A photograph of a woman in a wrestling ring. She is wearing a pink and green patterned top and black shorts. She is lying on her side on the mat, with her right arm extended. A referee in a black and white striped shirt is standing over her, with one hand raised. The ring has blue and red ropes. In the background, there are spectators and a green light fixture.

ISSUE WRESTLING

OR HOW TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES THROUGH SHOW-WRESTLING

A project initiated by the artist Natasha Taylor, and tested for the first time at WORM (Institute for Avant-gardistic Recreation) in Rotterdam (Netherlands) from 8 to 17 of December, 2017.

ISSUE WRESTLING aimed to be a basic and playful concept to involve the residents in open discussions about their neighborhood issues.

CONCRETE GOALS OF THE PROJECT



OFFER AN **ALTERNATIVE STAGE**
FOR **LOCAL ISSUES** AND SOCIAL
DEBATES



CONNECTING THE VENUE WITH
THE NEIGHBORHOOD



CREATE A **FUN AND UNIQUE**
EVENT



AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO ADDRESS LOCAL ISSUES

Together with Natasha Taylor, WORM experienced ISSUE WRESTLING in order to respond to the urgent need of public consultations for local issues where all the groups of the neighborhood 'Cool Zuid' can be represented.

Cool Zuid is an evolving neighborhood offering a vibrant nightlife and various art centres, rental houses and small businesses.

It is also an area with sharp economical contrast among residents where residential towers for middle and high income are being built.

The transition has raised several social issues.



WHAT IS A WRESTLING SHOW?

Show wrestling, also known as American wrestling is **not two men fighting in a ring** until one of the two is knocked out or gives up.

Show wrestling is a form of **art and theater performance** including elements of wrestling and other martial arts.

Following a script, show wrestling simulates a martial arts competition where a **'good guy'** confronts the **'bad guy'**.

Wrestling also contributes to the **channeling of emotions**.

Show wrestling follows codes, procedure and jargon.

WHY WRESTLING?

Show wrestling is very popular in the Netherlands with several show wrestling circuits and weekly events attracting thousands of visitors and broadcasted on national TV channels.



FROM THE CONCEPT TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PROJECT



> BEFORE THE WRESTLING NIGHT

Local issues to debate were identified by interviewing a cross-section of the residents of Cool Zuid:

- **Car parking problems**
- **Gentrification**
- **Bureaucracy**

A **performance-script** for each issue was created.

Each of the 6 professional wrestlers played a **specific character**.

A **theme song** and a short promotional film was created.

From December 8 to 17: Exhibition in the WORM's S/ASH GALLERY to display costumes, attributes, promotional clips that Natasha Taylor, the 6 wrestlers and the residents of Cool-Zuid have been working on.

THE WRESTLING NIGHT



In addition to the wrestlers, a referee, a presenter, a DJ and several artists are part of the event.

Three wrestling shows:

Flex Man vs The Great Yukki

The Million Dollar Boy vs Generation Y

The Car Crusher vs Mister Municipality

Gigs of local groups are organised between the wrestling matches with special guest L-Ciano.

ISSUE WRESTLING
LOCATIE: WORM / UBIK
ROTTERDAM
BOOMGAARDSTRAAT 69

ZATERDAG 16 DECEMBER

VS
FLEX MAN THE GREAT YUKKI

VS
THE MILLION DOLLAR BOY GENERATION Y

VS
THE CAR CRUSHER MISTER MUNICIPALITY

SPECIAL GUESTS
L-CIANO
ELTEN KIENE
DJ MR. WINTER

TICKET 7€
INFO: WWW.WORM.ORG
OF BIJ BARBER BOB/5G
BOOMGAARDSTRAAT 268

ZATERDAG 16 DECEMBER
ZAAL OPEN 20:00 UUR
START 20:30 UUR

CONCRETE EXAMPLE

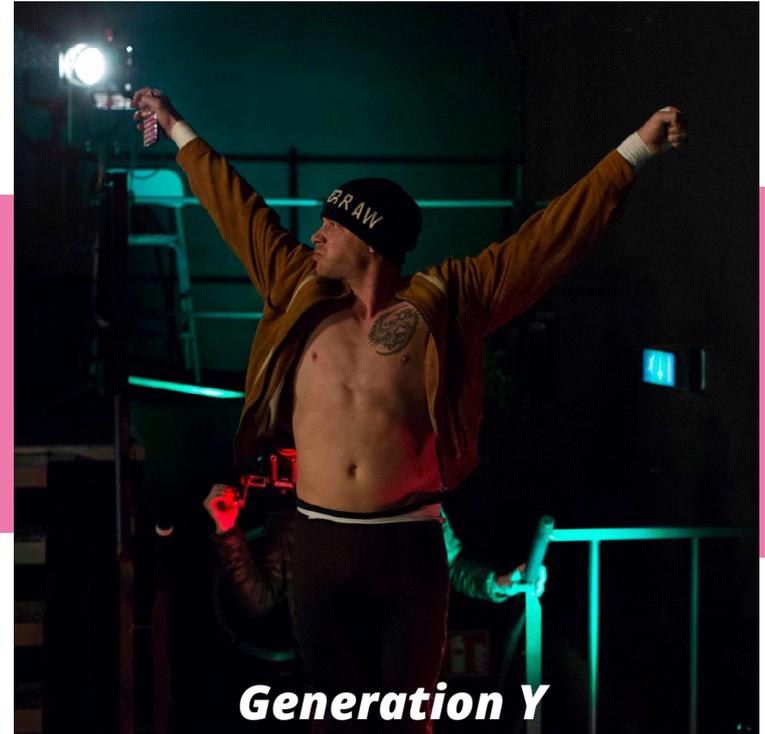


Million Dollar Boy

New comer with high income, resident in the residential towers in Cool neighborhood.

PROMO CLIP

VS



Generation Y

New generation, his family has been working in the neighborhood for a long time. He is struggling to find a job or even a place to live due to high rent costs.

PROMO CLIP

> AFTER THE WRESTLING NIGHT



Evaluation phase

To close Issue Wrestling, a dinner with the visitors is organised to discuss and share their experiences around questions such as:

To what extent does Issue Wrestling contribute to solving the issues? Will anything be contributed at all?

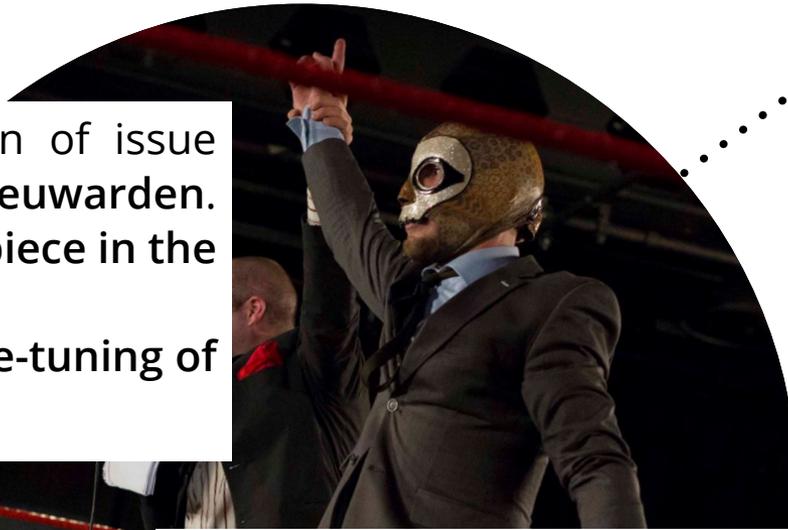
What can be a possible follow-up?

“ THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS SOLVED, JUST ‘ADDRESSED’. WE WERE CURIOUS IF THIS IDEA COULD HELP IN LOOKING AT THE PROBLEM IN AN OTHER WAY, BUT THAT WAS TOO RATIONAL, IT WAS MORE A RELIEF, LIKE CARNIVAL OF LIKE THE THEATER IS.”

Janpier Brands, WORM.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The realization of the first edition of issue wrestling will have a **follow up** in Leeuwarden. The event created a **conversation piece** in the **neighborhood** and in Rotterdam. The impact is hard to measure. **Fine-tuning of the method will be necessary.**



It takes time to build relations with neighborhood for co-creation.

There are some doubts about the name 'issue wrestling', maybe it is not strong enough. The organizing team is considering another name for the next edition. Cooperation with Pro Wrestling Holland was quite good.

The element of the referee and speaker is a big chance for better storytelling

RECOMMENDATIONS

NECESSARY RESOURCES

Organization team

Natasha Taylor (artist with project idea), **Charlien Adriaaensens** (Art programmer at WORM), **Janpier Brands** (Creative director at WORM), **Ivan Winter** and **Elise Tooren** (Involved local residents and creative entrepreneurs Neighborhood).

Wrestlers, artists, and participants

6 professional wrestlers (from Pro Wrestling Holland)

6 residents of the Cool Zuid neighborhood that raised and defined the issues of the wrestling shows, including a referee and a speaker.

DJ and bands

Bands and artists that have a connection with the neighborhood like **L-Ciano** and the producers **Izzy**

LOGISTICS

Room that provides at least 12m x 12m in order to create a ring that has to be 5m x 5m

The ring has to be prepared for show-wrestling so it is recommended to work together with a professional wrestling team.



WORM is an 'institute for avantgardistic recreation' with a strong tradition in counter/DIY culture in the heart of Rotterdam close to the neighborhood Cool-Zuid.

Their activities include live music, movie screening, performances, art exhibitions, conferences, debates, and multi-festivals.

WORM will repeat **Issue Wrestling** in 2018 for a second edition in Leeuwarden.
One of their first ambition is to improve the post-event follow-up.



CONTACT

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