

# Project “Water Books” for the wash house

Hans Roels

## 1. Summary

The sound of water flows through the past, present and future of the wash house. This soft sound is not immediately perceptible though: you have to focus, come nearer or touch the water to hear it. I want to take place in the beautiful wash house for four days and invite the inhabitants of Differdange to come and make water sounds with me, play in the water with hands, brushes or pieces of cloth. In between the composed and improvised water games – for up to 8 people – there is time to talk or dream about future plans for the wash house.

This stay at the wash house will result in two water books, full of poetic instructions, scores and sketches of the water performances and conversations. The books will be placed under water, fixed to the bottom of the tubs of the wash house. Future readers will have to put their hands in the water to turn the pages and wait till the water is calm enough to continue reading.

The aim of this project is to let you hear and experience how other people think, dream and feel about the wash house and water.

## 2. More details

### *Before the residency*

In advance I will compose and invent all kinds of water performances than can be performed in the wash house: water games, listening exercises, poetic invitations to move water with your hands, play with a group of performers while tapping rhythms on its surface, etc. The aim is to enjoy, explore and experience water.

Before the residency it is important that the inhabitants of Differdange know that they are welcome to talk and play in the wash house. Enough promotion for the residency should be made, especially in the streets and neighbourhoods surrounding the wash house (and perhaps also among music organizations and people that are already involved in making the wash house more public and accessible).

### *Residency at the wash house*

The mix of talking and playing with water (sounds) is central to the residency, this is what the visitors do when they come to the wash house. The water performances mainly act as a playful way to relax and free our minds. They make the atmosphere more informal. Moreover, they create an active, tangible and embodied link to the past of the wash house.

The talks about the wash house are not planned or structured in advance. People can freely talk. Perhaps I will point to the collective dimension of the wash house or add a suggestion on possible changes when the conversation needs some extra fuel.

There will also be pen and paper if visitors want to draw an idea or plan.

People can also choose to only play water games or only talk about the wash house.

People can come alone, with two or a small group. Based on the pictures of the wash house, I guess the maximum group size (to sit around the water tubs) is 8 or perhaps 10.

I will amplify the water sounds to make details more clear.

I will make an audio recording of a few water performances. (For clarification: I am not recording the talks in the wash house.)

### *After the residency*

The two water books contain poetic impressions and fragments of what people told me in the wash house talks plus music scores of the water performances. These scores are not traditional music notations but short, poetic text instructions or graphic visualizations of sound performances. The aim of the water books is to let visitors hear and experience how other people wish, dream and feel about the wash house and water. I plan to make four water books (two in English and two copies in French). To ensure that they are readable underwater, they will be larger than a usual book, have large text fonts and 4 to 8 pages (see → 'Specific area of the selected place').

I will edit the audio recordings of a few water performances and make them available online. A simple poster or placard with a link or QR code to the audio files can be placed somewhere in or outside the wash house.

### **3. Specific area of the selected place**

*Water performances and talks:* In the wash house people can sit on the stone edges of the water tubs (see → visualization 3). In this way they can put their hands in the water to play with it and make sounds. If people sit on opposite sides of the tub edges, they can see each other while talking or performing. (I imagine the tubs of the wash house to be a large table around which people sit, talk and see each other.)

*Water books:* These will be submerged, under the water in two tubs of the wash house. They will be made in totally water-resistant material (for example, in forex), thus each page will be quite thick. The books will be quite large (approx. A3 format), have text in a large font size (to make them readable under water) and have 4 to 8 pages. They need to have a (heavy) weight attached underneath the book or be firmly attached to the bottom of the tub (perhaps with a cable through the holes through which the water streams?). Important: it should be impossible to take the

book out of the water: visitors need to put their hands in the water to turn a page.

#### 4. Materials

This is a preliminary list of materials to realize the Water Books project:

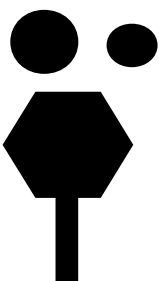
- Cushions (or something similar) to sit comfortably on the stone edges for one or more hours.
- Cables, weights and other materials to ensure that the water books stay at the bottom of the tubs.
- Pen & paper to draw or write down an idea.
- Something to drink and eat (coffee, tea, cookies, etc.) for the visitors during the residency.
- Brushes, sponges, pieces of clothing for the water (music) performances.
- A case or box that can be locked (to store valuables or protect them against water).
- An indoor space in the neighbourhood of the wash house (to warm, take a rest, store valuable material, etc.).
- 2 microphones (and wind caps), microphone stands, XLR cables, small mixer and 2 speakers for audio amplification & recording.

#### 5. Visualizations





*(Photos by Hans Roels)*



*= places where visitors sit for the talks and water performances*

*= two loudspeakers on a stand*

## 6. Budget

	<i>Estimated costs in €</i>
Assistant	1000
Hotel for 5 nights during residency	500
Extra transport from Ghent (Belgium) where I live	200
Food & drinks (for myself, assistant and visitors to the wash house)	400
Cushions	150
Brushes, sponges, pieces of cloth & towels for the water performance	150
Renting audio material (2 microphones, 2 microphone stands, XLR cables, small mixer and two speakers for four days)	600
Editing & lay-out of water books	750
Translation of the two books to French	500
Printing of the water books (by a specialized printing service)	3000
Test copy (with cheaper material) of 1 water book for on-site test	250
Editing and mixing the audio recordings of the water performances	500
Poster or placard with a link or QR code to the audio recordings	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>8100</b>

*Assistant:* this is a collaborator for 4 days to make promotion & invite people to the wash house before and during the first days of residency, to attract people from nearby streets to come to the wash house, search for specific people to invite, give help with French translation if necessary, assist with the audio recording, etc.

*There are also costs that are difficult to predict at this moment:*

It may be necessary to rent an indoor space in the neighbourhood of the wash place. Maybe it is a good idea to pay a local musician for one day to test and make the audio recordings of the water performances.

## **7. The involvement of the citizens**

My short and more detailed descriptions ( see → 1. Summary and 2. More details) clarify how crucial the participation of the inhabitants of Differdange (and surrounding villages) is to make this project succeed. The collaboration of people in the conversations and water performances delivers the material for the resulting Water Books and recordings. Without involvement of the citizens there are no results of this project.

Through the collaboration and participation I hope to give the inhabitants a feeling of ownership in the end results: I hope that they see the water books as something that they have co-written and something that – in the future – they have to re-enact (= put their hands in the water and play with water) to re-experience them again.

## **8. Safety requirements**

Based on my view there aren't any safety risks included in this Water Books project.