

# EXPERIMENTS IN THE CO-CREATION OF "THEATRES" FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION. A READING THROUGH THE LENS OF HANNAH ARENDT

ARTICULATIONS, CONTROVERSIES, DYNAMICS, ENGAGEMENTS, IDENTITIES, RELATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores how the authors are currently experimenting in bringing philosophical insights into dialogue with their design practices. Specifically, they are analyzing how concepts from Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* - such as those of "theatres" and "heroes" - have inspired their research within a project called "*Welcome to Seraing*". The idea of active citizenship powered by this project has been inspired by the idea of "hero" described by Arendt: i.e. to be an active player in society, discussing together and making decisions about the common sphere, and bringing these decisions into action. By doing so, the actors involved are given the possibility to experience deep satisfaction - "eu-daimonia" (ancient Greek for "happiness") - which derives from taking one's own responsibility within society and re-discovering the social character of human nature, according to Aristotle's definition of man as "zoon politikon" (political animal). This occurs in Greek theatre, where the stories of the "heroes" are enacted

and can become an example for the citizens. In "*Welcome to Seraing*" these concepts have been used as a conceptual framework for the co-creation, together with the citizens of Seraing in Belgium - of spaces of representation (inspired by Arendt's idea of Greek theatre) to experiment new forms of participation in the common sphere. The idea is that citizens can experience there what it means to be actively involved in their own neighbourhoods (which for Arendt is the main characteristic of being a "hero"). What is emerging from this project is that the situations we co-created with citizens are currently helping them to re-think their role within their own community. This paper discusses how Arendt's ideas of "theatre", "hero" and "eu-daimonia" can be relevant in order to fully value the political and social implications of the construction of new spaces for the enactment of possible future stories of local "heroes", active citizens who discover their own happiness ("eu-dai-

monia”) by fully expressing their social nature<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords: politics, active citizenship, theatre, storytelling, design for social innovation, design research, design & philosophy*

## 1. WELCOME TO SERAING

In 2015, we were asked by the Belgian municipality of Seraing to explore the co-creation of situations where their citizens could discover new ways of participating in the common realm. Seraing is a former industrial city just outside Liège where, with the closure of its factories in the past decades, many forms of employment disappeared. For 25 kilometres the landscape is a desert filled with the skeletons of heavy industry factories, currently owned by the multinational steel manufacturer, Arcelor-Mittal (*Figure 1*). Local public institutions, with the support of the European Community, created a master plan for the area to tackle some of these issues. These institutions then approached us to promote social dialogue in partnership with the residents and local organizations, and to generate opportunities for more citizen involvement and bottom-up actions, thus creating more connections between the local citizens and the master plan.<sup>2</sup>

We were told that, because the citizens were struggling to deal with everyday issues - such as unemployment, security and poverty - they had no time or desire to participate in public meetings organized by the municipality to update them about the forthcoming master plan for the city. When we started to work in this area, we encountered many

related social and economic issues, such as the lack of public spaces, physical and moral isolation from the wider urban context and an overall lack of work and opportunity.

From January 2015 to October 2015, we ran a design laboratory for social innovation, in partnership with residents, local organizations and a variety of stakeholders from the neighbourhood, in which we worked to co-create a context where all the local players could potentially develop a fruitful discourse, co-designing and co-producing new solutions for their neighbourhood. After a series of intensive workshops, we presented the first outcomes of the project within the framework of Reciprocity<sup>3</sup>, the local Triennial of design. Our main goal was to listen to the citizens and to possibly allow their voices to be more clearly heard, especially by the local authorities and the designers of the master plan.

In this process, we struggled with the limited time available for our project, being aware that building relational processes means also dealing with the impossibility to predict if and when these will happen. To make the best of the little time we had at our disposal, we chose to concentrate our work into a few weeks of intensive work every other month. We were keenly aware of the constraints of our situation, even though we kept in contact with the local associations and with some very active citizens during the in-between periods, and we were regularly visiting Seraing with our students<sup>4</sup> or to meet our partners. Being honest about this, while working with the Seraing community, has always been our main concern.

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<sup>1</sup> This series of reflection has been developed in the framework of the series DESIS Philosophy Talks, where we have been reflecting on some issues regarding the meanings and values connected to many possible uses of storytelling in social innovation. Indeed, there are several disciplines, such as philosophy, narratology and anthropology that can help to interpret the meanings generated by the use of storytelling in these design practices. One of these is provided by the work of the German philosopher Hannah Arendt. See the book *The Pearl Diver* (<http://www.desis-philosophytalks.org/the-pearl-diver/>)

<sup>2</sup> From January 2015, a design laboratory for social innovation was launched in Seraing: during several workshops, a group of designers working in the field of social innovation (Pablo Calderon-Salazar, Yara Al Adib, Elisa Bertolotti, Henriette Waal, Bettina Schwalm, Daniel Anthony Rossi, Gilles-Ivan Frankignoul, Nik Baerten and Virginia Tassinari), along with the Euregional FabLabs and a school (LUCA School of Arts) have been working in partnership with the residents and local organizations. The local institution in charge of the master plan is Eriges, and the regional institution for design, Wallonie Design, with its Triennial of design, Reciprocity 2015 - the Triennial of Design of the city of Liège (Belgium). To know more about the overall project, see the video by Gilles-Ivan Frankignoul: <https://vimeo.com/154704989>

<sup>3</sup> [www.reciprocityliege.be/reciprocity-2015-4](http://www.reciprocityliege.be/reciprocity-2015-4)

<sup>4</sup> Of LUCA School of Arts, Department Product Design.

During these months, we worked intensively at co-creating convivial and friendly situations with the local community where a dialogue could be created between citizens, local authorities and stakeholders. For instance, we organized co-creative sessions during dinners and picnics in the neighbourhood, where people cooked together, shared recipes and created welcoming and attractive environments to facilitate dialogue and to listen to each other's experiences. In the initial phase of our project, we chose to use humour to "break the ice" with the local community, adopting self-parodying and ironic roles to reduce the initial scepticism of the local citizens. For instance, we dressed up like doctors and asked the citizens to help us diagnose problems in the neighbourhood and come up with a prescription for improving the quality of life in Seraing. In our field research, we also created comic bubbles so that people could imagine they were a character and write in their bubble what they are really good at but no one else knows about; we provided opportunities for people to write their own thoughts and visualize them on the street; and we offered a service making hand-painted business cards for their dream job, as a way to start talking about dreams and aspirations connected with work, in a place where unemployment impacts 41% of the population (*Figures 2 & 3*)

Some of these activities happened once, while others were repeated many times. Some required some form of engagement from the participants, others involved only brief conversations. However, all were meant to generate trust and allow a real conversation to take place among all the stakeholders, by enabling funny, occasionally beautiful, surprising, and sometimes silly moments to happen in an environment that is often regarded as highly problematic. In conjunction with this, we designed a toolkit to co-create new positive narratives for Seraing, as we realized that a lack of imagination represented one of the key wicked problems for the community. Therefore, we organized some co-design sessions considering possible futures for Seraing, making these scenarios visible through collaboration with the local puppet theatre.

## 2. THE POLITICAL VALUE OF THE PUPPET THEATRE YESTERDAY AND (POSSIBLY) TODAY

The Walloon region - where Seraing is located - has a long tradition of puppet theatre, and it is there that Thcantchès, a very popular and iconic character, was brought into being. (*Figure 4*) He originated as a figure to entertain the public during breaks between puppet shows, in which Charlemagne - the representative of authority - was often the hero. In the character of a factory worker, Thcantchès represents a typical person in the Outremeuse neighbourhood of Liège, where everyone used to be a manual labourer. He is anarchic, strong and not afraid to speak out. Consequently, this figure, who was initially created for a functional purpose, became so powerful - as the citizens recognized him as one of them - that they started to demand that his character should be the protagonist of every play. Thcantchès thus became a key element in the Walloon imagination, and the authorities had to deal with his popularity, and respect it. The political *status quo* had found its counterbalance in Thcantchès, in whom the voice of the people was reflected. His reputation and relevance remain untouched today; Thcantchès can say things that individual citizens cannot. He is free, because he is each of us but in a collective way; and, therefore, he has a strong symbolic value.<sup>5</sup>

In the Walloon region, the puppet theatre used to be considered a serious play. It conveyed a political message and was only meant to be performed for an adult audience. Yet, after WWII it became predominantly a children's entertainment. Nevertheless, Thcantchès remained in the heart of the Walloon people and never lost its social and political symbolic value.

We came across the marionettes completely by chance during our field work in Seraing. One of the settings for our co-creation dinners turned out to be La Maison de Jeunes d'Ougrée Bas (the house of local associations), where the local puppet theatre is located, and every Sunday there is a performance of Thcantchès (*Figure 5*). There we met Marc Couvrette, the local puppeteer who also works for the city council to promote social innovation. Together we decided to use the puppet theatre as a tool for expanding the social imagination of the neighbourhood. The puppet theatre was great opportunity to realize our ideas emerging from the co-design sessions we had with the citizens about the possible futures of Seraing by playing with a strongly symbolic tradition. Marc, who has a life-long experience improvising stories

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<sup>5</sup> One can see many of those signs of respect by visiting the Musée Thcantchès (<http://www.tchantches.eu>), where it is possible to see many costumes made by local associations for the statue of Thcantchès, or diplomas invented by the army for this marionette.

with marionettes - constructed a play on the basis of the co-created stories and performed them with the puppet theatre (Figure 7). We helped Marc by creating a new marionette in the character of the local “hero” - a prototype of an active citizen involved in neighbourhood activities - and we co-created a portable puppet theatre and some set designs for the stories (Figure 6). The fact that it was Marc, and not us, who was telling these positive future stories of Seraing, made it very evident to the local community that we - as designers - did not “own” the ideas that had been generated. The ideas came from the community itself.

The enactment of the characters of these plays “illuminated” some of the dynamics currently taking place in Seraing. The anarchic character of the puppet theatre granted Marc the freedom to make the voice of Tchanchè’s forthright and honest, and to introduce negative characters such as the Devil, representing the private owners of industries no longer investing in the region, and the White Fairy, representing the designers, arriving in Seraing with good intentions and a great deal of naïvety. The new “hero” - the active local citizen co-designing and co-developing new initiatives in the neighbourhood - was a funny character, a bit naïve and clumsy. He is not yet fully developed as in the case of Tchanchè’s, as the character still needs to be interiorized and further developed by the local community who co-created it.

When we started working with the puppet theatre, we had many questions about the value of our work, particularly regarding the fact that we were staying for such a short amount of time. We feared that the project might be viewed as being our initiative, targeted towards the exhibition and unconnected to the local inhabitants. We were also afraid that we were being ‘used’ by the local authorities as a sort of ‘social green-washing’<sup>6</sup>. The hilarious moment of the arrival of the White Fairy and the Devil during Marc’s play, was a moment of revelation and mutual recognition. Since then, the relationship between designers and citizens involved in

the project changed, and became more open and straightforward. From both sides, we started to feel that everyone was putting all their cards on the table.

The puppet theatre represented for us a space of representation where existing social dynamics could be freely enacted, and where this new role for an active citizenship in Seraing - with all its difficulty and possibly naïvety - could be prototyped.

As these plays were performed during the Sunday morning puppet performances, we decided to broaden our audience (of children and parents) by bringing these stories out onto the streets. With the puppeteer, we co-designed and co-produced a portable puppet theatre, moved by the conviction that, performed in the street, the stories could help to discuss the role of citizens in the public realm.

In *Welcome to Seraing*, the puppet theatre - and particularly the portable one because of its broader reach - are spaces of representations for enactments of social interactions. There, the local “hero” can enact what it could explicitly mean in the local context to be an active citizen and to experience what it means to play an active role in society. Our source of inspiration for this experimentation has been the ideas of “theatre” and “heroes” described by the political philosopher Hannah Arendt in her book *The Human Condition*<sup>7</sup>. We were researching these concepts within the framework of the DESIS Philosophy Talk “*Storytelling and design for social innovation*”<sup>8</sup> at the same time that we were working at the Seraing project, and they have been used to define the conceptual framework of our design research.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt speaks about the city - the “polis” - as a common space

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<sup>6</sup> It seemed a natural way to describe our concerns, in relation to the green washing of many multinationals

<sup>7</sup> Arendt, H., (1958). *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

<sup>8</sup> [www.desis-philosophytalks.org](http://www.desis-philosophytalks.org)

<sup>9</sup> Within this project, we designed the series of DESIS Philosophy Talks, we created platforms for discussions between design researchers and scholars coming from fields such as philosophy, narratology, ethnography, about how insights coming from philosophy - and particularly the work of Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin - can be considered valuable for our design practices. The results of this discussion have been both the dissemination of the different dialogues - in the form of a book published on the DESIS website as well as in experimentations within our own design practices.  
<http://www.desis-philosophytalks.org/the-pearl-diver/>

where people speak to one another. These discussions are more than just a chat, since they represent the democratic process of decision-making about the common sphere, which become translated into concrete actions. Consequently, the “polis” is a common space that enables action. Arendt says that in ancient Rome, with the rise of representative democracy, the discourse/action slowly disappeared from Western culture. She also says that nowadays this discourse/action is no longer part of our process of policy-making. We are no longer making use of real dialogue - i.e. our discourses no longer inform concrete actions in the common realm. Yet, she also foresees the possibility for “oases”, i.e. spaces of exceptions where citizens can once again experience the democratic process of decision-making/action in the common sphere.

To Arendt, a real dialogue is a speculation leading to action. Dialogue is that which creates the common realm. In our opinion, this resonates with what happens in contemporary design practices, where designers work to create situations<sup>10</sup> where it is possible to have access to a real dialogue/action in the sense described by Arendt.

According to her, the person who speaks/acts - taking his own responsibility in the common realm - is the “hero”<sup>11</sup>, i.e. one who acknowledges himself, by means of his words/actions, to be a “zoon politikon” (a political animal)<sup>12</sup>. The “hero” recognizes that he needs others so as to be acknowledged as a human being. He does not need to construct his own identity by means of “what” he is - what he has achieved in his life - but rather “who” he is.<sup>13</sup>

The “who”, according to Arendt, is one’s own “daimon”<sup>14</sup>: one’s own vocation to play an active role in society<sup>15</sup>; the social character of man precedes the individual construction of one’s own personal identity<sup>16</sup>. It is his own most intimate dimension. The “daimon” does not have an individualistic value, but rather a relational one. So, when one speaks of the “daimon”, one means the social/relational nature of man. When one discovers this deep vocation, one experiences happiness, called “eu-daimonia” by the Greeks (etymologically, it consists of the words “eu” (“good”) and “daimōn” (“spirit”): literally, to have a “good spirit”). Happiness was considered to be a sense of belonging to society which transcends individuality and everyday issues. Arendt also calls this experience “social happiness”.

In Arendt’s view, Greek “theatre” was the tool that dispersed the idea of “hero” throughout ancient Greece. The “theatre” was a space for re-enactment and imitation of the discourse/action, which opened up the public space and revealed the meanings of words such as “hero” and “eu-daimonia”, allowing them to circulate.

In the “theatre”, the story of the “hero” was told by the “choir”. By means of the re-enactment of the discourses/actions of the “hero”, the meaning of the latter was crystallized. The “hero” could become an example to the citizens in the common realm. This was a powerful instrument to empower citizens in acknowledging that they were “zoon politikon” and to encourage them to become active citizens<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> G. Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, Buchet/Chastel, Paris, 1967

<sup>11</sup> H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958

<sup>12</sup> The definition of man as “zoon politikon” - given for the first time by Aristotle - is used also by Arendt in *The Human Condition*.

<sup>13</sup> When one is busy only with one’s personal needs and aspirations, one may forget about the fact of being part of a bigger picture, and risk betraying one’s own social nature. In our society, people are often busy defining who they are by what they do and what they achieve. Instead, Arendt suggests looking at the role of the individual within society in order to identify the “who” one is.

<sup>14</sup> H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958

<sup>15</sup> The idea of vocation here is void of religious connotations, from the Latin *vocatio* (“to be called to”)

<sup>16</sup> Personal from the Latin ‘persona’ (“theatrical mask”), probably coming from the Etruscan language. The “mask” assumed the value of “generic individual” and “body”, and started to be used in this way within everyday language. In the idea of the person, this is viewed as a construction, a “mask” one creates for oneself in order to identify oneself from others. (G. Agamben, *Pulcinella ovvero divertimento per li ragazzi in quattro scene*, Nottetempo, Firenze, 2015)

<sup>17</sup> The world “drama” still resonates with this connection to action, as it originally comes from the Greek word “dran”, meaning action.

To Arendt, the stories of the “choir” are experienced-based, being derived from an oral tradition, and are open and non-hierarchical. In the “choir” there is no individual narrator, but a “chorality”. There is a specific wisdom that the “choir” wants to communicate, a lesson learnt regarding the character of the “hero”, and the political nature of man, which is conveyed by the stories.

Looking at the idea of Greek “theatre” through the lens of Arendt, one could state that in ancient Greece it represented the means by which democracy became the leading political form. The “theatre” was used to re-enact the discourse/action and to enhance its meaning. As such, it can be considered a speculative instrument for enabling actions in the common realm. Thanks to the stories told by the “choir”, the idea of “hero” became the role model for citizens in democracy.

#### 4. DESIGNING FOR THE ‘HUMAN CONDITION’

In Seraing, we have been telling stories to make tangible and visible what it could mean for citizens in that specific context to become active players in the common realm. Arendt’s idea of “theatre” has inspired us to co-create situations with the local stakeholders where stories of active citizens - of “heroes” - could be enacted and become positive examples of a more inclusive and participatory idea of citizenship and where dialogue/action - in the sense of Arendt - can hopefully take place<sup>18</sup>. We co-designed and co-produced a portable puppet theatre so that citizens could experience in this “theatre” what it could mean to take their own responsibility as citizens and to contribute by means of one’s own discourse/action to the common realm.

As in Greek theatre, we enacted situations where the “heroes” could experience “eudaimonia” - the feeling of satisfaction connected with taking one’s own responsibility in the common realm - because they could eventually find their “daimon” in the common sphere, rediscovering the positive feeling one has when acting together with other citizens in making one’s own city/neighbourhood a better place.

The aim of the stories we co-created is not to have our own voice heard, but to provide the possibility for the “chorality” (i.e. the community) to have a

voice, and for stories (fictional or real, but always generated by the citizens’ own experiences) to circulate where citizens can find their own active role in the common realm.

In this process, we experienced the fact that such situations are often intense and yet delicate, fragile and fleeting. We needed to be careful in dealing with them, in order to live up to expectations in building trust and openness with citizens and local stakeholders. Those relationships must be nurtured and protected. We also experienced the fact that such temporary situations may possibly be translated into concrete actions, although not necessarily those envisioned during the design process. The actions portrayed in the co-designed stories of the puppet theatre in Seraing might not necessarily be performed. Yet, these stories show a possible role for citizens in society, where they can play a more active role in the public realm. They prototype a more democratic society in the local contexts, and show examples of the meanings and values that can be generated. In ancient Greece, it is not the concrete actions performed in the theatre that are important, but rather what they mean for the life of the “heroes” and what similar actions could mean for us citizens, if we follow the hero’s paths and take an active role in the common realm by means of our discourses/actions.

Looking at our project retrospectively, we can sense that something happened and is still happening in our collaboration with the citizens of Seraing. All of us - designers and citizens - have experienced reciprocal trust. They felt that we care for them, and we certainly felt that they care for us. They have shown this in many ways: cooking for us, inviting us to dinner and to local events and making us feel part of their local community. Together, we have done our utmost to create new opportunities for the neighbourhood, but without creating false expectations. It seems that we all enjoyed these situations we co-created together. The performance of the puppet theatre provided us participants - designers and local stakeholders - with a certain “eu-daimonia”, that carried in new energy to re-direct in new activities.

We are aware of the fact that this is a very fragile and temporary situation, whose long-term effects on the local region are particularly difficult to evaluate. With such projects, we deal with the difficulty of conceiving which actions will take place in the future, thanks to the fact that citizens have experienced in these situations of exception a dif-

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<sup>18</sup> After it disappeared with the introduction of representative democracy.

ferent way of being a citizen<sup>19</sup>. When and if the idea of the “hero” can finally mature within a given community, discourses on the common realm will eventually have a chance of being translated into concrete actions. But we cannot know when and if this will actually happen.

We have to deal with this uncertainty. One of the design decisions that we jointly took was not to rush to achieve short-term tangible results, which could have been interesting at that specific moment for us to capitalize on our work, but not necessarily for the local community. We are instead allowing these values to be “incubated” from the community. We are aware this is a very delicate balance, that needs to be monitored. We still need to create other mementos where new co-created stories of the “heroes” can be told and circulate both in the puppet theatre as well as in the portable puppet theatre on the streets, eventually also by referring to new ways of telling these stories and new approaches, or telling the stories in other neighbourhoods of the Outremeuse.

Two years after this experimentation, we are of the opinion that there is some evidence that a change of perception is taking place. For instance, some citizens continued the project on their own (e.g. the puppet theatre and the mural of the heroes), in dialogue with the stakeholders of the master plan. A new project of social innovation also started, inspired by the work of *Welcome to Seraing*, and all this happened without our involvement.

What we are starting to see is that citizens are slowly taking possession of the idea of “hero”, interiorizing it in their own way. For instance, citizens are now constructing a large puppet of the local hero for the town’s parade, telling the stories co-created with the citizens. Also, some elements of the stories co-created are now used as inspiration for the further development of the local master plan. Nevertheless, this process will take time to mature and we are all curious to see what will follow.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, the project *Welcome to Seraing* is offered as an example on how one can experiment with new ways to create a dynamic dialogue between philosophy and design practices. Ideas such as those of active citizenship, democracy and so-

cial happiness, are meanings we as designers often try to convey in our projects when working in local contexts, as in the case of this project. Yet, these are not totally new concepts. They have already been discussed at length in the past, and are currently being discussed by other disciplines. Therefore, it makes sense for us to research into disciplines that have traditionally been researching these meanings, for instance philosophy, and look at the way in which philosophers consider these concepts, and what we can learn from their experiences in order to take them into account when we design. As designers making meanings, it is our responsibility to trace back to the history of those meanings we touch upon, and to see if these meanings can teach us something that we can take into consideration in the design process.

For instance, Arendt’s philosophy shows us that the Greek “theatre” helped to apply inclusive forms of democracy. Therefore, it used to have a political value. Hopefully, our local experimentations of creating “theatres” where co-created future stories of active citizens (“heroes”) can be enacted, also have some political value, and can contribute - even if in a modest way - to an active process of transformation taking place in Seraing. As designers experimenting with “theatres” for participation, we are also dealing with politics, and need to be aware of that.

To conclude, we have been showing in this paper how some meanings we are touching on as designers by working at creating situations where citizens can discuss/act in a collaborative way in the public realm and for the public realm’s sake, are close to some concepts analyzed in the history of philosophy. Therefore, some philosophical analysis - such as Arendt’s in *The Human Condition* - can inspire our activity of designers as meaning makers.

In our contemporary design research landscape, many of us are currently sensing a need to create more dialogue around the cultural frameworks in which daily practices in design research move, identifying the cultural pre-history of some of the meanings produced by our singular practices in which we are working. Hopefully, this paper can represent a further step in this direction, and initiate a dialogue with other projects that also touch on the idea of active citizenship provoked by the creation of new “theatres” for positive co-created narratives.

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<sup>19</sup> For the impossibility to foresee what will happen thanks to these environments co-created with citizens, see also C.A. le Dantec and C.di Salvo, 2013, Infrastructuring and the formation of publics in participatory design, *Social Studies of Science* 43(2) 241–264.



*Figure 1*



*Figure 2*



*Figure 3*





Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

**Figure 1** - Images from the explorations in Seraing

**Figure 2** - Jan 2015 - Every evening of the first week, we organized and cooked dinner at the Maison de Jeunes. We invited designers and public servants working on similar topics, together with the people of the neighbourhood, whom we met during the daytime or we knew because they were involved in local associations.

**Figure 3** - From an intensive workshop in May 2015. After a picnic, we asked all the participants to join us in co-design sessions dedicated to future scenarios about Seraing. We worked in groups of 3-4 people on ideas about the future of the area, helped by a set of cards with different elements for composing possible stories: times, locations, skills, challenges and opportunities. After several co-design sessions, we shared the stories we had invented with all the people at the table. Those rough ideas were the start of future scenarios that we then tried to visualize through theatre. Marc was also presented with the outcomes of this session and he took the ideas and developed a 'canovaccio' for a puppet play the following day.

**Figure 4** - Seraing, Jan 2015 / Some of the puppets of the local theatre. On the right: Tchanchès.

**Figure 5** - Seraing, Jan 2015 / When we started cooking our convivial dinners at the Maison de Jeunes in Ougrée, we discovered a puppet theatre. Here, Marc is showing us part of their puppet collection, almost entirely created by the founder of this local theatre. In the other images: Marc and his friends playing with marionettes at the Maison de Jeunes in Ougrée, Seraing. Every Sunday morning, they stage two stories with Tchanchès, Charlemagne, Banane, Nanesse and other characters from the liègeoise puppet tradition for an audience of about 50, made up of children and their parents. The representations are very interactive: the audience is an active participant in the play, knowing all the songs by heart and cheering loudly at all of Tchanchès' chanchesadition for

**Figure 6** - May 2015 - Building a portable theatre

**Figure 7** - May 2015 - Images from the puppet play, the day after the co-design session on future scenarios. The use of the marionettes to visualize the ideas is linked specifically to that particular context, to those people, to their encounters. It works in Seraing because puppet theatre is a popular tradition. It is an experience that would be difficult to simply copy and paste into another context.

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