

TRANSITION ZONE | OVERGANGSZONE

Artistic Innovation and Co-creation in the transformation process of the ENCI area

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Abstract

The ENCI area involves an experiment in 'uniting incompatible dimensions'. But what exactly is the incompatible quality of this place? And for whom, where and in what ways does this incompatibility play a role?

These questions are at the center of TRANSITION ZONE, an art and research project in which artists search for the qualities of an old, multi-layered location – one that doesn't reveal itself easily. Artists research various hidden notions of place which more or less playfully can be applied to the ongoing transformation process of the ENCI quarry. They do so in close collaboration with parties involved in the transformation process. During one year 13 artists examine the quarry and its users, and they will present their research and work at various public moments, resulting guided tours and presentations. In their work, they transform the incompatible dimensions of the ENCI area into elements that are tangible and can be presented, experienced and negotiated. In this way, they co-create new forms for this place in transition: the ENCI as a transition zone towards the future.

Summary Paper

TRANSITION ZONE is a project about connections, participation and visibility. It is a project involving art, heritage and research, and the presentation of the artists' results in situ, in the ENCI area itself. The whole area, including the first Dutch cement factory, will transform into industrial heritage, natural landscape and a wellness center the coming years. This specific location is one in which various experienced notions of place are making particular changes possible.

The interesting fact is that in this transition area all kinds of new places and possibilities are created. All these places are staffed by various parties or stakeholders, who all have their own interest in the (re)allocation and rearrangement of the ENCI quarry, scheduled to be completed provisionally by 2019. The different stakeholders – including Natuurmonumenten, ENCI employees, new companies, local residents, recreationists, as well as the Maastricht Natural History Museum – all provide their own perspective and create their own notion of place in this way. All these various qualities of the place are relevant for artistic research in situ.

But what kind of research will the artists do, and how do they work in order to grasp the complexity of the place? To this end, we invited 13 young artists, who will follow the different parties involved for one year. They do so through conversations and by giving them a voice, which will provide them a basis for their research and work. Practically this means that the artists and stakeholders work together, in order to analyze, understand and grasp the specificity of the transformation process of the ENCI area, through which, in certain cases, the collaboration can be seen as a laboratory. So one could say that the innovative way of doing artistic research is by co-creation.

The status of the research, as well as the collaboration among the various parties and the results will be presented in a joint venture to the public at specific moments, in several qualified and experimental ways. At the same time the public will be invited to participate in these specific events.

The project thus addresses the emerging developments in the field of 'public participation', as mentioned in the conference. In our project we create public moments, in order to stimulate engagement by asking questions and provoking debates. This means that through the participation of the audience an extra layer will be created. Together with the stakeholders and the public the artists try to find out what the ENCI area in transformation with all the different notions of the place can be, and what kind of new places of meaning can be developed? In this way 'transition zone' means also a meeting place for the public and the artists.

The questions, "How can art and heritage worlds learn from participatory practices and reflection in other domains?" and "What are good practices for public participation?" are key questions for our investigation. Until now the transformation process of the ENCI operates on an economic, administrative and technical level, but not from the point of view of the human being. And it is exactly this human level that the artists aim to make transparent through the project and the collaboration with their partners.

It is our opinion that in this special location all these various parties can exist side by side, and tell their own story, no matter how controversial they may be. This offers distinct opportunities for artists who take the 'incompatible' as starting point for their research and who seek to render this aspect visible, experienceable and negotiable through their work.

In this paper we are aiming to show what the effort of the artistic innovation is in relation to co-creation, and how both artists and owners/users of a future heritage place can learn from each other. Concretely, we propose to address the artistic methodology and collaboration to the conference topic 'Innovation through new forms of audience participation'. We will do so by providing some examples of best practices from collaboration, co-creation and public participation.

The results of the artistic research will be presented at the 23th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA), held from 30 August until 3 September 2017 in Maastricht. A sample of the results will be presented in the ENCI quarry during the public program of the EAA-conference. The final result takes the form of a presentation of the research and the newly produced artworks in the new collections building of the ENCI 'transition zone'.

The distinctive character of the TRANSITION ZONE project lies in its focus on what is 'incompatible', as well as on the creation of 'visibility' and the connection of different notions of place, which arise from the various perspectives and combined practices. The artists will utilize and showcase this distinctive characteristic through their art and research.

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