The belly of the city

European Citizenship
and Cultural Identity
Seminar
20-21 January 2009

Based on:

THE BELLY OF THE CITY

Alternative Communicative City Networks

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European communicative cities

New information and communication technologies could and should be used more skillfully to meet local and regional information needs, and to supply regional residents with the kind of civic information they require to live comfortably in an active community. Both access to information and opportunities to use various communication technologies are required to initiate and maintain critical discussions on the future of a city region, to create local identity and civic pride, and to enhance participation in and commitment to urban development.
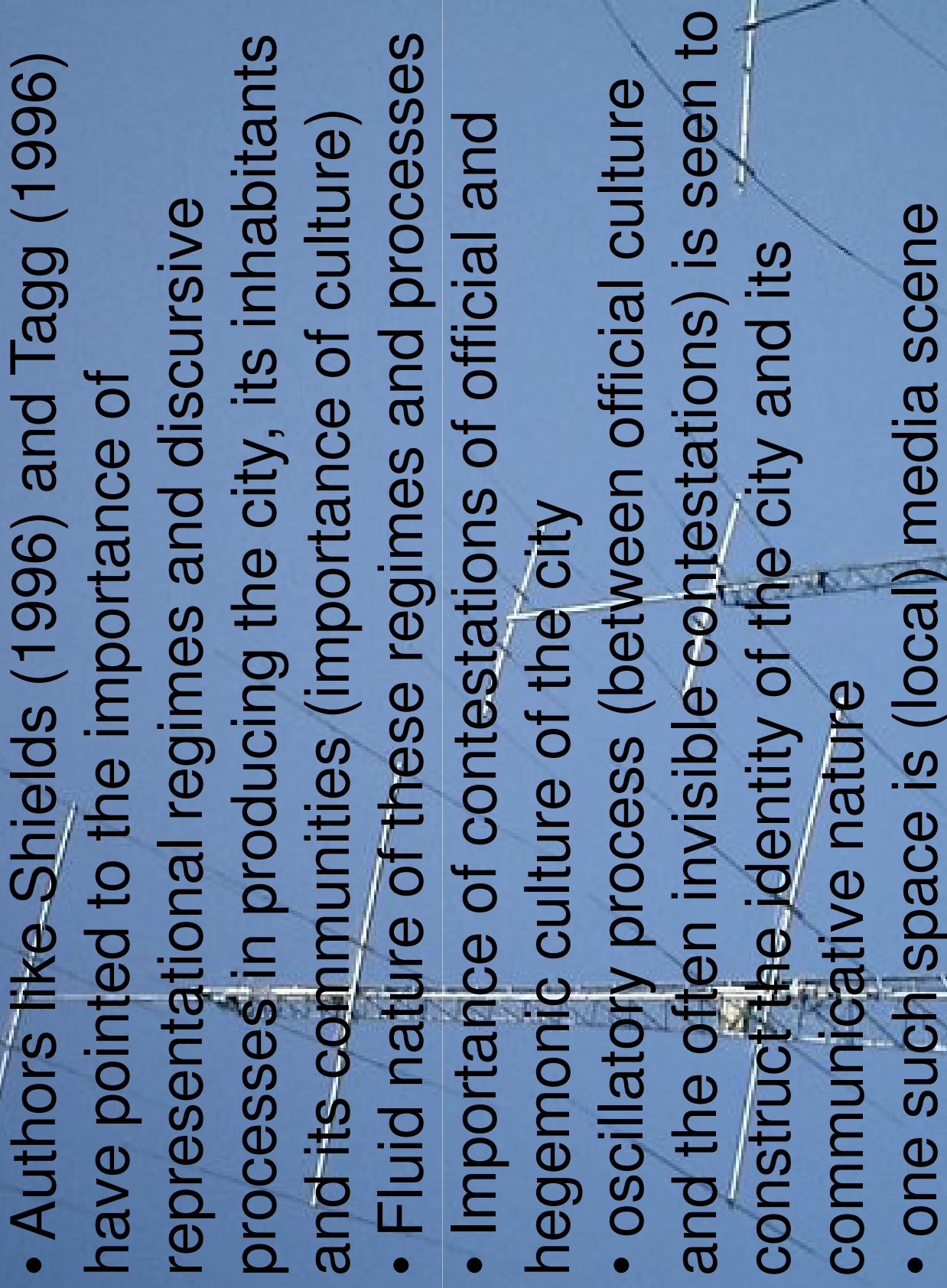
(Kunzmann, 1997: 28)

<u>In definition</u>

- social dimension of communication
- political dimension
  - 'critical discussions'
  - needs-based perspective of civic information provision
  - processes of access and participation

<u>Definitional expansion</u>

- broadening of the scope of participation
- organized nature of the 'active community' and citizenship
- adding an ethical-political dimension
- adding a spatial-political dimension

- Authors like Shields (1996) and Tagg (1996) have pointed to the importance of representational regimes and discursive processes in producing the city, its inhabitants and its communities (importance of culture)
- Fluid nature of these regimes and processes
- Importance of contestations of official and hegemonic culture of the city
- oscillatory process (between official culture and the often invisible contestations) is seen to construct the identity of the city and its communicative nature
- one such space is (local) media scene

Do you know the battle between the Fat and the Thin, he [Claude] asked? Florent, surprised, said no. . . . In this struggle he detected the entire drama of human life, and he ended up classifying humans into the Fat and the Thin, in two antagonistic groups, one of which devours the other, which has its belly grow round and enjoys itself. . . . We belong to the Thin, the both of us. Tell me, with our flat bellies, we don't take away much room from the sunlight. Florent looked at the shades they left, and smiled. (Zola, The Belly of Paris, 1991[1873]: 255; my translation)

I. Alternative media organisations

doen twee negers een test.
deux negros font un test.

maar de pijn gaat niet weg.
et la douleur continue.

INSPIRADO NA HISTÓRIA DA RÁDIO FAVELA

UMA ONDA NO AR

UM FILME DE HELVÉCIO RATTON

Participatory organisations

Pateman on full and partial participation:

Partial participation: 'a process in which two or more parties influence each other in the making of decisions but the final power to decide rests with one party only' (Pateman, 1970, p. 70)
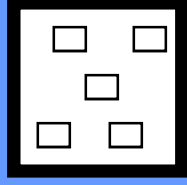
Full participation: 'a process where each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions.' (Pateman, 1970, p. 71)

Carole Pateman

Participation and Democratic Theory

Structuring the diversity of (semi-) participatory media organisations

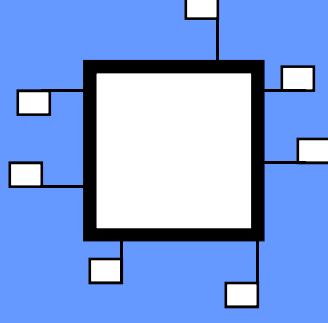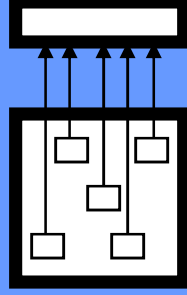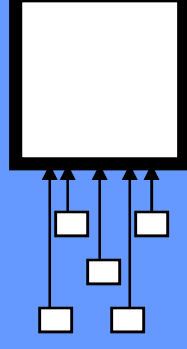|	**Membership organisation**	**Non-membership organisation**
Organisation aimed at access, interaction and participation		
	Model 1 Example: Alternative Radio or Independent media center (IMC)	**Model 2** Example: Community Radio or Digital Storytelling Project
Organisation aimed at access and interaction		
	Model 3 Example : Community Wifi	**Model 4** Example: Blogging / Vlogging and Social Networking
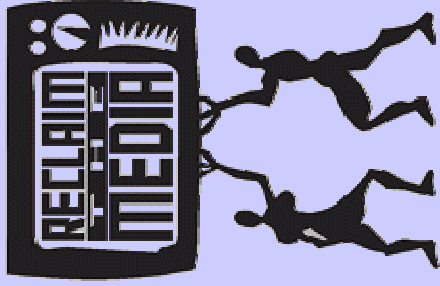
Positioning four theoretical approaches towards participatory organisations
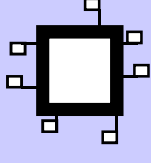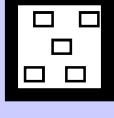
	Media-centred	**Society-centred**
Autonomous identity of A/CM (Essentialist)	Approach I: Serving the community	Approach III: Part of civil society
Identity of A/CM in relation to other identities (Relationalist)	Approach II: An alternative to mainstream	Approach IV: Rhizome

Approach I
Validating and strengthening the community, by enabling and facilitating access and participation by members of that community.

Approach II
Alternative ways of organization, of producing representations, discourses and formats that vary from those originating from mainstream media, with an emphasis on self-representation.

Approach III
Importance of civil society (as such) for democracy, democratization of and through the media.

Approach IV
The crossroads of a networked civil society, with fluid and contingent media organizations, that destabilise the rigidities and certainties of public and commercial media organizations.
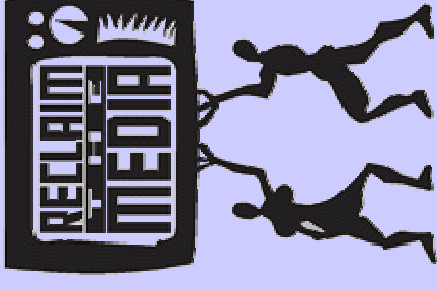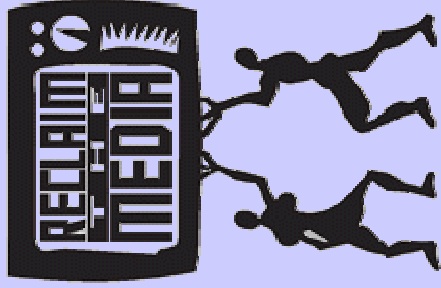
Approach I

Dependency towards the community, which often lacks two-way communication skills and culture and interest.

Approach II

Lack of financial and organizational stability, confronted with antagonistic reactions of market and state.

Approach III

Facing a contested need for organisations that deepen democracy, and the practical difficulties of making democracy work, especially when dealing with internal and external power imbalances related to expertise.

Approach IV

Not realizing its role as crossroads because of diverging or conflicting objectives, risking loss of independence towards or incorporation by market and state.

II. Translocal

organisational
components
of the (trans)local

more than local
active citizenship

Civil society

S T A T E

M A R K E T

◆ = Community medium

◁ = Civil movement and/or organisation
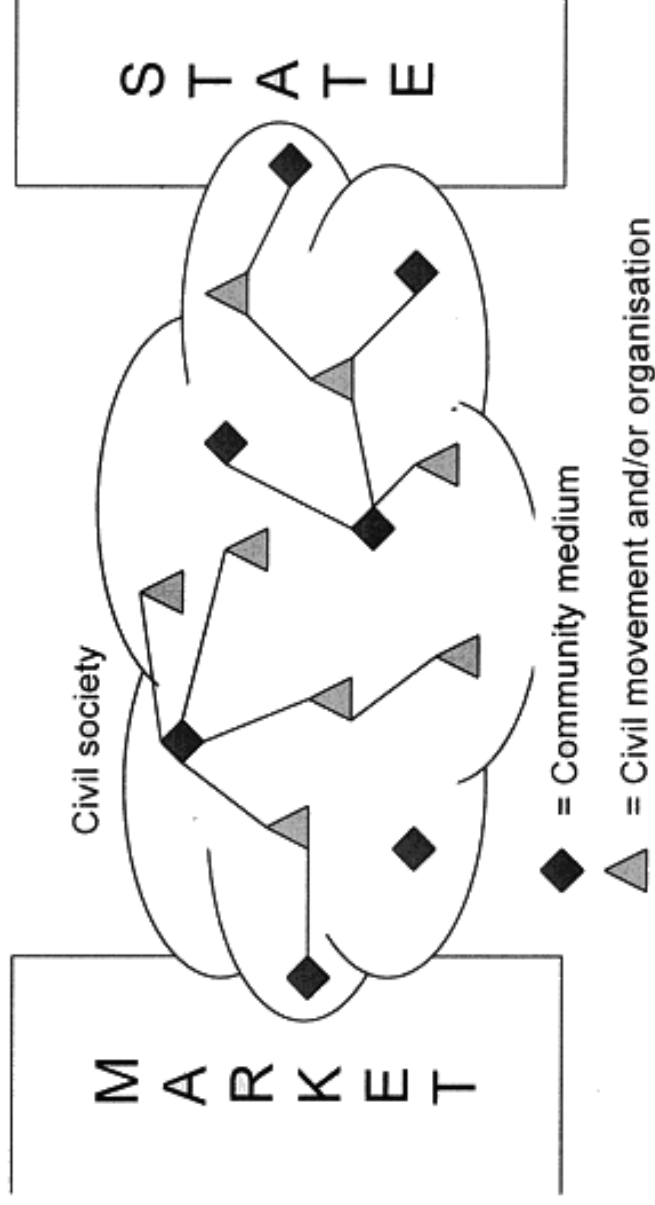
- trapped on one side of the local–global dichotomy / become vulnerable
- paradoxically become also relevant: close connection to their community, sensitive to the access and participation of their publics, beyond token participation
- importance of the translocal

Fluid Spaces and Communities

- the porousness of the (symbolic) city walls and processes of globalisation
- electronic urban networks
- the post-modern city (Soja)
- the urban representations that construct the city (Shields; Tagg)

Erasure of place?

- have locality and community now become disconnected?
- 'in a world that has become deterritorialised *(Deleuze and Guattari 1987), diasporic and transnational.'* (Appadurai, 1995: 213)
- marginalisation, obscuration and erasure of place (Casey; Dirlik; Escobar)
- option 1: from globalisation to glocalistation

The translocal

- Arjun Appadurai - *The production of locality* - 1995
- complex interplay between locality – more specifically neighbourhoods - and context
  - the local provides context and context is constitutive outside for the local
  - confrontation with capabilities of larger-scale formations to influence the (production of the) local

- *conflicting relation between neighbourhoods, translocal allegiances and the logic of the nation-state. (Appadurai, 1995: 220)*

- *The ethnography of these tourist locations is just beginning to be written in detail, but what little we do know suggests that many of such locations create complex conditions for the production and reproduction of locality, in which ties of marriage, work, business and leisure weave together various circulating populations with kinds of 'locals' to create neighbourhoods which belong in one sense to particular nation-states, but are, from another point of view, what we might call translocalities. (Appadurai, 1995: 216 – emphasis in original)*

The translocal

The moment when:

- the local is stretched beyond its borders, whilst still remaining situated in the local
- the local merges with a part of its outside context, without transforming itself into this context
- the local simultaneously incorporates its context and transgresses into it
- local reaches out to a familiar unknown, and fuses it with the known
- the place-based version of the rhizome

III. Examples

Case 1

- radio exchange project
- initiated by 6 Belgian urban RS, now 81 members
  - Seeking multilingualism; Directed at volunteers; Giving a greater place to forms of self-management; Dreaming of co-productions, partnership and news exchanges; and Willing to experiment

- transnational mindsets, but locally embedded
- circulation of alternative content
- adding nodes to the rhizome
- a translocal community of interest, based on the exchange of self-produced audio that crosses the frontiers of the local, without losing its connection to it

www.radioswap.net
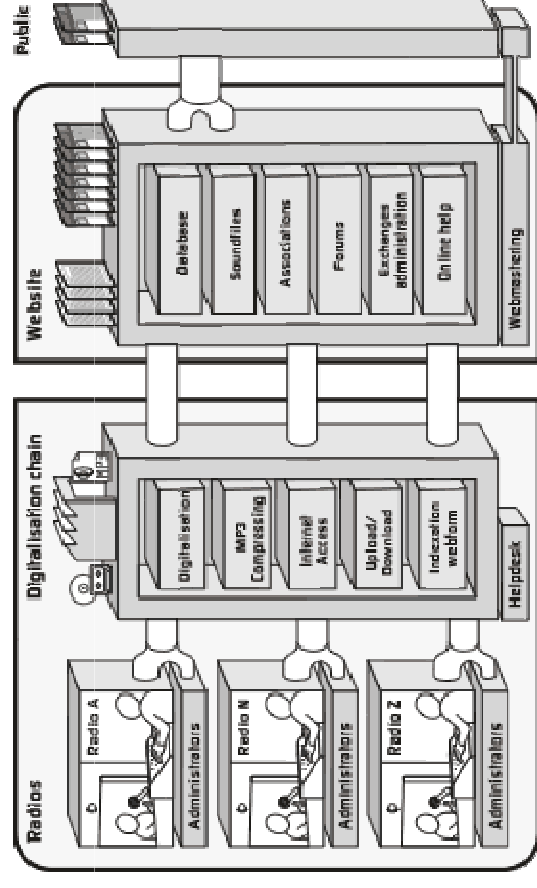
Case 2

- embedded in the discourse of the digital divide
- community broadband networks
- originally built by 'by default and not by design' (Sandvig, 2004: 591), evolving to an organised gift economy
- enabling free access to form a citizen's agora
- rhizomatic nature of the mesh network at the level of technology and people
- stop at the edge of the city?

People who are fed up with long lead times and high equipment and installation costs are pooling their resources to provide wireless access to friends, family, neighbours, schools, and remote areas that will likely never see broadband access otherwise. As difficult as the WISP nightmare example has made this idea sound, people everywhere are learning that they don't necessarily need to pay their dues to the telco to make astonishing things happen.
(Flickenger, 2003: 6)

Case 3

BNA·BBOT

Bruxelles nous appartient . Brussel behoort ons toe

DE OUDE WEBSITE

BNA·BBOT

PROJETS

Blind date 58

la question!

00:00

ACTUEEL

⇧ **zaterdag 14 juli 2007**
Weldoenersplein : 100 jaar
getuigenissen

⇧ **06 Juni 2007**
De knop in de deur van BNA-BBOT
De knop kan een aanleiding zijn voor een omweg op je stadswandeling.

NL FR

DATABASE
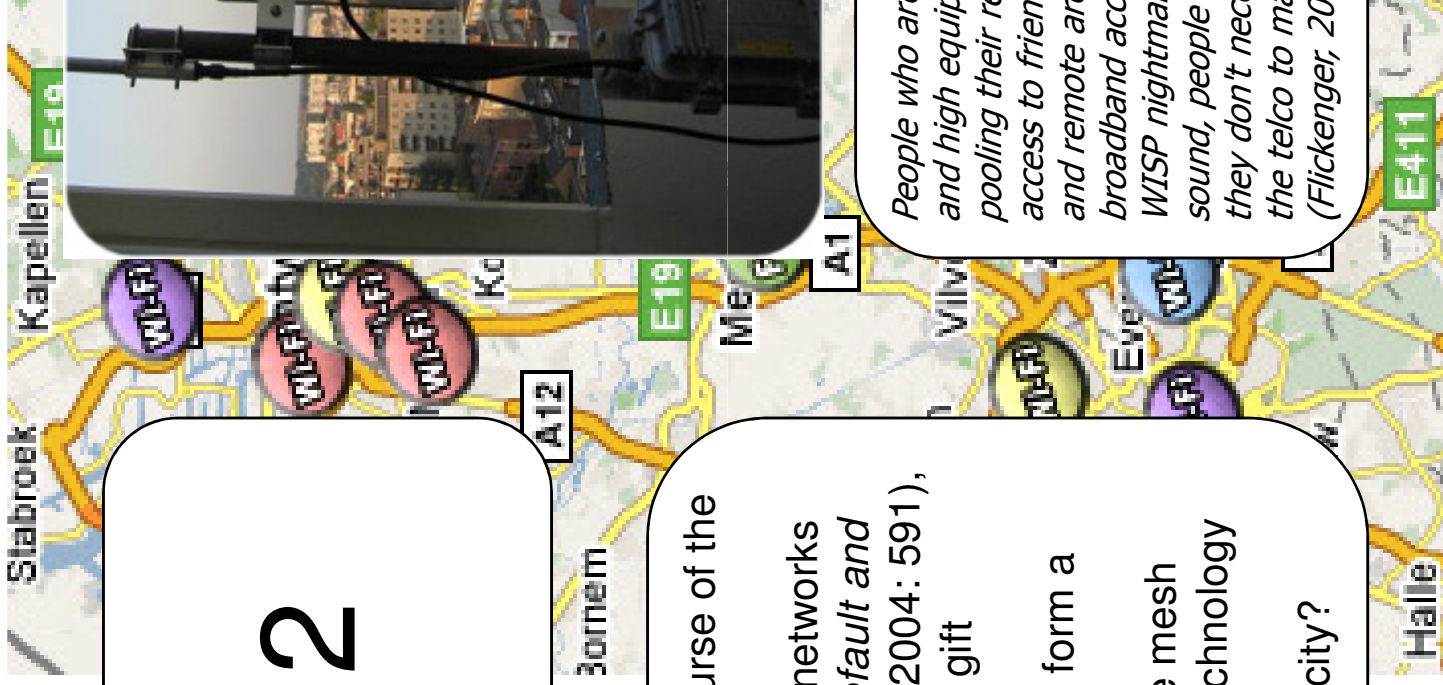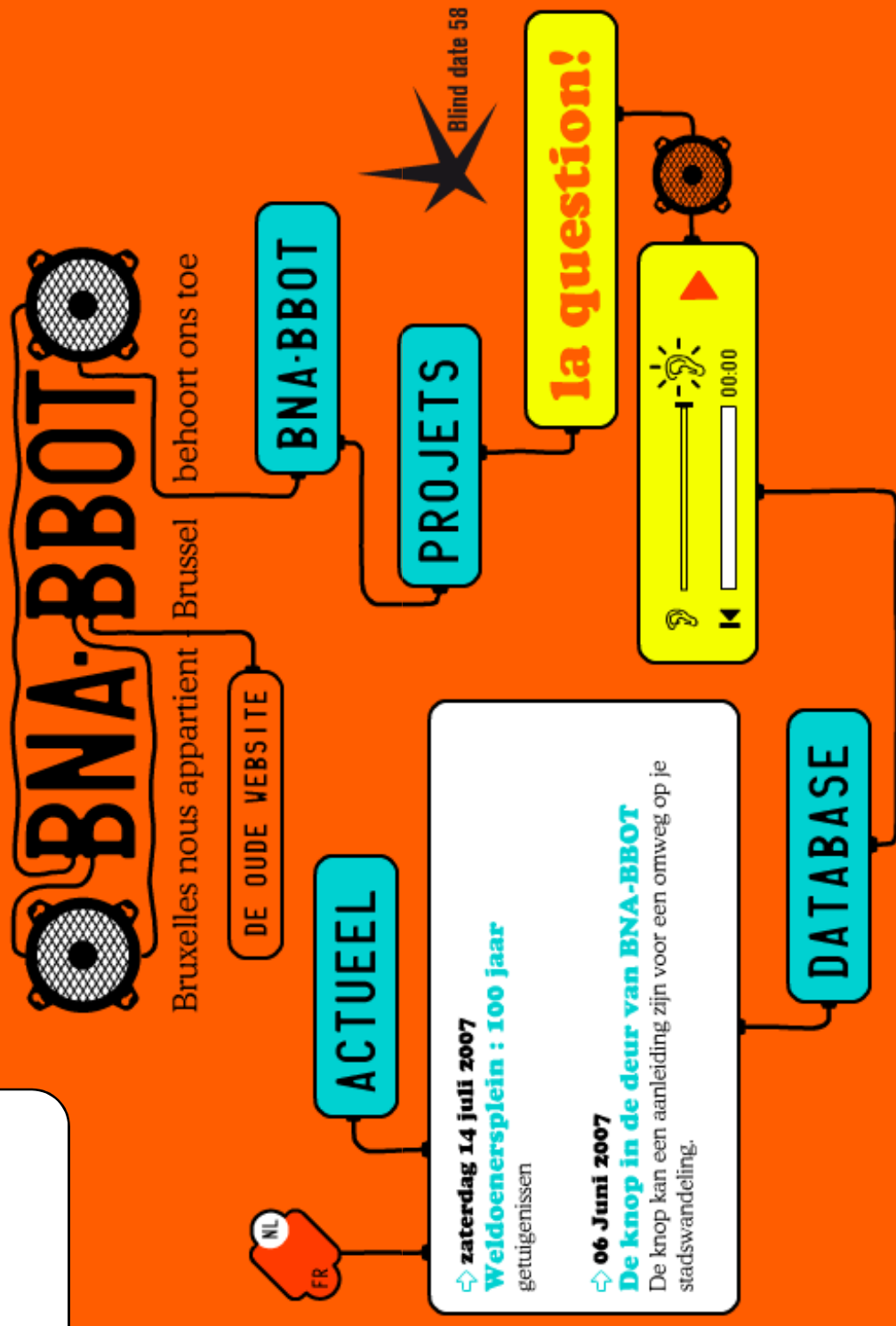
De quoi s'agit-il?

"Bruxelles nous appartient" s'est donné pour mission d'encourager un grand nombre de personnes à enregistrer ensemble leurs conversations à propos de leur vie à Bruxelles, de conserver ces enregistrements dans une collection sonore vivante et de les diffuser autant que possible.

Ces conversations - anonymes - sont accessibles à tous sur ce site Internet et dans le magasin d'histoires. Ecoutez tant que vous voulez!
Les conversations servent aussi de base à des travaux artistiques en tous genres : une nouvelle manière de créer qui offre un nouvel imaginaire à la ville.

Nous souhaitons que chacun prenne la parole, écoute ce que les autres racontent et participe à cette nouvelle image de la ville, proche des habitants. De tous les habitants. Cette collection sonore est une source d'inspiration inépuisable pour la création et une source d'information unique sur la vie d'aujourd'hui. Une source en perpétuelle évolution.

- 'Digital storytelling is a workshop-based process by which "ordinary people" create their own short autobiographical films.' (Burgess, 2006: 207)
- urban geographies / giving voice to the inhabitants of Brussels
- central position of the expert groups but minimal intervention
- combines Dutch and French languages
- symbolises the permeability of city languages, cultures and identities

L'arsenal Itinérant

Des histoires à écouter aussi dans l'espace public

L'OVNI
Cet étrange objet volant a atterri un beau jour chez BNA-BBOT. Il voulait en savoir plus sur la vie sur terre, à Bruxelles, au début du XXIème siècle. Il vous permet d'écouter les meilleures histoires qu'il a collecté dans la ville.

Le vélo à histoires
Un solide vélo muni de deux side-cars qui circule partout en ville. Il permet non seulement d'écouter des histoires de Bruxellois mais aussi d'enregistrer sa propre voix. Un vélo écologique aussi puisque ses batteries se rechargent au fur et à mesure que l'on pédale.

Bed d'amour
Un lit tout doux muni d'oreillers qui racontent des histoires, un lapin en peluche pour télécommande... Le lit d'amour vous entoure de douceur et vous protège du monde extérieur le temps d'une écoute. Une écoute d'histoires intimes, ça va de soi!

CONVERSATIONS

1132 - Track 41

Listen See detail Load conversation Add to compilation

your selection

Date 2007-05-02 (Café Rabelais à Anderlecht)
Language French
Context Workshop - Facere Expo 58
Babbeleer (62 Years) documentaliste - 1070 - Country of origin: Belgium
Kurieuzeneus Male (41 Years) Animateur - 1080 - Country of origin: Belgium
Kurieuzeneus Female (37 Years) sans - 1070 - Country of origin: Belgium
Kurieuzeneus Male (31 Years) sans - 1070 - Country of origin: Belgium
Kurieuzeneus Male - 1070 - Country of origin: Undetermined
Kurieuzeneus Male (27 Years) résident Facere - 1070 - Country of origin: Bel

Keywords parents « visites familiales » différence
« visites solitaires »
lenteur rapidité
informatique vitesse playmobil lapsus playboy
accélération comparaison époque maturité jeunesse consid
participation

Raadpleging

Consultation

Thursday 16 August 2007 - 22:44:46

Nectil OS - Microsoft Internet Explorer
File Edit View Favorites Tools Help
Back Search Favorites Media
Address http://www.bna-bbot.net/OS/
Nectil Windows Utilities Website Help Connected users: 2

Raadpleging Conversations Compilations

Keywords participation Search
Suggestion

Navigator

Title Search: participation
1132 - Track 41 FR 00:03:35
1002 - Track 04 FR 00:01:54
1002 - Track 05 FR 00:01:28
0961 - Track 16 FR 00:01:28
0955 - Track 06 FR 00:01:15
0991 - Track 05 BL 00:06:15
0946 - Track 06 FR 00:02:33
0946 - Track 13 FR 00:03:02
0924 - Track 14 FR 00:02:30
0927 - Track 09 FR 00:03:17

69 Hits Page 1/7

Done

Radioswap.net
Home Search Help About

Series detail
Bruxelles nous appartient - Brussel behoort ons toe

Administrator : any@bna-bbot.be
Station : BNA_BBOT

Some concluding remarks

- importance of the belly, also from a communication rights & citizenship perspective
- alternative / community media (as part of the communicative city) important to complement (or counter) official city culture
- often strong examples of participatory tradition / 'really' active citizenship
- modest examples of the translocal - expanding rhizomes are still very much work in progress
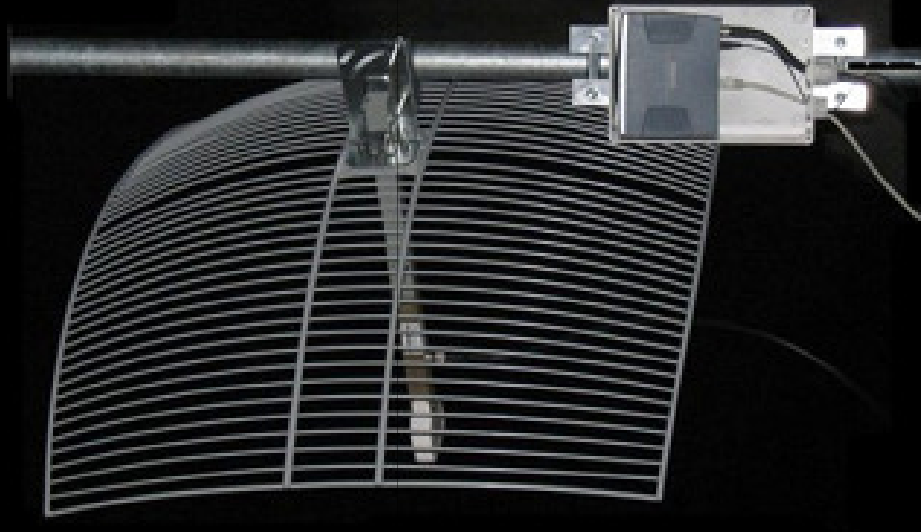
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http://homepages.vub.ac.be/~ncarpent/