



# *Konnekt: the barrier as game board*

*Design by Job Jansweijer*

*Text by Pieter Desmet*

In the Netherlands, over 500 children are diagnosed with cancer every year. During treatment they are often isolated, sometimes for a few days, sometimes for as much as four months. Visitors are limited and are only allowed with protective clothing - and playing with other kids is practically impossible. This causes boredom and sadness, and it hinders the child's social development. This presents a challenge: can you design something that prevents these patients from becoming isolated? Independent designer Job Jansweijer took on that challenge, and his solution is both simple and brilliant: the barrier as game board.

## **Play**

Before he decided to take on this project, Job really had to think about whether he would be able to handle the emotions he foresaw when working with young cancer patients. Now, looking back on the project, he wouldn't have hesitated for a single moment if he'd known what he would experience. Talking and working with these children proved to be the absolute highlight of his project. Those conversations have changed his perception. Initially, he particularly saw the cancer, the pain, the chemotherapy, the nausea and the traumas. But the sessions with the patients proved to be surprisingly open, fascinating and very enjoyable. His most important discovery was that these children could also have a lot of fun. Just like all other kids, they are playful, and if the



situation allows for it, they like nothing more than to play with friends. As it turned out, his project wasn't about cancer, but about children.

The result is KonneKt, a game that makes clever use of the glass wall between the patient's room and the hallway. Job recognised the double meaning of these walls: the glass forms the connection with the outside world, but at the same time it forms a barrier that hinders social contact. KonneKt transforms this barrier into a game board for active interaction.

### Dragon

The game was developed together with the children. Job filled a box with all sorts of materials, such as plastic figures, magnets, pieces of string and stuffed animals. He took this box to the patients in the Sophia Kinderziekenhuis, the children's hospi-

tal in Rotterdam. The children immediately started to play with the figures and magnets on both sides of the wall, with the glass serving as a game board. Step by step Job developed a game that consists of colourful shapes that can be connected and attached to the window by means of suction cups and magnets. KonneKt is suitable for three types of games: games with clear rules (gaming), coming up with active games with their own rules (adventuring), and inventing and telling fantasy stories (crafting). For example, you can play tic tac toe, but you can also make a castle or a dragon or create your own fantasy world. The magnets stimulate interactive play, because they will only stay up when a figure is put up at both sides of the window. The abstract shapes appeal to the children's imagination, which means the possibilities are endless.



### Suction caps

KonneKt shows that innovation isn't just about innovative technology. On the contrary: with a few coloured shapes, magnets and suction caps, KonneKt's technology is actually very simple. The innovative aspect lies in the social interaction and the effect this has on the children. KonneKt supports and stimulates that interaction. During his project, Job arrived at an important insight: even in a con-

text where the negative is dominant, you can provide an essential contribution with something that's aimed at the positive. That makes KonneKt a great example of positive designing. With a designer who gained a deeper understanding of the children for whom he was designing, and has completely put the result in service of their wellbeing: designing as an act of love.



photo by Stakelbeek

**Job Jansweijer** has developed KonneKt as a graduation project for the master's programme Design for Interaction at the TU Delft. His supervisors were Elisa Giaccardi and Marco Rozendaal (TU Delft). The project was part of a joint research initiative of the Prinses Máxima Centrum voor Kinderoncologie and the faculty Industrial Design of the TU Delft aiming to increase the quality of patient care. KonneKt was partly made possible by Stichting Roparun. KonneKt is a finalist for Shell LiveWire Award 2015; winner of the Interaction Design Award categorie connecting 2014; finalist for Sustainable Healthcare Challenge 2014; nominated for the Wereld van Morgen Award 2014; finalist for Conceptual Design for Innovation for Healthcare Award 2014. More information: [www.konnektplay.nl](http://www.konnektplay.nl)

# Colophon

## **Konnekt: The barrier as game board**

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## **Product concept & design by Job Jansweijer**

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## **Reference**

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