

Quality Agreements 2019-2024

Report of evaluation talks with educational platforms of academic year 2022-2023

Conducted by: Rosie Haward, Nell Schwan

1. Context

The editorial board organised an open call in March 2022. 12 groups responded with a proposal to start a new educational platform. Based on specific criteria—urgency of proposal, feasibility, originality in either educational model, approach, or topic—the editorial board selected 4 groups to start their platform from September 2022 onwards:

- Crip the Curriculum
- Material Monopolies
- Bread Oven
- Motormond

A coordinator supported the platforms from September onwards.

Crip the Curriculum organised lectures and workshops around the topics of disability studies and anti-ableism. Material Monopolies hosted talks and screenings within the fields of theory and philosophy, tackling topics of minimalism and excess. Bread Oven organised guest lectures, workshops and open-oven sessions on food anthropology, community building, yeast and more. Motormond operated as an art space committed to circulating pan diasporic culture, highlighting artists of colour, committed to remaining underground while imagining a queer and black institution.

All platforms received participants from MA & BA programmes, occasionally participating teachers as well as people from outside the Rietveld/Sandberg community joined their activities.

In the May of 2023 the editorial board organised a symposium at Perdu, where the 4 platforms shared their research and activities with each other and the audience.

At the time of writing, Motormond has received funding from the Mondriaan Fonds & Prince Claus Fund to continue their activities in a more permanent gallery space on Kinkerstraat. Material Monopolies and Bread Oven are continuing their activities on Sandberg/Rietveld campus in other forms.

2. Evaluation conversations

Coordinator of the platforms Rosie Haward and web editor Nell Schwan organised evaluation talks with the platforms and their participants in July & September 2023. All platforms except Motormond participated. A series of questions were prepared and shared with the platforms beforehand:

1. What were your expectations regarding the programme at the start? To what extent have these expectations been fulfilled?
2. What was your most positive experience during this programme? Can you describe what it was and why it was such a positive experience?
3. How did this programme compare to the regular programme of your department? Did they reinforce each other, was there conflict?
4. What was the average time investment in hours per week? How did you experience this?
5. Was this program of added value for your BA/MA study? If so: in what way? If not, can you explain your answer?
6. What tips and advice would you like to give to future platforms? Or if you were organizing another programme, what would you do differently?
7. What do you think the editorial board should take into account when selecting new projects? Are there certain criteria that should be used?
7. (to participants) How did you find out about this platform and decide to join?
9. Did being active in the platform help you find work in the field?

Fragments of these conversations can be found in the attachment, see page 3.

3. Conclusions based on the conversations

What the platforms brought:

- A chance for students to gather around topics they are interested in, and meet others who share the same interest. The platform filled a gap that departments currently don't. "We wanted to create a

programme that challenges and disrupts the way we/society/institutes handle/perceive the lived experiences of marginalised (especially disabled) people.”

- Support of individual research into media and practices outside of the department system. “We were missing certain conversations in our programme, and decided to invite those in ourselves. Those expectations have been entirely fulfilled, in the sense that we got what we wanted. We aren’t sure how fulfilled we would have felt by our programme if we hadn’t organised this trajectory — it helped address our personal interests.”
 - A chance for participants to make connections to audiences, participants, artists and practitioners outside of the academy, which in some cases led to further collaborations or work for the participants.
 - A different social dynamic than what students might be able to access elsewhere. Students as facilitators, teachers or staff participating as students.
 - A chance to practice collaboration, mutual skill exchange and trust outside of the teacher/student dichotomy (despite visiting guest teachers). “Networking wise, I feel like running Bread Oven gave us a leg up. I feel like we have a lot of options if we want to continue down the path of social practice and food anthropology.”
 - A sensory/physical/embodied approach to study, research and art making. “A clear moment that was very nice for me was the foraging walk. We went around the streets around school, and I would notice things I’ve never noticed before, like wild rucola and mustard plants. The factor of coming together and also discovering new things that not only have to do with bread. “
 - Community building and collaboration. “To see interest and to see the new faces come back — that continuity was really nice. Many individuals were there at every single event. In the moment I might not have been very sociable at every event because I might have been stressed with organising, but in the periphery of my eye, seeing people coming back again and again was very nice.”
- 1.

What drawbacks the platforms experienced:

- Groups generally experienced needing to spend more hours on organising the platform than what was formally paid.
 - Organisers described less interest in the activities of platform from their department heads and teachers than they would have liked. Organisers consider the platform part of their artistic practice, and would prefer if this activity was taken into consideration when assessing them. “I felt like it worked really well to combine the platform with my study programme, since the Rietveld is already set up that way, with all the workshops taking place next to your programme. However, in Fine Arts year one it was somewhat discouraged (by teachers) for me to be in this initiative. Due to time concerns, partially, but also due to questions on whether this was now my practice. Personally, I didn’t miss any classes due to Bread Oven, so the teacher’s reactions couldn’t have been based on that. But I did feel annoyed [with their lack of support].”
 - Some organisers found it occasionally difficult to reach their desired audience or experienced low participation numbers during certain events. Crip the Curriculum speculated whether people thought that one has to have a disability in order to join the group, when in reality they would like to invite everyone (while centering the experiences of disabled folks).
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4. Possible solutions / advice to the editorial board

- Encourage groups to pay themselves for more hours or find other ways to delegate work. “I would give the advice to not be afraid of running out of budget. We would sometimes have an idea and debate whether it made sense budget wise. But now in hindsight I realise we could have done it [since we didn’t finish our budget during our year]. And don’t be afraid to ask your guest to become involved! Don’t cater to people too much, because when people are involved in creates something very nice for everyone.”
- Communicate the value of student driven experimental education to the whole academy. For instance, using a retrospective publicity/archive effort that brings attention to the many interesting platforms students have organised during the past 4 years.
- Support platforms more with the documentation of their activities and their end of the year public presentation. “Something we didn’t think of was to record the sessions we hosted. We don’t have any photos, videos or audios of our talks. We felt fine about it as it was happening but in retrospect it feels a bit of a shame. The conversations were extremely interesting and it would have been nice to have a youtube channel or similar.”

Attachment: testimonials of the two conversations

As participating students (or staff), what were your expectations regarding the programme at the start? To what extent have these expectations been fulfilled?

- Freedom to design and execute a programme with a great amount of conceptual and practical collective autonomy, which was certainly the case.
- We definitely feel like we have expanded our professional network and are able to reach out to these people again. However, we wonder if their enthusiasm to participate would have been the same if we had organised the same programme (Material Monopolies) but outside of the umbrella of Sandberg? Overall, we're very happy that we got the opportunity to do something like this, since a place like Material Monopolies wouldn't have existed if we hadn't created it. There are certain trends, and the topics we are interested in aren't in vogue in, for instance, Stadium Generale, which focuses mostly on identity politics.
- What really appealed to me from the start was the gathering aspect of Bread Oven. I ended up participating a lot, until I was asked to join as an organiser. In the beginning I didn't know what my position would be since there wasn't a clear outline of what I was expected to do. But after a bit of searching it was fine.

What was your most positive experience during this programme? Can you describe what it was and why it was such a positive experience?

- It's hard to pick a single moment because I really love all of the events, but it would take too long to talk about all of them. But what was really special to me was that every time we were together we were very mindful of whether our intentions were met or not. And that experience we brought into every subsequent event. It felt like we had a learning curve and things became easier for us. That experience of learning by doing was really great.
- Crip the Curriculum has clearly been welcomed by the community (and is still getting followers from all over the world) and, by receiving the positive feedback, the need of having a programme like CTC has given a shared feeling of a flourishing solidarity.
- The richness of the subject, content shared by guests and participants was certainly one of the best I've personally witnessed. This speaks more about the lack of disability discourse within general art education. Also access to this discourse enriching other perspectives.
- Most guests who we invited were very positive and interested in coming. They're also very professional in that they are used to traveling and giving talks, so they are well prepared when they come and they don't need us to do much to take care of them. We did, however, have dinners with the guests after their talks. This was a nice experience and a chance to connect on a more personal level.

How did this programme compare to the regular program of your department? Did they reinforce each other, or was there conflict?

- There weren't many conflicts for us, although sometimes we felt strapped for time when the editorial board asked us to do something (promotional). Such as participate in the symposium or film and introductory video. In the grand scope of things, we're very happy that these things happened, however. The requirements led us to produce texts we otherwise might not have, and the editorial board created material which we can use to show future funding bodies what we have done.
- Due to the online/hybrid nature of our events, the accessibility of our events were a positive outcome: people were invited to attend in the way which was most comfortable to them. Also, because we also offered other accessibility needs (like captioning, breaks, etc.), CTC made sure to be adapting to everyone's needs and this is often not the case with other programmes (there you have to conform, instead of the other way around).
- Sometimes we had to miss a few classes due to a meeting, but I think we did a good job at placing Bread Oven events outside of everyone's schedule. But we are a lot of people in different departments, so sometimes we had to miss a class or two, which our teachers weren't fond of. We did some nice collaborations with other extracurricular platforms, who are also training themselves to

do [self organization]. Those were very light experiences: suddenly, you are the double amount of hands and the double amount of ideas and experience in creating these events.

- My department facilitated the Bread Oven events, they offered us space to put our equipment. They even asked us to collaborate, which was a crazy event. [...] The education I get from the academy and Bread Oven activities reinforce each other, but Bread Oven taught me how to build a team and how to work around each other's strengths, how to source talents and collaborate with people from around the school. How to look at people as if I was casting them for an event. To look at them as a source of inspiration.
- My department is quite closed off, and my teachers didn't really give me a lot of feedback on the platform. But I do think they complimented each other nicely because the platform is super open and my department is so closed.

What was the average time investment in hours per week? How did you experience this?

- When it was a busy month and we had 2-3 event the time investment was 5-6 hours on the day of the event. If we would also count the preparations: 7-8 hours per week, total. Some weeks were *more* than that, especially when we were making something completely new, since we had to test it out first.
- We paid for ourselves 2hrs/week but it can be hard to find a balance between having money to do all the events you want to do and paying yourself for all the work you actually want to do. But for me it was ok being paid symbolically, because the value was there anyway.
- It was more than the couple of hours we had allocated ourselves, and the work was not always evenly spread, but we all have very different schedules, and we tried to keep this in conversation. We could have worked on this more but in the end it's more appealing to spend what limited resources we have on programming and activities than on discussing the conditions for organising
- I was strict to stay within my hours, and invoiced extra for extra time. I spent min 2 hours per week with the exception of a few weeks.
- One thing that was hard was time management. In the times when the platform had a busy month it felt like it took up all my time and energy. Some months when we had 3-4 events, or 2 in a week, that didn't really leave space for anything else.

Was this program of added value for your BA/MA study? If so: in what way? If not, can you explain your answer?

- Yes, absolutely. Crip the Curriculum showed me the missing representation of disabled artists in 'normative' curriculum at Sandberg Instituut. It gave me a feeling of belonging, solidarity and most of all the diversity of the guests/events showed me there's a place for disabled artists in the art world.
- I personally wished I could make more of the sessions we organised, which I was unable to be present for due to graduation demands.
- The programme was very beneficial in how it influenced my approach to my work. A few layers did seep into the writing of my thesis.
- Yes, absolutely. Crip the Curriculum supplemented my MA course (Dirty Art) so much that the director of my programme included it in our schedule/syllabus, and involved me in the planning of our programme to make sure we didn't duplicate invited guests. All students in my MA were also invited to our programming and many frequently attended. This speaks to the chasm of disability justice / anti-capitalism through an intersectional lens that is missing from the courses and that people want. Lastly, we were invited to represent the "educational sector " at a panel talk at De Balie, which felt very significant
- Regarding to what the platform gave to my practice as an artist: my practice is very much aligned with my well being. So eating breakfast in the morning, or having a social life, or going for a walk is also part of my practice. How I interact with the world will shape what ideas I have and what I'm able to create. To meet a lot of new people, to have a space and the feeling of being an active participant and not just another student made me feel like my voice became more important. I think this confidence showed up in my practice in Fine Arts.

- We've all just graduated and trying to figure out what to do: which jobs to take on, graduate programmes to apply to etc. We would like to continue Material Monopolies, however. Now we have a good structure running it. Once we have decompressed we'll have a meeting and discuss how we will continue this thing.

What tips and advice would you like to give in future projects? Or if you were organizing another program, what would you do differently?

- Document and archive everything (as you go along) besides the institutional documentation. What we have is brilliant, that can and needs to exist beyond a year of programming.
- Keep a track of budgeting as you go along! Be realistic about what you can commit to. Try to be as accommodating as you can be - it's a fruitful way of connecting with the audience.
- My other tip would be to collaborate with people who will add to your skills or open new doors. And the final thing is to just make it fun for yourself, so that it doesn't feel like a burden but something that you are excited to show up for.
- I want to reflect on the possibility of a programme having different caretakers over time, so that it can keep existing. We are actually the 3rd generation of caretakers for the oven. We met with the 1st generation, and what they were working with was quite different than what we were working with. I don't know what the tendency is for the platforms to keep existing after the year of editorial board funding, but it would be very nice if they could.

What do you think the editorial board should take into account when selecting new projects? Are there certain criteria that should be used?

- Many programmes/events are exclusionary in a way - perhaps there should be created more space to advance the inclusive nature of the programmes/events, like creating a budget for accessibility needs.
- It's important to remember that the social environment at a school is really important. Right now we're post COVID, and artists especially tend to isolate. I was quite surprised to come to the Rietveld and discover that there isn't a Friday bar or a cafe or any sort of social gathering once a week. For me, it was so important to be able to bring this aspect with our platform. I think it's very relevant for our education, building bonds and exchanging shouldn't be an afterthought.
- My advice is to look for something that has community impact, and something that can have continuity and can be exciting over and over again. To have practical hands on activities really affects continuity and community impact. Fun people with an innovative approach are important! Who aren't afraid to fail. Failing was a very big part of our whole experience. It was nice for us to fail and for it to be ok.
- I like the mix of programs you selected. Keeping it broad yet it was nice that The Bread Oven and Crip the Curriculum had much in common at the end-of-year event at Perdu: yeast, bacteria, baking and plant modification. It's nice when platforms who run simultaneously can collaborate, this saves them budget and builds new audience.