

PiMDi

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A Pedagogy of Imaginative Dialogues



Waddenzee (Waddensea)

Foto: <https://www.ecomare.nl/verdiep/leesvoer/waddengebied/waddenzee/>

Preparation PiMDi intensive study week in Groningen, 17 – 21 April 2023

This intensive study week is part of the Erasmus Program Strategic Partnership of four European master programs of Arts Education:

- the Master of Education in Arts at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen, a joint degree with NHL Stenden University at Leeuwarden;
- the Master Arts Education at the Iceland Academy of the Arts in Reykjavik;
- the Master Fine Arts at the University of Agder/Norway;
- the Master Dance pedagogy at Uniarts Helsinki

The starting point of the PIMDI project was the idea that in Europe there is something that we call ‘the paradox of democratization’. The European Union is a democratic government which means that it is based on principles of equality among European citizens. But as it now encompasses 27-member states, we are challenged to bring all these different voices together in the enactment of values that people recognize as more or less their own or as interestingly different.

In the PIMDI project we experiment with the arts as a way of creating dialogues without trying to eliminate differences. These dialogues are about the act of valuing. We think that through the arts, we can create a dialogue among different groups in society, to experience processes of value-making. Artists are educators in their own right; they can instigate new perceptions and experiences. We ask ourselves what the arts can do to explore differences and to create dialogue among different groups in society who might be too polarized to speak with each other. Groups who know each other less and less, because we tend to live in separate worlds, both physically and psychologically.

During the PIMDI project we elaborate on the idea of imaginative dialogues in four intensive study weeks; each held in another country and with other local partners. In Finland we cooperated with the Tempest Group. Students designed imaginative dialogues as a present for the elderly who live in a senior home. In Norway we cooperated with the local arts museum and with the arts school. Students designed imaginative dialogues to engage with children from the local arts school in Kristiansand.

In Iceland we were working in a special, deserted landscape and designed imaginative dialogues to engage pupils from a local secondary school.

And now we’re ready for the last Intensive Week in Groningen, in which we hope to build further on insights of the former intensive weeks while off course still being open for new findings. The task in Groningen will be to develop Imaginative Dialogues and to design Dialogical spaces that offer conditions for these dialogues to happen. As we found, an Imaginative dialogue involves the creation of new experiences by artistic means and an exploration of the unexpected. In this dialogue participants notice and question their assumptions and prejudices, it involves curiosity, play, humor, attentiveness, sensing, silence, listening, relaxedness and interest in otherness and the unknown. In Imaginative dialogues the language of different art disciplines is spoken. Dialogical spaces are social & physical spaces that have their own ‘rules’, configuration of actors (roles), meanings and relations, aimed at providing fruitful conditions for imaginative dialogues.

In the last Intensive Week, students will work in mixed groups with students from the other countries, like they did in former weeks. In doing so, we have found that PIMDI experiments can bring to light differences in culture, profession and personality.

For more information about the PIMDI project look at the PIMDI newsletter:

PIMDI Newsletter 1 and 2; website: <https://pimdi.lhi.is/2022/11/29/pimdi-newsletter-november-2022/>

Subject of interest of the week:

The (arts-pedagogical) paradox of safety and transgression

The paradox of safety and transgression' appears to be a very interesting and rather topical theme in our societies. There is a heated public debate about notions such as 'Safe Space', 'Transgressive behavior' and 'Cancel culture'

A lot of questions can be raised, because what is safe for one person can be felt by the other as an obstacle for their authentic voice, their freedom or creativity. Experiences during the former Intensive Weeks underline the topicality of this theme.

As artist-educator we are fundamentally engaged in this paradox of safety and transgression. In a text from Helene Illiris, one of our participating teachers from Agder University in Norway, in which she reflects on the past Intensive Weeks, there's a reference to this notion: " This paradox can clearly be connected to the 'classical' pedagogical paradoxes of Western enlightenment democracies with roots as far back as Platon: "In order for education to be possible, the individual must be free, and simultaneously, in order for the individual to become free education is necessary" (Uljens). In other words: In order to become free "in the right way" the already free individual must use her freedom to choose education to transgress herself into an even better and freer person – actually to become the person she already is, to become (even) more "authentic"? ...But what if the learner withdraws and resists transgression? What if she prefers to maintain her boundaries, claiming the need to be "safe"?

In Illiris' text she proposes furthermore that " The main focus will be on the phenomenon of 'paradox', both in the 'abstract' sense (...) of the simultaneous presence of divergent perspectives and in 'lived' sense of paradox as a form of practice that does not aim to overcome differences, but rather to stay with them trying to live them and thus in a certain sense to 'become paradox'.

" The safety-transgression conflict can (...) be understood as a paradox in an original sense of on one hand the doxa, the good sense and common opinion that we can all agree on, and that tends to erase differences, and on the other hand the para-doxa that goes against the good sense and increases complexity (Illiris, 2022).

Preparation for the week

What to read:

In this syllabus you'll find some texts to inspire the process of designing Imaginative Dialogues and Dialogical Spaces during the Intensive Week in Groningen. You might want to do some preparatory reading before this week.

Regarding the Imaginative dialogues, there are excerpts from these texts:

1. *Building Conversation, The Scripts: Impossible Conversations, Parliament of Things, Time Loop, Agonistic dialogue* (Aers, van den Berg. Lotker, 2022)
2. *Think with your Hands. Subversive Affirmation* (Kicurovksa & Cornelis, 2022)
3. *Sparklab art & philosophy* (Beekman, 2012)

Regarding the Dialogical spaces there are excerpts from these texts:

1. *From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces* (Arao & Clemens, 2013).
2. *'Building Conversation, The Scripts: 'Preparing for conversation'/ Preparing the conversation space/ the role of the guide/the role of the participants/the walk to conversation space/ introduction and preparation in the conversation space* (Aers, van den Berg. Lotker, 2022 p. 37, 38)
3. *'Revisiting Social Space...'* (Friedman, 2011 p. 241-249)

Regarding dialogue and polyphony we have the excerpts from two texts:

1. *On Dialogue* (Bohm, 2004)
2. *Room for polyphony*, a summary of the PhD of Nathalie Beekman (2021)

Finally, we include another draft text in this syllabus written by Ingimar, Tormod and Eeva as part of the PIMDI project. We would like to discuss this text with those who are interested in it:

Why do we need a pedagogy of imaginative dialogue? - draft

Where will we stay?

Sunday, April 16 and Thursday to Saturday, April 20 to 22

Teachers: Hotel Labnul50, Boterdiep 11, Groningen, <https://www.labnul50.nl/>

Students: Simplon, Boterdiep 73, Groningen, www.simplonhostel.nl,

3 x 2 persons room; 6 x 3 persons room; 1 x 4 persons room

Monday to Thursday, April 17 to 20

Students and teachers: De Energiek - Mernaweg 79 - 9964 AR Wehe-den Hoorn, <http://www.de-energiek.nl>; 5 x 2 persons room; 1 x 5 persons room; 4 x 6 persons room



- We will stay in an old farmhouse turned group accommodation in the village of Wehe-den-Hoorn in the north of Groningen and will sleep in shared bedrooms. These will be spaces yet unfamiliar to everyone. That's why we ask you to bring an object with you that makes you feel home at an unfamiliar place. This will be part of our communal 'placemaking' session on the first day.
- Furthermore, to celebrate our first common evening at Wehe den Hoorn, we ask you to bring a typical sweet snack that is connected to a local tradition or to the landscape or culture of your country.

Further to practical stuff to bring with you:

- towels
- warm and water-resistant clothes
- walking shoes
- for 'wadlopen' you need shoes/sneakers that can get wet and dirty; you can hire them for € 7,50