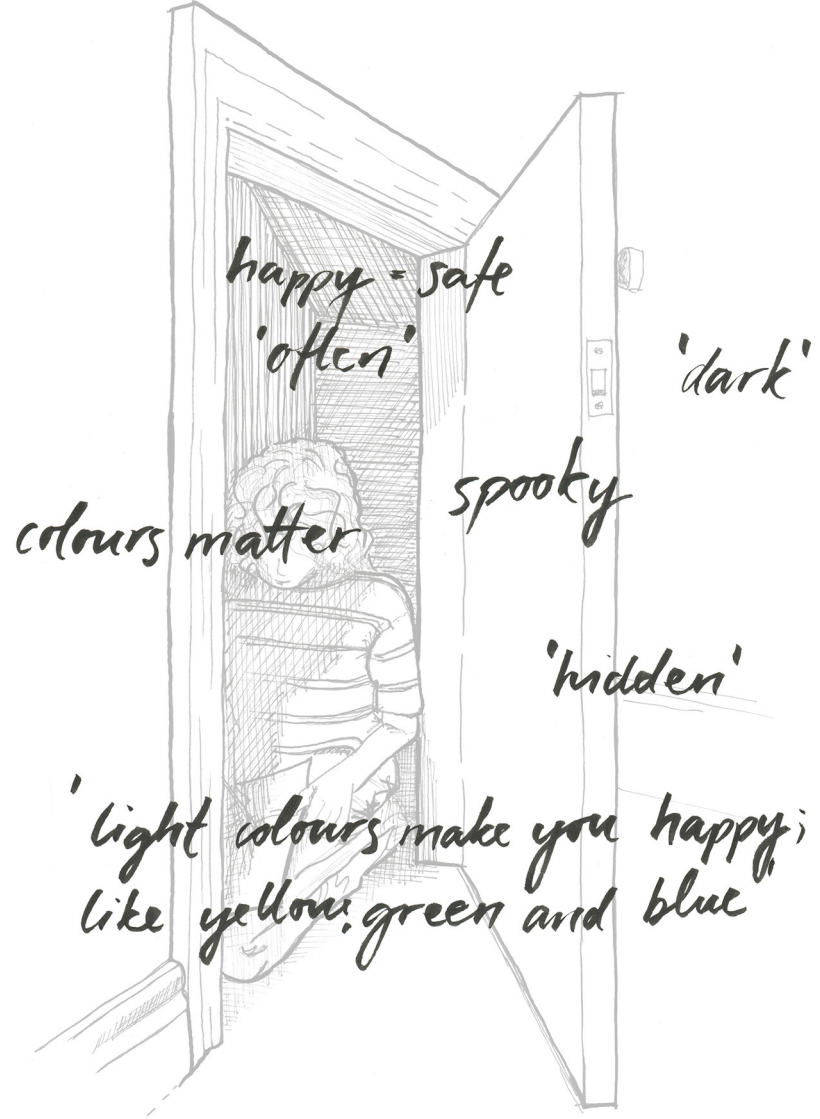
*safe place*  
booklet

Showing someone your safe space is to trust that person with personal secrets and make yourself vulnerable.

The children gave me different answers through mainly the intervention Daydreaming and Co-researcher. Observations and conversations have been the base for this, my attempt in passing some of this information on to you.

*s*  
*a*  
*f*  
*e*

*p*  
*l*  
*a*  
*c*  
*e*



happy - safe  
'often'

'dark'

colours matter

spooky

'hidden'

'light colours make you happy;  
like yellow, green and blue'

'light colours make you happy'  
like yellow, green and blue

'hidden'

colours matter

spooky

'dark'

'often'  
happy = safe



'warm'

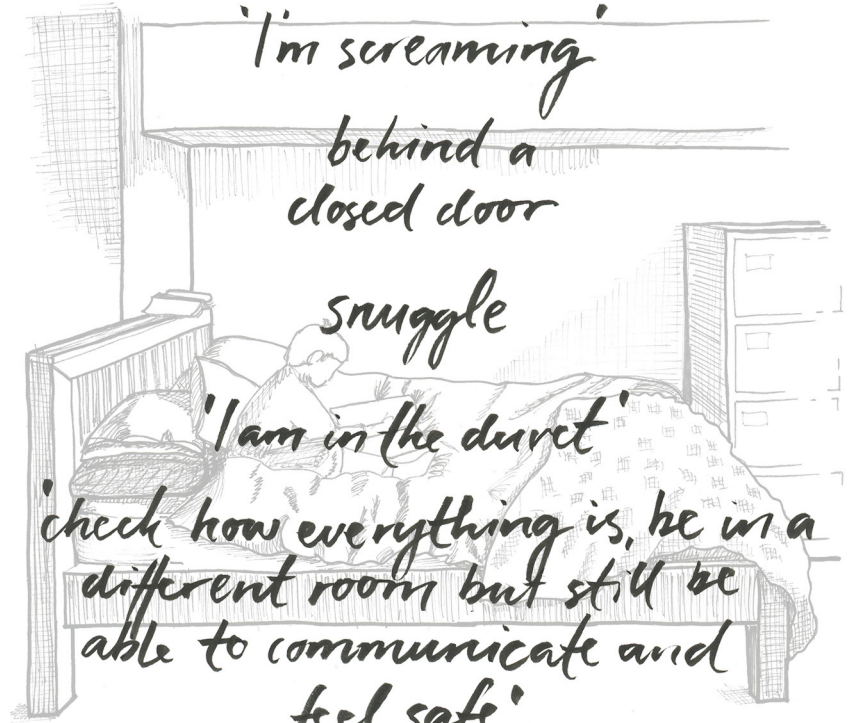
'I'm screaming'

behind a  
closed door

snuggle

'I am in the duvet'

'check how everything is, he is in a  
different room but still be  
able to communicate and  
feel safe'



'warm'  
'I'm screaming'  
behind a  
closed door  
struggle  
'I am in the closet'  
'check how everything is, he is in a  
different room but still be  
able to communicate and  
feel safe'







'no one can  
find me'

close  
but out of sight

'dark but not  
too dark'

connection  
without contact

no one can  
find me  
in brief  
Close  
but out of sight  
dark but not  
too dark  
convention  
without contact



'I like being under a blanket  
it's almost like it protects you'

'I said the sister  
you know well'

'I don't like being under a  
blanket, it feels like someone  
is going to jump on my  
head and kill me' said  
the friend

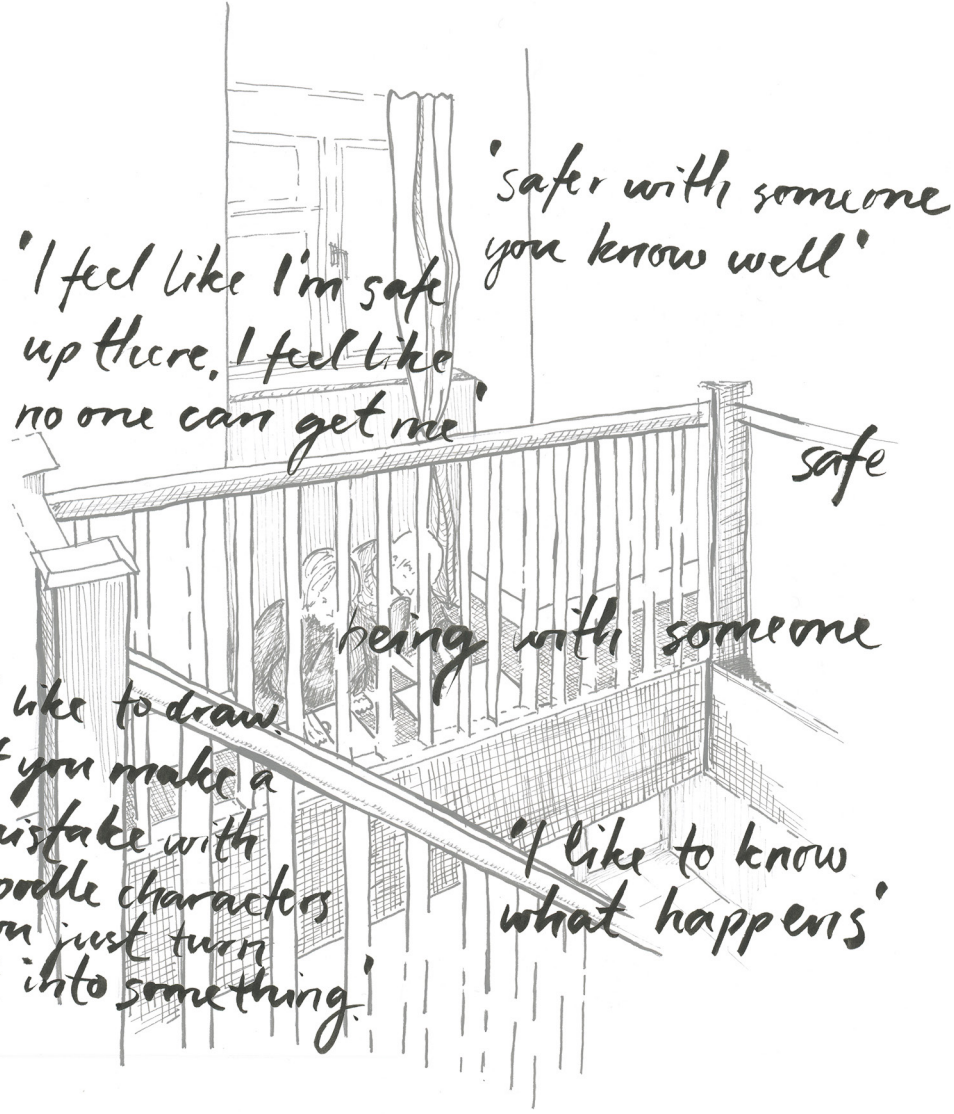
'Yeah, like someone is going  
to run up and jump on you,  
if you it's scary' said the brother

'Not like under it, sitting  
and pulling it over my body'  
she explained

I like being under a blanket  
it's almost like it protects you  
said the sister

I don't like being under a  
blanket, it feels like someone  
is going to jump on my  
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the friend

'Yeah, like someone is going  
to run up and jump on you  
it's scary' said the brother  
'Not like under it, sitting  
and pulling it over my body'  
she explained



'safer with someone  
you know well'

'I feel like I'm safe  
up there, I feel like  
no one can get me'

safe

being with someone

'I like to draw.  
If you make a  
mistake with  
doodle characters  
you just turn  
it into something'

'I like to know  
what happens'



interpretation two

*cave*

booklet

The children often chose safe places with uncomfortable edges, that they just about fit in or was a squeeze to get to. Places that found new purposes as they were inhabited. Placemaking at its smallest scale.

Sou Fujimoto (2008) has explored different origins of architecture. He describes each starting point with the possibility of 'giving birth to myriads of different architecture'. The first one in his book Primitive Future is 'Nest or Cave'.

*recessed*

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Consider the two origins of a "Nest" and a "Cave."

As a functionalist archetype, a nest is prepared according to inhabitants' sense of comfortability, while a cave exists regardless of convenience or otherwise. Inhabitation remains indifferent. Upon entering a cave, humanity adeptly assimilates to the landscape by interpreting the various hints of complex, concave surfaces and scales.

This is architecture of unrelated external factors.

Le Corbusier, who proclaimed "Machine for living," devised a nest for people.

Tracing further back, Provision architecture is a cave immediately before becoming a nest.

It is not organized by the name of functionalism but by place-making that encourages people to seek a spectrum of opportunities.

Instead of organizing functions, a cave is a provocative and unrestricted milieu.

Neither purely natural nor purely artificial, I search for an ideal

condition of new architecture in between artifice and nature.

This topography is composed of 35 cm increments. Not dissimilar to landscape, it is simultaneously furniture as well as architecture.

It is a proposition for a transparent and artificial cave.



interpretation three

## *connectivity*

booklet

Where are safe places in relation to other rooms?  
Is a safe place more likely to be in a room with public  
or private character?

This is a follow up on the first part in the intervention  
Daydreaming. Through simple connectivity graphs,  
developed by Tim Stonor, the relation between spaces  
can be assessed. The root space is where the diagram  
takes its origin. The connection between the rooms can  
be read with a depth value, counting from  
the bottom row in the graph.

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Where are safe places in relation to other rooms?  
Is a safe place more likely to be in a room with public or  
private character?



starting  
room



public room *livingroom,*  
*kitchen, hallway, playroom*



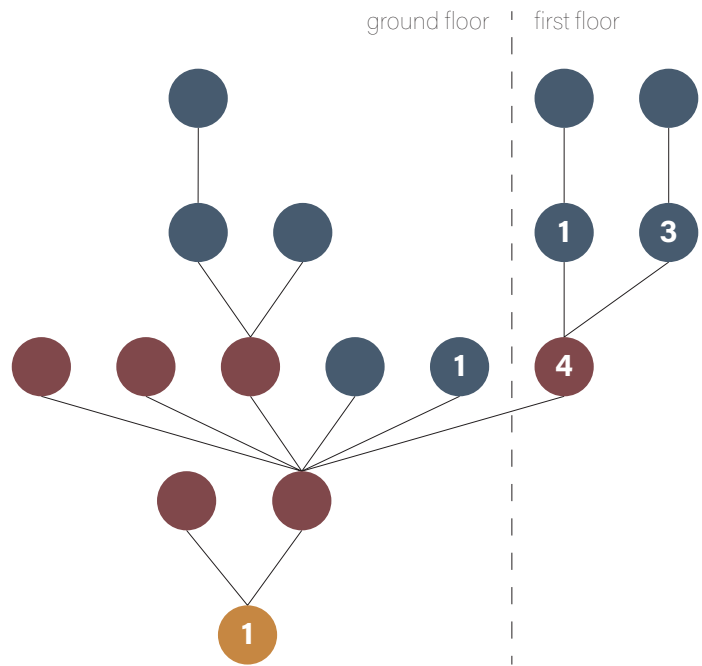
private room *bath-*  
*room, bedroom*



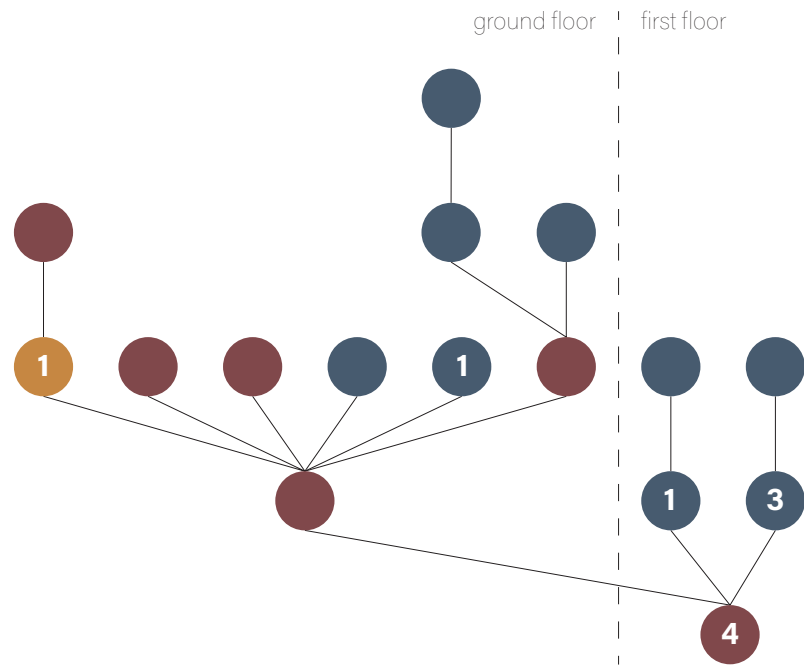
number of children  
in that room



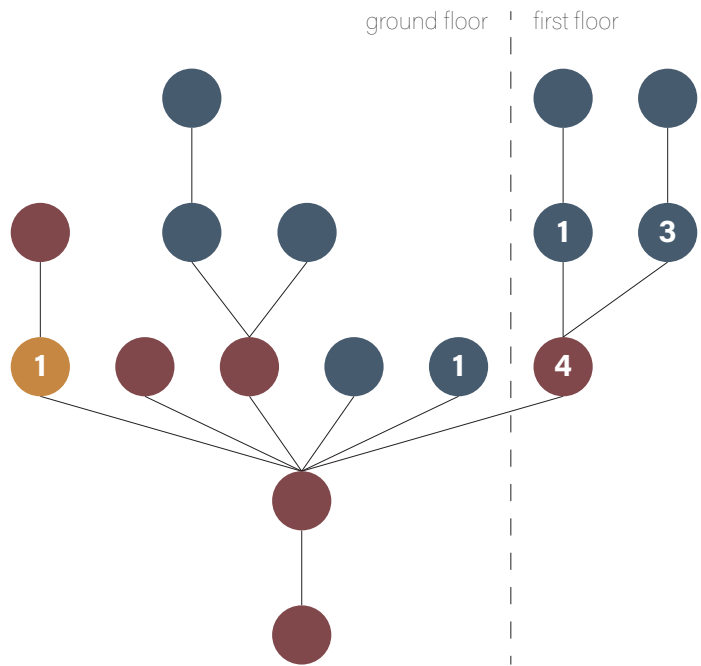
room pointed out with  
good safe spaces



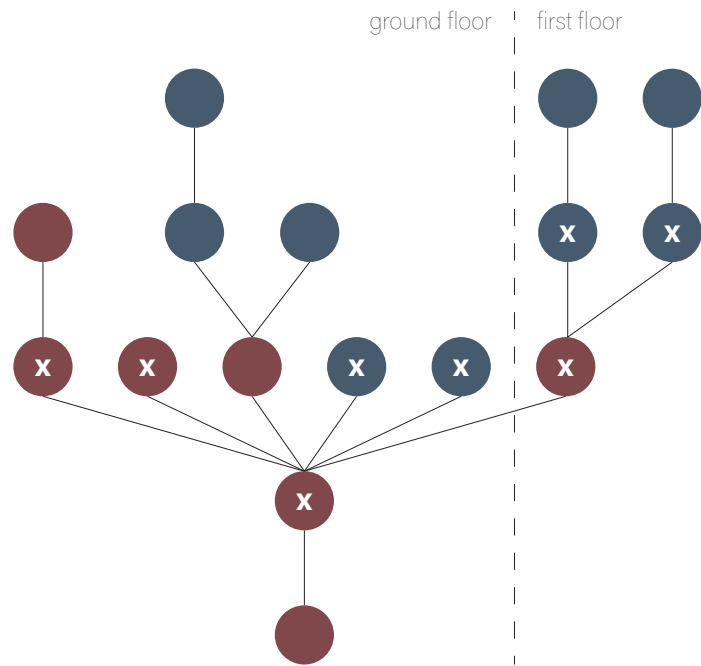
root space; our starting point for the intervention



root space; the room most children chose



root space; the entrance of the house



root space; the entrance of the house

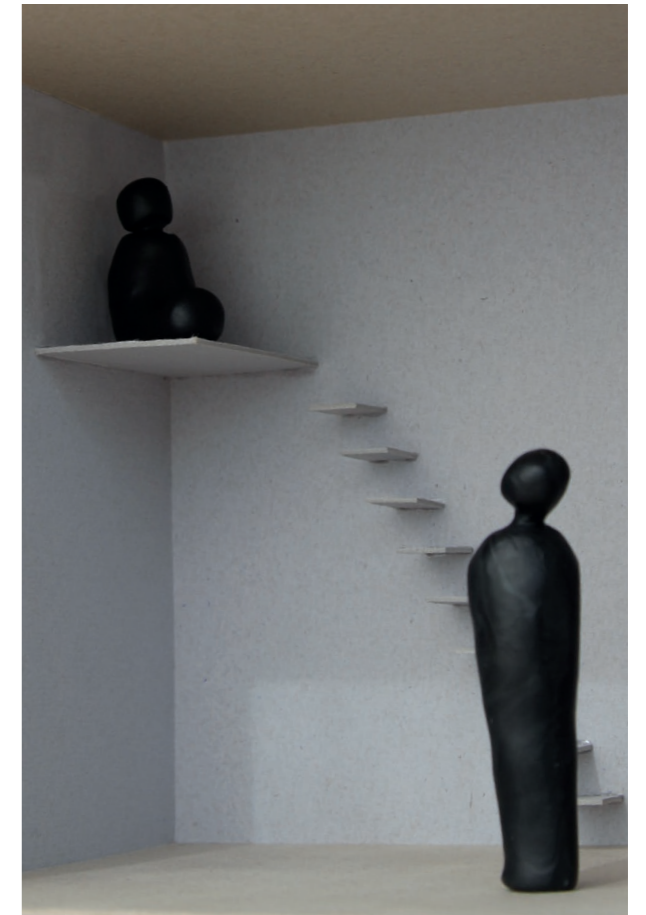
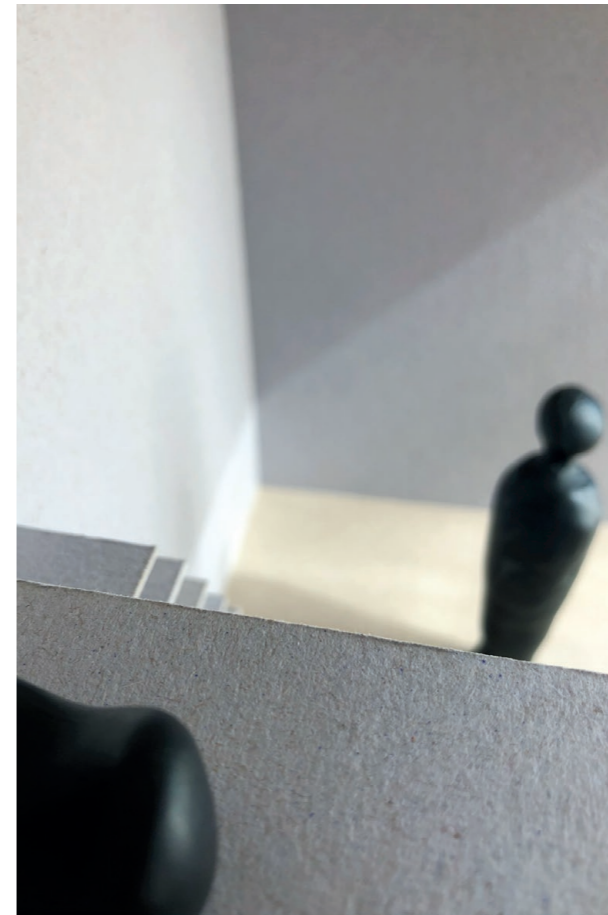
interpretation four

# *spatial connection*

model

Three different aspects of spatial connection were explored in these models. They are based on my observations in the intervention Daydreaming. Through the model you are invited to see the child's perspective as well as the overall context in the room.

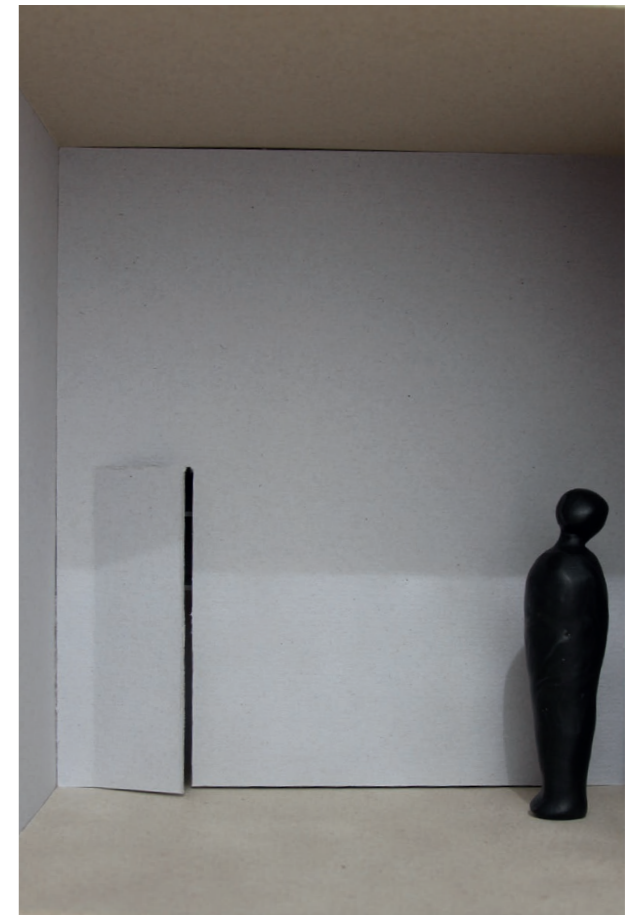
connection  
overview | different level



presence  
limited vision | in the same room



secluded  
out of sight | behind a closed door

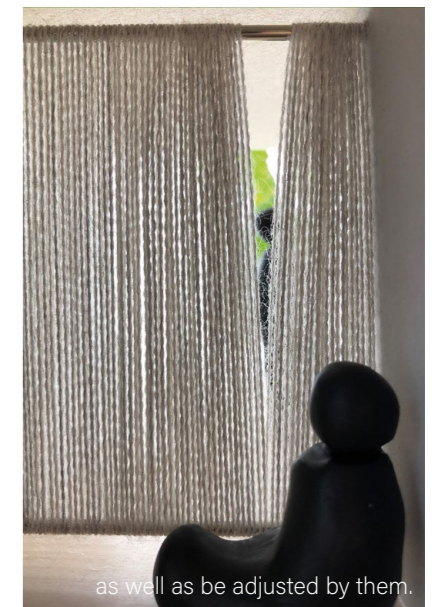
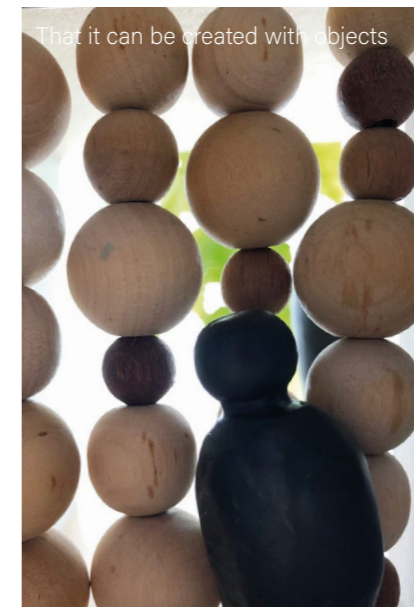
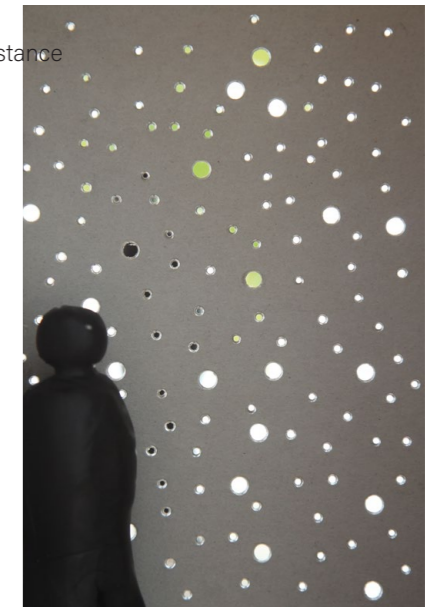
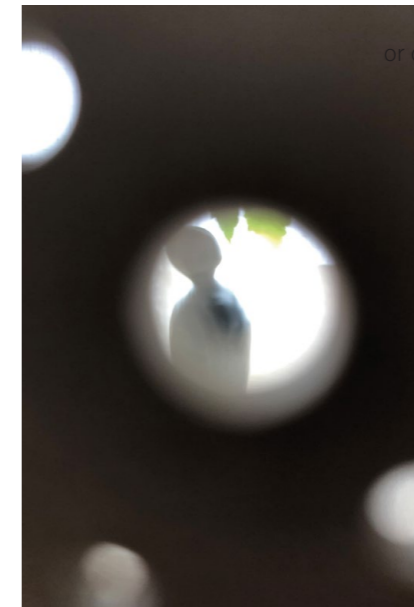
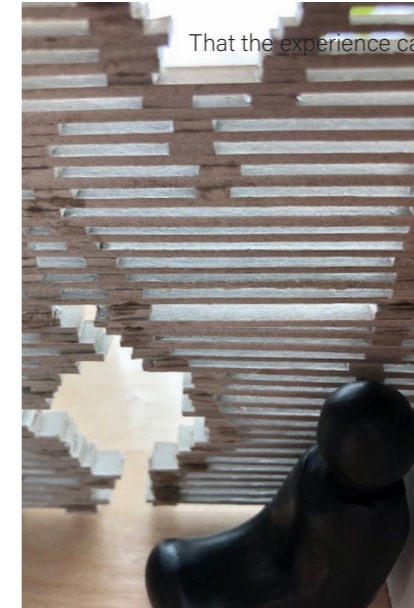
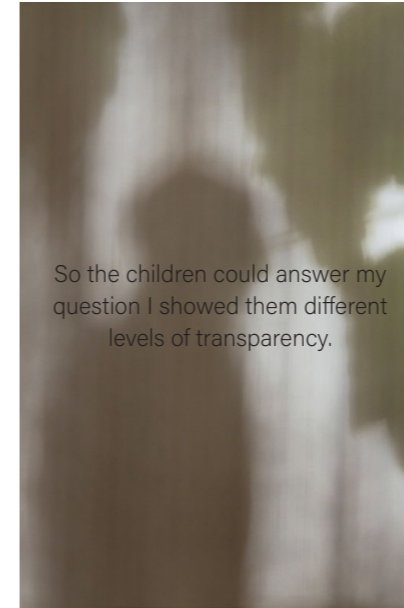


interpretation five

# transparency

model

How does transparency affect the safe space?  
A question I asked myself as I made the models in the interpretation Spatial connection. I showed the children what transparency can look like, so they could answer my question. These six models explaining different kinds of transparency. It is shown from the child's perspective in their safe space. Pictures together with videos became the base for the intervention Den discovery.





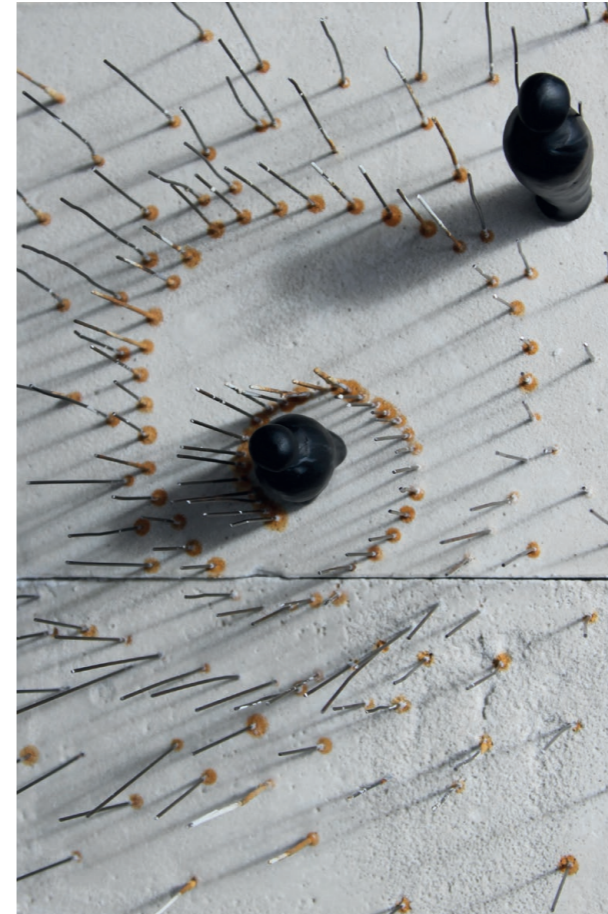
interpretation six

## *sequencing* model

How do you arrive at your safe place?

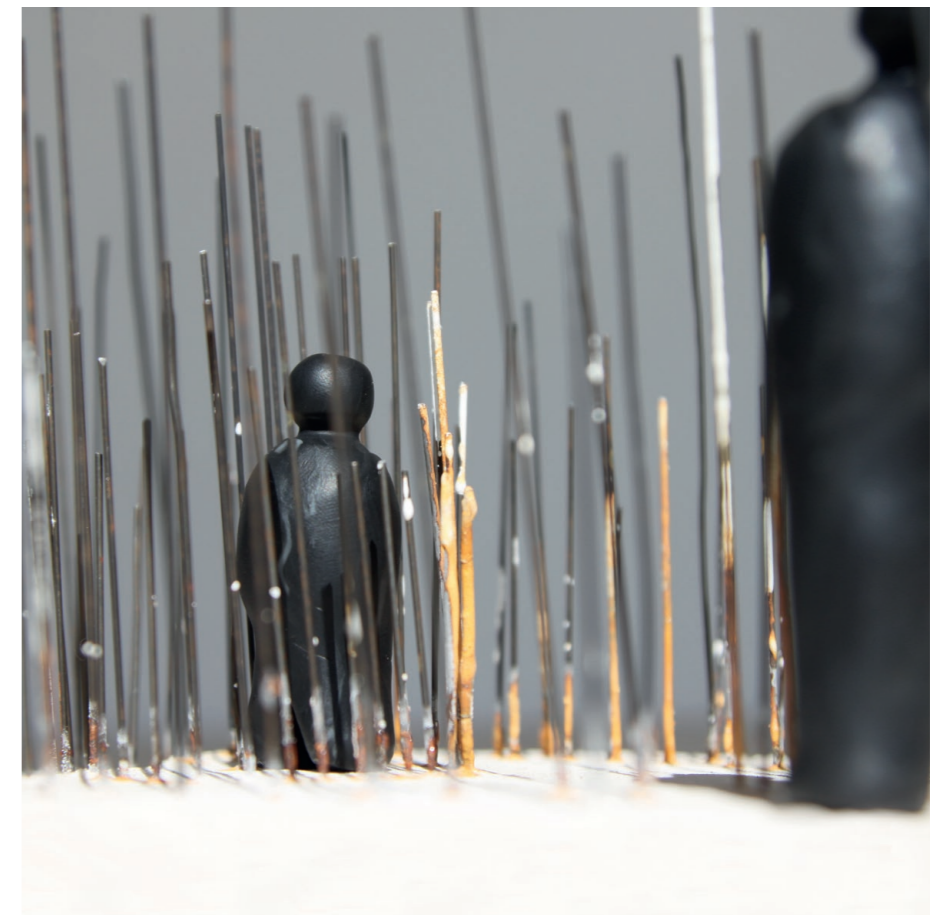
When are we close but not *too* close?

These three models were used to broaden the understanding of safe space. Pictures together with videos became the base for conversations together with the children. I talked to them in pairs or one at a time to give each child time to talk about where they would prefer to be and what qualities they found within the models. This was done as a follow up on the intervention Den Discovery.



The path to reach this safe space is only known to the one who has been here.

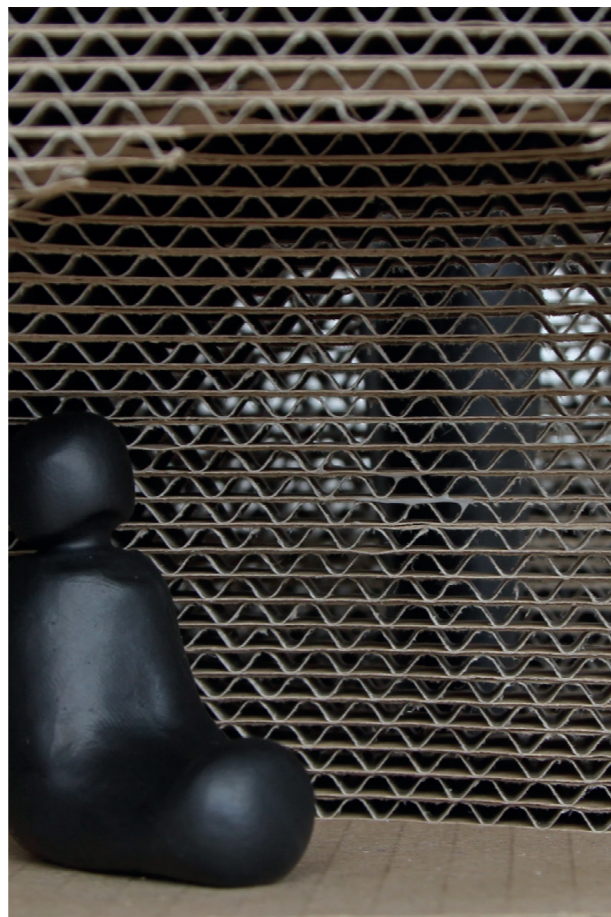
There's a visual connection from the safe space with the possibility to be close but without reach.





Here places are enabled as one inhabits the space, through physical challenge and dangerous manouvers.

The visual connection depends on the user, it can be an overview or hidden behind a corner. The pockets in the landscape allow for sound and glimpses between spaces.



Moving thin delectate layers brings one deeper into the space.

One can be close and within reach, only divided by a thin layer that can be easily moved.





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## discussion

trying to weave in some loose ends

When this thesis was set in motion and it all started to come together, the ambition was that the exchange, for everyone involved, would be mutual. That through giving, sharing would come naturally. Maybe it should have been obvious to me already then, but it took me quite some time to understand that this thesis is a study of relations through relations. And the relationships created extended outside this thesis. Imagine the joy when one child didn't want to stop talking during our video call. When he thought time was up and he had to leave the room for his brother's turn, he would negotiate '10 more minutes'. He put his hand to his face and frowned with all the concern and importance a six year old body can hold and said, 'I am trying to think of good safe spaces for you.' He felt important and knew there was knowledge he could share, but more importantly he was emotionally attached to what we had been doing. There was no time limit, but the 10 minutes estimated tripled and the one off call became many catch ups as friends. This thesis is not a stand-alone project, it is not the beginning nor the end. What I bring with me is that through building trust, by letting someone into my world, I will be allowed into theirs and collaborations can thrive. Whether I am in Cornwall, sharing knowledge with children – or in any other part of life. It is about leaving the door open, and not expecting the right answer but a will to understand. For me it is about giving knowledge so I can understand more.



None of the interventions did clearly address one of the specific ways of learning. Thinking about it, the intervention addressing cave spaces became a watering hole, the watering hole became part of the campfire and so on. It shows how intertwined these activities are and how necessary it is to design learning spaces for all of them. Investigating the learning spaces has only been lightly touched upon. I have only asked a few children to work with me. What I hope is that you as a reader have found inspiration in the way of working. It is mere a way of thinking, an approach, and hopefully it can encourage conversations about architecture between children, adults and across ages in many different ways.

While staging the interventions, I sometimes had a hard time understanding the connections. It has been challenging to balance the exploration of asking the children what to ask for while feeling like there was a product to be completed. Especially, since my strategy has been to let go, let happen and stay openminded to what and how we can do things. Designing with children cannot be distilled down to some magic formula. It is truly dynamic, where success is a product of healthy relationships and practice. It is important to remember that we are all collaborators. Adults should not be afraid to give their ideas nor to try and capture and project the idea of the child. Listen, question and work together, the best catalyst for success is to have fun in the process.

I like to think that the constraints in this thesis became beneficial. For example the great distance between us. It meant that the interventions happened close together and then there was a pause. Stillness. Remembering and appreciating the experience became a goal in itself. This time for reflection became unavoidable and looking back, it deepened my understanding of the interventions.

Ultimately this journey stems from the desire to engage the user in the process to enhance the relation between user and space to become more empathic and sustainable. I began with a wish to become better at understanding others, to share the process with the user and highlight the power inherent to the process of creating architecture. Often the act of inviting the user into the design process is looked upon as less worthy. 'Don't hide your design behind someone else.' But this method proved to me that I can find more inspiration from being with the child and feel motivated to explore that notion, than to look inward. This process is as much a source of inspiration for my design process, as it is giving agency to its participants.

At times I have had difficulties in communicating this project. There have been many interventions, stages and interpretations and it is all intertwined. There is no clear hierarchy within this thesis and neither in my experience of it. Each intervention has its own importance, each interpretation has been a key in unlocking user awareness and taking the next step. It is impossible to capture everything and record every thought, so there's an underlying selection going on. Instead of cherry picking the best parts I have been honest in conveying what felt true in that moment. This wide range of work is meant as a source of inspiration rather than a refined tool.

The interpretations are a tool to discuss my understanding of the child's experience without misrepresenting them or exposing entrusted details. I believe the models and booklets function as a point of departure for the design process to move forward from. I hope that they can be something that Soweni can use in the future.

Being relational and contextual are important. But what do I do in Cornwall? I've come to think about it in terms of belonging by not belonging. What I bring with me is a way of looking from the outside in. With a trained eye in architecture that looks for spatial relations, a light has been shed on the child's experience of space. As the thesis unfolded it became apparent how central my role was in the interventions. I designed them and their themes are driven by the thesis hypothesis. This realisation makes being neutral redundant. I have not tried to. I cannot leave behind my partisanship and activism, they are part of my contribution to the work. I'd like to stay contextually embedded and not propose a generalised solution but more of a scaffold for exploration. I've been encouraged to clarify the exploration so that it adheres to a structured, diagrammatic format to make the information easier to digest and discuss.

Through my journey I have found that the relational practice has released my creativity. Letting go of the product and letting architecture flow, observing the experience, joining the experience and being inspired by the user. This discovery is driven by the search for new narratives from which new understanding can arise and bring about meaningful ways to relate to the world. Ultimately this is about relationships between human and non human - the natureculture we are part of. In this way this is an open-ended journey, guided by empathy, conveyed through architecture.



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