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ARTS-BASED INTERVENTIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN EUROPE

Edited by
ANDREA KÁRPÁTI



Arts-Based Interventions and Social Change in Europe

This book presents 23 successful arts-based efforts to respond to social problems experienced by disadvantaged communities.

The arts are a powerful means of fighting discrimination, marginalisation, neglect and even poverty. The educational programmes described in these chapters help stakeholders find solutions which are research-based, adaptable, repeatable and sustainable. Social problems that are addressed in this book include children living with physical challenges; suffering from financial and educational poverty; elderly women suffering from solitude; migrants facing a strange and not always welcoming cultural context; Roma youth fighting negative stereotypes and many more. Revealing the interconnectedness between social, economic and cultural exclusion, contributors planned interventions to develop skills, strengthen identities and build communities.

This book will be of interest to scholars working in the visual arts, art education, design education, drama and theatre education and museum pedagogy.

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Arts-Based Interventions and Social Change in Europe

Edited by *Andrea Kárpáti*



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Introduction: Arts-based social interventions: Policy-oriented results of the AMASS project

Introduction to the case studies

Andrea Kárpáti and Raphael Vella

This book presents 21 successful arts-based efforts to respond to social problems that are experienced by disadvantaged communities: children living with physical challenges, suffering from financial and educational poverty; elderly women in solitude; migrants facing a strange but welcoming cultural context; Roma youth fighting negative stereotypes and many more. Our research project, *Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS), is funded by Horizon 2020 under the theme of *Societal Challenges and The Arts*. AMASS ideas about the power of the arts: the potentials of arts education to impact cognitive and affective development, motivation, self-esteem and self-expression have been implemented and researched in depth in the case studies. From the cultural rights perspective of marginalisation and other forms of exclusion, we used arts-based interventions with community involvement to address social and health-related challenges. Revealing the interconnectedness between social, economic and cultural exclusion, we planned interventions to develop skills, strengthen identities and build communities. Empowered for democratic participation and self-expression, the participants of our programmes are now charting their own way to learning and personality development.

Why did we use the arts and not social work or political action to support marginalised communities? Why did we focus on socially-engaged art? Artistic value is a distinctive social value. Art helps us confront unpredictable situations and bring the added effect of life-altering catharsis to educational projects. Engagement with the arts facilitates learning, as they serve as catalysts for knowledge acquisition through visualising complex concepts and processes. Education through the arts often involves unlearning inhibiting norms and rules of representation that are not the only option, but only one of a wide range of possibilities.

We started our work with an extensive review of English language research literature about arts-based social interventions. Multiple impacts of the arts were interpreted through “participatory means to agency and empowerment, identity and expression, and learning and development. These categories are related to analytically derived positions of marginalisation as predominantly structural- or more individual-based. Art is conceived of as a way to bridge these positions through an understanding of its educational qualities. These categories offer a fruitful but also potentially limited role of the arts in society” (Gusén et al., 2021, 12).

The systematic literature review (SLR) performed by Sofia Lindström and the AMASS team of the University of Borås gave us a firm grounding for the design of the interventions. The SLR was conducted from February 1 to August 31, 2020. The time period selected was 1990–2019, and peer-reviewed articles in English were available in the digital format in the SCOPUS and Web of Science databases. More than 10,000 papers were

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identified in the first search, and the final sample that was reduced through bibliometric data included 110 relevant papers. The content analysis revealed four overarching themes:

- 1 Effects on cognitive and psychological learning skills, with the subcategories School performance and engagement in class, attitudes, values and beliefs of young people, productive behaviours in therapy for young people and cognitive functions and well-being of the elderly.
- 2 Effects on knowledge gain and knowledge dissemination, with the subcategory Health and preventive action among children and young people.
- 3 Testimonies of marginalisation in drama production were linked to the subthemes of social exclusion and environmental issues among refugees and effects on the well-being and self-esteem among young people.
- 4 Effects on social inclusion, well-being (“at-risk” young people).

Most frequently targeted *populations* of arts-based interventions targeted the Roma minority and migrants. *Methodologies* of past projects employed overwhelmingly the visual arts and theatre/drama and focused on participatory methods challenging the norm of passive spectators. Based on the papers, it was difficult to determine success because they included narrative accounts about the activities unsupported by assessment data. Knowledge and skills development may not be the most important proof for the success of an arts-based intervention, but in many cases, it may be instrumental in securing a better future for participants through access to further education and vocational training. Several arts-based interventions were reported to have important benefits in the affective and motivational realm, but their promoters reported only their conviction that these benefits would be evident months or years after the conclusion of the project. Optimal methods of capturing the impact of the arts are not straightforward, and as Daykin et al. conclude, it is unlikely to find a single methodology that serves as a “gold standard” in research on the impacts of the arts because most of the implied gains can be evidenced in months or even years after the termination of the intervention (2008). We compiled a booklet of case studies of successful socially oriented arts education programmes (Kárpáti and Sarantou, 2021) and evaluated results of our projects through authentic assessment tools that were in line with project objectives and ensured sustainability through a clear articulation of observed gains of the interventions.

We also conducted a survey in AMASS participant countries about arts-based social interventions and revealed many good practices that were never published in English language books or journals; we invited our partners from seven countries, the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom, to document arts-based social programmes undertaken between 2010 and 2020 and documented in national languages. Our project database consists of 133 templates that describe a wide variety of programmes, representing a variety of art forms and methodologies of collaborative and individual artistic practices. These good practices were used to build on accomplishments and identify needs to fulfil.

The literature review and the project database analysis showed that previous interventions mainly targeted children and young adults and middle-aged and older generations were rarely involved. Among project objectives, self-expression and identity development and successful appropriation of cultural values seemed to be the most important. These interventions often lacked the assessment of results. Narratives by the project promoters

and enthusiastic recollections of selected participants were heart-warming but failed to prove that the arts successfully catalysed positive change. The lack of accountability could have been one of the reasons why most interventions were terminated as soon as financial support from grants ran out. Another reason was the lack of training and mentoring of local artists and educators who could utilise project results.

Based on the analyses of previous arts-based social interventions, we designed sustainable and accountable programmes involving a wide range of participants in 35 experiments that utilised the impact of arts for addressing marginalisation and exclusion. Our objectives were:

- To develop and sustain innovative projects in formal, informal and nonformal arts education.
- To collect, analyse and evaluate project results to measure their impact.
- To realise active participation of stakeholders of disadvantaged communities as an added value.
- To promote networking to increase impact, engaging stakeholders on local, regional and national levels.
- To use public spaces sustainably and thus increase community participation.
- To renew the promotion of culture using technology.
- To enhance and assess cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills development.

The various sections in this publication refer to different art forms, media, general themes and contexts in order to provide research-based evidence about the effects of developing arts-based strategies that meet these key needs. While all the artistic projects described in individual chapters promote broad participatory practices in and through the arts, they also provide information about the importance of sustaining cross-sectoral innovation that is linked to measured impact and identifiable results.

In AMASS, the visual arts were clearly the art form that most participants, artists and researchers employed in their projects and workshops. The chapter *Visual Arts for Social Inclusion* presents experiments that were carried out in Portugal, Malta, the United Kingdom, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Finland. Teresa Eça and Ângela Saldanha's text on the work of the Portuguese teachers' association APECV revolves around a model they refer to as a Pedagogy of Interdependence: an educational approach in which persons with special health-related needs are supported in their creative ambitions. This approach is implemented through arts-based methods that are informed by participatory research and community-driven strategies. These interventions were hindered by several restrictions during the COVID-19 lockdown. Nevertheless, important creative results ensued as well as data related to social impact of the arts and policy implications to provide opportunities for such efforts.

In their chapter, Erika Kugler and Andrea Kárpáti describe and assess a research project carried out in the Hungarian educational system, in which the abilities of students with learning difficulties tend to deteriorate in Grade 5 once specialised teachers take responsibility for different school subjects. The project's focus is on developing mathematical skills through art, is quite unique in AMASS due to the interdisciplinary, project-based methods of teaching and learning and the impressive developmental trajectories students presented. Comparably, the chapter by Raphael Vella and Milosh Raykov on the use of visual arts strategies and other methods like Photovoice with a group of sub-Saharan migrants in Malta seeks to assess a combination of creative outcomes in different

media, interpersonal skills development and findings from artists' journals, pre- and post-workshop evaluations, and other **benefit** from environmental improvements.

Magdalena Novotná and Marie Fulková's chapter "Searching for Beauty: Art at a Distance" explores ways of simulating exhibition visits in a virtual setting. In the home-made "museums" that were developed by participants, new forms of dialogue through sharing collections of family histories helped to weave new forms of beauty despite the educational and other difficulties that were experienced in a period of social isolation. In the second chapter by the same authors, "Cut for New Times: Emancipatory Effects of Artistic Open Form", the issue of inclusion was studied with students at the Faculty of Education in Charles University in Prague. A similar conclusion to that of the previous chapter was drawn here: art education should be based on personal encounters, and distance learning can only be considered as an additional, and relatively limited, mode of delivery and communication, not as a replacement for more direct educational methods.

Two chapters by AMASS members from the University of Leeds engage with some of the key themes identified in several educational experiments, such as the activation of communication networks among experts and the assessment of creative activities in order to gauge their impact. While the chapter by Tang Tang, Paul Wilson and Kiwoong Nam describes research undertaken to articulate connections and reveal the development of sustainable relationships in an international research project like AMASS, the chapter by Tang Tang and Paul Wilson uses a dialogical correspondence model to study and assess perceptions and expectations related to participation in AMASS. These self-reflections of the research community help contextualise the arts-based experiments.

The use of drama strategies in participatory arts research is discussed in two chapters in *Drama-based interventions for social inclusion*. The chapter by Isabelle Gatt discusses the theme of ageism and how this can be highlighted through theatrical processes in an Active Ageing Centre in Malta. While the participants in this theatre project found the experience challenging, they also felt that it was rewarding and helped to build a sense of group cohesion. The chapter by Raphael Vella, Milosh Raykov, Karsten Xuereb and Toni Attard refers to another theatre project and study that made use of a mixed-methods approach in order to understand challenges faced by persons with intellectual disabilities in Malta and to develop a creative outcome that highlighted the participants' ability to work in challenging circumstances. This is clearly in line with the third key need identified earlier, the importance of inclusionary policies.

The section on *Environmental and design education projects* presents a wide variety of methods and target populations. Some of the research foregrounded here refers to curricular innovation to promote skills development of disadvantaged groups. The section includes a chapter by Anna Eplényi, Rita Terbe, Gertrúd Schmidt and Dóra Szentandrás, who show the wide-reaching educational effects of a spatial skills development programme for teachers of socially challenged students. The chapter by Mirja Hiltunen uses arts-based action research to target a completely different population: a school community in Utsjoki, the northernmost municipality in the European Union. One of the main outcomes in the Finnish project was that participants in the school community grasped the importance of relating different learning contents to each other through the medium of contemporary art.

In contrast – and in line with the fourth identified key need to broaden social participation in the arts and culture – another Finnish project discussed by Maria Huhmarniemi, Satu Miettinen and Melanie Sarantou targeted a broader range of individuals and communities to understand how the arts can serve to improve well-being and human-nature

relationships. Similarly, broad in its reach, yet more activist in nature, is the artistic project discussed by Margerita Pulè, Milosh Raykov, Raphael Vella, Karsten Xuereb and Kristina Borg in their chapter that focuses on urban overdevelopment in Malta and the need for civic engagement and guerrilla actions to counter challenges of this sort. The chapter by Ângela Saldanha and Teresa Eça in this section also illustrates the range of possibilities in socially-engaged arts, as it promotes the participation of Roma communities and unemployed persons engaged in arts projects through an exhibition at the Museum of Misericórdia in Viseu, Portugal.

The section called *Media-based social interventions* includes two chapters about the use of new media and social media. Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa and Silvia Remotti write about the work of PACO Design Collaborative, leading young people in Italian suburbs to document their surroundings with analogue cameras. This experience helped participants to gain new skills in a medium they were not acquainted with and express ideas about their environment through the language of art photography. The Roma Cultural Influencer training programme presented by Andrea Kárpáti, Ágnes Veszelszki, Lajos Kovács, Márton Rétvári and Eszter Deli seeks to highlight the cultural heritage of the Hungarian Roma minority through empowering young Roma women to open new channels that present moral and aesthetic values of life and culture. In a male-dominated media environment that is characterised by narratives of segregation, marginalisation and unemployment, or acts of aggression, their clear and strong voice opens new dialogues. Their positive and encouraging posts about role models, art treasures and cultural achievements are well received by Roma and Hungarian youth and strengthen the feelings of confidence and recognition among the followers of the Cultural Influencers.

The last section on *Social interventions in nonformal settings* brings together chapters from three countries in the EU: Finland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The chapter authored by Zsófia Albrecht focuses on a new educational initiative in the Hungarian National Gallery to develop the cognitive and affective skills of students with Special Educational Needs through interdisciplinary museum experiences. Artworks of the Hungarian National Gallery serve as educational resources and make museum collections central to experience-based learning. Another project in a museum setting, the chapter by Zsófia Somogyi-Rohonczy, presents an educational programme for children of the disadvantaged living quarters in the immediate vicinity of the beautiful modern edifice of the Ludwig Museum in Budapest. The programme utilised contemporary art as a catalyst of learning about core identity and personality issues. Their teachers were mentored by museum educators to introduce and wrap up the museum experience at school. Art educators, along with teachers of other disciplines, acquired methodologies and tools to ensure the sustainability of the art appropriation programme, with the key message: “It’s your life!”, that build bridges between visual and media arts and their young audience.

Also dealing with museum education, the chapter by Marie Fulková and Magdalena Novotná focuses on an exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague and its use in a project with hearing-impaired children in a Czech school. Importantly, this chapter offers a nuanced view of the target population in Czech education, highlighting shortcomings in meeting the needs of such children. Another text by the same authors also discusses a museum visit in a chapter that highlights and studies Roma-related issues. Here, the authors conclude that museum and gallery education can develop cognitive abilities, though the under-valuation of the arts in curricula and educational settings continues to offer severe challenges.

Starting with a provocative question – Is money a dirty word? – the chapter by Melanie Sarantou and Niina Karvinen studies how market forces affect certain art forms and cultural production generally. Working with artists and designers based in Finnish Lapland, the experiment explored new possibilities of getting artists to engage with the business world. Among the results, a revealing outcome is that artists have generally positive attitudes towards entrepreneurial practices and marketing strategies. They want to enter central stage, coming from the margins of the land.

A wide range of good practices are described in different sections of this book. They can serve as an inspiration for policymakers to harness the potential of the arts to address social marginalisation in Europe. The projects presented here suggest that artists and arts educators are ready and able to meet this challenge.

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Part I

Visual arts for social inclusion



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1 Dialogical correspondence of socially-engaged participatory arts research project

Paul Wilson, Tang Tang and Ki Woong Nam

Participating in socially-engaged participatory arts research

Socially-engaged art practice and research involve individuals and communities as the medium or material of the work to transform society and society's impacts. Its intention to impact people and communities directly makes socially-engaged arts different from other types of art. The artworks – outcomes of the collaborative act – are shaped by the intentions and actions of each participant or agent. As a result, it can produce diverse intended and unintended consequences of some significance. Similarly, the artists' and art researchers' methods, processes and projects of knowledge creation are also outcomes of such a collaborative act and could be considered as potential instances for the development of a particular type of art or social sculpture since their results and impacts often act and achieve the same intentions as other types of art activities. This case study aims to establish a theoretical framework for assessing and developing shared understandings around expectations and experiences of participation within and through one particularly complex instance of socially-engaged participatory arts – the externally funded international, interdisciplinary research project called AMASS (Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture).

Description of target population

Socially-engaged arts by its nature are participatory and collaborative and can result in sites or situations of great complexity. There is a growing need for artists and art researchers to carefully consider and manage the complexities generated by multicultural and multidisciplinary research projects. Beneficiaries from this case study will include artists, art researchers, communities and organisations who participate in the arts-based and socially-engaged participatory arts research projects. The research advances our understanding of how teams of individuals, partnerships between organisations, agreements among institutions and connections to communities within and outside the specific research context can establish a positive pre-award relationship for gaining funding and producing new knowledge via the activities outlined by the application.

Description of methodology and procedure

This report presents the results of research investigating the application 'dialogical correspondence' model as a means to understand the complexities in establishing pre-project relationships. We first conducted a literature review that analysed ideas of correspondence (Ingold 2015) and dialogical practice (Kester 2000) and highlighted key concepts that

help to establish research relationships. A wider range of factors were further identified through an auto-ethnographic study (Wilson 2020) with all AMASS project partners and then mapped onto the theoretical model of dialogical correspondence.

Literature review to develop the factors dialogical correspondence

Correspondence

The concept of correspondence reframes ideas of social engagement to view and review interactions in a way that acknowledges the multidimensionality of relationships. At the core of correspondence is the idea of being-with-others (and other things) and, consequently, of a weaving together of the actions, ideas and outcomes that are constituted or result from these acts: correspondence is, fundamentally, a process (of being-with) rather than viewed by a need to arrive at a stable or concrete endpoint or being composed additively by sets of discrete elements (Ingold 2017a). Fundamental to correspondence is an idea of openness as critical to any activity (ibid) where a life lived with others depends upon engagement with all others – and that such relationships are determined by an idea of meshwork, entanglement and movement, of things travelling back-and-forth between participants and of a joining-together (Ingold 2017b). Such joining might often not result in an ordered form for correspondence (or an ordered structure to any situation) but, instead, calls forward a harmony between participants – being attuned to each other and how this is shaped in the process of becoming-with are regarded as critical to correspondence.

Correspondence can be considered as a communicative act of anticipation and response. The word correspondence conjures images of the materialities of meaningful human communication and of a connection and intimacy between individuals, even over great distances. Correspondence is determined, therefore, by a gap between ourselves and others. It acknowledges the potential for some kind of meaningful exchange within these spaces. It calls for us to recognise and embrace how our experiences of being human are co-created within moments of dialogue and reciprocal communication. Gatt and Ingold's (2013) discussion of correspondence can be used as a model to identify things that pass over, between and through scenarios of complexity such as the research relationship. It allows for the identification of the matter of any exchange and for describing the bond formed as a result (between all parties in any scenario). It results in a mesh or network along which such 'gifts' are exchanged as the basis of each scenario's complexities and their respective correspondences.

Within arts, design or creative practices, correspondence acts to generate possibilities to suggest and speculations that are responses-in-process within any such discrete situation or context (Ingold 2017b). Ingold's ideas of correspondence present us with a way to reflect on the types of activities and interactions that are part of a project such as AMASS – correspondence being an inherently social and socialised activity determined by the entanglements and co-existence of all partners who are part of such a relationship (Ingold 2015).

Dialogue

Kester (2000) has outlined a model for an immersive, participatory and community-led art practice within which relationships, aesthetics and ideas of exchange are (re)defined in terms of their being 'dialogical'. He discusses how, an arts-based practice that is established upon ideals of dialogue or discourse stands out for its sense of having coherent values, a utilisation of opportunities for bi-directional communication and the potential

for contribution to a strategy or approach. Such dialogue allows for opportunities to remake not only the artist but also their collaborators, the ‘object’ of any art practice and the knowledge that can be created around and within any dialogical interaction. He identifies the following three characteristics of ‘discursive or dialogical art practice’

Interdisciplinarity

Chiefly, of being ‘between’ (institutions, established discourses), at – or as – an interface between people and between established or emerging knowledge, actively tracing new disciplinary trajectories or routes between, through and around those that currently exist or have been developed.

Operating with/on multiple registers of meaning

Meaning is not held within an object or determined by a viewer but ‘dispersed through multiple registers’, of both space and of time, where it can and should be co-created by particular contexts of reception and the range of ‘discursive systems’ at play. For Kester’s notion of dialogical practice, ‘the work is constituted as an ensemble of effects and forces, which operate in numerous registers of signification and discursive interaction’.

Indeterminacy – but one that is dialogical and not formal

Meaning, however messy or difficult to ascertain, is still something that can be agreed upon or defined – a given in any dialogical process for knowledge production which aims for a degree of novelty or innovation.

An auto-ethnographic study with AMASS project partners

A project like AMASS is a complex hyper-object and challenging to fully understand. We recognised a potential to grasp or represent the relationships among its partners in a way which reflected the needs for, and practices of, dialogue at many levels. The purpose of our study was not just to visualise or communicate this dialogue but also to create instances where we could try and capture ways to understand it from the inside out.

Recognising that Design-led communication has a role to play in helping navigate the complexities of contexts, individuals, institutions, activities and relationships in AMASS so that meaningful and valuable research can result, a novel method for participation making use of a series of bespoke, auto-ethnographic tools (Wilson 2020) was adopted to encourage intra-community communications. These graphic tools were deliberately designed to create experiences of novel participation which, through their use of textual production and dialogical interaction, allowed for an embodied, performative use of memory to recall and identify significant moments or events in the project’s life and in the lives of its members. A four-phase interpersonal relations framework was used to encourage conversation and to elicit narratives of autobiographical memory on the project’s development during the pre-award phase:

- 1 Association: How did you find each other or first meet? How did you establish a common language to discuss your working relationship?
- 2 Build-up: How did you identify common goals? Were there opportunities to bring together pre-established directions for the project?

- 3 Continuation: How did you establish mutual trust? Were there any considerations you had to make with regard to power within the relationship?
- 4 Transformation: Has the relationship changed since your first discussion and subsequent decisions? How have you been able to manage these changes?

Fourteen AMASS project partners from six institutions (two to four participants per country) participated in auto-ethnographic workshops online via Microsoft Teams and using the Miro platform. The insights gathered assisted the identification of the details which would go on to shape our dialogical correspondence model.

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

The synthesis of Kester and Ingold's concepts allows correspondence to be mapped as a key characteristic (and outcome) of this distinct and particular instance of research-led reflection and dialogue. Three themes and seven subthemes emerged from the analysis of results from auto-ethnographic workshops and revealed examples, moments or suggestions of correspondence.

New knowledge generated at the interstices of collaboration

Meaning develops from motivations and mutual need. Three subthemes connected to Kester's category of interdisciplinary emerged from the participants' narratives of relationship-as-process.

- A value in Embracing dynamism: experiences of relationship are considered as something active and valuable – an action and an intentional (or designed) activity which benefited from (and made use of) a pre-established 'network of networks'.
- No correct ways for proceeding: it recognised that having to work together in ways that are not precise or perfect and which, sometimes, might require the use of creative intuition in response to uncertainty.
- Balancing professional and personal: dialogue must complement but not replace established hierarchies. For dialogue to be sustainable, there is a necessity to both cultivate motivations and recognise mutual need.

Operationally-polysemic meaning was present in the project

For Kester, meaning is situated across contexts and within or between relationships. Our participants' articulation of their experience in forming the AMASS relationships resulted in three notable subthemes.

- Recognising the value in connections: participants' perception of a project's value is situated by the range of constituents that make up its network of networks and the connections between people, and their contexts.
- Agreeing on common understanding: the open-ended nature of the project's call document meant that a deliberate activity of seeking or making meaning was required and could be developed through a series of interactions in response to the call's text.
- Considering people's institutional contexts an individual's motivations and connections between individual partners might not be enough to result in a stable or sustainable relationship.

Uncertainty is a condition of meaningful engagement and dialogical exchange

For Kester, productive, innovative and potentially successful relationships (and their underpinning values) should embrace the ambiguities and challenges which define their dialogical interactions. In the context of an emergent research network, positive or constructive indeterminacy necessitates the co-creation of meaning. Our participants recognised a number of instances of positive or constructive indeterminacy, where ongoing dialogue allowed for correspondence which helped to co-create meaning for the network and its ambitions.

- The establishment of relationships in the AMASS network was frequently a non-linear or interrupted process.
- Negotiating a reliance on others: interdependence was cultivated directly and deliberately through, between and within the relationships which form a network.
- Recognising reasons for success: moments of certainty are often a direct result of processes of dialogue and meaningful exchange.

The dialogical correspondence model

There are clear overlaps between Kester's notions of 'dialogical interaction' and how Ingold determines the characteristics of 'correspondence'. Likewise, Kester's assertion that dialogical practices are determined by their 'ensemble of effects and forces' itself reflects Ingold's discussion of correspondence as being defined as an entanglement and a 'mesh-work' of participants and their relationships, activities, contributions, etc. Our model of dialogical correspondence' has an idea of 'relationship as process' at its heart which recognises that our consortium and project were both processes of 'being and becoming'. The model embraces an idea that our correspondences are formed and take place through shared experiences of communication and we feel our three themes (outlined above) can serve as key pillars in the development of any future-facing, sustainable relationships for research partnerships.

Conclusion

The AMASS project's relationships, status or context as a form or type of fluid, dynamic and emerging social sculpture can be acknowledged and as a consequence of our study of its partnerships a model for dialogical correspondence has been developed – an idea which constructs and shapes relationships where these relationships construct and shape the form the project goes on to take. Within the context of AMASS, such an exchange (at points of correspondence) also presents opportunities at which mutually-beneficial connection can be made and reinforced. Such connections (perhaps particularly when undertaken during the preparation and writing of a project's application) establish a set of attachments which help to develop social infrastructure which has a power in the potential that is brought together through a complex collection of individuals, communities and activities. The dialogical correspondence model recognises and explores a reality where the best likelihood of achieving meaningful impact can be reached through interconnected processes of evidence-based accretion and where a carefully choreographed series of studies, trials, operations or procedures establishes broad concepts of value that can go on to underpin social innovation - impacting upon individuals and their

communities but, ultimately, which hopes to have effects on policy and policy-makers. Our research has applied a critical lens of correspondence in identifying and describing threads or themes which can serve both as useful pillars in the development of any future-facing, sustainable relationships for research partnerships, and in how they might go on to form the basis of meaningful and impactful communications as the project develops and works through its own ongoing processes of becoming.

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2 Dialogue as social sculpture: a visual method of graphic-ethnography for storytelling

Exploring participation and collaboration in research and socially-engaged arts

Tang Tang, Paul Wilson and Ki Woong Nam

Description of theme

The focus of artistic productions is expanding towards addressing contemporary societal challenges, such as social inclusion, poverty and ageing. The great complexity of the ‘wicked’ problems and the shared ambitions and values to transform society and society’s impacts drive the collaboration of artists, arts and cultural organisations and communities actively engaging in the field of socially-engaged arts. Socially-engaged arts as collaborative efforts are shaped by the intentions of participants, artists and the arts and cultural organisations and can result in sites or situations of great complexity. The partnership with interdisciplinary expertise allows for experiments, interventions and impacts to reflect, extend and evaluate arts-based approaches. It is essential to establish relationships and partnerships among the artists, arts and cultural organisations of strategic importance for art researchers in tackling the ever-wicked problems and combating the inequalities faced by marginalised communities. However, it is unclear how the connection, partnership and fixed or formal association are created within a particularly complex set of interconnected contexts. This chapter outlines research that has been undertaken to articulate stories of connection and association within an externally funded international, interdisciplinary research project AMASS.

Description of target population

A graphic-ethnography method was used as the basis of the participatory storytelling sessions that capture and/or (re)articulate the points of correspondence and present opportunities at which connections can be made and reinforced within art-based activities. Making use of participatory methods to reveal attachment and connection, our research aims to identify how a critical lens of correspondence can help to identify and describe the factors influencing the development of any relationship for research partnerships, but also how they can form the basis of meaningful and impactful communications as the art practices and outcomes develop and research project works through its own processes. The academic beneficiaries of this research can be characterised by end-user status. Our peers can use the findings of and the visual methods developed as a result of the case study because it was the first attempt to capture the dialogue and help identify or even understand instances of correspondence within a very specific set of moments of the AMASS research project.

Description of methodology and procedure

The overall aim of AMASS project is to explore the potential of the art and design-based participatory research to respond to contemporary societal challenges. AMASS requires each project partner to develop the ‘external’ partnerships so that a range of testbed experiments take place to reflect, extend and evaluate arts-based approaches in the field. The AMASS testbed experiments investigate the educational effects of the STEAM model in integrating the socially-engaged arts with science through participatory and multidisciplinary approaches. More than 30 new innovative testbed experiments have been set up over in six European countries in culturally underserved Northern, Southern, Western and Eastern regions, including Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Malta and Portugal. This case study reports the partnership study’s initial findings that aim to explore the complexities of association, entanglements and movements in the testbed experiments between each project partner (and their academic institution) and the external organisations or institutions with which they are working.

The auto-ethnographic tools are useful and effective in encouraging intra-community communications and understanding the interrelationships of researchers engaging in interdisciplinary socially oriented research projects (Wilson 2020). These graphic tools are deliberately designed to create experiences of participation which, through reliance on textual production and dialogical interaction, are embodied, performative and encourage the use of memory or recall to identify significant moments or events in a community’s life and the lives of its members. Such activities have the potential to reinforce the value and potential power of storytelling as a means to articulate certain experiences in such a way that their recall both identifies and reinforces a value. Therefore, the stories become a means for communities to co-design a shared sense of identity that can have practical value in helping to address challenges that they might face. Such tools could be used as a locus for ‘connected knowledge’ and to facilitate (and mediate) a range of ‘dialogical interactions’ (Kester 2013, pp. 14–15) – where a community’s structures or situations can be acknowledged and formalised through the visual appearance and design of tools such as those used in our research. With this knowledge becoming a basis for the tools’ design, they can also activate or reveal people’s reflexivity in their community – and such revelation can help determine a future for how they might then be used.

The four assumptions that underpin research making use of such a participatory approach within the context of the AMASS project are summarised as follows:

- 1 Interpersonal relationships are works-in-progress: making, growing, giving and taking. These can be caught or described at certain moments in their development.
- 2 Active reflection on recent experiences (of how relationships are formed, for example) by way of them recalled as memory lets us interrogate the interactions and dialogues that constitute how and why these relationships might persist and sustain (since these scenarios might be described as being moments of meaningful correspondence).
- 3 Reflecting on experiences prior to the formalisation of a relationship (a moment such as the successful submission of a funding application, for example) often reveals much which can further inform or reveal a relationship’s critical foundations, shared objectives and intentions for achieving impact – such ‘infrastructuring’ can clarify the vision that may be used to help.

- 4 Visualising, spatialising and materialising dialogue (or ways that dialogue can take place) and, in particular, using writing as a particular method for knowledge-making offer opportunities to articulate memory, narrative and experiences in novel ways.

'Relationship-as-process' tools

The 'relationship-as-process' tools were developed based on the work of anthropologist Tom Ingold on 'Correspondence' and psychologist George Levinger on 'interpersonal relationship'.

Correspondence acts to generate possibilities and opportunities for speculation that themselves are responses-in-process and answers to a discrete situation or context (Ingold 2017b). Openness is essential to any activity (Ingold 2017a), where a life lived with others is determined by others' engagement and participation. Such relationships depend on meshwork, entanglement and movement of things travelling back-and-forth between participants and of a joining-together (Ingold 2017b). According to Ingold (2017b), such partaking does not necessarily transform into correspondence. Instead, it calls forward a synchronisation between participants – an attunement and receptivity shaped in the becoming – that is so critical to correspondence. Ingold's concept of correspondence allows for a particular mapping of ideas and how we can understand or reflect upon how relationships are and will be 'entangled'.

A bespoke set of design-led methods and visual tools – 'Relationship-as-process' – were designed and used to encourage conversation and narrative elicitation. Such a tool allowed both exploring and visualising each partner's relationships with their external partner as a process or state that could be distinguished by points or moments of exchange within which they have particular characteristics of correspondence. The methodological approach taken in our research centred on two interconnected activities: active reflection and active writing. A visual canvas (such as that accessed through the Miro platform) allowed for the spatialisation of these activities and framed how memories of relationship could be elicited and articulated. We used three categories of experience as a structure through which the reflection could be organised: 'Ideas' – 'Actions' – 'Agreements' (they might be interchangeable). These three categories also allowed us to map the phases of the partners' interpersonal relationships through a structuring of events, recollections and outcomes.

The work of psychologist George Levinger (1976, 1980) proposed a framework of interpersonal relationships and defined four stages – association, build-up, continuation and transformation – of a lifecycle of human relationships. The 'relationship-as-process' tools were structured around the four specific stages or themes of interpersonal relationship formation and related questions and three categories of experience of dialogue and reciprocal communication, as shown in [Figures 1.1–1.4](#).

Association

How did you find each other or first meet? How did you establish a common language in order to discuss a working relationship?

Here, the intention was to establish a context for becoming acquainted or being matched, of initiation or introduction and the significance of first impressions and initial 'attraction' in establishing mutual or having 'things-in-common'. Identifying experiences of STIMULUS often regarded as demonstrating shallow or self-interest.

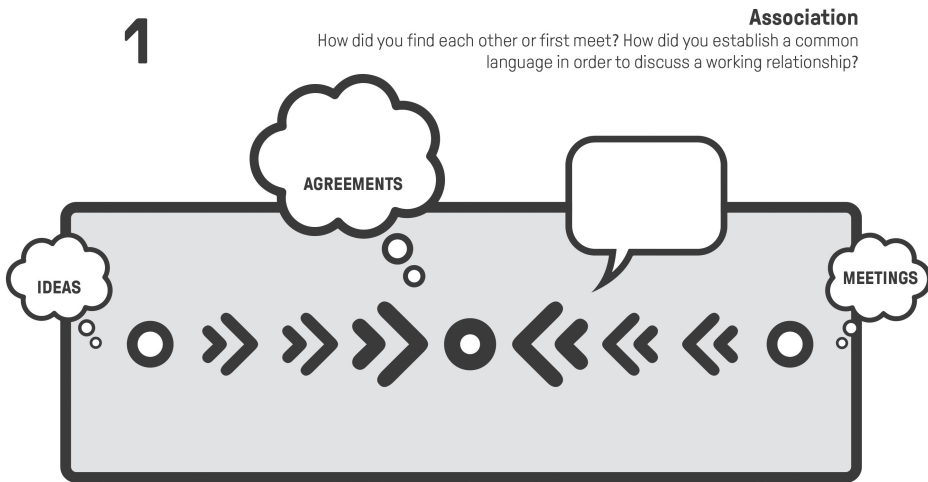


Figure 1.1 Relationship-as-process association tool.

Build-up

How did you identify common goals? Were there opportunities to bring together pre-established directions for the project?

Here, the tool hoped to reveal tactics or means of developing intimacy, trust and understanding conditions for compatibility, allowing for the identification of common goals and how conditions of interdependence could be created. Identifying the value of VALUES regarded as being deeper or more meaningful in helping to understanding the other.

Continuation

How did you establish mutual trust? Are there any Considerations you had to make with regard to power within the relationship?

Here, the experience of participant dialogue aimed to uncover the contexts or motivations for mutual commitment and how stability was or could be established,

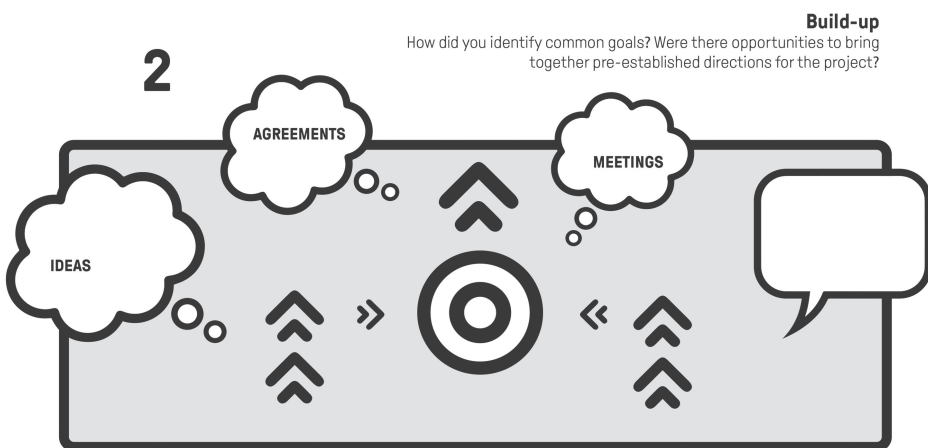


Figure 1.2 Relationship-as-process build-up tool.

Continuation

How did you establish mutual trust? Are there any considerations you had to make with regards to power within the relationship?

3

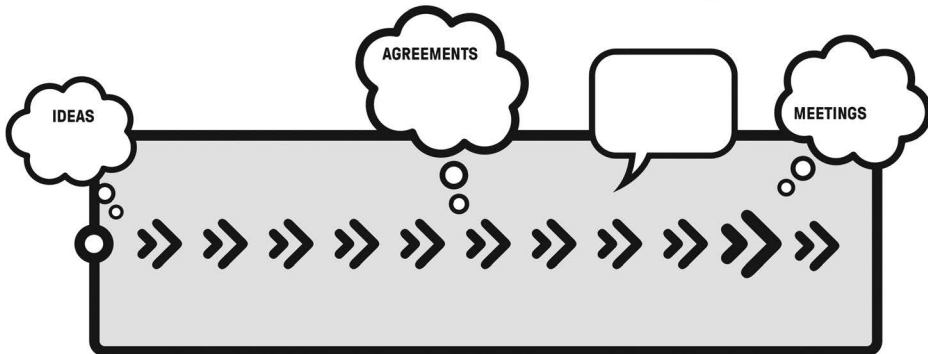


Figure 1.3 Relationship-as-process build-up tool.

grown and developed – such progress is usually dependent on a deepening of mutual trust and the continued association with mutual benefits and goals but might be jeopardised when issues of power and/or hierarchy are introduced. Identifying the significance (or not) of ROLES and how they help establish or develop the contexts for working together.

Transformation

Has the relationship changed since the first discussion and decisions? How have you been able to manage these changes?

Here, the tool sought to acknowledge a fluidity or process or development that is necessary in any relationship, and how participants viewed the relationship as being something dynamic and whether the earlier acknowledgement of mutual goals or values has helped to manage any changes which took place.

Transformation

Has the relationship changed since the first discussion and decisions? How have you been able to manage these changes?

4

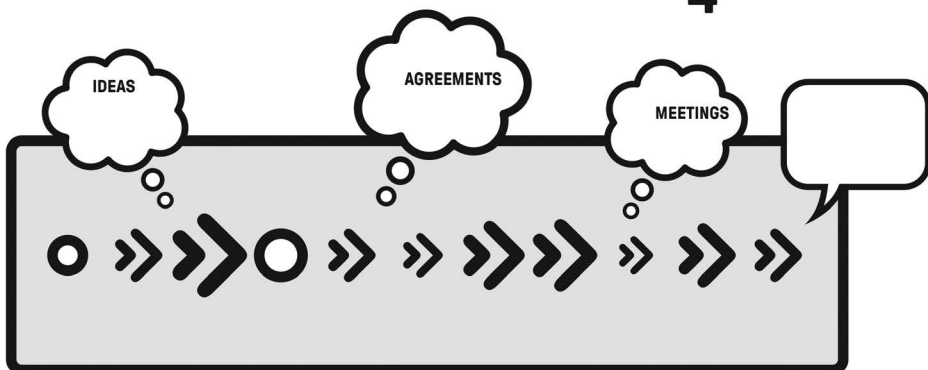


Figure 1.4 Relationship-as-process build-up tool.

The institutionally derived tools were used to facilitate a discussion of partnership, relationship and connection established and developed between each project partner (and their academic institution) and the external organisations or institutions they are collaborating with in the testbed experiments.

Procedure

To explore the foundations of the relationships the AMASS testbed activities were built on, a series of participatory activities were developed so that each project researcher could partake in an experience of design-led dialogue around the values, needs and motivations which helped establish their being in the individual country.

As illustrated in [Figures 1.1–1.4](#), each tool formed the basis of a semi-structured conversation between members of each AMASS testbed experiment team, which was prompted and facilitated by the researchers. The workshops took place using the MIRO online platform, allowing for a digital experience of remote participation. From each of the six institutions/seven testbed sites (two participants per testbed site), 14 participants took part in the workshop.

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

The relationship-as-process tools allow to outline a range of scenarios within which correspondence (as an activity that was distinguished by particular types of relationship) when partaking in an AMASS testbed experiment: the institution – an individual – an activity. Such correspondences are often situated or use a series of ‘place events’ which act as markers through which significant moments in a project might be identified and, consequently, where categories or characteristics of participation or, more importantly, the correspondences can be mapped. This echoed Wilson et al.’s (2018) findings of the ‘correspondence’ model as a means to explore the range of complexities that occur within scenarios such as international research projects.

This case study reports the preliminary findings from two workshops conducted with project partners from PACO, Italy and Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary. The following themes were identified as the most helpful for further analysis and discussion.

- 1 Collaboration as a process of ‘knowing’ and arriving at a mutual understanding: A desire for reciprocal connection and the innate forms of socialisation experienced was observed through any meaningful act of communication. Working with other institutions (e.g. local NGOs, museums) required clear management of interactions and establishing reciprocal expectations.
- 2 Skills are an essential pre-requisite to managing conditional and context-specific collaboration: Correspondences can be identified as being constituted through an individual participant’s subject-specific knowledge and skills in relation to their partners in the testbed site and the experiment objectives.
- 3 Being change-capable to collaborate: The collaboration relationship is in a flow state.

As new partnerships are established, they are often accompanied by a number of un-anticipated problems, mainly divided into how to deal with the diversity of objectives among members, and how to improve communication and face changes in the collaboration environment. Defining testbed experiment objectives required newer sets of activities

which translated abstract concepts into concrete actions, and recognised uncertainties to co-create meaningful roles in the partnership (e.g. researchers/observer, gatekeepers). New relationships emerged within the testbed teams. The roles of the partners and relationships built from practical activities kept changing, taking into account their institutional positions and requirements and individual skills and expertise.

Conclusion

The study attempts to identify and discuss important threads or themes in developing sustainable relationships in the socially-engaged art-based activities between researchers and their own external (local) partners. The design-led methods and visual tools created have been useful to uncover the contexts and motivations for the partnership and how stability was or could be established, grown and developed. In international, interdisciplinary research projects like AMASS as a model of knowledge creation, the collaboration and partnership in the local testbed experiment are established upon the project's ambition, experiment objectives, the project team's shared motivation and individuals' own needs.

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3 Building relationships through arts

Two case studies in Portugal

Teresa Eça and Ângela Saldanha

Researchers and artists from the Association of Teachers of Visual Expression and Communication (APECV) worked with social and health workers and clients of two care centres from one rural and one urban area in Northern Portugal. The aim was to experiment with art practices as relational tools between May 2021 and November 2021, in the scope of the AMASS project. Ethnographic research, participatory action research and arts-based methods were combined to design and implement the activities. Performance artists, Abel and Dori, and plastic arts artists, Juliana and Carlos, were invited to take part in the research, considering their previous work in APECV with people with disabilities. During the activities, other artists were also invited to collaborate in workshops that took place during the experiments. The main direction from APECV was that the project should be collaborative, and all people involved should participate in the design, planning and evaluation of the activities. The outcomes of the experiments revealed that arts activities were beneficial to both the host organisations and the participants. Follow-up activities such as festivals and exhibitions disseminated the project results with larger audiences.

Target population

The first experience was carried out in a rural area—at a daycare institution—for seven months with 29 participants: 18 male and female participants aged 22–60 with mental disabilities, five artists aged 30–40, two caregivers and four researchers from APECV. The caregivers, a man and a woman were social workers trained in the Pedagogy of Interdependence method, who provided artistic and craft activities in the annual plan of the daycare institution, namely in the papier-mâché studio and in the bindery. Pedagogy of Interdependence is characterised by a person-centred planning processes, according to which the important thing is to help the person to create a vision of the desired future and to support the path towards its realisation (Saldanha et al. 2021, p. 74). Before the COVID-19 lockdown, people with less severe disabilities worked in part-time jobs in the hospitality industry, factories or other services in the region. They usually come to the daycare house when not working for social; health care; training and leisure activities such as crafts; music and informatics. Some of them live in very remote mountainous areas, which is why the daycare institution provides transportation for them to go to work and to the daycare house. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, the great majority were completely isolated.

The second experience was carried out in a home care institution situated in an urban area with 47 participants: five artists aged 30–40, four caregivers and four researchers

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from APECV. The caregivers were health or social workers who provided artistic activities as part of the regular programme of the home care institution in partnership with the cultural centres of the city, namely the municipal theatre and resident dance company integrating some of the participants. The 33 participants comprised men and women aged 20–30 with mental disabilities, whose families could not take care of them. They have been living here since they were very small children, but they frequently visited their families during the weekends until the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2019. People with less severe disabilities worked in part-time jobs in restauration, factories or other services in the city until the lockdown in 2019. They were completely isolated during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Description of methodology and procedure

The approach in both experiments was arts-based inspired by community-based participatory research, where researchers, artists and participants from host organisations are treated as full and equal partners in all phases of the research process (Minkler and Wallerstein 2003). The multi-voiced narratives of the participants were conveyed by photographs and videos taken during the sessions with the consent of the parties involved.

The first case

The first case was carried out in the Association of Social Solidarity of Oliveira de Frades (ASSOL), which had collaborated with APECV in the AMASS pilot project during 2019–2020. After the pilot, researchers contacted ASSOL staff to invite them for another experiment and discuss the protocol of collaboration. Because of COVID-19 restrictions during the winter of 2021, it was not possible to visit the ASSOL venue. Artists sent postcards to maintain the connection with the clients of the daycare centre. In June 2021, ASSOL caregivers asked people in their groups if they wanted to attend creative arts workshops, and selected persons who were not involved in the AMASS pilot experience, so that more people could benefit from the artistic activities. They provided a list of participants, set up a calendar for visits and expressed their expectations in terms of artistic media to be explored (printing, animation, performance).

AMASS researchers and artists were invited to several activities organised by ASSOL during the summer of 2021, such as a book release in the local library and an exhibition of self-portraits in the local museum. During these visits, researchers, artists from APECV, stakeholders and other participants from ASSOL discussed informally how the artists could work with the group and contribute to the community.

During the first visit in June 2021, researchers and artists described the AMASS project and consent forms were signed. The following visits in July were facilitated by visual artists Carlos and Juliana and multimedia performance artists Abel and João. Carlos and Juliana explored animation tools with the participants to create a stop motion story using the self-portraits of ASSOL exhibition. Later, the participants developed their own stop motion narrative to be presented in the ASSOL summer festival. Abel and Joao facilitated a music workshop, and after the workshop, participants asked the artists to participate in the ASSOL autumn cultural festival.

In September 2021, artists Carlos and Juliana set up a printing workshop to respond to the participants' wishes of printing bags and covers for the notebooks they had designed and produced in the ASSOL bindery: 'The Improbable Collection'. ASSOL



Figure 1.5 Printing workshop. Photos: Raquel Balsa.

bindery is one of the activities of the daycare centre. The facilitator is the caregiver Pancho Matias, with initial training in design and health care; he organises the bindery as an open space where people can come and work if they wish by helping in producing handmade books and notebooks that are sold to raise funds for the daycare centre. ‘The Improbable Collection’ was a series of notebooks with covers illustrated with creative sentences created by the bindery participants. The notebooks and bags were a success in the book fair in Porto (Figure 1.5).

During October 2021, the artists’ collective of Abel, João and Rosa facilitated a performance workshop with folk music and dances and performed during the ASSOL autumn cultural festival. The AMASS team was invited to the festival and participated in the picnic with all ASSOL members—about 100 people. During the picnic, AMASS workshops were evaluated alongside other ASSOL activities during the year, and were given a green label (excellent).

The experiments were described by the researchers according to the documentation such as photographs and videos taken during the sessions with the consent of the parties involved. It was difficult to correlate the results with measurable indicators in a

quantitative way, but during the sessions, the artists, researchers, caregivers and people with disabilities observed gains in terms of well-being.

The second case

The first meeting with the director of the institution was held in February 2021 to establish the protocol for cooperation. COVID-19 restrictions prevented further visits until October 2021. Therefore, artists and researchers proposed a postal art connection and the health workers proposed video messages between artists and participants via the cell phone app WhatsApp and postal mail. These communication media were explored between April 2021 and September 2021, so all the participants from APECV and from the home care centre were able to meet virtually before the workshops took place. The plan of activities was designed as an intensive workshops' programme by researchers and health workers according to the preferences of the participants who selected one of three workshops (Performance with Abel and Dori, Multimedia with Carlos and Juliana or Textile Art with Celia). After several cancellations because of quarantine, the institution opened its doors to visitors in September 2021. Artists and researchers from AMASS were the first visitors after several months of isolation. Between September 22nd and November 3rd, the artists coordinated the workshops and during four to five intensive days, they explored arts-making with the participants. One group performed body expression, the second group discovered multimedia arts and the third group created tapestries. Local mediators, health workers and social workers were key elements to help artists understand the participants with more severe verbal and physical difficulties and helped artists during the artistic activities (Figure 1.6).

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

Evaluation was based on the collected documentation: observation notes of the researchers; artists' reports; photographs and videos captured by researchers and artists, participants' drawings and individual interviews. Researchers had prepared guidelines for individual and focus interviews to evaluate the experiments, with the help of caregivers the guidelines were adapted, the main questions proposed for all the people involved were 'What did you like most? What didn't you like? Were the activities important for your life?'. It is important to note that the participants were very heterogeneous, with very different levels of communication skills. Some could easily maintain fluent conversations; others had minimal verbal competencies. Artists and researchers often had to trust the mediation of the caregivers to understand the verbal narratives. Researchers' observations were descriptive about what was happening during the sessions through photography and video and included notes about feelings during the activities. Artists could not take notes during the activities because the work was extremely immersive, and they had to be very focused in the group interactions. They wrote final reports when the experiments completed describing the workshops' development (when, where, with whom, what activities).

Data was collected, with the consent of participants, through photographs taken by APECV researchers during workshops, drawings and texts by participants who could write or draw as feedback to workshops, written notes by researchers and artists about the workshops, and audio and video records of evaluation sessions integrated in the programme activities (individual and focus groups interviews), records of online meetings with artists and researchers, and records of online meetings with artists, researchers

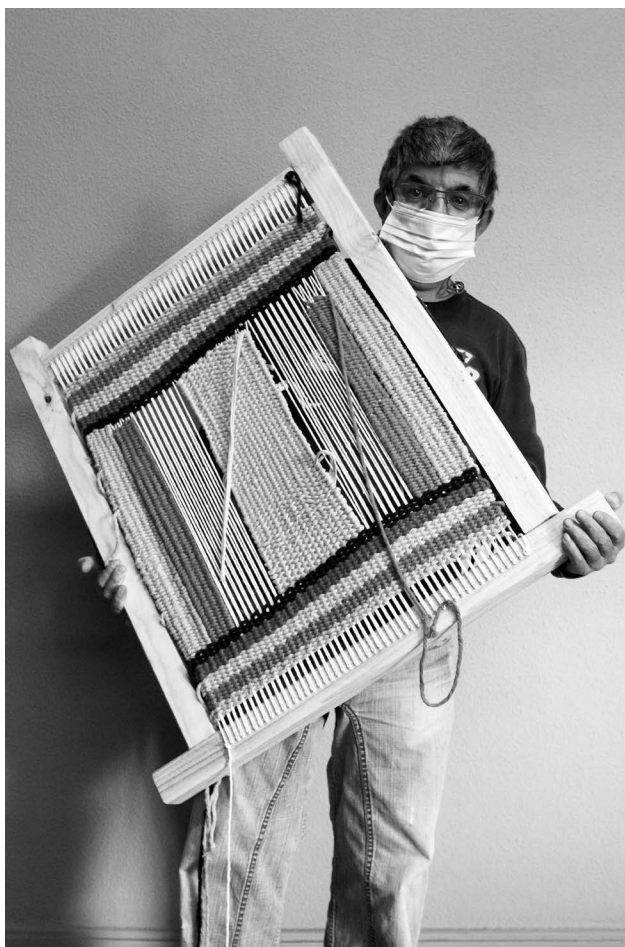


Figure 1.6 Textile workshop. Photo: Raquel Balsa.

and social/health workers. Data was analysed by researchers according to the categories: activities carried out; feelings of the participants about the activities; benefits of the activities in the life of the participants.

Initial findings were discussed with artists and social/health workers. Group conversations were conducted during the evaluation sessions to discuss the results with the rest of the participants to understand if they agreed with the proposed findings and if they wanted to add more reflections. Their feedback was collected by researchers during a group conversation in the final session of the programme.

Data was interpreted according to dialogic/performance narrative analysis, approaching stories as being multi-voiced and co-constructed linking words and images in a coherent narrative (Riessman 2008), first cropping and combining opinions and visual stories about the experience as a collage, in the form of collaborative videos, followed by a selection of keywords that emerged from the collage as possible categories such as relationships, well-being, expression, joy, being together, motivating, inclusion, stories, making art products, belonging, new ideas, new memories, like, love, useful and collaboration. (See links to some ASSOL project videos in the Appendix.)

Participants stressed some outcomes of the activities such as well-being and personal expression:

I think art is about self-expression, it liberates us, for people with mental problems, making arts is a space for introspection and restoring harmony.

JC, video interview, 23-09-2021

Others such as Andreia enjoyed learning new art practices to develop skill through arts:

Making tapestries was useful, I have never learned this technique, it was good to interact with other persons, and we also produced beautiful works. My colleague Manuel noticed that if we could have more sessions, we would be able to make tapestries for selling and start a shop, and this would be fantastic!

A, video interview, 30-09-2021

Vera recognised that making visible the works and stories of the participants through the arts is a process of recognition and therefore social inclusion:

I think it was very good, I loved working with all of you. I think the exhibition of the final works was fantastic, because we like to show our work outside the institution. We should do more exhibitions in other places.

V, video interview, 23-09-2021

For caregivers, social and health workers, although they also used arts in their practices, the experiments ‘brought new methods and strategies’ (Ana, video interview, 28 September 2021) and as Pancho said, ‘it is good to have visitors, artists from the outside that can interact differently with the group... this reinforces our work with social inclusion’ (Pancho, group interview, 23 September 2021). It is important to note here also, as artist Juliana and caregiver Maria said in the context of successive lockdowns, that the activities were also a factor to break down the isolation (Juliana, Zoom meeting, 15 November 2021) and build bridges with the outside through artistic strategies based on affection, listening and creating together (MJ, Zoom meeting, 15 November 2021) (Figures 1.7 and 1.8).

Policy implications

From these two case studies, researchers, caregivers and participants agreed that participatory arts can bring added value to social care institutions and therefore the benefits of participatory arts-based actions with people living in care centres or using them. Findings were listed as follows:

- Increase positive relationships between the members of the group.
- Provide situations for well-being.
- Foster personal expression using arts.
- Develop skills through arts.
- Foster self-confidence.
- Foster interaction with others through arts.
- Create new narratives about the group.
- Create new possibilities for artists to work with social care institutions.
- Integrate new possibilities of working with artists for social care institutions.



Figure 1.7 Presenting the textile works to the group. Photo: Raquel Balsa.



Figure 1.8 Presenting the textile works to the group. Photo: Raquel Balsa.

Conclusion

Participatory arts-based projects offer new possibilities for artists, as well as social and health care workers. They also bring benefits to achieve social inclusion goals of the host organisations. However, such projects need a long time to establish trustful relationships, flexible professionals that can work transdisciplinary following truly collaborative lines of design, planning and implementation, and, of course, financial support to ensure fair contracts with artists and sufficient resources for the activities. To be visible and recognised by stakeholders and policy makers, it is important to describe the projects and their outcomes in a clear language based on multi-voiced narratives conveyed not only by written reports referring to measurable indicators, but also by events such as exhibitions and multimedia communication. Organising such events and media communication objects requires careful planning and constant documentation of the process, which is not easy for artists and caregivers alone. This is where researchers and research groups can bring their support, as collaborators of a joint project where all the participants: artists, researchers, social workers, health workers and clients of the institutions have decision power.

Through small exercises, indoor and outdoor, capturing photographs and movements, it was possible to demonstrate that from fixed and static s, we can build movements and sequences, which we later worked on in a computer, in the form of stop motion. It was in these still movements that we got to know each other, laughing, complaining, and exchanging secrets and affections ...

Carlos, artist, focus group interview, 15 November 2021

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Appendix: Examples of ASSOL project videos

<https://youtu.be/siIrXJgTORQ>
<https://youtu.be/vRT4C8xeiGw>
<https://youtu.be/lx-ZDL1WKC8>

4 Teaching Mathematics through art

Developing spatial skills and digital literacy of children with learning challenges through visual arts education

Erika Kugler and Andrea Kárpáti

The context

In public education, it is expected from schools to cater for student diversity and support those who are challenged with social disadvantages, learning deficits or mental, behavioural problems. Children who are diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) are given special treatment by speech therapists, special educators or psychologists, thanks to their parents. There are, however, many children deprived of appropriate parental care and/or financial resources, who may receive remedial education at school only, through methods meeting their special needs. Teachers, however, experience individualised instructions as a huge challenge: they are responsible for those who lag behind, due to their special needs, and average performers, or the talented ones in need of nurturing (Amstad and Müller 2020; Bereczki and Kárpáti 2021). Those children who are less successful in the race for better learning results because of their social situation often develop aggressive behaviour or sink into depression, even entertain suicidal thoughts (Mather et al. 2015). Our mission was therefore to use the power of the arts in two seemingly opposing ways: for facilitating learning of one of the most difficult disciplines at school, Mathematics, and for opening creative channels in students to arrive at its deeper understanding visually. Our arts-based intervention addresses two major societal challenges:

- 1 *Negative attitudes to learning*: encouraging students to develop their learning skills, attitudes and interests towards science and art disciplines and deepen their knowledge and critical skills.
- 2 *A lack of transparency in knowledge production*: we exploit the role of arts for innovating knowledge acquisition and overcoming barriers between scientific and artistic domains.

Target population

This longitudinal developmental programme was realised in collaboration with the Hungarian Art Teachers Association (HATA) and the Visual Culture Research Group of Corvinus University Budapest, at the Szent István Primary and Secondary Grammar School with Sport Specialisation, Jászberény, Hungary. The project started in September 2020, with students in Grade 5 (average age: 11 years) and concluded its third semester in December 2021 with the same students in Grade 6 (average age: 12.5 years). Arts-based programmes of spatial skills development based on learning

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content from Mathematics for Grades 5 and 6 were realised during the lessons of Visual Culture (the discipline dedicated to art education in Hungary) and partly through informal learning programmes (afternoon sessions in day-care at school). *Thirty students diagnosed with special needs* (ADHD and ADD) were invited for one semester only. Boys slightly outnumbered girls. With two exceptions, they stayed and completed the three-semester programme voluntarily.

The programme started with the identification of students with multiple behavioural and mental challenges and their invitation to join the programme “Mathematics through Art”. Fifteen students each were selected from the two parallel classes (Grade 5, average age: 11.3 years) and their background data were collected. Homeroom teachers characterised students in terms of their creativity and problem-solving skills (as diagnosed in previous national assessments) about their areas of interest, preferred activities, skill deficits, learning problems observed and current mental state and behaviour. The social background and any other information relevant for the development of the students were also recorded. The teaching-learning programme was based on the characterisations of the teachers and observations of research group members on site. *We personalised instructions* to care for the needs of hearing-impaired, left-handed, hyperactive or depressive children. Individual learning trajectories were followed through the process folio method (see under *Assessment methods and outcomes*), and tasks were targeted to areas that needed special development. Regular feedback sessions among Mathematics, Art and Homeroom teachers ensured that behavioural challenges were also met.

The social situation of the students was average or below average. In the critical economic situation caused by the pandemic, this meant that their basic needs were met, but their parents could not organise and finance the special therapy sessions that would have been needed for them. Speech therapy is offered at all Hungarian schools free of charge, but other treatments, including individualised instructions tailored to their learning issues, were unavailable. In the primary school years (Grades 1–4, ages 6–10 years), one classroom teacher oversees most disciplines and may devote more time for mentoring. In Grade 5, however, when all disciplines are taught by specialists, who encounter one class once or twice a week only, as they have eight to ten other classes to teach, learning results of children with learning difficulties gravely deteriorated and their behaviour at class also caused problems. When the Art and Mathematics complex programme started in Grade 5, both problem areas had aggravated to the point that needed intervention (Figure 1.9).

Methodology and procedure

Art education in Hungary is not one of the major disciplines. With one, 45-minute lesson per week, the developmental potentials of the arts are hard to realise. However, this discipline may be instrumental in supporting the cognitive and emotional developments of challenged learners through scientific visualisations and collaborative, creative tasks. The theoretical foundation of the methods employed was the *Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) education model* (cf. Perignat and Katz-Buonincontro 2018 for a review of current literature). This model emerged in the USA, at the Arts-National Policy Roundtable Discussion in 2007, to improve student engagement, creativity, innovation and problem-solving skills. The arts are integrated in project-based learning, problem-based learning, technology-based learning and “making”: the



Figure 1.9 Boy aged 11 with his production of a spherical lattice – a complicated spatial imaging task.

interdisciplinary concept for crafts, design and construction. The originally science- and technology-oriented STEAM model includes the arts because of their potential to promote imagination and expressivity. This model is reflected in our programme through collaborative projects based on overlapping themes in Visual Culture and Mathematics.

Scientific visualisation is another important model for our programme as “Visualization lays the foundation for new modes of thought and dissemination of scientific ideas and information. (...) If Crick’s wife, Odile, had not drawn a visual representation of the DNA structure for the 1953 research paper, it would have been more difficult for readers to appreciate its structure. It was also through the visualisation and manipulation of a physical cardboard model that James Watson had a serendipitous insight into the structural details of DNA” (Najak and Iwasa 2019, p. 1). This quote indicates that scientific visualisation is important for interpreting information, but also for gaining new insights.

We have long been studying the elements and the development of spatial skills of students in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education (cf. Kárpáti and Babály 2021 for a summary of findings). We found that subskills of perceiving space and creating spatial objects and images need to be developed from the onset of abstract spatial concepts in the development of the child: at the age of 10–11. The learning programme presented here focused on the development of spatial abilities and numeracy, to support the most difficult thematic areas in Mathematics for the students with special needs. The interdisciplinary learning content was developed in collaboration with the teachers

of Mathematics and Art (E. Kugler, the project co-ordinator). Intersecting areas of Mathematics and Visual Culture were identified:

- space and plane geometry
- the concept of distance
- radius, diameter, arc of a circle, annulus and tangent
- constructing a triangle
- splitting a section by half
- characteristics and construction of rectangle and square
- perpendicular and parallel lines
- diagonals of plane figures
- examination of symmetry
- types of angles
- network of space figures (cube and cuboid), rules of frontal axonometry and overlay.

The first author developed a learning programme that enhances mathematical skills of students with learning difficulties through arts-based interventions in a holistic, reflective way. Students' social behaviour, interpersonal skills, task-centredness as well as their digital literacy, numeracy and spatial skills are improved. *We motivated learners* through open-ended, creative activities based on concepts and rules of geometry learnt that gave them a new and flexible channel of expression through variation and combination of visual elements. *We facilitated student learning through experience-based instructions*, offering dismountable, hands-on models for visualising difficult geometric shapes or rules of Monge axonometry. Through carefully structured manual activities, we developed cognitive and spatial skills at the same time. *We encouraged visualisers* to use their skills in a predominantly verbal instructional culture and taught them how to make meaning through images. Many slow learners turned out to have serious text-processing issues and could learn easily from maquettes, illustrations, graphs and charts (Figure 1.10).

In complex activities of Visual Culture and Mathematics, we employed *the arts as expressive means but also as agents of meaning making*. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) were constantly employed to create an authentic imaging environment. Informal (after-school) arts programmes interacted with formal arts education and beneficially influenced learning results of students.

The interdisciplinary learning content was developed in collaboration with teachers of Mathematics and Art. It focused on the development of spatial abilities and numeracy, to support the most difficult thematic areas in Mathematics for students with special needs.

The art educator gave tasks from everyday life that needed the utilisation of geometrical concepts and rules. Mathematics teachers coached students with special needs on a conceptual level. Construction of objects and spaces, building complex spatial ensembles and modelling based on images were well received even by students with short attention spans because the tasks provided a chance for individual solutions. After the development of basic spatial skills like orientation and manipulation in space, sign systems depicting space were acquired. Learning Monge axonometry was preceded by a series of constructing and depicting tasks. The image of a spatial object from different angles was carefully studied through 3D models, and only then was represented in a realistic way, and finally drawn using the Monge system. This long process of spatial imaging development will continue all through the four years of the programme (Figure 1.11).

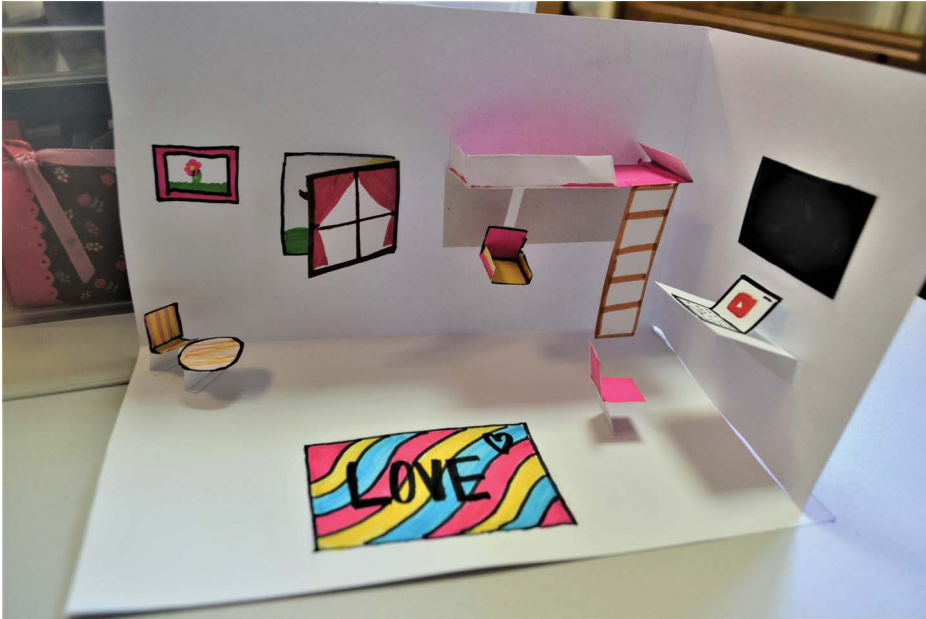


Figure 1.10 Bedroom design in 3D, based on the Monge axonometric projection method.



Figure 1.11 Re-creating paintings by Kandinsky in the form of collage (from surface to sphere, from 2D to 3D).

In the second part of the programme, we focused on the integrated development of visual and digital skills. In the 21st century, when the characterisation of the role of visualisation is slowly shifting from the Age of the Image to the Age of the Digital Image, teachers consider ICTs a new and powerful means of creativity development (Bereczki and Kárpáti 2021). Students acquired the techniques of digital imaging and produced *animations, video clips, photo sequences and photo collages*, and learnt about digital editing and postproduction. During the quarantine resulting from the COVID pandemic, children continued developing their media pieces (see a selection of films with YouTube links in References).

Assessment methods and outcomes

Arts-based social interventions generally do not focus on skills development – the usual target of any educational programme. Their objectives are much wider, as they want to heal the wounds of marginalised minorities, neglected children or abused youth and, at the same time, encourage and empower them to express their problems and prospects. Despite careful planning and meticulous implementation, socially oriented arts projects often remain islands in the sea of traditional arts-based programmes, as their effects are unclear and unsupported by research data politicians are used to interpret and, if they are convincing, probably accept. We intended to provide research-based evidence based on formative assessment: standardised tests, portfolios documenting learning trajectories and qualitative accounts of performance and behaviour. This chapter reports on pre-test results of the first two semesters of the programme (September 2020–June 2021).

Development of spatial skills

We used standardised spatial ability task series developed by Bernadett Babály, architect and art teacher (cf. Kárpáti and Babály 2021). The tasks may be administered online, in the eDIA interactive diagnostic system developed at Szeged University (<https://edia.hu/projekt/?q=en/index>), and have a quiz-like, playful character that students found so interesting that they required similar “games” for future lessons. The items measured the key components of spatial skills: *visuo-spatial perception, spatial visualisation, mental folding and mental rotation*. Surprisingly, girls performed better already in the pre-test, at the beginning of the developmental programme in September 2020, and many of our “problem students” with learning challenges performed better than the national average. As they develop further through the programme, it may facilitate an orientation towards a successful career in engineering, architecture or design. Often considered “school failures”, such a life perspective is a significant benefit.

Standardised diagnostic art tasks were given to identify visual competence and further life problems revealed in creative assignments (Kárpáti and Gaul-Ács 2020) that had been standardised previously to function as visual skills tests.

- Double self-portrait: in favourite dress and happy mood/in a dress you dislike, being sad
- Art map about a place you liked or one you want to visit
- Free expression: a painting entitled “Storm”
- Spatial representation: 2D representation of a house from three angles, based on a photo

These tasks were analysed in collaboration with a special education teacher and the school psychologist, and developmental trajectories were drawn to identify areas of excellence and skills to be developed.

Portfolio assessment and qualitative accounts of performance and behaviour

Visual competence is also assessed through the process-oriented portfolio method. The evaluation of a collection of works completed in a longer period (in our case, two school semesters of ten months) completes with notes by the teacher and remarks by the author of the works, written on the back of sketches and finished products or as notes attached to spatial constructions and objects. We have started collecting drawings, media works and 3D constructions of 30 students and will continue till the end of the longitudinal educational experiment in 2022. In expressive drawings and interviews, students elaborated knowledge gained during the study of geometry in Mathematics and Visual Culture classes. *When the tasks involved a theme taken from everyday life, they assumed meaning and the rules of representation were employed easier than in abstract tasks.* Visual competence of students represented a wide spectrum: there were several gifted (and so far, unrecognised) visualisers, while others found it difficult to use the visual language.

A qualitative methodology was employed to organise and evaluate evidence collected in the portfolios to define the optimal motivation methods and learning support strategies. These were entered in the process portfolios that also included the reports of the psychologist and special educator. During the two semesters of competence development, we could witness the evolution of the visual language of students and the variety of ways imaging supports their learning process. After the analysis of tests, portfolios, interviews and expert reports and observations, we could co-design the developmental programme for the second experimental year, based on research data.

Those with learning challenges often struggle with visual expression, as they have hardly ever been encouraged to draw or build – they were instructed to “learn”, that is, to read and memorise. Individual development plans started the students on a developmental trajectory tailored to their special needs. Spatial development tasks often involved the representation of scenes from school or home life. Students were encouraged to develop their personal imaging repertoire and elaborate on deprivation (death of a family member or divorce) or joys of life. Many of them have shown traits of depression and needed the involvement of an art therapist for individual care.

Policy implications

There are many didactic principles about teaching children with learning challenges and behavioural problems (Mather et al. 2015; Amstad and Müller 2020; Waller 2022), and most of them require a holistic approach to education, a profound change in the philosophy and practice that a school or the educational system of a country is built on. Struggling with the task of teaching students with ADD and ADHD, to name only the most frequent of learning and behavioural challenges, teachers often leave the profession for the lack of competence to develop students with special learning needs. Therefore, there is a burning need for teaching methods and aids for special needs students that go beyond self-expression and support the acquisition of knowledge required for school success and a career that suits their abilities and interests. We have invited teachers of Mathematics,

ICTs and Visual Culture to start with *reshaping the methodology of their own disciplines* first and *adopt an inclusive and personalised approach*. When it is proven to work for one or more disciplines, the school (system) may feel inclined to expand the effort and find out if the methods utilised successfully to overcome learning and/or behavioural challenges are transferable to other areas of teaching and learning. This is what the first author did, using the power of the arts to overcome learning difficulties and resulting in increased behavioural issues.

Interventions aiming at supporting students' academic buoyancy may also decrease their feelings of school stress and increase effective and enjoyable learning (Hirvonen et al. 2019). Our experiment indicates that art education may successfully enhance the agency of students at risk of alienation from school and the wider society. The power of the arts may be used effectively for science education as well Kárpáti et al. (2020). The teaching-learning process employed in this experiment was based on the STEAM model, discussed above. The visualisation of phenomena, facts, rules and principles – a method more and more frequently used in science communication (Najak and Iwasa 2019). Our students, who manifested poor performance in disciplines requiring high-level verbal comprehension competence and advanced reading skills, understood the complex learning content easier and more profoundly, when it was transmitted through creative, interactive art tasks.

Conclusion

When designing the educational experiment, we focused on spatial perception, interpretation and creation – a skill set that is equally important at school, at the workplace and in private life. As a result of the focused educational intervention, significant development was achieved – even though the amount of time allocated to art education at Hungarian schools is limited to 45 minutes (one art lesson of 45 minutes per week) weekly in Grades 5 and 6 where the experiment was conducted.

The most important feature of this experiment is its *sustainability*. The STEAM model does not require the integration of curricula; therefore, teachers did not have to alter their learning programmes profoundly. After identifying themes that may be taught more effectively in synergy, Mathematics and ICTs education could easily be harmonised with Visual Culture. Complex lessons featuring knowledge from these disciplines were supplemented by interdisciplinary project tasks to be realised in the homeroom period and, voluntarily, continued in free time. Students who experienced appreciation for their achievements (often for the first time at a Maths or ICTs class) were ready to work on more and more visualisation tasks and produced expressive and insightful artworks.

We are aware of the limitations of the experiment. Students with learning difficulties and behavioural problems will not get the same, personalised care when trying to get to grips with other disciplines. Still, their success in two areas of high importance has a transversal effect. Their attitudes to learning improved and so did their learning results. At present, the methodology has been further developed and is currently piloted for Grade 6, with students 12 years of age (in the school year of 2021–22). Art and science educators keep on engaging in professional collaboration and present their results at local and national conferences and exhibitions. We hope that research-based developmental results of this good practice will involve followers from other disciplines, where the power of the arts may be equally beneficial for reaching the unreachable.

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Appendix

Three films made by the students

Film 1: Music-image, photocollage, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIK5bXbVhLc>

Film 2: Dancers, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgoGc3kgnsQ>

Film 3: A puzzle of images, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25mvzxmv09U>

5 Engaging youths through visuals

Amna Qureshi

Introduction

Youths can cultivate a creative mindset through visual literacy (VL). “As with any literacy, visual literacy begins with the development of the brain’s capacities over time, through both structured experience (i.e., teaching) and ongoing, informal interactions with the visual environment” (Hailey et al. 2015, p. 51). Baca (1990, as cited in Braden 1996) states that “visual literacy refers to the use of visuals for the purposes of communication, thinking, learning, constructing meaning, creative expression, [and] aesthetic enjoyment” (p. 65). “Visual literacy can serve as a powerful tool in helping young people to develop their creativity and mental flexibility, which can facilitate their growth as expressive and creative thinkers” (Qureshi et al., 2021). In this chapter, the significance of creative freedom and self-expression is examined through four research cycles of artwork created by children between the ages of 10 and 12 and youths between 19 and 22. The artwork itself is assessed using an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA).

This study reflects on one of the six artistic experiments that has thus far taken place in the 2020–2023 Finnish research project *Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS). The AMASS project serves as a basis for the discovery of margins and challenges in the field of VL among children and youths, as well as what tools and methods can be employed to refine this form of literacy. This experiment was implemented predominantly in Finnish Lapland over 2021–2022 in the Arctic city of Rovaniemi, and employed the revised VL definition proposed by Fransecky and Debes (1972):

Visual literacy refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, and symbols natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, he is able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communications.

(7)

According to Avgerinou and Pettersson (2011), VL is grounded in five areas of study, which serve as the main pillars of VL theory: visual communication, visual language, visual learning, visual perception and visual thinking (VT). Hortin (1980) likewise discusses three basic VL principles: (1) visuals constitute a language and thus are analogous to verbal language; (2) a visually literate person should be able to understand (read)

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images and use (write) visual language; and (3) a visually literate person should be able to process information visually to think visually. Arnheim (1969) further explains the development of VL by introducing the approach of thinking out loud and asking people what they see, understand and decode, and how they create meaning using visuals. This approach is further examined by Housen (2002), who argues that visual perception, interpretation and meaning-making – which belong to the domain of psychology – can be interpreted and helped through creative processes (Hailey et al. 2015).

Based on the selected components of VL theory (perception and interpretation) and Hortin's (1980) three principles of VL, this study examines the importance of being visually literate (Kędra 2018) by using arts-based methods (ABMs) for mental imagery, visualisation, interpretation, problem-solving and processing mental thought – all of which can enable youth to be creative. This research's objective is to investigate how VT can be used as a tool and method from the perspective of arts-based research (ABR) to stimulate the creative process in youths. VT is an integral part of learning and can be honed through practice with various learning processes, such as thinking aloud and turning intangible ideas into tangible forms with the help of visual strategies, methods or tools that help visualise the development of ideas, thoughts, questions, reflections, narratives, mind maps and so forth (see Gholam 2018).

This experiment employed a flexible and multi-faceted qualitative ABR approach during each research cycle to examine youths' creative expression(s) via mandala making, photography, interviews, essays, portfolios, documentation and group discussions. This method was adapted to verify the effectiveness of VL in enhancing and building useful knowledge for youths to develop reflective and creative thinking, which involves self-assessment, belief, judgement and behaviour.

Target population

This research began with youths aged 19–22 years old who were students with an art and design background from the University of Lapland, Finland. As the research advanced, the target population progressively widened due to the scope of the study. During the pilot study workshops (Qureshi et al. 2021), the youths were asked how they gained access to a certain level of VL through experiences acquired in formal and informal settings. This question spurred further research on how VL may assist young people in becoming creative thinkers over time (Yenawine 2004). Due to the participatory nature of the experiments, the research enabled a deeper investigation into the trajectory of VL and its effects among young people over ten years of age. Because COVID-19 was peaking at the time of this research, more workshops were not possible, so the 13–18 age group requires further study. [Table 1.1](#) outlines the demographic information of the current target population involved in the four research cycles.

Table 1.1 Target population in the four research cycles of the engaging youths through visual(s) experiment, 2021–2022

<i>Research cycle</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Age (years)</i>	<i>Gender</i>
1	4	19–22	F
2	4	19–22	F
3	13	19–22	F
4	16	10–12	10F, 6M

Methodology and procedure

The AMASS project investigates the arts in relation to societal challenges, especially in marginal regions in Europe. Among the case studies conducted in this context, this experiment, which specifically focused on Finnish youths' VL in Rovaniemi, indicated the necessity of arts-based learning in formal and informal education. The youth services provided by the city yield many opportunities for the inclusion and well-being of young people (City of Rovaniemi 2022), but they lack arts involvement from the VL perspective. Arts education is similarly lacking. Therefore, the goals of this research were to (i) access the level of VL among Rovaniemi's youth, and (ii) verify if VT enhances mental imagery, visualisation, interpretation and problem-solving. This led to the following research questions: (i) How can VT contribute to the meaning-making processes of young children and youths?; (ii) How can young children and youths acquire basic knowledge of VL's importance in creative learning processes? and (iii) How can the forms of documentation, interpretation and reflection used in artistic processes assist youths' creativity?

Experiment overview

This research was based on an evolving artistic experiment that consisted of four case studies, resulting in a research process that was performed in cycles. The four cycles are discussed below.

Research cycle one

The experiment began with an unconventional ABR method. The first case study (Qureshi et al. 2021) assessed VL levels among youths aged 19–22 living in Rovaniemi, Finland. In addition, the study examined how VL affects students' learning and determined whether it ought to be emphasised in K-12 learning. A prototype model, Wagner and Schönau's (2016) Common European Framework of Reference for Visual Literacy, was applied to validate VL competency during the workshop. The model enabled an understanding of the research process and how the methods of data collection produced new knowledge about the skills and attitude changes of the participants, as identified in their reflections (Qureshi et al. 2021, p. 255).

Interpretation is subjective (Messaris 1987, 1994). It occurs in the mind and is affected by individual biases. It is the process that helps us comprehend the experiences we encounter, focusing on meaning, expressions, emotions or a personal response that relates to our experience (Qureshi et al. 2021). A person's perception and interpretation cannot be the same as another's. Therefore, to understand the participants' perspectives of subjectivity in this study, the phenomenological approach was used to examine the data. The workshop data were also assessed using IPA, which demands that the researcher play an active role in the interpretation process when decoding participants' subjective perceptions and experiences of objects and events (Smith 2004; Tuffour 2017). During the workshop, the visual data collected from the participants' personal mandalas provided insight into their artistic expression(s), as can be seen in [Figure 1.12](#).

Research cycle two

The second research cycle (Qureshi 2021) was an extension of the first study and focused on the same youths' documentation, reflection and interpretation skills. The study



Figure 1.12 Personal mandalas created by the participants, research cycle one, 2021.

discussed the role of VL among youths and how visual language and cultural representations can foster an individual's visual reflexivity and understanding.

The study employed two methodological approaches: (i) reflexivity, in the context of examining one's beliefs, judgements and practices during the research process and how these may influence the research (Finlay 1998; Hammond and Wellington 2020), and (ii) constructivism, which argues that individuals acquire knowledge of the world and that it can be positively constructed based on our experiences (Hall 2013; Mills et al. 2006; Schwandt 1994). During the study, important questions began to emerge regarding young peoples' reflexivity and how reflection can contribute to developing their personal representations. [Figure 1.13](#) features some of the participants' unique contributions and highlights the importance of visual images in the VL context, as well as how the participants' experiences and the documentation role affected the interpretation of the group's experiences (Qureshi 2021, p. 250).



Figure 1.13 Close-up object photographs taken by the participants, research cycle two, 2021.

Research cycle three

The third case study (Pietarinen et al. 2021) involved visualising and mirroring the voices of youths to re-engage with their personal experiences post-COVID-19. As part of this study, the participants (aged 19–22) explored their own narratives and art choices to explore the boundaries of VL, as well as to derive novel ideas about what they want to achieve in the future. The purpose of this study was to reveal new perspectives by investigating the materiality and spatiality of the participants' expressions, works and interactions. The workshop provided the youths and artist-researchers (i.e., authors) with knowledge about pluralism and how to apply it in their (re-)design thinking (Pietarinen et al., 2021, p. 217).

The artist-researchers used narrative inquiry combined with a reflexive analysis. The results provided insight into the participants' subjective and emotional reactions during the workshop. Using ABMs in research with experimental and improvisatory



Figure 1.14 Photos of the Flag installation artwork designed by the participants, research cycle three, 2021.

approaches for analysis can generate significant impacts (Levine 2013). By means of the same approaches, the participants were able to test, evaluate and compare artistic methods and how to use them, transforming them into a thoughtful, personal process. This can be seen in [Figure 1.14](#), the photos of which were taken during the making of the *Flag* installation.

Research cycle four

The aforementioned three research cycles led to a fourth case study (Qureshi et al. 2022). This case study mainly focused on children over the age of ten to examine their VL level. To develop VT skills for reflective thinking, the study examined visual learning that taps into children's voices and expressions. The findings were presented at the AMASS 2022 academic

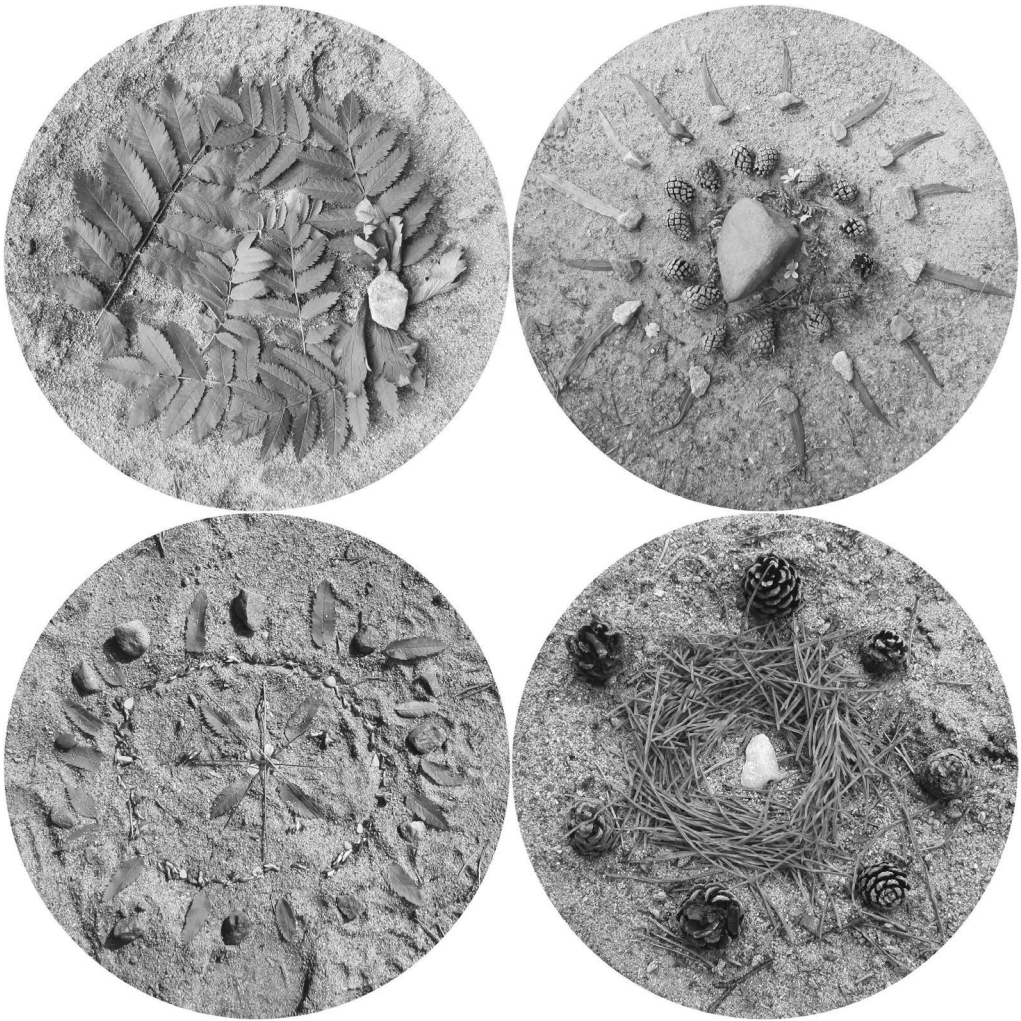


Figure 1.15 Photos of the nature mandala artwork designed by the participants, research cycle four, 2021.

conference (see the Appendix), and were also disseminated as an exhibition (Qureshi 2022) at Gallery Kopio, University of Lapland, Finland (see [Figures 1.15](#) and [1.16](#)).

The study was a qualitative phenomenological inquiry into children's reflexive activity and was conducted during a summer workshop held at the University of Lapland in 2021. The research examined the children's views on their creative processes. The young participants were asked to share their reflections on their experiences of making mandalas with naturally found objects. This ABM led to the invention of the visual design thinking (VDT) model (Qureshi et al. 2022), which involves unconventional, creative processes to assess children's existing VL and determine what can be done to facilitate it. The purpose of this qualitative research was to examine and discuss a prototype VDT model that can support young children to foster their VL using various visual methods. This research revealed that the children's perspectives were instrumental in transforming



Figure 1.16 Photos of the exhibition conceived by the study's researcher (author), research cycle four, 2021.

ABMs into design formats that can be integrated into formal and non-formal learning (Ware 2010). Adopting the perspective of a child artist to understand the visual language of youth provided inspiration for building this new knowledge to comprehend VL (Kárpáti and Gaul 2013).

Ethical considerations

This experiment followed the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, as reviewed by the ethics committee of the University of Lapland, Finland. The participants provided informed and written consent prior to the start of each study. All participants and their guardians (where necessary) provided written permission to use their artistic results. Moreover, it was clarified from the start that the participants could withdraw at any time, even after the study was completed.

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

The data collected from the participatory mixed-methods experiment's case studies were analysed using a qualitative ABR approach (Barone and Eisner 2012; Leavy 2017), coupled with the phenomenological approach (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 2004). The ABMs involved mandala making, photography, observations, interviews, portfolios, documentation, writing descriptive narratives about the experiences and sharing views on how the artistic processes enhanced the participants' perceptions, interpretations and meaning-making skills. In all four research cycles, the data were analysed using a thematic analysis of the visual images and artwork that the participants co-created.

The case studies were further analysed using reflective narratives provided by both the participants and the researcher. The workshop participants (aged 19–22) wrote essays discussing their learning processes and experiences. For instance, research cycle three featured a three-dimensional sensory writing exercise involving self-reflection and creative writing. This type of writing practice uses figurative language that is precise and persuasive and employs sensory language to make people, events and ideas more expressive. By using this method, the researcher gained insight into the participants' thoughts, as they described in detail what they aimed to convey. Consequently, the researcher could identify what the participants had learned through the ABMs and their subsequent attitude changes. All these assessment methods contributed to a better understanding of VT as a tool, which led to the idea of the VDT model (Qureshi et al. 2022). Exemplary narratives of the participants' experiences in the experiment are as follows:

For me personally, if I look at it [personal mandala], this is also the thing of art. We have embedded stories into our mandalas knowingly or unknowingly. But those stories then become detached from us in the artwork itself and those stories are there for other people to start to read and interpret and make their own meanings from.

Participant 3, Visual Literacy Workshop (2021)

I've had my challenges understanding this kind of work. It is to be seen if the arts-based study is something I'll want to explore more. Sure, I have already learned from this experience many things I can use later. So far, I've at least learned to trust the process and tolerate uncertainty. I've also found that I very much like studying a concept and how it could be interpreted in a visual form.

Participant 2, FLAG – A Shared Horizon Workshop (2021)

The four research cycles within this VL experiment yielded four promising outcomes:

- VL is an important form of literacy that children and young adults ought to be encouraged to learn and develop throughout their various learning stages because it fosters introspection.
- The reflections shared by the children and youths demonstrated the need to supplement formal and informal learning settings with open dialogue and reflexive practices both inside and outside the classroom. Thus, the reflections assisted in articulating and expressing the content of one's imaginative expressions.
- In addition to enhancing creativity, boosting self-esteem and cultivating individual emancipation, the studies also demonstrated that progressive arts-based collaborative processes can facilitate idea sharing and understanding.
- Empowering youths to engage in social innovation through creative processes can help them become positive agents of change in society.

Policy implications

Educational and cultural policies that foster the development of youths' identities can be designed to increase the number of creative citizens. Providing youths with a sense of inclusion and ownership over their artwork is one such means of motivating them in their personal representations. The arts are thus a valuable component of education, and their inclusion in formal and informal educational settings can provide young children and

youths a deeper understanding of challenging concepts, and therefore decrease anxiety in relation to demanding subjects.

VL-inspired ABM methods can also help achieve new paradigms in educational policymaking, especially when embedded in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics education (STEAM) models. To improve the education of young adults, the establishment of STEAM models for learning in formal and informal settings would make it possible to guide student inquiry, dialogue and creative thinking away from science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) models (Herranen et al. 2021; Yakman 2008). For a better understanding of STEAM-based policy implications, it is imperative to grasp the difference between the two models: STEM focuses explicitly on scientific concepts, and STEAM investigates these concepts through creative inquiry and problem-based learning methods. Therefore, VL-inspired ABMs can contribute to the formulation of educational policy since they help create meaning for oneself and for others. If society needs more advanced thinkers to fulfil the needs of STEM industries, then it is up to society to prepare citizens who are capable of this advanced thinking (Yakman 2008).

Conclusion

To conclude, youths can become more creative through frequent engagement with VL. Enhanced VL articulation can be achieved by observing VT in action, which can make youths better visual thinkers. The VL-themed, arts-based experiment discussed in this chapter has exhibited promising results for the youths of Rovaniemi, Finland. Although the experiment was conducted only in this region, it can be adapted to other parts of Europe to analyse and interpret youths' creative perceptions. In general, enhancing young people's understanding of how being visually literate can facilitate attitude changes and decision-making can have a positive impact on creative thinking and meaning-making capacities. Finally, and most importantly, the study's findings can be used by educators, professionals and policymakers working on projects meant to provide youths with the tools to think visually and inspire one another.

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6 Searching for beauty

Art at a distance

Magdalena Novotná and Marie Fulková

This case study is influenced by personal and emotional experiences from the pandemic situation, which to a large extent influences the authors' interpretive strategies. When analysing data from primary documents, we repeatedly asked the basic question: What did people experience during the first COVID-19 lockdown? We found ourselves in social isolation, the nature and consequences of which we could hardly imagine. Public authorities, schools, museums and galleries were closed; individuals and families withdrew from social space. Our in situ research activities that we planned to hold at a museum remained just a plan. The situation forced us to reformulate not only the project objectives, but also the means. We looked for opportunities to simulate a visit into an exhibition using digital technologies, an educational programme and ways of turning the virtual setting back into social action. In parallel, we were looking for opportunities to overcome social isolation and fear and guide nuclear social units towards empathy and solidarity. We investigated the possibilities of communication and were interested in processes that would help us propose such educational models stimulating art-and-dialogue-based learning, creativity and collaboration. Does the artist have a role to play whatsoever in this process? In conjunction with the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, we proposed and tested an educational programme consisting of a virtual viewing of an exhibition of art glass and related activities, communication with the participants and documenting their activity. The idea of the assignment was simple: if we can't go to a closed museum, let's make our own museum at home. When we can't go art-making at a museum studio, we'll do it at home and all together. We sent an e-mail to friends and acquaintances asking them to do several activities that everyone could do, regardless of age.

The result was in a series of creative family events and subsequent thematic analyses that are evidenced through an evidence-based scenario and the production of a video: https://youtu.be/O5bN83_DJgU.

Target population

The target population consisted of socially isolated people who experienced feelings of absurdity, danger, fear and powerlessness, but also feelings of unity and mutual support. The group included our own families and those of our colleagues, which were diverse in terms of age – from preschool children to seniors; colleagues from the Museum's educational department; undergraduates – individuals who did not manage to go back to their families on time and got stuck at their halls of residence; friends from academia and co-workers from universities abroad; and doctoral candidates who were part of social networks in similar disciplines and research. They all agreed to participate in the creative activity, to provide their reflections and to participate in the collection of qualitative data. The research sample

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comprised 40 participants divided into three groups. The first one was a group of 19 family members of different ages and gender. The second group consisted of seven seniors who could communicate via e-mail (in some cases, younger relatives helped them). The third group included 14 MA students from the Faculty of Education, all from the same cohort.

Methodology and procedure

The research methodology consisted of combining qualitative participatory action research (PAR) and visual ethnography (VE). The study also employed critical theory, partially contained in grounded theory and thematic content analysis. Methodologically, this was a typical example of so-called liquid methodologies. At present, these are often found in ethnographic and art-based studies that reflect current hybridised fields of research and emergent design, “whereby the design emerges in response to the participants and contexts” (Lincoln and Guba 1985 in Savin-Baden and Tombs 2018). All these approaches stem from the notion of the “speaking subject”, inspired by Phenomenology, and from its understanding of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), manifest in individuals’ personal accounts. The originally planned qualitative action research (PAR) in the specific environment of the museum has been replaced by the online alternative of reflective narratives, very detailed descriptions of artefacts and the photo/video documentation of the research participants’ concrete environments with a commentary (Photo-voice). The participants set into motion situations that they orchestrated and staged for themselves or in mutual interaction, and they subsequently reflected on those activities (methods of reflexive thick descriptions). The data collected (recordings of family dialogues, recordings of dialogues in couples, online dialogues, reflexive review, commentaries on photographs) were transcribed and clustered into the hermeneutic unit of primary documents.

As mentioned above, we invited participants to create a home-made museum of art. The assignments were designed by the artist and the educators, who also participated in activities in their families. The topic of the home-museum was at hand, because on the one hand, we have been cooperating with the Museum of Decorative Arts for a long time; on the other hand, this specific museum represents a memory institution that has just opened and closed immediately a new exhibition of Czech art glass. The closed museum was one of the many paradoxes brought about by the pandemic situation. We wanted to present glass in its dual form: as an art medium and as an ordinary popular object that no one pays attention to. From an educational point of view, this is a good starting point, which is represented by the so-called close experience, which we gradually subject to research, reflection and reconstruction. The reflective assignment worksheet also served as a data collection tool, as it contained a hidden structure of questions and incentives for the activities that the participants were to record. Let us quote from the contents:

Dear friend, make your own gallery at home. You need one wall only and a reflector plus a photo/video camera, or your cell phone.

Visit the virtual exhibition and find out more about it: <https://en.upm.cz/pleiad-of-glass-1946-2019/>

Think: Do we need to look only or to touch glass as well? How many recollections can an artefact hold? What does light do with glass? The first task will lead you to the family treasure. Which kinds of glass do you have at home? Is there a glass object connected with a family member? What are your memories when you look at a selected glass object?

The second task is to create your own home exhibition. Please install a selected glass object in front of your “gallery” wall so that it could express your recollections best (light it up, turn it, arrange, etc.) Create a capture or a composition and install it. How did you communicate or share your activity? Make a photo document of your family conversation of the installation in your family gallery. Collect your conversation with your friends, etc.

And finally, learn about the main techniques of glassmaking: you can find some terminology online and watch videos showing the magic of glass formation. Create specific captions for your glass exhibits if you can. Thank you so much for your help. We are looking forward to sharing your ideas via e-mails. Greetings from Marie, Magdalena, Jan.

Uncertainty

We were looking for answers to the following questions: What are some of the possible forms of communication emerging from the period of social isolation? What educational or cognitive approaches can be designed to meet creative, critical and art-based learning through art and dialogue when people are isolated from cultural resources? And what is the role of the artist in these processes?

The instructions included on the worksheet resulted in investigating forms, contents and methods suitable for online versions of education that practically did not exist at the time. Individual participants and MA students worked independently. They received the instructions via e-mail and then sent back the worksheets. The families did not fill in the worksheets. Their family members (the artist and the researcher) led their activities. The dialogues were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The events were documented (using photos, videos, digital media). The activities included family celebrations – performance, joint storytelling, home installations of glass objects into aesthetically impressive sets, documenting these sessions and writing individual memoirs.

The data were analysed as follows: initially, three researchers coded the data in line with grounded theory at the stages of open and axial coding. Due to the small sample, they coded manually in a shared document environment. They obtained several codes that were reorganised. Wider categories emerged using concept maps. Each of the three case study authors individually created several concept maps in axial coding. The research group repeatedly discussed the maps. As can be seen in the following picture, the final map shows us the thematisations of the research field, which consists of the strongly populated codes Contents, Beauty and Sharing (Figure 1.17).

The artist in the game

Already at this stage, the role of the artist crystallised. Jan developed a video art piece called *Transformation: The Cut for New Age* which is still located on AMASS website (Pfeiffer, 2020) and sends us a multi-layered report on our uncertain present and future. The artist reflects his work in these words:

The visual project *Cut for a New Suit (For A New Era)* was created in the first days of the pandemic. The main impression from that time was that there is a need to transform the established practices, both outside and inside, in society and in the family. The project contains video and audio-visual segments centered around it,



Figure 1.17 An example of the mapping of main concepts in the selective coding phase of the analysis. Main concepts: Central code 1 – Contents, Central code 2 – Beauty, Central code 3 – Sharing. Other codes: family, place, closed institution, material, glass, play, humour, informal education. The creation of the final map may be also seen as the process of triangulation, done by three members of the research team by e-mails, calls and shared documents.

which can be grouped with subtle nuances of meaning: collages, objects and transformation objects. The video emphasizes *tailor's shop* as a metaphor for the place. It is a place where things are supposed to fit, customers are trying on clothes, tailor-made clothes are created there. There are fabrics on the shelves as an accumulation of possibilities. A master tailor uses a meter, scissors and chalk as a *master of craftsmanship and initiation*. The main, static character of the video is an old man - a tailor: his face and voice initiate, connect and transform all segments. His authoritative voice provides viewers with instructions on how to sew a new fitting suit for a new era. Is he serious or ironic?

We live in a society of instructions, so I chose the form of instructions on how to behave and act in the new era. It was based on the inescapable feeling that social networks have been full of instructions for everything, as if people didn't know how to do it themselves. I have found that a project can also have an educational effect if we also consider education as a cultural artifact and a space for the emergence of meanings. Therefore, I later shared the creative process with children (in cooperation with GASK) and currently I assigned/handed over the topic to the students of Department of Art Education within AMASS project. Interesting individual variations appear and the project grows.

Pfeiffer 2020

This was a powerful stimulus that we wished for and anticipated; however, we did not know at which stage of the document analysis it would emerge and what form it would take. *Transformation: The Cut for New Age* represents the first step towards the pedagogical and cognitive use of the so-called Open Artistic Form, which Jan Pfeiffer transformed into a didactic structure. This is a kind of scaffolding, leading the user to deal with uncertain, vague and ambivalent assignments.

Families in the game

The storyline of two selected families ended up being written scenarios that were emerging at the same time as the production of the documentary video. Gradually, the central category *Shared beauty* emerged in this two-track, collaborative manner, while the individual categories were being perfected and tested. In the scenario, the visual and textual forms are inextricably interconnected. The photographs, the editing, visual adjustments and so on helped test the emerging categories and the actual storyline. At the same time, they determined the selection, the form and the sequence of the visual materials. We realised that the conventional separation into visual-textual positions was pointless. That is why the video *Shared beauty* is an inseparable part of this study. We consider devising our own specific research methodology a key asset of the pilot study. We have been developing it further in our follow-up research; recently, among other things, we have elaborated it into the form of a didactic structure that was presented at the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) in Geneva in 2021.¹ We have also been using it in teacher training courses for future art teachers. We hope that this way, we will be able to guarantee permanent sustainability for the ideas of the AMASS project. The fact that now, after a year of applying them in teacher training, topics such as Sharing and cooperation, inclusion and an emphasis on the aesthetic category Beauty and the perceptual category Sharing frequently appear is a good sign for us.

Assessment methods and outcomes

As demonstrated above, the study accentuates the concept of the “dialogicity”, “sharing” the possibility and the impossibility of communication; the limits of online communication; the modalities of beauty in everyday life; individual and collective memory; and experiences of solidarity. Creative activities accompanied by an educative subtext were seen as an opportunity for providing mutual support and overcoming the fear of an unknown situation and social isolation. In the following text, we will demonstrate two aspects of the activities that are worth paying attention to also in the future.

Motivator – emancipator

The study shows that the role of the motivator is indispensable in such situations. Any participant in the activity at hand may perform it: a family member, artist or also – and possibly primarily – a teacher. The role of a teacher consists in modelling situations that lead the learners towards their emancipatory actions (Rancière 1987). We may define such a teacher-initiator often as the person who provokes unusual forms of thinking and action, emancipates and empowers participants towards an active stance that does not dwell on any form of incapability. The statement “I can do it too!” paraphrases the following thinking: “People capable of saying ‘me too, I’m a painter’, a statement that contains nothing in the way of pride, only the reasonable feeling of power that belongs to any reasonable being” (Rancière 1987).

Ms Hannah² was one of the participants in the pilot probe: her case will help us illustrate the above well. In spring 2020, just like many other seniors, Hannah found herself alone in her flat, with limited social contacts for several months, only able to go out for short walks or to do a limited amount of shopping. One of the researchers asked her to participate in the pilot project and asked her the following question: What kind of glass do you have at home? Is any of the glass objects associated with a family member? What do you recall when you look at the selected glass object? They started corresponding and exchanging photos and stories. Hannah wrote back the following text:

For me, it was an impulse to formulate and put into words what I feel and sense in a disorganised way when I’m in contact with the “touched” family objects. I experienced two half days of intense memories. And I bawled a fair bit. I’m sure you know what I mean because you also reminisce about your mum and think back on your childhood.

Today, as an old woman, I already sense that every part of the smoked (glass) set was a reminder of bygone happy moments, but also of lost hopes. With each broken glass made of smoked glass, apparently, my mum’s other illusions disappeared as well: illusions of her life in marriage, which a long time ago, when she and my father were setting up their own home, she had pictured very differently.

The above case indicates the irreplaceability of the teacher in that she invited Hannah to act and inspired her. She was the one who initiated the communication and remained in dialogue with her all along. She listened, responded, shared. She gave Hannah care and attention. That is how the teacher becomes the driver of social practices. Without the initial invite and the sent e-mail, Hannah would not have occupied herself with glass: she would have remained in her isolation.

The pilot study has led us to define the specific role of the teacher-initiator and the artist-teacher, who has subsequently become a key figure in the follow-up experiments, which we describe in Case study 4.

Communication at a distance

“To approach the other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to receive from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity” (Lévinas 1961). It is clear (not just) from the documents collected that in order to communicate, it is necessary to create space. Another condition is the openness of all the participants and a readiness and willingness to communicate. Those communicating must listen to each other. They need to understand one another.

This also applies to digital communication, albeit differently. While mediated remote communication overcomes distance, it must make up for the missing physical contact and direct experience. The pandemic has shown the obstacles related to the use of technologies. Due to the abrupt separation, people felt the need to connect. They established new ways of remote communication with others. Children and seniors set up new user accounts on social media. People purchased new computers and tablets: on the one hand, they were testing new possibilities presented by remote digital communication; on the other, they were realising that it can never replace being together. Society touched its limits in many areas: ranging from mental health to the economy. At first, people were not aware of them but little by little, they started to show. Museums and schools were closed for a long time. Teachers and curators sought new ways to teach and demonstrate.

Society realised that there are a considerable number of people who do not have access to technologies. They do not have enough money to access them; they do not know how to use them or do not want to. We evidence the notion of the unnaturalness of remote digital communication with an interview. It shows how three generations of family members try to communicate about a memorable glass pint over Skype. The whole situation seems to be upside down.

<i>Father:</i>	<i>What am I supposed to do if I want to have it in front of me?</i>
<i>Grandmother:</i>	<i>Couldn't you just pour something into it?</i>
<i>Grandson:</i>	<i>Turn the camera!</i>
<i>Father:</i>	<i>But aren't we turning, though? (arranging this takes an additional 2 minutes so that all the participants see what they are supposed to see)</i>
<i>Granddaughter:</i>	<i>You are mobile barbarians!</i>
<i>Father:</i>	<i>Now I'm showing it to you, do you see it?</i>
<i>Mother:</i>	<i>We see the Canadian flag with a pint. Where does the glass come from?</i>
<i>Father:</i>	<i>For now, I'm showing you what I have here. Can anyone tell what it is? Where has it been until now?</i>

Although, after another year of online communication, the functionality of digital platforms and applications, people's technological competencies and general digital literacy have improved, the limits of teaching have become apparent as well.

Searching for beauty, mystery, memories

Glass is a unique material that allows one to express the most subtle, changeable thoughts, dreams and memories. A virtual tour of the Pleiades exhibition in the museum, where participants could get through the website, showed a number of works of art of high aesthetic quality. Glass is a sovereign medium of expression of an idea, metaphor, association or even a master craft and design. No wonder the old aesthetic category is in the centre of the communication map (above-mentioned): Beauty. But in what dimensions did people in social isolation perceive the most ordinary glass objects they use in the household and to which they do not normally pay attention to?

The people we approached have shared their relationship with glass objects with us. Their relationship manifested itself in several modalities that can be considered unique; at the same time, though, they can be generalised within the context of the mediation of a cultural artefact. As examples, we have selected these options: beauty, delight, a memory container; and we have allowed some of the commentaries to speak (Figure 1.18).

We found that the participants are delighted by glass objects just as much as we are, and they consider glass a treasure. They talked and wrote about it, listened, watched and reminisced. Some played and enjoyed themselves. They installed the glass objects they were touching as though they were in a museum exhibition. *“Glass is a material with a soul, glass is a mystery”*, a woman has told us. Another person, student Zuzana, delivered a story: *“A while ago, I frequently travelled past a dump in our border area. I saw something that was glittering strangely in the sun, so I came nearer to take a look: among the different heaps of rubbish, there was a heap from the local glass factory. I did not*

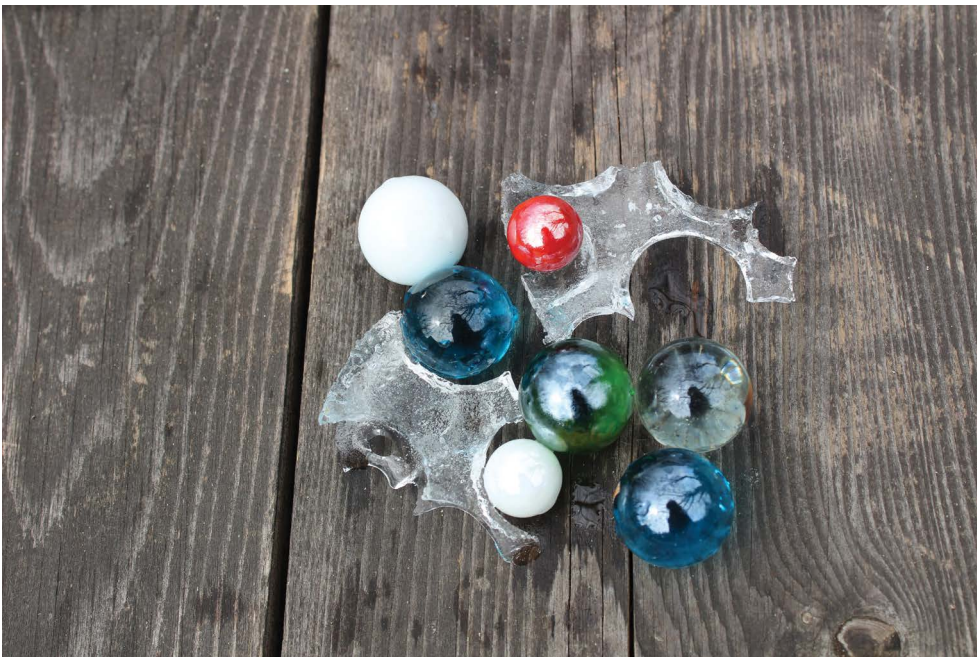


Figure 1.18 Glass is a mystery. A family activity. The set of glass balls used for playing is the result of creating a composition where several materials (glass, ice, wood) are in a juxtaposition and where natural and human processes play a major role.

hesitate for a second, found out who the owner was and went there once again, this time equipped with a permit to take all the interesting pieces. I spent several hours captivated by the glass. The experience of seeing a large amount of glass in different stages of the production process is still alive inside me, particularly when it's awakened by a look at various glass shapes that now occupy our space, which I brought home”.

An important modality, which was remarkably often repeated in all communications, was the understanding of the glass object as a trigger and preserver of memories. Almost every participant told a story that was tied to a given object: a container of memories that belongs to the family and personal collections of memorabilia. According to psychologist and culturologist Douwe Draaisma, such material metaphors play a crucial role in modelling learning situations. Draaisma refers to Comenius' philosophy and didactics and says, that metaphors combine language with images, abstract with concrete, conceptual with illustrative. They help our imagination to seize what would otherwise remain an empty abstraction. These qualities make metaphors extremely suitable for a didactic function: a mediation of theories (Draaisma 2002). In other words, if we consider metaphor in terms of visual semiotics and unconscious processes of memory, we can also understand the metaphor as a pre-determined artefact-sign, i.e., a cultural sign over-flowing with potential meanings that can never be fully interpreted (Fulka 2008).

The family reunions over glass treasures, which we initiated as part of the pilot probe, became opportunities to tell and listen to stories. The glass objects and gifts were an invitation to reminisce about the people and places associated with them. We came to understand that telling a story is symbolic: it gives us a feeling of certainty. We watched how the joint process of remembering shaped family identities. The containers were being filled with meaning. We were realising that the glass objects were memory containers, physically and mentally associated with remembering people and places. Together, we experienced glass as a celebration (Figure 1.19).



Figure 1.19 Container full of memories and stories What kind of glass do we have? What are we remembering? A family celebration.

“How many recollections can an artefact hold? For example, a 1500 B.C glass bead necklace made in ancient Mesopotamia. How do you quantify the memories connected to an object? When does a recollection of a memory end, is the bigger question”, muses Cornelia, international student who participated in the project.

Policy implications

In the introduction, we explained that this experiment has brought new insights for the research team. It has helped us devise the research methodology and formulate key concepts.

A number of creative activities in this experiment showed us the possibilities that we later applied or developed while working with the minority gallery audience of deaf and socially excluded visitors, as we present in [Part V](#) of this book. However, from the outset, the irreplaceability of direct interpersonal dialogical communication proved utterly apparent, especially in the field of education. We realised that isolation, mediated communication and a lack of communication may become sources of misunderstanding, loneliness and mental health issues. We noticed that the terms well-being, proportionality and sustainability started to come up more often in expert discourse. We believe that for educational policies, these are signals that it is not possible to replace direct education with remote alternatives. We began to realise that interpersonal dialogue and understanding emerge only through a joint effort and in an atmosphere of trust. It is hard to suddenly instigate a change in society, which has been governed by fear spread by the media and the government’s diction thus far, irrespective of the ongoing powerful disinformation campaign that the former Eastern Bloc countries have been exposed to (Výborná 2020).

The echoes of the original fear of the disease still resonate, while social uncertainties, inequalities are deepening and images of unimaginable brutality materialise in the influx of witnesses, physically present and in their true life stories. The fear of existential security is no longer a medial prefabricate, but a reality.

“Fear and fears: individual and collective, combining and reinforcing each other, (the dynamic of fear itself), are charging through our world. [...] Move, or inversely, barricade yourself at home in the hope of preserving your space, according to a logic that is not the search for living space but its preservation” (Paul Virilio 2012).

When, ten years ago, Paul Virilio and Bertrand Richard were doing an interview on the topic of fear, its causes and particularly the effects of its dissemination in the contemporary globalised world for the academic edition *The MIT Press Semiotext(e)*, we read it with curiosity as one of many warnings by philosophers and cultural theorists. It would hardly occur to us that one day, barricading ourselves at home may become a reality. Due to restrictions during the COVID pandemic, the pilot activity of the AMASS research project, focusing on the creation and appreciation of art, and communication about art in public spaces became impossible to organise as planned. We had no idea that this open space would close and a brand-new form of social existence would emerge instead of sharing: life at a distance.

In the Czech Republic, schools were closed for more than a year and a half during the pandemic. It has transpired that it was a political mistake: it will take many years to eliminate the consequences. In the case of children born in specific years, as well as of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, it remains unclear whether this will be possible at all. Unfortunately, remote learning did not cover art education. Art, music and physical education were left out of compulsory education for a lengthy period. As the

ongoing curricular reviews are showing, this blackout strengthened the already existing voices pointing to the uselessness of art subjects. As members of the expert society, we have been facing these utilitarian opinions. Besides schools, galleries and museums remained shut for a long time, too. To an unprecedented extent, they were gradually digitalising and publicising their collections and educational programmes online. They experimented with new forms of communication with visitors in an effort to keep them interested. Unfortunately, attendance analyses continuously point to decreased interest.

Nevertheless, despite the above, the data we collected and their analysis indicate that people feel the need to rejoice in the beauty of art together and to participate in creating culture. They also point to the irreplaceable role of artists and teachers in the processes of enculturation. Artistic practice does not emerge without their involvement.

Conclusion

We were searching for possibilities to overcome isolation and create compassion through admiring the art of glass. In situations where all is vanishing very fast, we were interested in what is permanent and old. We were observing the possible forms of communication around art emerging from the period of isolation.

Using a small, diverse research sample, we have demonstrated the creative and cognitive potentiality of art in developing social cohesion. We presented art as building communication bridges between marginalised or isolated individuals. In this respect, we consider our own collective experience of social isolation of key importance. We have also shown the significant role that teachers and artists play in overcoming cultural distance where they actively seek to create a common space for communication. As a result of the extreme situation presented by lockdown, we were confronted with the following question: Who needs art? The traditional aesthetic category has reappeared in its existential form. Our response is as follows: most of us do in one way or another. The testimonies point to the strong need that people, including children, have to perceive and experience beauty and create it, too. It brings us joy and, in some situations, also relief. We have prefaced the text with a quotation about fear and anxiety. The worries that the pandemic has brought are unfortunately still here reinforced by the incredible stories of witnesses and survivors of the war too close. We are afraid of the unknown, isolation and uncertainty. Artistic practices may be a source of relief and a signpost for us, maybe a resource of cognition?

What have we done with the findings? The pilot study has launched a series of follow-up experiments, which we present in the other case studies included in this book. Paradoxically, “thanks” to the improving pandemic situation, it was possible to undertake some of the project outputs in real life; unfortunately, others have had to keep a reduced format or a remote form. From now on, we all must be able to better appreciate authentic, unmediated experiences. The first experiment has also led the artist Jan Pfeiffer to the artefact *Transformation The Cut for New Age*, dedicated to the AMASS project, which has been published on the project website. It has become a basis not only for our subsequent pedagogical thinking but also in a performative Open Form approach which has been used in a workshop at the GASK gallery³ with the public. The topic of inclusion, which we have been able to identify in our pilot probe and which is highly topical in the Czech educational environment, has become a central theme for our team; we keep developing it further. Thanks to this step, we have been able to initiate new partnerships with institutions and establishments. In hindsight, we see that the pilot probe and consequent research project have very much fulfilled its purpose.

Notes

- 1 Novotná, M., Pfeiffer, J. (2021). Transformation: Cut for New Suit (for New Age). ECER 2021 European Conference on Educational Research. Geneva (online) 6. – 10. 9. 2021.
- 2 For ethical reasons, the participants' names have been changed.
- 3 GASK, the Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region: <https://gask.cz/en/visit/about-us>

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7 Cut for New Times

Emancipatory effects of artistic open form

Magdalena Novotná and Marie Fulková

Theme of the project

The focus of this case study is on prospective teachers' inclusive university education. Since 2016, inclusive education has been steadily implemented in the Czech education system. Society has not yet assimilated its concepts, various types of schools have continued to struggle with the introduction of individual measures and universities are not an exception. After a year of distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we realized that the number of students with special needs was increasing, particularly students with mental health issues. Students' unhappiness with isolation has been demonstrated through their distance learning experiences. Of course, students with special needs face increased social isolation which has been exacerbated by distance learning. The absence of meetings has had an impact on our ability to communicate, cooperate and organize our time. It has had an impact on our work ethic and our well-being. We realized how burdensome distance digital learning can be despite some organizational benefits. On the contrary, we valued social modes of learning, such as dialogical teaching and collaborative artistic creation processes. This case study explores the possibilities of an artistic "open form". It validates ways to use it in communication with students with special needs and to promote social cohesion among teaching staff. It describes an open experiment which was conducted in the spring of 2021, after a year-long pandemic, at the moment when the school system began to "get used to" its new digital technology.

Target population

We conducted the experiment digitally through the Teams platform with a group of female students, who are prospective art teachers. We approached five students at the Department of Education who were classified as with special needs. One of them joined the group, one declined and the others did not respond. Our aim was to connect students with special needs by engaging them with others. Eight students from various study programmes also joined the group, two of whom were representatives of a student association that organizes various events for students, e.g. social events, introductory courses for new students and studios. Total of nine female students participated in the experiment. The heterogeneity of the group was deliberate; we wanted to capture the maximum range of views and situations because we understand inclusive education as individualized, as such, that strives for quality education of all students. We see the university as an open space for a socially and culturally diversified community. We strive to create a space of equal opportunities and equal treatment with an interest in the diverse needs of

all students so that we can support all of them in a focused way, with the aim of maximizing their educational potential. In this context, it is necessary to state that the support of students with SN is based on the principle of voluntariness, so-called self-determination. Students must actively sign up for it. They undergo the so-called functional diagnostics, which characterizes the type of their disadvantage and provides the basis for drawing up a suitable support plan. Through administrative procedures, students thus come out of anonymity and have the opportunity to use support in the form of consultations with a representative of the study department and the coordinator of the relevant department. They play the role of mentors and, if necessary, mediate communication with teachers. A student with SN can use appropriate support measures (e.g. interpreting, special equipment, student tutor support, modified study materials, modification of study obligations, consultations in the academic counselling centre).

Methodology and procedure (emphasis on the experimental process)

Unlike previous inclusion-oriented experiments, we have turned our attention to our own institution, the Department of Art Education of the Faculty of Education, Charles University, with the intention of “putting our own house in order”. In the case study entitled *Cut for New Times: Collaborative project at the School for the Deaf and the Museum of Decorative Art in Prague*, we realized that a paternalistic view that considers a disadvantage to be a “deficiency” necessarily reinforces the unbalanced relationship between the caregiver and their wards. We also want to avoid this in our approach to students with special needs. We seek to break the vicious circle of misunderstanding and failure; we abandon the distinction between us and them. In the experiment, we tried to follow up on the above-mentioned administrative procedures of the study agenda with an artistic experiment; to use artistic procedures for direct communication with student representatives, thereby opening and setting up space for emancipation. A previous survey carried out by the university showed a lack of communication as one of the main obstacles in supporting students with SN. Therefore, we asked ourselves: *What do we need to do to understand each other?* In keeping with the Cut for New Times theme, which connects all the project experiments, we state: *We can be a collective tailor and sew something new that makes us feel good.* The research questions were: *Can we communicate through art in a digital environment? How to build trust through art practices?*

Magdalena Novotná, one of the co-authors of the case study, acts as a contact person for students with special needs. She plays the role of a mentor, consults with students on the fulfilment of their study duties and mediates relationships with other teachers and the study department if students apply and request it. Marie Fulková is the principal investigator of the AMASS project. From her position, she introduces research topics focused on the reflection of the discussed topics from the point of view of broader social contexts and from the point of view of the implementation of inclusive and collaborative elements into the study programmes. Both also have leadership roles at the Department of Art Education. Therefore, we cannot omit the managerial aspect in the research probe. Since the probe originated in the environment of teacher training, let us recall that the means is to some extent the goal here. In an effort to educate teachers – reflective practitioners, we expect students to use inclusive practices in their future practices that they themselves have gone through. Jan Pfeiffer’s view is artistic. It is he who brought personal experience to the project with the open form, sensitivity to the use of space along with an emphasis on the course of artistic creation.

If we talk about shared space and attention to the needs of others above, the ethic of care offers us a suitable support. The concern for the voices and experiences of the marginalized and the drive to continuously change practices are underpinned by values such as belonging, helpfulness and consideration. We understand “Doing ethics” as responding to the identified needs of students, in our case changing practices in terms of refining the student support system and transforming the thinking of all players. Responsibility, trust and solidarity appear among the ethical qualities as articulated by, for example, Joan Tronto (2010, 2012). As we will see below, they also emerged as central themes of the experiment.

To establish or restore communication disrupted by the COVID pandemic, we used the artistic process of open form. This concept was created by Finnish-Polish architect and theorist Oskar Hansen. He focused it on participation, process and change of hierarchy between artist and viewer. He developed strategies of uncertainty, flexibility and collective participation. He advocated the formation of space as a “perceptive background”, revealing the richness of events and the diversity of individuals co-present in space. The wave of communities and collective creation was an attractive opportunity to share cultural and social values. Hansen applied the principles of open form in his compositional, architectural work and described them in the book *Towards Open Form/Ku Formie Otwartej*. This way of working was subsequently adopted by the younger generation of Polish artists, headed by Sofia Kulik, who introduced the method into her teaching practice at the Sztuk Pieknych Academy in Warsaw. The documented unbridled séances represented an island of freedom under the communist regime. When watching video recordings, the viewer may get a sense of improvisation and randomness, but the opposite is true. Open form has its rules. It has no theme, it can be played anywhere and with anyone, and its main principle is action and reaction. Reactions are spontaneous, usually using the first idea. There is no wrong step; the only wrong step is no step at all. For collective creation, both interactions and non-verbal continuous communication are necessary. The end of the action always follows from the situation. The open form allows you to explore boundaries, discover new artistic possibilities and unite a group of participants. Each participant gets to know themselves and their needs during the game. In the Czech environment, Zbygniew Libera applied the open form procedures. At the turn of 2008 and 2009, he led a two-semester workshop at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague as a visiting professor. In his Workshop of Open Form, Libera developed his own original series of methods of working with students, thus giving the tradition of open form a new dimension (Libera, 2008–2009). In the interviews, Libera and the participants of open forms talk about the creation of a “freeland”, a specific space of freedom, trust and relaxation. In the pedagogical context, this moment can be understood in conjunction with well-being, which currently resonates in the theory and educational policies of many countries (McLellan et al., 2012; Novotná and Schreiberová, 2021; Seligman, 2011, 2014; SKAV, 2021).

Procedure

As part of the experiment, three open forms took place. However, they had to be implemented online via the Microsoft Teams platform due to pandemic reasons. The open forms took the form of joint visual actions in the Microsoft Whiteboard and Onenote drawing environment. We chose digital tools with regard to their availability for students and tested them for educational purposes. Online meetings were preceded by an organizational part

led by Magdalena who communicated with students by email. She repeatedly invited students from several courses which included students with special needs to the event.

The open forms followed up the themes formulated by the symposium *The Art of Being Different*, held in Prague on 8 March 2021.¹ The implementation was based on the experience that resulted from interviews conducted with faculty stakeholders: Psychologist Anna Kucharská, Member of the Scientific Board of the Faculty of Education and the Dean's College, Vice-Dean for Accreditation and Quality of Educational Activities and Head of Support for Students with Special Needs of the Faculty of Education, Special Educator Vanda Hájková, Faculty Representative in the Academic Senate of Charles University and Kristýna Janyšková, Consultant of the Study Department for Special Needs of applicants and students.

The first meeting took place on 14 April 2021 and was attended by seven students. It opened up the themes of being different, inclusion, communication and understanding that arose from the symposium *The Art of Being Different*, and at the same time from the experience of a year-long distance learning, which showed frustration with isolation, the impossibility of meeting face to face and physically – directly communicating with each other. The open form initiated a movement from the edges towards attention, trying to give space for being together, getting to know the others and expressing oneself collectively. She saw imagination as a means of change. After a short discussion, participants were asked to choose together a metaphor from the submitted text that captured their current experiences and moods. The title of the poem, *I register delayed reactions*, subsequently became the starting point for drawing together.

The possibilities of drawing have been significantly limited by the digital means of the Whiteboard programme: imposed colour, digital smoothness of the plastic being touched, a lack of context, inertness. As particularly irritating, we experienced the fact that everyone can see something different on their screen. Although the screen is shared, no one knows what the other person can see. The participants are not sure that everyone can hear. They want to determine the order in which they will alternate in action according to the list of the MS Teams participants, but everyone can see a different order and, moreover, the order keeps changing. Finally, Magdalena invites the students to react, calling on them like at school. It reduces spontaneity, the possibility to react spontaneously. Physical reactions were ruled out by the digital medium itself – distance communication. Anonymous bodies did not share a common space. In the process of actions and reactions, it was not always clear who intervened, who was drawing and who had already finished drawing. Not all participant icons were visible or active. It depended on who had which window open on the screen. In our eyes, such semi-anonymity demonstrates the degree of depersonalization of distance communication. Compared to Zbygniew Libera's open forms, we see a big difference in this (Libera, 2008–2009). Information technologies thus distort empathy. We were also irritated by the framing of the visual field. The Whiteboard does not display the entire drawing area. Repeatedly, it happened that someone was drawing, but did not see what, because the mouse went out of the screen end, or they saw what they were drawing, but the others didn't see it. We already realized this during the first attempt at drawing and we counted on it during the second one. We think it caused the wide angle of the joint drawing. We just interpret it as a way in which the boundaries and barriers that are in the centre of interest are symbolically revealed.

The second meeting took place on 28 April 2021 with five female students participating. The participants tried to capture their irritating experience from the previous

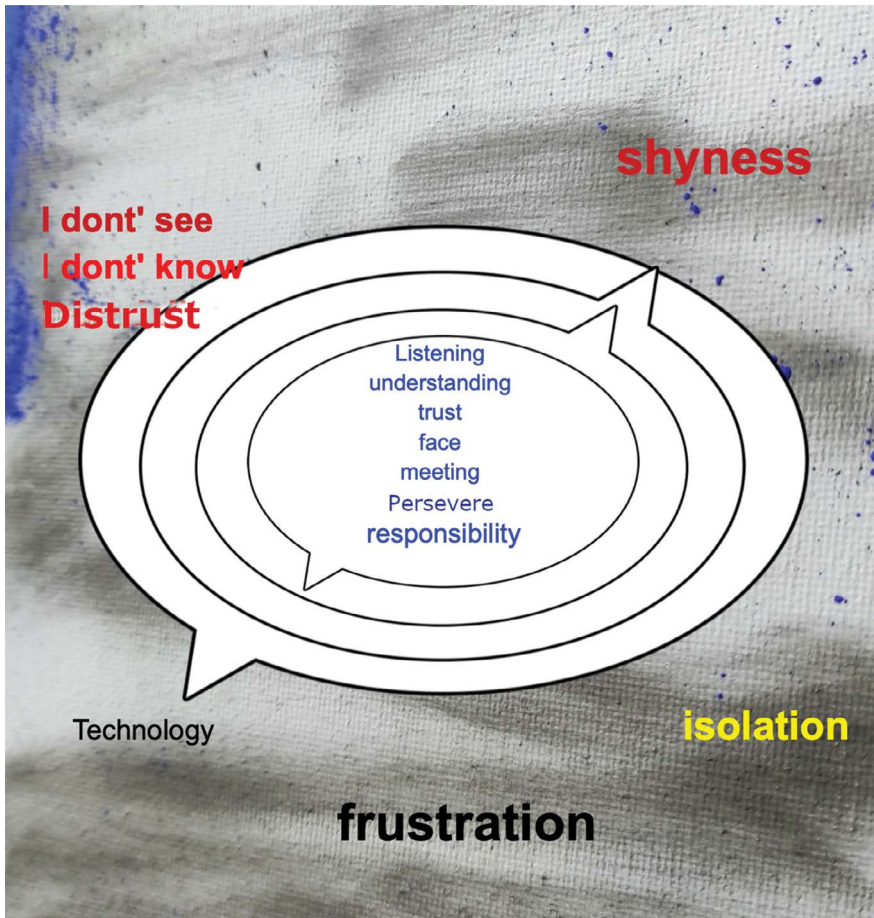


Figure 1.20 Jan Pfeiffer (2021) created a visual map of the central concepts: listening, understanding, trust, face, meeting, persevere, responsibility, surrounded by concepts that sound negative in relation with communication: distrust, shyness, technology, frustration and isolation.

open form in a poetic, jointly composed text which can be read as absurd. We present its English translation:

Majda is here!
Hello! I'm glad we got together.
We'll wait for the others.

I can't see anything.
I don't know who's talking?
My pencil isn't working, I can't draw.

Majda is here!
I don't know when my turn is?
Hello! I'm glad we got together.

Talking about your feelings is easy?
 Could someone draw it for me?
 I'm going to tell you what to do.
 Can you see that?

Draw the line from left to right, and then stop and make a thick wall there.
 I can't see beyond the edge. How do I move there?
 Those signals come back here and are kind of intermittent.
 Oh yeah, I can't see that. This is beyond my horizon.
 I'm glad we got together.
 Majda is here!

The text responds to the specific temporality of distance communication, which is lengthy, postponed and broken depending on the Internet connection of the participants. It also reflects “digital powerlessness” and captures “digital solidarity”. We repeatedly encountered different types of boundaries and barriers in the process of co-creation. In the text, they are symbolically named as a horizon, a thick wall or a border.

In the meeting, we dealt with the following topics: **signs of trust, signs of distrust and signs of responsibility**. The students responded individually with individual drawings.

The common discussion was followed by a series of individually conducted online interviews with female students. The following questions were asked: What helps to build trust at the faculty and in the society? When do you feel shy at school? What helps you overcome it? In what situations do you perceive distrust? What is an obstacle for you in your studies? What stresses you out in your studies? Why? How do you understand inclusive teaching? What possibilities does art education have in it? The interviews were analysed. The map (Figure 1.20) reflects main concepts.

The third and final meeting took place on 5 May 2021. It took the form of an online workshop during which the form of media communication with students with special needs was discussed. The result of this meeting was the modification of the existing website and Facebook pages of the Department of Art Education in terms of new wording. A new node was created with short messages to students.

Assessment methods

Primary documents of the experiment are collected in hermeneutical unit HU 5. They include an introductory correspondence with the addressed students, a video recording and transcript of the Art of Being Different symposium, lesson plans, video recordings of three online meetings and their transcripts, visual documentation of the course of open forms, which includes 16 printscreens, transcripts of interviews with students, written responses of students who were not present at the second meeting, recordings of interviews with stakeholders and their transcripts, and a written reflection by Magdalena Novotná.

For the data analysis, we used a hybrid research methodology based on a three-phase reflection according to Donald Schön (1983): the in-action reflection had already taken place at the second and third meetings; the on-action reflection was carried out by Magdalena immediately after the end of the third meeting. She transcribed the recordings and combined the collected documents into one file, which she sent to two other researchers who provided feedback. The third phase of reflection on-action-on-action took place several months later. The two researchers encoded texts and visual documentation partly

using Grounded Theory. In joint discussions, they triangulated code lists and working concept maps. This is how a structured concept map was created, which was handed over to Jan Pfeiffer for interpretation. Jan created its final visual form.

Online communication has not worked well for many students with special needs. It was difficult for them to establish contact with teachers; they were ashamed or it was harder for them to orient themselves in their study duties. The neuralgic points they emphasized are described above.

Outcomes

This experiment raises more questions than answers. Its outcomes show the effort to change the mindset of people, students and teachers, who – together – form a community; efforts to transform the processes that affect not only its current functioning in this community, but also the future form of education in the Czech Republic. These are subtle and invisible processes that we cannot measure or prove. We can only read them from the reactions of the participants and hear them from their words: *Building trust is a long way in which small things form a big picture. When I mess it up, it means nothing. I have another chance.* To the question, in what situations do you perceive mistrust? we heard: *If the control is too obvious, e.g., in conversations, in disparaging the answers... Too strict school regulations and rules anchor distrust. Also the GDPR and official rules.* We have realized that a change in attitude consists of many small steps towards openness and understanding of the individual needs.

The main thing we have had in mind during the whole project, not only in this case study, is emancipation and responsibility. We consider intellectual and creative emancipation to be the main purpose of education and training. We are inspired by the thinking of Jacques Rancière with his understanding of emancipation, described in the book *Le maître ignorant*. Following this, we ask ourselves urgent questions.

Joan Tronto (2010, p. 165), in her enumeration of seven warning signs of poor care, states the following: “Care is narrowed to care giving, rather than understanding the full process of care, which includes attentiveness to needs and the allocation of responsibility”. We take it seriously that the care system is necessary and does not separate care from responsibility. We would only change the wording of “assigning responsibility” to “taking responsibility” in the sense of active taking over. In this, we advocate the statement of Jacques Rancière:² “*Education is like freedom: education is not given, education is taken*”. Nor do we take Joan Tronto’s warning lightly that care must not be seen as a commodity, but as a process. If we were to think of ourselves as consumers, we would be denying ourselves the right to make decisions about our needs (p. 164).

We took this knowledge to heart when we mapped the whole system of support for students with SN, in which we actively participated. Several teachers of our department studied in the system of university lifelong learning courses and contributed to their development by sharing experiences with student support. We have summarized our experience in supporting students with SN through participatory artistic practices and we hope that they will be used in preparation of a course focused on the development of well-being of students with SN.

We understand responsibility as the central concept of the whole project, precisely in connection with emancipation. We understand emancipation as gaining independence gradually, as taking responsibility for ourselves and others. In his ethics, E. Lévinas makes an absolute claim to responsibility to others. He understands meeting “the face of

the Other” as ethical experience that changes our lives. He takes it as a challenge to give something of himself (Lévinas, 1994, pp. 178–182). With Lévinas, we realize the connection between the words answer and responsibility. Lévinas says that the Face of the Other allows conversation. And he sees the conversation as an expression of an authentic relationship with another person that makes us responsible. He also says that we do not have to take responsibility for the other one, and that it falls to us by itself. He associates responsibility with freedom: *“I can’t be free without being responsible prior to that”*. Different people are differently independent or, conversely, differently dependent on each other. It might seem that Lévinas’ extreme claim is a concept unacceptable for our time and way of communication. However, in light of current events and the growing threat to Western democratic values, Lévinas’ understanding of absolute responsibility for the other does not seem so metaphysical. Does this idea not sound completely topical and completely understandable for the current, any everyday situation? “Above all, there is the straightness of the face itself, its direct, defenseless exposure. The most naked, most uncovered is always the skin of the face. (...) The face has something essentially miserable in itself; the proof is that we are trying to mask this misery with poses, behavior. The face is exposed, threatened, as if directly calling for an act of violence. At the same time, thus, it is the face that prevents us from killing” (Lévinas, 1994, pp. 178–182).

The goal we are aiming for is to lead students with SN to independence and responsibility by talking to them on an ongoing basis, asking about their needs and involving them in deciding what form care should take. As the interviews showed: based on the experience of reflected participatory creation, the participants perceived cooperation as a means of achieving change in terms of responsibility and trust. They talked about the responsibility they feel when meeting the Other and about being sensitive to the other’s needs. They projected responsibility into the concept of dialogue. They pointed out that proactivity and responsibility come when people feel they can make changes. We have no doubt that we are talking about a never-ending process of adjusting the conditions of study, demands, ways of speaking, personal positions and adaptation.

Policy implications

First, this case report has brought an understanding of the whole system of support for students with special needs at the Faculty of Education and the entire university. As we mentioned above, we consider the understanding of the whole to be important especially in that the individual elements of care are not separated and are not considered a commodity, but remain associated with an interest in the real needs of the supported students and with the right to responsibility. We managed to establish relationships with stakeholders and important players in the system of support of students with SN. We also managed to establish closer cooperation with some of them and set up individual mechanisms that currently suit.

We believe that co-creation and participation in the open form helped to create a more open space at our department. We hope that they have also brought about the aforementioned mutual trust, although in this respect it is true that this is a fluid, never-ending process and not a final result. We are convinced that even inclusion in the university environment is not a *fait accompli*, but something that needs to be formed on an ongoing basis.

The same applies to well-being, respectively, interest in the quality of professional and study life of students, teachers and the official apparatus. As many authors have argued, art makes it possible to overcome the urgency of the moment (Adams, 2016; Gilligan, 2008;

Goulding, 2013). That is why we are talking about artistic practices in connection with well-being. McLellan et al. (2012) have demonstrated that collaboration allows for a sense of belonging to others and, combined with an active approach to learning, leads to a sense of well-being. We view well-being as a condition of education, not as a goal.

Conclusion

The course of the open form clearly showed the limits of distance communication and revealed the difficulty and sometimes impossibility of mutual understanding through these technologies. We consider distance learning mediated by information technologies and based on digital communication only as an additional method, not as an alternative to direct, full-time education. We already know that it cannot fulfil social functions such as sharing, being with others and getting to know them. It cannot replace contact with other people. Distance learning, however, builds some of the new digital barriers and limitations we described above.

Changing internal processes and attitudes is a long-term matter. It would be illusory to think that one case report would bring about such a change. We realize that we are at the beginning of the journey we want to continue. We also want to explore, for example, the emancipatory potential of the open form.

Notes

- 1 <https://youtu.be/M0zLZF33N1s>
- 2 Rancière, 1987 (překl. aut.).

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8 Studying the impact of a collaborative art workshop on social inclusion

Raphael Vella and Milosh Raykov

Main themes

Suitable Citizens was a collaborative art workshop carried out by a team of researchers and artists at the University of Malta in 2021, as part of the EU-funded “Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture” (AMASS) project. The artistic component of the workshop employed a multi-media approach, combining the teaching of the core knowledge and skills required for screen printing, photography, filming and editing, sewing and stencilling. The research component of this project was based on a mixed-methods approach.

The main objective of this study was to examine the possibility of using a collaborative art workshop to bring people from different backgrounds together in a community-building process that simultaneously advocates for social justice, empowerment and civic engagement. The study also examines the challenges that persons arriving from African countries in Malta face, particularly challenges relating to citizenship, integration and inclusion in local cultural life. The research was informed by the idea that contact between locals and migrants, especially small groups of migrants, can lead to positive interpersonal interaction, despite the stigma towards sub-Saharan migrants in Malta (Korostelina and Camilleri 2017). It also sought to promote the work and challenges discussed in the sessions beyond the workshop to contribute to the inclusion of migrants, to make a positive influence on public opinions about migrants and other marginalised social groups and to contribute to social cohesion in Malta.

Target population

The research team worked with a local NGO, Jesuit Refugee Service, to recruit participants from the migrant population in Malta. Potential candidates were recruited by the Jesuit Refugee Service, and informed about the aims of the research study and workshop schedule. The recruitment was focused on participants from different African countries, given the various challenges and forms of discrimination that migrants often face. Initially, seven participants were recruited, but one of them dropped out after the first session due to personal reasons. Another participant from the same region was trained in mobile filmmaking and editing to document the whole process (Vella 2021).

Methodology and procedure

The research team consisted of the project coordinator, Raphael Vella and Milosh Raykov, supported by research assistants Karsten Xuereb and Margerita Pulè. Artists Sarah Maria Scicluna, Giola Cassar and Luke Azzopardi led six of the ten sessions in the workshop.

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The team adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining arts-based, qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. For the six participants in the main workshop, the arts-based method focused on the acquisition of artistic knowledge and skills through structured instructional scaffolding techniques designed by four members of the academic and artistic team. One additional participant was trained to document the workshop using video and still photography (Figure 1.21). This participant was trained and guided by two German filmmakers and curators Sabine Küper-Büsch and Thomas Büsch. This aspect of the project has been studied in some detail in another publication (Vella 2021).

The data for the quantitative component of the mixed-methods evaluation study included anonymous pre- and post-assessment surveys conducted with the six workshop participants. The survey collected data about participants' expectations and experiences of screen printing and other techniques, participation in art-related activities and their opinions about the potential impact of socially engaged art on issues of social justice, empowerment and inclusion. In the last section of this survey, the participants were asked



Figure 1.21 A participant trained in mobile filmmaking interviews another participant.
Photo: Raphael Vella.

to provide some general demographic information. Another survey conducted at the end of the project during a pop-up exhibition was designed for the evaluation of visitors' experiences, attitudes towards inclusion and the potential of socially engaged art to change public opinions towards marginalised social groups.

The qualitative component of the evaluation study consisted of a focus group interview with the workshop participants during the first session, PhotoVoice method, individual interviews, artists' journals and notes collected by artists over the course of the workshop. The focus group interviews and PhotoVoice were integrated as a community-based participatory research method into the pedagogical structure of the workshop, serving to develop ideas that fed into creative output. Some of the discussions during the focus group were conducted in a creative way, producing texts that could later be integrated into artistic outcomes. Participants referred to integration challenges related to religion, language, skin colour and so on, but some form of mitigation was available due to the input of NGOs specialised in their field. One of them referred to challenges she faced regularly: "If you are a single mother in Malta, it's very difficult. Also, if you are illiterate. The language barrier can be difficult. For me, what is difficult is that I am a mother". However, the arts-based methods used in the workshop were very popular and largely contributed to the regular attendance of all participants. One of the participants was happy to have learnt new skills: "I didn't know how to make screen printing. I just did this today. I like the workshop because I'm an artist and this is an opportunity for me to become a better artist".

Following the sixth session, some artefacts produced by participants were donated to four local volunteers (an artist-academic, a writer, a CEO in a national agency and a psychotherapist) to collect data about their experiences and opinions about the workshop and its central issues through their Facebook posts. Some participants were happy about this dissemination of artefacts they had produced. One of them said: "It feels amazing because I didn't think that my work would be seen by any other person apart from me". The methodological approach applied in this experimental study is extensively described in another publication (Raykov and Vella 2021).

Procedure

The workshop was initially planned to last 30 hours but was prolonged by 20 hours since the participants requested further sessions. Each session lasted five hours, with two short breaks. Before the first workshop session, the participants completed a pre-assessment survey. In the first session, the participants took part in a focus group interview, during which they discussed various topics related to their experiences in Malta, advocacy, work and the arts. Some of their themes and statements (related to their dreams, integration and so on) were later interpreted in their designs for stencils. This was followed by a basic introduction to photographic techniques (light, composition, pattern, etc.), a photographic task using their mobile phones and an introduction to screen printing techniques, tools and historical context.

Between the first and the second sessions, participants took more photographs on their own based on the following broad categories: *People, Places, Things*. A selection of these images was transformed by a member of the research team into halftone photos and exposed on screens. During the second session, the participants took part in a PhotoVoice session, during which they gave interpretations of their own photographs. They were then introduced to printing inks and registration methods on paper. During this session, they all experienced the screen printing process and related procedures, like cleaning screens. In the

following sessions, they learnt how to screen print photos on tote bags and other fabrics for face masks and chiffon scarves, and they understood the curing process for inks. They also learnt basic sewing techniques and modelled some of their artefacts with a professional photographer and fashion designer. These sessions were accompanied throughout by discussions about their images as well as topics that emerged in the images.

At the end of the sixth session (30 hours), the participants filled in the post-assessment survey. The success of this workshop up to this point led us to prepare an additional four sessions on stencilling, during which the participants produced new sets of photographs and then stencilled their images on paper and fabric. During these sessions, they developed new skills related to stencilling and the use of brushes, dabbers, acetate sheets and so on. During the final sessions, participants produced a large 3-metre $\times$ 1.5-metre stencilled textile piece as a group.

To develop self-confidence and public speaking skills, participants were sometimes interviewed about their experiences by the participant who was trained in basic mobile filmmaking and editing.

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

Assessment methods

Relatively standard assessment procedures used in art education were used to assess the art-based methods. Each of the four artist-teachers involved in the workshop provided an individual assessment of participants' progress as well as a general evaluation of the workshop sessions.

The photographs, images and designed texts produced by the participants were analysed to identify the main themes and patterns emerging from the visual data. These findings were integrated with notes collected during the Focus Group and PhotoVoice sessions.

The artists' journals and notes were coded in order to evaluate the success of the pedagogies adopted and other issues like the artistic outcome, participants' teamwork and so on. Images were categorised in the three broad groups that were used as guiding topics (people, places and things) as well as another more symbolic category reserved for more personal topics. References to historical or religious buildings and monuments were made by some of the participants (Figure 1.24). The latter included drawings by one participant that referred to political themes like freedom and political issues in the African continent. While some of the images were relatively straightforward and referred only to personal features (like selfies) or personal preferences (for example, some types of food), others were anecdotal or made cultural allusions, and led to deeper discussions during the workshop.

Photos taken later in the workshop referred to heritage sites in Malta, while the artistic results became more confident as the course progressed. In combination with the increasing familiarity of participants with each other, this helped to boost their sense of motivation and creativity. In the final sessions, the participants were taught basic stencilling techniques, and this led to some of the most creative results. The final outcome was a three-metre-tall group patchwork made with 50 stencilled images (Figure 1.22). Creating this group piece involved the participants in brainstorming exercises about the composition of artefacts, colour combinations and conceptual decisions that showed evidence of a certain maturity in their artistic output. This final group piece also indicated that the participants could work together effectively as a team. It was shown in several exhibitions both in Malta and internationally.



Figure 1.22 Fixing and ironing the patchwork fabric. Photo: Elisa von Brockdorff.

Due to the limited number of participants, this was primarily a qualitative mixed-methods study based on textual, audio, visual and video materials and survey results. Due to the limited number of participants, to describe and identify the general patterns and the outcomes of participants' engagement in socially engaged arts, results were reported mainly through graphical data presentation.

Data from the visitor survey were analysed using exploratory, descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to describe and identify relationships between various factors that determine visitors' experiences and opinions about socially engaged art and attitudes towards migrants who often experience social marginalisation.

Results of the thematic analysis were integrated with quantitative data according to the research questions about the participants' experiences and attitudes towards socially engaged arts and the possibility for social inclusion of migrants.

Outcomes

Consistent findings from pre-workshop and post-workshop evaluations, visitor survey, artists' journals and artworks evaluations demonstrate that the workshop was successful. During the workshop, there was a noticeable improvement in their quality of work and participants' knowledge and skills. As well, participants' well-being has significantly improved compared to the beginning of the workshop, leading to a more positive and relaxed atmosphere that contributed to the creative results towards the end.

As [Figure 1.23](#) shows, workshop participants reported the most significant improvements of their general skills required for screen printing, knowledge about tools, equipment and inks for screen printing, the origin and history of printing, sewing skills and

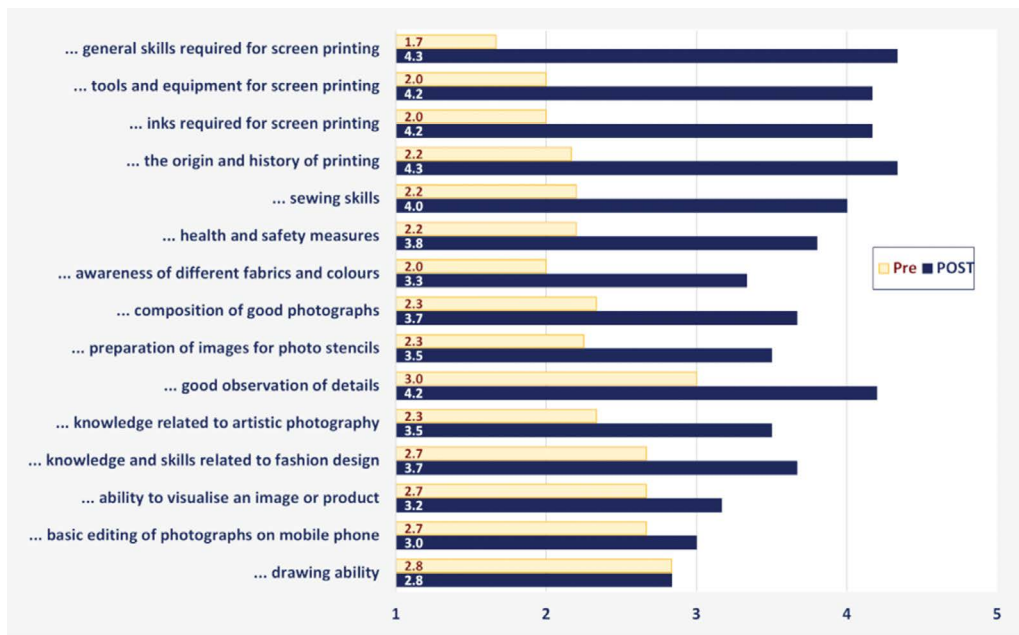


Figure 1.23 Knowledge and skills developed through participation in the workshop.

knowledge about health and safety measures required for screen printing. Several participants also reported a significantly increased awareness of different fabrics and colours, understanding of the composition of good photographs, preparation of images for photo stencils, improved ability to observe details and increased knowledge related to artistic photography and knowledge and skills related to fashion design. Some small improvements are also noticeable regarding the basic editing of photographs on mobile phones and the ability to visualise an image or product. The only domain where the improvement was not reported was the drawing ability due to the relatively short duration of the workshop and the focus on screen printing.

During participation in the workshop, participants most noticeably improved their well-being manifested through their positive feelings about themselves, feeling loved, relaxed and optimistic, energetic, interested in others and close to others. Some negligible improvements were identified regarding participants' ability to make up their minds, think clearly and deal with problems. A lack of improvement was noticeable concerning participants' interest in new things, confidence and usefulness, and cheerful mood (see Figure 1.24).

Qualitative analysis found that the participants learnt how to use art to make symbolic statements about the world. The collected qualitative data from interviews also confirmed some findings from the literature on migration and asylum seekers in Malta (for example, JRS Malta, aditus Foundation & Integra Foundation 2016), eliciting powerful stories about challenges related to language barriers, lack of empathy and racial discrimination. Some of the participants realised that art can be a career, albeit not an easy one. One of them said, "I really thought that it would be just play but with the training that we received, (I can understand) those that are doing it as a career because ...you know they are not playing".

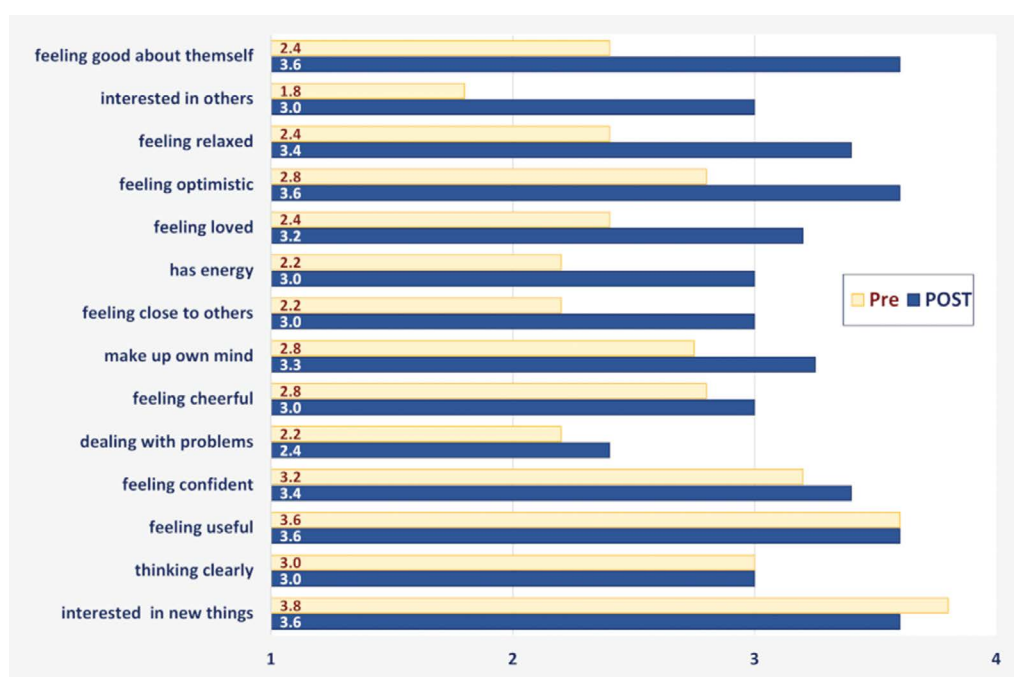


Figure 1.24 Well-being of participants during participation in the workshop.

Also, highly positive feedback was received from most visitors of the pop-up exhibition organised at the end of the workshop. Press coverage of this event led to additional support being offered by members of the public. Given the success of the AMASS testbed workshop, an agreement has been reached with a national youth agency to offer two new basic art workshops for groups of local and migrant youths in 2022, fully funded by the agency.

Some of the main outcomes and indicators are summed up in a tabular form here.

<i>Outcomes of Suitable Citizens project</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Development of technical skills	• Four artist-teachers agreed that participants' skills in screen printing, composition, photography, sewing and stencilling significantly improved. • Participants' work and ideas tended to become more confident and creative as the workshop progressed. • The pre- and post-assessment surveys show that the participants believed that their skills improved in many topics taught in the course.
Development of critical and creative thinking skills	• Art was used by some participants to make a statement. • Discussions with participants during focus groups and practical work demonstrated that the participants understood that art and advocacy could go hand in hand. Most participants spoke openly about important issues like integration, detention policies, etc.

(Continued)

<i>Outcomes of Suitable Citizens project</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Development of problem-solving skills and autonomy	Participants were encouraged to make their own choices and take artistic decisions. The participants were keen to learn more by asking questions regularly.
Development of group interaction, team building	Artists' journals indicate that the participants were good team players and supported each other through positivity and encouragement. All the artwork created in the workshop was produced in a spirit of collaboration.
The workshop helped to develop a stronger sense of belonging amongst participants.	In the initial focus group, the participants indicated that they needed to familiarise themselves more with Maltese culture. They took many photos of Maltese sites and monuments and discussed them in PhotoVoice sessions.
The course met the participants' need for a stronger CV (educational achievement).	All participants received a University of Malta Certificate of Participation for their participation in the course.
The project promoted the participants' work and issues related to integration by increasing awareness amongst members of the general public.	- The participants frequently spoke about the lack of understanding amongst members of some local communities towards migrants. They also spoke about their belief that the arts could help social integration. - The artwork of participants was disseminated on Facebook and this initiated some positive online discussion. - The artwork produced during workshop sessions was presented in 2021 at three public exhibitions: the University of Malta, Spazju Kreattiv in Valletta, and at the Mahalla Festival in Istanbul, and visitor surveys demonstrated a highly positive impact on public opinions about migrants. - A report in one of the prominent national newspapers, the Times of Malta, contributed to considerable material support for the work of a workshop participant. - A film produced by one of the participants presented during the exhibitions and on Facebook received broad positive support from the public.
The workshop was successful.	- Attendance was very good throughout the ten workshop sessions (50 hours). The participants requested more sessions after the first 30 hours and also encouraged others to get in contact with the research team to ask about similar workshops. - As a result of this first workshop for migrants, the Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education, in agreement with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh (national youth agency), is offering two standalone study units in visual art to a mix of local and migrant youth in 2022.
The workshop promoted positive emotional well-being.	The surveys indicate that the participants' sense of well-being improved during the workshop (empowered participants, increased their self-confidence, feeling of acceptance, optimism and more positive perceptions of socially engaged art and local citizens).

Policy implications

Several policy documents, as well as the new National Cultural Policy in Malta (Government of Malta 2021), seek to promote social inclusion, cultural access and wider participation of all members of Maltese society, regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, religious belief, regardless of their personal characteristics and orientations. The cultural policy seeks to use artistic innovation for the benefit of different communities in Malta and to develop new audiences in the arts, based on the unfavourable findings in recent national studies (Arts Council Malta 2021a). Based on the collected evidence and a wide public debate, the new *Strategy 2025* (Arts Council Malta 2021b) highlights the central importance of diversity and social inclusiveness within the cultural sphere for the empowerment of marginalised communities through “radical inclusion”.

The evaluation of the *Suitable Citizens* project was guided by the “radical inclusion” rationale and mixed-methods approach used for the collection and interpretation of the evidence. Focus groups with stakeholders conducted as a component of the AMASS study demonstrate that marginalised individuals and/or communities in Malta are rarely included in artistic projects despite such inclusion is likely to might help artists to develop studies relevant for the development of inclusive cultural policy (Vella and Xuereb 2021). The involvement of an NGO specialising in working with migrants demonstrates how inclusive research with marginalised social groups can inform policymakers and contribute to policy development.

Conclusion

The main objective of the *Suitable Citizens* study was to examine the possibility of a participatory, co-creative art workshop in a community-building process and advocate for social justice, empowerment and civic engagement of persons arriving from African countries to Malta.

The evaluation found highly consistent findings from pre- and post-workshop evaluations, visitor surveys, focus group interviews and artists’ journals. Results demonstrated that the art workshop was highly successful in developing participants’ knowledge and skills about art techniques and the development of participants’ self-confidence and public speaking skills. Pre- and post-assessment surveys demonstrated that the participants had high expectations and highly positive experiences of participation. Participants also demonstrated a desire to extend the length of the workshop and recommended the participation in similar activities to others. Visitors indicated almost identical intentions as the participants and a highly positive evaluation of socially engaged art and its potential to contribute to the positive changes of public attitudes towards migrants. Focus groups with stakeholders confirmed a general agreement that marginalised communities are underrepresented in artistic projects and that the involvement of NGOs can contribute to better inclusion and inform policymaking and the implementation of more inclusive policies. Dissemination of the outcomes of the *Suitable Citizens* study resulted in additional public awareness as well as the setting up of new art workshops for marginalised groups. Overall, the *Suitable Citizens* study demonstrated that socially engaged art has great potential to contribute to the social inclusion of migrants.

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Part II

Drama-based interventions for social inclusion



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9 Developing and evaluating a theatre project for youth with intellectual disabilities

*Raphael Vella, Milosh Raykov, Karsten Xuereb
and Toni Attard*

Description of theme

Persons with intellectual disabilities do not often participate in cultural activities in Malta. To our knowledge, theatrical projects bringing together persons with intellectual disabilities and professionals have not been carried out and researched in Malta. The aim of the Opening Doors Theatre Project was to have professional theatre practitioners engage in creative participation with people with mild-to-moderate intellectual disabilities, including some speech impediments. Furthermore, it examined what people with intellectual disabilities think about participation in creative activity with an aim to improve their livelihoods and well-being. In terms of research, it assessed the impact of the involvement of persons with intellectual disabilities in arts-related activities on public attitudes towards the social integration of people with intellectual disabilities.

The Opening Doors Theatre Project collected data about the challenges faced by persons with intellectual disabilities in Malta. The study focused on members of the Opening Doors Association (ODA), a not-for-profit organisation involved in support of people with intellectual disabilities. ODA contributes towards the demystification of issues related to intellectual disabilities by increasing awareness of this significant social issue. One of the main objectives of the study was to create a theatrical production related to themes chosen by or experienced by the participants of the project. The project was coordinated by the creative enterprise Culture Venture led by Toni Attard. Simone Spiteri, writer and dramaturg, wrote the script.

Description of target population

The target population was composed of members of Opening Doors, who responded to the call for participation in this research project. As per Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Malta ratified in 2012, all disabled persons have the legal capacity and are able to provide informed consent. The participants were recruited regardless of their gender and ethnicity or other professional activities and regardless of their educational attainment. The main inclusion criterion was their membership in ODA and their readiness and ability to provide their individual consent to participate in this study. The six initial online workshop groups each included three to six participants, while the physical workshops were open to anyone who was committed to attend on a regular basis. Ten participants attended the physical workshops. The youngest was 19 years old, while all the others were in their twenties or thirties.

Description of methodology and procedure

Methodology

Culture Venture is a creative enterprise made of professionals in the creative field with a strong track record in relation to community engagement. It was contracted to prepare, manage and produce a theatrical production in collaboration with ODA. The rehearsals and production took place at the premises regularly used by the Association. The director of Culture Venture directed the theatrical production and organised data collection during their workshops and the public performance.

This study applied a quasi-experimental qualitatively focused (QUAL-Quant) mixed-methods approach (Creswell and Plano-Clark 2007) due to the complexity of the research questions and the limited number of participants in the Opening Doors AMASS study (Raykov 2021). Another reason for selecting this methodological approach was the nature of the socially engaged art methodology, which is participatory and co-creative and requires a sophisticated approach to collecting and analysing qualitative data (Leavy 2017). The mixed-methods approach was based on the transformative-emancipatory perspective emphasising intentional collaboration and positive relations with marginalised social groups and the researchers' positions on values, social justice, inequity, ethical and epistemological beliefs (Mertens 2003; Taylor and Raykov 2020).

The Association assisted with the recruitment of their members to participate in data collection, including pre-and post-assessment: structured interviews and a focus group interview. The study was approved by the institutional ethics research review board and participation in this anonymous and confidential study was entirely voluntary. All participants were free to accept or refuse to participate as well as to stop participating.

The pre-and post-assessment structured interviews contained questions about the interviewees' interest in and expectations about participatory art, well-being, the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities in theatre and their opinions about different forms of discrimination. The structured interviews also included demographic data related to the participants' basic socio-economic characteristics. A standardised well-being scale was included in both structured interviews. All standardised interviews were conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data collection also included notes taken by the director about the workshop activities. The focus group meeting was held at the end of the project, following three public presentations of the play. The initial plan was to conduct one public performance but, due to strong demand, the play was performed three times. During the focus group meeting, the participants discussed their experience of participating in the research and performance, the feedback they received from others and the impact of projects like these on their attitudes towards socially engaged art and their daily lives (Figures 2.1 and 2.2).

Procedure

The first workshops were held online in January 2020 and were co-led by Toni Attard and Simone Spiteri. During these workshops, the participants were invited to prepare a hand contour drawing on a paper and on each finger they to write (1) a dream; (2) a concern (something they're afraid of); (3) the most important person for them; (4) something they want to change; (5) something they will remember forever. This task was used in order to get to know the participants and their interests at the start of the project.



Figure 2.1 Rehearsal for Opening Doors project. Photos: Elisa von Brockdorff.



Figure 2.2 Rehearsal for Opening Doors project.

Some of the participants' dreams included to be a musician, to be a dancer and in a band, to perform on stage or abroad, to always be happy, to become a teacher and to swim. Concerns included the virus, various animals like bats and cockroaches, stress and fear of rejection. Important persons included parents, boyfriends and friends. Things they would change included issues related to equality, poverty, discrimination and marriage status. Things they would remember forever included going to the theatre or seeing snow for the first time. When asked to suggest themes for the play they could co-create for this project, initial ideas were varied: from topics like autism to equal rights, winning the lottery and how to be a superhero.

The ten participants who went on to be part of the physical workshops in June 2020 were involved in a number of exercises and games about likes, feelings, senses and so on. The workshop leader made sure that exercises included verbal, non-verbal, reactionary and responsive impulses to ensure that all participants could engage equally in the creative process. Words were provided for the groups to select a theme which would serve for the creation of an improvised scene. The themes were family, disability, dreams, friends, work, love and discrimination. The theme of disability was the least popular. Individual thematic choices were as follows: Dreams (X 3), Friends (X 2), Love (X 2), Family (X 1), Discrimination (X 1), Work (X 1). When asked who would like to perform in the show, all participants expressed a keen interest. Meant that the original idea to have a scripted play with three actors had to change completely. Together with Simone, it was decided to opt for a structured devised piece that would be created from the material that emerged in the sessions. This also meant that the team had to build on the various abilities within the group. The specific talent base of the individuals helped the different scenes in the play to take shape and influenced decisions about language (both English and Maltese are used in the play).

The rehearsal process was similar to any other rehearsal process adopted by theatre producers and directors. All artists were included in the creative process and given enough time and space to include their own artistic contribution. The end result was a play called *Is-Sigra tat-Tin* (The Fig Tree), based on the idea of a wishing tree that represents the participants' dreams. The script developed with the input of all actors. Simone left blanks in the text which were then co-created with the actors. The creative process had to be adapted to the particular needs and abilities of the actors. There were certain difficulties with the memorisation of words and utterance of scripted words. This led the creative team to make many changes in the scripted lines, which were replaced by phrases which actors were more comfortable to use or were familiar with. It is important to note that some of these vocal impediments were mainly due to speech difficulties linked to their disability. The presence of Kurt Castillo as a trained speech therapist was crucial to identify ways in which a challenging text could be changed to accommodate the needs of the actors without changing the context of the scene.

Consistency in the use of props and costumes was very important to create a sense of continuity. Changes in the working environment and dramaturgical direction could have easily caused unnecessary distractions. One challenge was the fact that the play would finally be performed in a theatre-in-the-round, at Spazju Kreattiv in Valletta. Working in the round is known to challenge actors on stage, often leading to disorientation. However, since the ODA participants and other actors rehearsed with the exact replica of the stage and use of props, there was negligible disruption on stage. All the participants were disciplined and focused and contributed to the creative process (Figure 2.3).



Figure 2.3 During the public performance.

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

In terms of outcomes, it was noted that the project contributed towards increasing participants' and audiences' understanding of issues related to the life of people with intellectual disabilities. Feedback given by participants during the focus group and in the director's notes shows that participants believe that their participation in projects like *Is-Sigra tat-Tin* needs more exposure. Some of them also stated that the workshop helped to increase their self-confidence and feelings of autonomy and happiness. One participant stated that the group "should do a tour and make more shows for people". Another participant agreed and said that they could do more shows "to educate people". One of them said that they "should go to youth centres, because young people don't know the concept of disability". According to yet another participant, the play is "not about our disabilities here. It's about us as individuals". According to the participants and the audience – the members of the public – more mixed ability theatre performances of this kind are needed, particularly for young audiences. The main challenge is not the "stigma" of disability but the fact that the issues they discuss, such as employment, are often overlooked by others. The major challenge, expressed both during workshops and the performance, is that participants want to be heard and seen. For example, employment is what gives them dignity; yet, some are given a job by employers who do not really look for what they can actually achieve, which is often much more than what they are asked to do.

On the theme of relationships, there was agreement that having the right to engage in a meaningful, romantic and sexual relationship is often interpreted as a naïve, childlike desire. Participants expressed their frustrations on how the extremities of overprotection

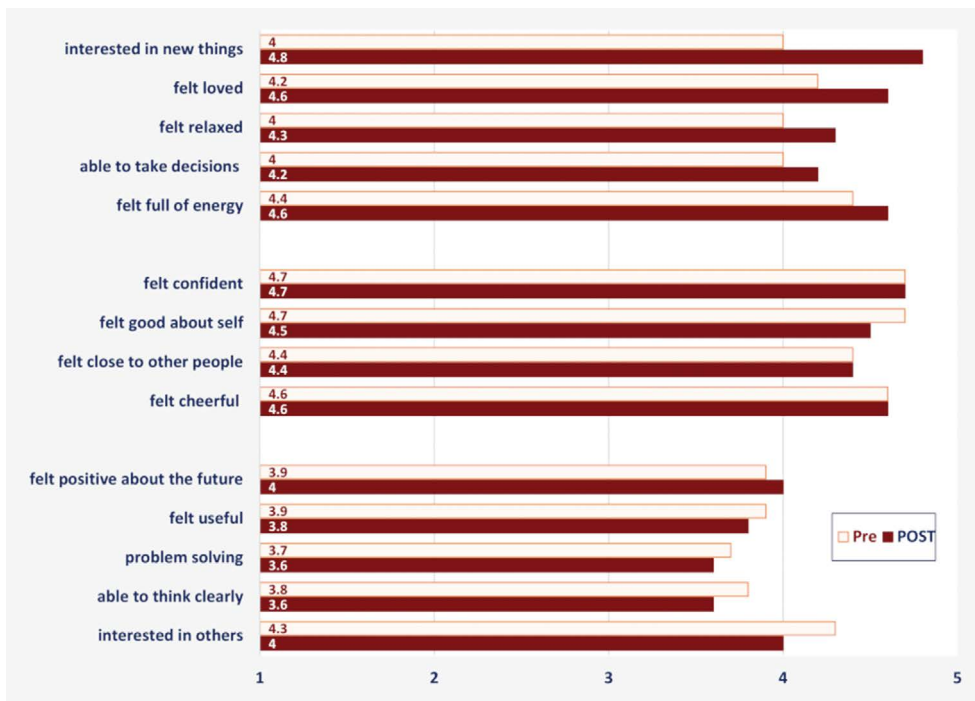


Figure 2.4 Results of the standardised well-being scale before and after participation.

or belittlement of serious relationships restrict their freedom to engage in serious conversations about relationships, creating their own families and securing their independence as adults. It is important to note that the subject of disability was the topic that participants did not want to talk about in the play itself.

The inclusion of three non-disabled guest actors in the creative process was beneficial because it legitimised further the value of the ODA members' work on stage. This was particularly noted by two of these members, who were vocal about the importance of inclusive performances and working with professionals in the field.

Results of the standardised well-being scale presented in Figure 2.4 indicate that the participation in the Opening Doors study contributed to the improvement of well-being of the participants with intellectual disabilities in several domains. Significant improvements were identified in participants' interest in new things, their feeling of being loved and relaxed, full of energy and ability to make decisions.

Figure 2.4 also shows that before participation in the Opening Doors study, participants with intellectual disabilities felt highly confident, felt well about themselves, felt close to other people and were cheerful. These aspects of well-being remained unchanged during the participation in the Opening Doors study. The average scores were between 4.4 and 4.7 on the scale, with a maximum score 5, and the improvements in these domains were difficult to measure with this scale since the participants' initial scores were close to the maximum measured by this scale. The qualitative component of this study provides some additional evidence that the well-being of the participants improved.

A lack of improvement was noticed regarding interest in others, optimism about the future, problem-solving and the ability to think clearly. The lack of changes in these

domains is probably a result of the positive atmosphere in the group, and participants' loyalty to the Opening doors group, as well as the nature of the participants' disability, which requires longer specialised training by professional therapists and that was not the objective of this socially engaged project.

Policy implications

The results of this study confirm that professional artists can work together with a variety of marginalised social groups that can assume a number of different roles in order to deliver the implementation of socially engaged art projects. As demonstrated through this and other AMASS testbed studies, such projects are very likely to have strong and long-term positive impacts on the marginalised members of society and other members of society. The participants are already participating in other projects organised by ODA. An integrated approach towards cultural action, linking different levels of expertise across a diverse area of technical, academic, practical and artistic skills, may support further initiatives in the fields of policy development and implementation through the necessary structures, especially funding and infrastructure for education, training and capacity building, to develop and nurture knowledge, skills and competent professional practice.

Studies that examine the impact of this and similar participatory arts activities on issues related to social justice, civic engagement, social inclusion and the innovative approaches to policy initiatives are both integrative and diverse and valuable contributions to the development of cultural policies (Gatt et al. 2021; Vella and Xuereb 2021).

The research component of the Opening Doors Theatre Project was developed according to the high standards of mixed-methods social research in the domain of art, and the collected evidence is expected to additionally inform the process of benchmarking, referencing and the development of the future national cultural policy and research agenda.

Conclusion

The objectives of this study were to increase awareness of the issues that people with intellectual disabilities experience in their daily life and about their capacity to effectively participate in arts-related activities and all other domains of social life. In the long term, this study was expected to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life and well-being of ODA members and the members of other marginalised social groups.

The approach used is innovative in that it treats the participants, namely people with intellectual disabilities, as professional performers. Participants were highly motivated and involved in workshops and frequent rehearsals. The groups accepted the goals of this study and the members closely collaborated to achieve the overall objective of the project leading to the delivery of a string of strong, engaging performances. The participants performed on stage, as professional actors, alongside other professional performers, as a result of the dynamics created over time through teamwork and nurturing common aims and methodologies. The approach is also innovative in local settings and in the context of the dominant social, where people with disability are too often marginalised or in some cases "overprotected", and do not have the opportunity to participate in social and cultural life, particularly in performing art. Particularly valuable outcomes of this study were the highly positive and empowering experiences of the participants in the Opening Doors Theatre Project and the overwhelmingly positive transformative experience reported by the public, visitors of the theatre performance. The results of this

project and the evidence collected through this mixed-methods study through the wide dissemination are expected to achieve a broader impact on public attitudes and treatment of people with intellectual disabilities as well as on decision-makers, particularly in relation to their access to cultural activities.

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10 Combatting ageism through participation in a theatre-making process and performance

Isabelle Gatt

This chapter reflects on the impact of theatre practice for senior citizens in combatting ageism. This chapter draws on the process of devising and performing *F'Hakka T'Ghajn* (Maltese for *All of a Sudden*), a theatre performance that addresses the societal challenge of ageism. The research project used a collective-theatre-creation approach in which a team of theatre practitioners worked with six women who attend an Active Ageing Centre (AAC). The performance script was based on the women's life experiences, stories and songs which the women shared during drama workshops. The protagonists in the performance were women and a young male actor. The data that emerged from the focus group discussions, the artists' journals and the researcher's semi-immersive observations showed that the process and performance positively affected the six participants in terms of personal empowerment, growth and group cohesion while reducing feelings of loneliness and solitude. Moreover, the theatre collaboration was of mutual benefit for all those involved and the fact that all remained committed in spite of all the COVID-19 restrictions made the whole experience poignant, revealing resourcefulness and tenacity all round. The feedback from the audience surveys revealed other significant findings suggesting that authentic positive ageing examples through collectively devised theatre performances such as *F'Hakka T'Ghajn* expand the discourse about ageing. In considering how and why theatre practice affected the six older women positively in terms of personal enrichment and a general sense of well-being, group cohesion and solidarity, the study suggests that theatre practice has a key role to play in people in their third age.

The theme

Ageism is often the result of an unconscious defence-mechanism by younger people to counteract fears of their own ageing and death anxiety. This often results in prejudice and age discrimination against older adults. The World Health Organization has been working on a global campaign in an effort to change people's perceptions and behaviours towards senior citizens and thus combat ageism (Officer and de la Fuente-Núñez 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has rendered ageism an increasingly important global discourse (Ayalon 2020; Ayalon et al. 2021). When it comes to older women specifically, ageism, combined with sexism, can actually have a hazardous effect on their physical and mental health (Chrisler et al. 2016). Research shows that participation in drama training and theatre programmes has proved to positively impact older adults' psychological well-being, particularly in the dimension of personal growth (Davis 1985; Noice and Noice 2006; 2009; Noice et al. 1999; 2004).

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The community theatre project this chapter is about is based on senior participants' life stories and reflections on life, interpreted in a story through theatre, a story that reflects the vitality and experience of senior citizens and the importance of senior citizens' contribution to society. The working title of the project, which became the actual title of the project performance, is *F'Hakka T'Ghajj* (F'HT), the expression in Maltese for *All of a Sudden*. This was the trigger which was given to the theatre director to set the process going. *F'Hakka T'Ghajj* was intended to get the conversation started as to how life changes all of a sudden at times. This phrase was even more suggestive considering these were pandemic times. The purpose of this project was to offer an opportunity to senior citizens attending an AAC to experience a participatory theatre process. The societal challenge that the project engaged with was ageism and its consequences, such as neglect, social isolation, loneliness and their impact on personal well-being. It was planned that the theatre performance would be shown to other Active Ageing members.

The project-plan was for an intensive six-week theatre-devising workshops and rehearsals where the senior participants would work with a group of professional theatre-makers and artists, to develop a collective theatre performance in an effort to improve their well-being and sense of community. The drama workshops within the theatre-making process explored in more depth what the participants think about their life, particularly their thoughts about being in their third age. Data was collected before the intervention through questions exploring how the participants felt about their age (66–86) and its impacts on their self-perception and ageing in general. The post-intervention research assessed the impact their participation in the theatre process and performance had on their lives, their sense of self-worth and well-being.

The collaborating institution was the Active Ageing and Community Care (AACC) directorate within the Ministry for Senior Citizens and Active Ageing. More specifically, it was done through the Active Ageing Day Centre located in Siggiewi, a city surrounded by countryside in the South Western Region of Malta.

The F'HT theatre project participants

An invitation to take part in the six-week theatre programme research project leading to a performance was sent, through the Siggiewi AAC to all its members. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in March 2021, the AAC members were split into bubbles of nine, each group attending only one day a week. Whoever opted to attend this programme would commit to following a schedule of afternoon workshops and rehearsals which, by the third week, would increase to daily rehearsals five days a week. Six women aged 66–86 from the Monday group applied.

Since all the participants were women, it was decided to contract at least two male professional actors as part of the professional team, but due to COVID-19, all male actors contacted declined our invitation. All the six women remained committed throughout the programme, which, due to the lockdowns, took much longer than originally planned. The women all live independently at home, some alone and others have a family. The participants were facing various life challenges; one was undergoing chemotherapy treatment, another had a disabled adult son to care for, one had lost both her son and husband within two years and the most senior participant suffered from a severe disability following a stroke. Nevertheless, they were enthusiastic about this new experience.

Methodology

The author of this chapter was the academic responsible for the project and also acted as the producer/artistic director. Josette Ciappara, a veteran director with a vast experience in applied theatre, having worked at schools, with senior citizens and with the blind, directed the workshops and the performance. Simon Bartolo, a locally established writer and dramaturg, wrote the script. Joe Roscoe, musician and sound engineer, composed and recorded the songs as well as voice coached the participants. Sean Briffa, a young professional actor, was the only male actor. The media crew consisted mostly of young men (Figure 2.5).

The AACC helped recruit the participants and ensured the presence of one AAC staff member throughout the project. The AACC also provided a location. The performance ultimately had to be filmed rather than performed live. In this way, it could be screened in all the AACs around the island. It has also been viewed by university students studying Applied Arts. Over 1000 people had watched it by Aug 2023 during screenings and more are expected to see it since it is available online with English subtitles.

During the introductory meeting, the participants were briefed about the project. They were also introduced to the team of theatre professionals they would be working with and asked to fill in a brief survey about their motivations for joining the programme as well as their perception of themselves and their life at the time. Data collection also



Figure 2.5 Joe Roscoe conducting the participants as they sing one of the songs written for the performance.

included the journals of the participating artists, the researcher's semi-immersive observations throughout the process and audio-recorded post-intervention focus group discussions with the participants one month after the first screened performance was launched. The focus group meeting included questions about their experiences of participating in the project, whether it met their expectations and how it impacted their life and well-being. They also gave their opinions about the potential impact of participatory art on prejudices, social (in)justice and inclusion. Audience surveys were collected after each screened performance for feedback about performances featuring older adults and to find out whether these can present positive ageing models. The data, including the stories the participants told during the drama workshops, was analysed through a hermeneutical phenomenological approach.

The developmental process of the theatre programme

Twice weekly sessions started in March 2021, and the plan was to increase rehearsals to three sessions by the third week and then meet daily for the last three weeks run-up to the production. Every meeting in the programme started with mindfulness exercises and gentle physical exercises. These exercises were intended to increase the participants' physical flexibility and awareness of the physical movement of different body parts, help with balance of the whole body and stimulate cognitive skills such as concentration (Figure 2.6).

The benefits of adopting these exercises as part of their daily morning routine were explained. The exercises were followed by recreational dramatic activities such as ice-breakers, warm-up team-building exercises, improvisation and imagination activities. Once a safe space was established through regular use of these activities, participants were asked to bring songs from their past, personal artefacts and also stories to narrate. One of the exercises was to turn a story into a solo performance with or without the use of props.

The data recorded during these meetings and discussions formed the basis for the draft script of the play. Unfortunately, we could only meet three times before the COVID-19 lockdown.



Figure 2.6 Mindfulness exercises.

The script writing process

The professional script writer, who also participated in all the initial sessions, started the process by taking notes of the various inputs by the participants through personal stories, stories based on the artefacts, songs and popular tunes. During lockdown, the producer, artistic director and script writer drew up a script framework; the parts were written to suit the performing skills of the women and the professional actor.

Script development and the rehearsal process – May 26th, 2021 – end of June

By the end of the lockdown, the script writer had finalised the first draft of the 50-minute script. In it, he managed to weave in most of the stories, tunes and ideas which the participants had contributed, into a play where each of the six women was a protagonist together with the young male actor.

The storyline is about female neighbours, who meet in the neighbourhood to chat, to shop from the vegetable vendor or to visit the café. The play reflects female friendships: mutual support, acts of kindness and even jealousy within such friendships. The vegetable vendor makes up a story about the mandarin of youth and promises to sell them some. At first, they all want this, but later, upon reflection, most decide against this. They reason that, while youth was sweet, it also meant hardships and anxieties which they would rather not go through again and that they are happy to be in this stage of their life. The script raises issues of abuse and exploitation of senior citizens, through the street vendor's fraudulent claims. However, the script also emphasises the importance of honesty and other values. These are reflected in the young vendor's solo scenes, when, alone with his thoughts at home, he ruminates about his fraudulent plan as he looks at the framed photo of his late father and decides not to go through with his deceitful plan. Besides such profound moments, the play includes singing, dancing and has some truly comic moments.

Rehearsals resumed on May 26th. The participants were excited to read the script and find that the script writer had kept their actual names for the characters they were playing. Their characters also told the stories which they themselves had shared. These lines were easier for them to remember. They clearly liked the script and laughed at the humorous parts. The three-time weekly meetings became daily meetings in the final three weeks. Vocal exercises were added to the mindfulness and physical exercises, followed by rehearsing the different scenes. The sessions became longer and more intensive through to the last week of June. During these last three weeks, the participants also took the initiative to organise daily evening Zoom calls to go over lines and cues to ensure that they knew the script well. The participants proved to be disciplined, highly focused, resourceful and keen to contribute to every stage of the creative process, including the decisions as to what costumes to wear and the props to use. One of the participants even brought in a traditional wooden cart for the vegetable vendor's scene. They were determined to give the best performance they could (Figure 2.7).

In mid-June, authorisation was sought from the health authorities to perform the theatre production to a live audience but this was denied due to COVID-19 restrictions. Plan B was to film the performance in a TV studio over three days at the end of June. The post-production was concluded by the end of September 2021 and the launch of the screened performance was held on October 22nd. Audience numbers were still limited. Fifty people were in the audience, including the Minister for Senior Citizens and Active Ageing and two officials from the AACC. The latter were important stakeholders. They



Figure 2.7 Participants brought in props from home.

stayed on for the reception and talked with the participants and the artistic team. This encounter proved to be productive in terms of the project's sustainability.

Assessment results

Research evidence demonstrated that the senior women in this research study, all but the 86-year-old, do not perceive themselves as vulnerable but as independent active citizens. Most of them are involved in voluntary work besides taking care of their families, minding their grandchildren and, in the case of one woman, caring for a severely disabled adult son. Their motivation for joining this project was their interest in putting up theatre skits for certain occasions. They also said that they like to take on a new challenge in life; they were keen to learn how professionals work and believe that remaining culturally active helps them forget their various life challenges and overcome feelings of grief and solitude.

A challenging experience but a positive impact in the dimension of personal growth

By the end of the project, the participants' comments revealed that the experience had not been an easy one. The programme required study, discipline, hard work and more commitment than they had imagined. However, this helped each of them grow as a person. They declared that they would readily do it again and, in fact, they expressed their wish for theatre-making to be one of their AAC regular activities.

Doris, in her late sixties, stated: "I had never done anything like this, at this level, and I never imagined I could do something like this but Josette (the director) and the whole team believed in me and all were so supportive and had a way how to help us improve, no matter how many times we had to repeat something, everyone was so sweet and patient

and this helped us all make it”. Participants mentioned that they felt a sense of ownership about the whole project since these were their own stories. The production process positively affected their self-esteem, gave them a sense of security, empowered them and made them feel valid: “Working in front of a camera, with the lights on us, made me feel like a star even if with a sense of trepidation” (Gloria).

Group cohesion – a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose

They also mentioned how they had become “close to each other”, “working in a team”, “like one family” and felt a sense of belonging: “There was a time when I wanted to quit as the afternoons were proving too difficult for me because I need a siesta because of my meds, but the fact that the team found a way of changing the whole schedule to the mornings, just for me, convinced me to stay. I felt needed and I am so glad I saw this through to the end” (Grace) (Figure 2.8).



Figure 2.8 Teamwork as the participants review the script after a rehearsal.

The experience helped participants gain more self-esteem and self-confidence and provided a sense of purpose and something important to look forward to each day. Carmena (age 86) said, “I wake up and I think to myself, my limp leg will hold me back today. Then I remember that I am coming here, and then I become more determined to get out of bed. I love it here. Since I am always on my own at home., and then I remember I have to come here for rehearsals... and then I forget everything”.

Policy implications and conclusions

The F’Hakka t’Ghajn research data is expected to inform future national policy concerning the arts and positive ageing. The presence of the AACC officials and the Minister for Active Ageing at the screening of the play also proved to be crucial for the sustainability of the programme. The AACC has since contracted a theatre director to work at the centre as from February 2022. Theatre has become a fixed activity in the AAC schedule in the Siggiewi AAC.

This study presented a collective-theatre-creation approach that aimed to address the societal challenge of ageism. The theatre piece created was based on lived experiences, stories and songs shared by six senior women who were also the protagonists in the performance. For the artist researcher and members of the creative team, encountering these women and witnessing their lively engagement with the theatre process was a life-affirming experience in itself.

The theatre collaboration was of mutual benefit for all those involved; the fact that all remained committed in spite of all the COVID-19 restrictions made the whole experience poignant, revealing resourcefulness and tenacity all round. The contact between the participants, the artist researcher and some of the creative team members continues after the project ended through invitations to events organised at the ACC centre. This research project positively affected the six participants in terms of personal empowerment, growth and group cohesion. Another outcome is sustainability, the continuation of theatre activities for older adults in AACs.

The feedback from the audience surveys, collected at the AAC centres and university where the production was screened, reveals other significant findings. These suggest that authentic positive ageing examples through collectively devised theatre performances such as F’Hakka T’Ghajn might expand the discourse about ageing. Our project challenges societal perceptions as to how older adults should live and behave to the point of rendering older adults invisible in society. In this way, our theatre performance helped combat ageism.

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Part III

Environmental and design education projects to promote social integration and environmental appropriation



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11 SoftPowerArt

Tackling environmental and societal conflicts

*Maria Huhmarniemi, Satu Miettinen
and Melanie Sarantou*

Description of theme

As part of the research project *Acting on the margins: Arts as social sculpture*, the *SoftPowerArt* experiment included eight sub-projects executed by nine artists: Amir Abdi, Maria Huhmarniemi, Satu Miettinen, Taina Kontio, Raisa Raekallio, Misha del Val, Melanie Sarantou, Mari Mäkiranta and Heidi Pietarinen. Addressing the role of the arts in expressing societal, political and environmental viewpoints in Finland's most northerly region, the experiment was conducted between December 2020 and December 2021 to investigate rising levels of eco-anxiety in remote regions of Finnish Lapland, where communities live in close proximity to their natural environment.

To explore the role of the arts in enhancing well-being and human-nature relationships, the nine artists (predominantly from Finland's Lapland region) sought to understand how artists can mitigate the further marginalisation of people and communities in the shadow of local and global social and environmental conflicts by reconstructing policy-making and negotiation of values in a visual form. Global and local environmental crises and conflicts highlight the need to develop a less human-centric union with other-than-human nature. Visual imagery representing human-nature relationships in the Arctic has typically stressed colonisation and the historical past (Wood-Donnelly 2018), and imagery related to policy construction has been male-dominated and characterised by exploration and mystery (Mifflin 2011). Drawing on post-humanistic theory, *SoftPowerArt* sought to develop dialogical post-humanistic art practices, in communication with other-than-human nature, with imagery representing female spaces in the North. To that end, the participating artists created a series of political and environmental artworks reflecting the diverse societal and environmental challenges faced by Finnish Lapland.

Sub-projects and themes

- *Reflections in water* (Taina Kontio, Satu Miettinen) explored the role of agency and temporality in performance and the environment and how bridges can emerge between our bodies and their surroundings (Sarantou and Miettinen 2022).
- *Forest talks to us* (curated by Maria Huhmarniemi) was a group exhibition exploring perspectives on forest disputes caused by the pressing challenges of climate crises, lack of biodiversity and the activities of the forestry industry (Huhmarniemi 2021b).
- *Battle and sense of forest conflict in Lapland* (Maria Huhmarniemi) explored emotional relations to the forest and strong opinions about the current state of the forestry industry (Huhmarniemi 2021a, 2021b).
- *Co-creation with nature* (Amir Abdi) studied human-nature relations and co-creation.

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- *Mindfulness and drawing in Ilulissat* (Misha del Val) used artistic means (drawing, songwriting, poetry, body movement) to explore and express visual content created during an active meditation and reflection sessions focused on the environment and youngsters' well-being during the global COVID-19 pandemic.
- *Kittilä youngsters* (Raisa Raekallio) employed a range of art and meditation exercises to identify new ways of viewing the environment and to gain a new understanding of youngsters' habitual surroundings.
- *Five salmon and two fish* (Satu Miettinen, Taina Kontio, Mari Mäkiranta, Melanie Sarantou) related to the activist movement for conserving the free flow of rivers and indigenous salmon in northern Finland (Miettinen and Sarantou 2021).
- *Naked narratives* (Satu Miettinen, Heidi Pietarinen, Melanie Sarantou) used performance, photography and video documentation in a traditional wood-heated sauna to address the social anxieties associated with climate change, especially in the frail environment of the Arctic and Finnish Lapland (Miettinen and Sarantou 2021; Sarantou et al. 2021).

Target population

The SoftPowerArt experiments targeted various groups of participants and audiences. *Mindfulness and drawing in Ilulissat* and *Kittilä youngsters* involved children and young people aged 13–21, while the other six experiments targeted communities and individuals as well as artists, policy-makers and society at large in Finland's northern region and beyond. Invitation to participation was open at different phases of processes, even at the presentation of documents of sub-projects. For example, participants of community art wrote guidelines for further participation and these were printed on sharable cards given away from exhibitions (Figure 3.1).

Three exhibitions in Äkäslompolo and Rovaniemi targeted general art audiences in the North. Most of the sub-project outcomes were disseminated through the AMASS narrative platform and were shared extensively on Facebook and Instagram. The experiment was also circulated in two consortium exhibitions curated by Raphael Vella: *Documents of Socially Engaged Arts*, and *Active Witnesses*. Hosted at Spazju Kreattif in Malta and at Arktikum in Rovaniemi, these are also available as virtual exhibitions.

Methodology and procedure

Art and activism offer new tools and methodologies for addressing environmental and cultural conflicts and impacting policy discussions through mediation, reconciliation and healing. The project's methods included (1) influencing views on the arts and cultural politics in the Arctic; (2) decolonising the arts by rejecting the Western dualist distinction between art and spirituality; (3) making sense of the interconnections between arts, crafts and ecoculture; (4) using the arts to explore contemporary gender constructs in policy and decision-making; (5) using the arts to promote discussion of environmental policies and (6) using the arts to empower artists and local communities to express their views about environmental policies.

Artistic production can help to revitalise local and regional ecocultural traditions and transform traditions for contemporary culture. Dialogical aesthetics and arts-based methods were used to release stress and to help artists and art educators facilitate transformative experiences for community sustainability (Sarantou and Tessmer 2021).



Figure 3.1 Maria Huhmarniemi and co-artists Francis Joy, Misha del Val, Hugo Peña, Amir Abdi, Tanja Koistinen, Raisa Raekallio and Smaranda Moldovan. *Encounter-a-tree*, 2021, Participatory installation (posters on the wall, sharable cards, Instagram @ encounteratree).

To that end, the SoftPowerArt experiment applied *artivism* and *craftivism* into community art. *Artivism* is a hybrid form of art and activism that drives change and social transformation (Aladro-Vico et al. 2018) through participatory experiences that dissolve distinctions such as artist and participant, creator and receiver or student and professor. In addition, the distinction of an artist and material was dissolved, for instance, in bioart (Figure 3.2). The parallel concept of *craftivism* views craft making as an artistic movement and uses embroidery, crochet, knitting and similar textile crafts to promote societal and cultural conversations (Huhmarniemi 2021a; Keune et al. 2021; Nordenstam and Wictorin 2021).

Some of the sub-experiments pursued outcomes such as art installations that integrated human relations and collaborations with the non-human natural environment (e.g. *Reflections in water*, *Forest talks to us*, *Co-creation with nature*, *Mindfulness and drawing workshop*). Inviting audiences to reflect on their connectedness with nature, the artworks encouraged bodily and spiritual encounters. Some of the sub-experiments introduced eco-feminist themes (e.g. *I hear you in the river*, *Sauna stories*), while others focused on activism or artivism and environmental awareness (e.g. *Kittilä youngsters—a little art experiment*, *Five salmon and two fish*). Some of these sub-experiments employed strong visual autoethnographic narratives and embodied action (Scarles 2011) to describe and recontextualise personal histories, experiences and connections with nature.



Figure 3.2 Amir Abdi, *On the ropes: Bio-Art Yantra (Rope and Oyster mushroom)*, 2021, project Co-creation with nature. Photo: Maria Huhmarniemi.

These two experiments targeting younger people (*Mindfulness and drawing in Ilulissat* and *Kittilä youngsters*) used collective drawing exercises to raise awareness of emotional states and different ways of sensing one's social and environmental surroundings and to use less obvious resources beyond rational thinking to express those perceptions (Figure 3.3). By connecting with something deeper within human nature, this understanding constructs the foundations for a happier life rooted in a consciousness of core human values and purposes. The young participants engaged in mindfulness and sensorial drawing practices in remote locations at Kittilä, Finland, and Ilulissat, Greenland. The other artists created political and environmental artworks addressing the diverse societal and environmental challenges in Finnish Lapland that further marginalise people and communities. These works were thoroughly documented in the form of digital video and photographs, which were circulated widely through exhibitions and social media.

The project addressed the following research questions:

- How can multi-level and spiritual relationships with nature be enhanced through art to strengthen, revive and unite humans with more-than-humans?
- How can visual and performative methodologies be used to study the narratives, roles and identities associated with nature conservation and females' connection with nature?
- How can an art exhibition space be transformed to create a space of encounter for conflicted communities?



Figure 3.3 Youngsters drawing in Kittilä. Photo: Raisa Raekallio, 2021.

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

The assessment methodology was based on unstructured focus group discussions involving the nine lead artists. The first of these discussions (at the beginning of the experiment in January 2021) lasted 1 hour and 26 minutes. Six of the artists gathered in situ and online (using the Teams platform) to discuss the experiment's aims and anticipated impacts, as well as practical plans for their artistic activities. Three further group meetings discussing the progress and challenges of the sub-projects helped to support the project's continuity. The final unstructured focus group discussion in February 2022 (after the experiment concluded) lasted 44 minutes and was attended by seven artists on the Microsoft Teams platform. That discussion explored the artists' reflections on the impacts of the sub-projects. In addition, all of the participating artists submitted reports on their activities for the SoftPowerArt blog on the AMASS narrative platform.

Reflecting on the completed sub-projects, the artists shared their experiences and discussed the wider impact of their experiments. For example, one of the artists explained the impact of *Five salmon and two fish* (Figure 3.4) as she saw it.

The salmon case had a huge impact on me personally but also on the people living near the river (Kemi River). People who experienced the construction of these power plants and witnessed how their living environment changed saw the cultural trauma it actually caused. So I see this salmon case as more than what it seems—more deeply connected to people's way of life up here.



Figure 3.4 Satu Miettinen, Taina Kontio, Melanie Sarantou and Mari Mäkiranta, *Five Salmon and Two Fish* (viisi lohta ja kaksi kalaa).

Policy implications

This series of open-ended experiments explored how art-driven narrative practice could facilitate discussion and influence policy-making. Intimate encounters and artistic imagery of this kind are not typically used as policy-making tools, and often fragile, hidden or unrecognised issues of gender equality and gender role are not consciously addressed. These experiments attempted to develop art-based practices to create dialogue with policy-makers and communities in northern and Arctic contexts.

Conclusion

Artworks produced in the SoftPowerArt experiment employed reflection, interpretation and analysis of dialogical art and arts-based environmental conflict mediation, contributing to new visual, embodied and reflective approaches to policy discussion. Some of the experiments are featured in a volume of visual artworks, including the imagery produced and documented encounters, narratives and dialogues with the participating communities, capturing their perspectives on women's roles and bodies, which were central to the AMASS project.

In the two sub-experiments involving young people, collective drawing exercises helped to raise participants' awareness of emotional states, including ways of sensing one's social and environmental surroundings and using less obvious resources beyond rational thinking to express those perceptions. This facilitated a connection with something much deeper within human nature as the basis for a happier life rooted in a consciousness of core values, meaning and purpose.

The SoftPowerArt experiment encouraged participants to recognise and deepen their experience of communication with non-human nature and to enhance their understanding of natural elements as sentient beings. Engagement with the visual arts can help people to further develop their awareness, empathy, compassion and sense of empowerment.

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12 Telling the truth

Guerrilla art and community engagement in Malta

*Margerita Pulè, Milosh Raykov, Raphael Vella,
Karsten Xuereb and Kristina Borg*

Community engagement in a participatory arts project

Batman Gżirjan, which loosely translates as “Batman from Gżira”, was a participatory arts project, led by artist Kristina Borg, who mostly works on socially engaged research-based art projects. The project attempted to encourage participants to articulate their feelings about their neighbourhood and to empower them to express themselves publicly against the exploitation of their town for commercial interests.

The project explored how rapid change in the coastal town of Gżira, and its seafront in particular, has affected its local inhabitants and their quality of life. The project’s workshops and final performative work focused on identifying and articulating the impacts of privatisation, long-term construction and traffic congestion, as well as rapid population change on the town’s communities. Elements such as construction and road works with ensuing noise, air and visual pollution, changes in zoning from residential to entertainment and feelings of impotence in the face of commercial interests were explored; however, the project also worked with residents to express their fondness for their town and their pride in being its residents.

The environmental issue explored in this project is evidenced by studies that show that pollution in Malta is undeniably a real problem that is experienced by many of its inhabitants. In 2017, for instance, Malta had the highest percentage of persons in the EU (26.5%) who reported that they had been exposed to pollution and other environmental problems (Eurostat 2019). Shipping activities in parts of the island in the vicinity of Gżira have been shown to significantly impact the air quality in these areas (The Malta Independent 2021). Recent construction activities along the Gżira seafront have led to a degradation of the marine environment and inhabitants’ protests related to loss of public spaces (Arena 2019). Amateur fishermen and small boat owners in the area have felt threatened by large-scale development projects (Times of Malta 2019). The environmental problems described here have also led some studies to highlight the importance of developing an Environmental Justice (EJ) index for Malta that would help to monitor pollution and other issues like overdevelopment, generate more scientific information for evidence-based policymaking and impact assessment exercises in specific localities, and lead to a stronger integration of environmental and social policies (Portelli et al. 2020). Participatory artistic practices have frequently served to help communities to reflect about and address environmental issues affecting their lives (for instance, Kang Song and Gammel 2011), so *Batman Gżirjan* was clearly an important contribution to debates about the relevance and impact of the arts on a serious social and environmental issue impacting the lives of many Maltese people.

Population under focus: local inhabitants, fishers and users of the seafront in a harbour town

The project's participant group consisted of two specific invited groups: local inhabitants and fishers. Local inhabitants who live or have lived in the town of Gżira, as well as those who frequent the neighbourhood, were invited to take part. The project also contacted fishers who make use of the seafront and the sea in the area. Participants were recruited with the support of the non-profit NGO *Flimkien Għal Ambjent Aħjar* (FAA) (which translates as “joining forces for a better environment”) and the community pressure group *Inħobbu l-Gżira* (“We love Gżira”). Other participants were recruited by word of mouth, mainly by participants bringing friends. The views of 80 passers-by were also collected.

The selection criteria aimed for a balance of age groups, gender and backgrounds. The participants could broadly be described as over 60, but some younger participants (around 30–40 years of age) also took part. Despite the fact that the area is relatively multicultural, all of the participants were Maltese.

Civic engagement and participatory arts practice

Batman Gżirjan was created in close collaboration with its participants who contributed actively to the project's development. After a series of conversations and workshops, both online and in person, participants worked with the artist to carry out a series of “guerrilla actions” and ultimately produce a live performative activity for a small audience.

The project began by inviting the two participant groups separately to take part in workshops – both online and in person – to discuss the impressions of their neighbourhood, using the senses (sight, smell, hearing) as a starting point. Local inhabitants started off with five online workshops, while fishers had three in-person workshops. Following these sessions, there were three in-person workshops in which both groups merged. The first set of workshops focused on the collection of memories, the transformation of the area, its impact and reaction of the locals. Participants were invited to document the transformation of the seafront in relation to their daily life through simple exercises such as recording sounds or videoclips at the seafront and taking photos or notes and making drawings of the view from their window, as well as keeping a journal inspired by the project. The artist used innovative techniques to keep in touch with participants during COVID-19 restriction, including sending handmade journal notebooks by post and encouraging the use of their mobile phones for photography and videography. The research workshops were audio-recorded, upon the consent given by participants. This allowed the artists to review the material in order to pinpoint the concerns of the participants and to identify material that could contribute to the development of the final performance (Figure 3.5).

The second stage of the project invited the participants to have a more active role, thus becoming co-creators of the final outcome, with the participants meeting to develop its creative output. Participants were introduced to concepts such as public art, performance art and co-creative practices. From the beginning, participants took an active role in devising activities, such as hanging up posters in their locality, or designing and sending postcards with a message to local and national policymakers, including politicians. The content of the final outcome – the performative activity – was also devised in close collaboration with participants.



Figure 3.5 Participants during one of the workshop sessions. Photos: Elisa von Brockdorff.

The posters and postcards were coloured red, yellow and black, with a “building site” aesthetic. They contained phrases such as “HANDS OFF GŻIRA” and “KILLING GŻIRA’S SOUL”. The posters were hung up by the artist and some of the participants in the locality mainly on building site hoardings.

Following this second stage, the project paused during the very hot Maltese summer. The artist took this six-week break to review the material gathered and to plan for the rehearsal and final parts of the project with a co-artist director, who was specifically invited on board for his theatre-making experience (Figures 3.6 and 3.7).

The participants met again during the project’s final stage, for rehearsals, further planning and the final performative action. The final performance was repeated on two occasions with a small public audience. It consisted of a promenade-piece, with the audience following a guide and pausing to witness interventions carried out by the participants themselves. These varied from monologues about the locality, to messages (both positive and negative) on protest signs, and included small pieces of historical information about buildings and experiences in the locality which held special meaning for the participants. The audience was then taken on a short boat ride in traditional Maltese boats, where they were invited to read a short narrative and view the town from the (busy) sea. A small team of synchronised swimmers performed for the audience, while participants spoke to them with the use of loudspeakers. Later, the swimmers collected the pebbles on which the audience had been invited to write down their wishes for the town (Figure 3.8).

Most of the participants remained involved in the project until the very end. However, it is interesting to note that a few either did not take part, or remained in the background since they did not want to go public about their protest or were pressured by their families to keep a low profile.



Figure 3.6 One of the participants showing a sign to the audience during one of the public performances.



Figure 3.7 Members of the audience writing messages on pebbles before they board a boat.



Figure 3.8 Synchronised swimmers and boats with audience members.

In terms of timeframes, the various steps took place over a period of a few months at the beginning of 2021. COVID-19 restrictions meant that participants did not meet in person at the beginning of the project. As restrictions were eased, workshops took place in a local community centre. Restrictions also affected the final performance, as audiences were kept in small groups, and the performance took place outside.

Assessment and narrative accounts of community participation

The project was assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively with data collected from participants, audience members and passers-by in the town of Gzira. The artist leading the project also kept a journal in which her thoughts on the project were recorded.

The project's impact on the participants was assessed through individual close-ended questions before and after participation, and a focus group session at the beginning of the project. The conversations during the first phase of the project were recorded and transcribed by the artist. The impact on the audience was assessed through close-ended question surveys distributed following each performance. Close-ended question surveys were also carried out with a large number of passers-by on the seafront in the locality, which provided insight into the preoccupations and opinions of a broader cohort of residents and visitors.

Overall, evaluation shows that most participants noted a greater degree of reflection on the local environmental and social changes and dynamics, and a greater ability to express them clearly. Most participants also noted a varying degree (among different participants) of involvement in the community, both of an optimistic as well as critical kind. Comments made by participants referred to the loss of public space or the lack

of an Urban Conservation Area in the town. During a meeting, one of the participants said: "They are going to take away part of the only garden we have in this town to build a petrol station. Unfortunately, Gżira's future doesn't look good to me. You're probably thinking, how negative are you? We always sound critical. But we're telling the truth". Another participant complained about the privatisation of public land and being "forced to buy something to eat and drink just to sit and enjoy your sea and your coast, which the authorities gave away to someone for their profit". Such comments contrasted with others in which participants reminisced about their past: the town had a closely knit community, with little shops, a football stadium and community members that participants identified with. At the same time, some of the more recent changes, such as the existence of more multicultural groups living there and take-away shops selling food from different regions of the world, were also perceived by one participant as giving Gżira a new sort of "identity".

Most passers-by felt that the Gżira community has no say over urban development (83%) and that they do not like the change or transformation of the urban development of Gżira (73%). However, most participants consider visiting the Gżira promenade in the future if they have the opportunity (78.5%), and an additional 19% of passers-by will probably consider visiting Gżira in the future. Also, a slightly smaller number of passers-by would certainly consider recommending the Gżira promenade to their friends (62%), and an additional 22% will probably recommend visiting Gżira to their friends or relatives.

Most of the audience members felt emotional during the performance (88%) and felt that this performance increased their understanding of issues related to community-centred regeneration of public space (98%). Many visitors also reported that this performance changed their attitudes towards communities affected by the disrespectful regeneration of their public space (82%). Visitors considered that the public performance was well-produced (98%) and trusted that performances like this can help to nourish people's sense of belonging and ownership of their community spaces (96%). A great majority of the audience also indicated that socially engaged art could influence decision-makers about policies that affect residents of Gżira (84%) and are confident that performances like this can improve the situation related to developments in Gżira (89%).

After the artistic production, on a seven-point scale, the members of the audience felt that the performance was valuable (5.7), active (5.3), exciting (5.1), powerful (4.9), empowering (4.4) and optimistic (4.2). In contrast, the participants felt acceptability (3.9) and that the issue of the community complexity (3.5) had a less positive feeling. Following attendance of the public performance, the members of the audience unanimously indicated that they would certainly (75%) or likely (25%) consider attending similar artistic productions in the future if they have the opportunity to do so. Similarly, all audience members indicated that they would certainly (81%) or likely (19%) consider recommending similar artistic productions to their friends or relatives.

Survey data from the participants in this study, the response from the passers-by survey and the survey of the members of the audience of the public performance are highly consistent and indicated that a majority of all participants perceive the negative consequences of uncontrolled development. Most participants were concerned about overcrowding, noise, pollution, deterioration of living conditions and the lack of community participation in decision-making about the new construction projects. Participants almost unanimously agreed that socially engaged art could express their concerns and facilitate meaningful dialogue of community members and policymakers. This study demonstrated

that socially engaged art and performances like this have a powerful emotional and cognitive impact and consequently the potential to influence the development of visitors' attitudes about uncontrolled community development.

Since the content of the project was participant-led, the creative output can also be seen as a reflection of the concerns of the participants, and of their empowerment in expressing their thoughts and concerns about their locality. The guerrilla actions – the posters and postcards are a direct reflection of the many concerns voiced by fishers and other locals participating throughout the workshops organised by the artist. The posters they designed, sites where these posters were placed, and texts and images used in designed postcards all reflect some of the key topics discussed time and again during these workshops.

The arts-based research produced results that clearly indicated that participants developed skills in making use of the workshops, postcards, posters and performances to voice their concern about their environment. This concern was made public in various ways: through “guerrilla” actions around the town, placards produced and shown in public, and postcards sent to local council members, MPs and media houses.

Community-informed policy

While other artistic projects and installations in Malta have made reference to overdevelopment and the misuse of public land, no previous projects have, to the knowledge of the AMASS UM researchers, been planned in such detail in terms of academic and artistic research. On a national level, the area has been controversial for a number of years, with NGOs highlighting issues related to the private appropriation of land in the area of Manoel Island – a small island which forms part of the municipality of Gżira.

As noted, research that interested policy areas of the impacts of culture and the arts on social practice, in line with other practices assessed by the AMASS project, led to a study of local actions and perceptions about the social impact of what was identified as a necessary space for thinking, interaction, reflection and action addressing creative and social means with which to address the issues related to public space as assessed in this particular project of a community-inspired and multi-faceted nature. A great deal of current policy practice in Malta has refigured its focus in order to assess the community-oriented areas where developmental and well-being matters that influence society may be tackled in parallel or at least in relation to one another to inform and generate policy measures that are more impactful, long-term and relevant to the diverse, ever-changing and inter-related aspects of contemporary society. It is essential that research and projects like this serve to show that cultural policy cannot be studied in isolation; rather, it needs to be integrated with other sectors and policies related to communities and the environment.

In this particular circumstance, the locals of Gżira relate strongly to the town's seafront, perhaps because the town has no central square where people can meet. Some participants in the project spoke of the need to take a chair with them to the seafront to be able to sit and enjoy the view. Nonetheless, in the light of recent private projects that are interfering with the use of public space, as well as hindering the accessibility to the sea and the coastline, policy-oriented research and action needs to take note that Gżira's promenade always served the community with an open space and a meeting hub, and that current infrastructural projects are appropriating such space for their private needs renders futile cultural or arts policy that is inhibited from developing with communities and spaces.

Conclusion

Thoughts, stories, memories and experiences shared during the workshops were shared in the public realm throughout the process weeks that followed. Basic guerrilla tactics were utilised. The participants opted for three main artistic methods: posters, mail art through postcards and “please take one” notices. These small-scale interventions allowed the community members to share the process of the project, while building momentum towards the final stage.

It is recommended that further research analyses the effects and impact of such tensions between private development projects and public space and their effects on the daily life and well-being of the community members. Moreover, the project allowed participants to understand better the impact on a more practical level, for instance, with regard to what amateur fishermen and small boat owners lost and will lose in terms of slipway and mooring facilities, and so they allowed them to question their future and the tradition of boatbuilding, *frejgatini*, and other traditional activities once all developments have taken place. These applied experiences, together with stories of collective memory, complement Gżira’s heritage, and may, indeed, allow for certain elements of community life to emerge before they are completely submerged and obliterated.

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13 Crossing bridges and being together

Ângela Saldanha and Teresa Eça

Target population

As we have already mentioned, we are talking about two different groups: one was made up of long-term unemployed people (about 10–12 people) who live on the coast of Portugal. They exhibited little enthusiasm for professional integration into society, which has made the integration and development of social and personal skills very difficult. This group was joined by family members (usually children, between 5 and 15 years old), mediators (psychologists and social workers) and a project researcher.

Another group was made up of gypsy people, comprising children, young people and adults, inhabitants at Bairro de Paradinha (23 adults; 15 young people). The district is very poor, on the fringes of the city, with a social neighbourhood architecture from the 1990s. The great majority of inhabitants are unemployed, and some people have criminal records; in general, people who live there possess very low educational certificates and children have a high rate of school absenteeism.

The great majority of the population have Iberian Roma cultural roots, identifying themselves as “Gypsies”. Other inhabitants are migrants and people from the mainstream culture facing severe economic difficulties.

Methodology and procedure

The artistic activities were according to the conversations with the designed participants. A participatory and collaborative methodology was used, in which the participants were at the same time builders and actors of their process, without hierarchies, with democratic methods, with at least 50 face-to-face hours. Due to the pandemic situation, it all started with the sharing of postcards.

Being Together

In the “Being Together” group, mediation was carried out by the photographer and videographer Abel Andrade, who made postcards with photographs taken by him and sent them to all the participants, who responded with a presentation of themselves, referring to their characteristics, goals and dreams. This first approach was intended to serve as an initial contact, even if at a distance, to permit the creation of relationships and bonds.

The first session, which was held in a space provided by the town hall of the participants’ residence, served for everyone to introduce themselves and get to know their

history and common goals. It was determined, at the suggestion of the group, that they would like to make CVs in a video format to help them look for a job.

In subsequent sessions, everyone took tests with a camera – so that participants became familiar with the subject-camera dynamics (self-reflection) – and started the video CV.

In one session, a businessman was invited and came to speak from the perspective of the person who hires other people, as well as to answer some questions from everyone.

With the continuation of the work with the CVs videos, the group became discouraged, and they began to question whether they could share their strengths in the group. One of the participants, a physiotherapist and holistic technician, came up with the idea of sharing experiences in terms of touch, interaction and alternative therapies. In later sessions, meditation exercises, crystal therapy, Tibetan cup, relaxation exercises and music were performed.

One of the most important activities carried out several times with the group was the sharing of food, in the form of a picnic, in which people brought something they prepared for the group and around the food. As a result, relationships were strengthened.

The last sessions involved visits to museums, walks along the beach and in the gardens. Some had never been to a museum or to gardens in more “upmarket” areas of the city. They thought that they were not places for them, but they understood, with the visits, that they are everyone’s place and that their visit is welcome, strengthening their knowledge, self-esteem and sense of belonging. As they walked together through the city, they built paths, cities and invisible places, in a collective construction of a place, with similarities with situationist/psychogeography behaviours, where the recent group can continue and live in its differences. (See more: <https://www.apecv.pt/pt-pt/amass-estudo-de-caso-3>)

Paracity: Crossing Bridges

Artists Carlos and Juliana were already known in this community, from art projects they had conducted with children funded by the municipality and in the collaboration with the social charity organisation Caritas-Viseu during the last four years. Integrating these artists in the AMASS project enabled the research team to learn from their experience and to contribute to the stakeholder organisation goals relating to social integration of the community. Furthermore, several adult women from the community had expressed their wishes to know more about art and craft practices, during informal conversations with the artists.

Moreover, the artists proposed to conduct artistic activities with two groups, the first comprising 7–15-year-old participants and the second adult participants, over a period of five months, twice a week. The groups were very unstable, varying from session to session. The calendar was established, but very often the activities were cancelled and postponed to another day according to the life and problems of the community. Fortunately, the artists were already used to being flexible and adapting in the face of this reality. They helped the other researchers to gain the trust of the community. They recommended that the other visitors from AMASS should always conduct a round tour of the place before entering the community centre, to be seen by the community and identified with the community centre’s activities.

The artistic activities were designed according to the conversations with the participants. They explored Typography printing and Silk-screen printing with Carlos and Juliana to produce sketchbooks and t-shirts. Carlos and Juliana, together with the children

and young people, created a choreography to record videos about the community. Young people were very interested in being photographed and taking photographs and very often they engaged with Raquel, the AMASS researcher who was taking photographs of the process, to know more about the photography. They explored textile art with a session with Célia and ceramics with Carlos, Juliana and Teresa. For the participants, having a final product, a printed t-shirt or a ceramic piece was very important and provided a motivation to come again. The long process of art production provided a space for conversations. Due to their experience of the project, adult participants asked the community centre to include art activities in the professional training curriculum provided by the centre.

Participants said that they had improved their relational skills. Artists observed that during the session, adult participants from rival families were speaking together about what they had created; children and young people, who were usually extremely anxious at the beginning, learned how to slow down and be more patient. The activities also included a visit to a local museum in the old city, and the feedback about the visit from the participants was surprisingly positive. Feedback from the museum guide was also very positive: she mentioned the interest of the groups and the way they interacted during the visit. This visit was a way to cross the bridge between the neighbourhood in the fringes and the city centre. The artists asked the director of the museum to make an exhibition of the works produced with Paradinha's participants during AMASS project in the temporary exhibition room. The response was positive and the AMASS exhibition will be curated to open in February 2022. (See more: <https://www.apecv.pt/pt-pt/amass-estudo-de-caso-4>)

Assessment methods and outcomes

Data was collected – with the consent of participants – through photographs taken by APECV researchers during workshops; drawings and texts by participants as feedback of workshops; written notes by researchers and artists about the workshops; audio and video records of evaluation sessions integrated in the programme activities (individual and focus groups interviews); records of online meetings with artists and researchers; and records of online meetings with artists, researchers and stakeholders. Data was analysed by researchers and initial findings were discussed with the stakeholders who explained it to participants. Their feedback was collected by researchers during a group conversation in the final session of the programme.

At the exhibition, the Paradinha's participants (11 February 2022–29 May 2022) at the Museum of Misericórdia, Viseu (an important museum of the city) made visible their work, advocated for the role of arts in society, raised participants self-esteem and established a bridge between the margins and the city centre.

Why this museum?

The museum was chosen because it is a cultural elite museum, because it belongs to a religious charity organisation (a different religion to the participants), because it contains an archive of the history of the city and because the participants visited it. The opening was attended by local journalists, as well as by local authority representatives and stakeholders, who included:

- The cultural chair of the city Hall
- The president of the district area

- The president of Caritas Viseu
- The social workers of the community centre of Caritas
- The director of ASSOL and a caregiver of ASSOL
- AMASS Portugal team
- The director of the Museum
- The president of the Misericórdia de Viseu

Local authority representatives from the city Hall, the district and the director of the museum acknowledged the contribution of the project to the society, referring to the arts as a tool for empowerment. The president of Caritas Viseu claimed that it is important to dignify the spaces and asked the city Hall not to overlook the quality of life in the city district.

Policy implications

AMASS researchers had to adapt themselves and respect this other way of working. The staff of the two community centres would telephone the adult participants to remind them about the activities one day before, and at the beginning of, each session.

In the centre, the staff help inhabitants to fulfil administrative tasks such as conforming to society's requirements; filling in forms for schools and social security; job applications and applications for social support. They also provide psychological support and organise extra-curricular activities for children and professional training activities for adults.

Protocols for cooperation with the community centre were established at the beginning of the project (July 2021).

In "Paracity" group, the artists and the community centre social workers often started the sessions by knocking on doors and going to the square to let people know they were there, ready for an art session with people.

The community centre – through the parent organisation – has protocols with different regional and national institutions, such as the local municipality, Social Security Services and Ministry of Education.

With this project and given the active participation of social workers and psychologists in the "Being Together" group, the relationship between the unemployed person and the technician who helps them became closer. Connections were made and knowledge gained that would not have been possible otherwise.

Conclusion

The feeling of community, trust and belonging was created in the groups.

For the successful accomplishment of work of this type time, plus the mutual respect, affection and cooperation of all parties are required. The visibility of the work developed on the project also proved to be very important, and a seminar was also held (11 March 2022) in which the following were present:

- Secretary of State – Office of the Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality (Ministry of Social Affairs);
- Commissary of the National Plan for the Arts (Ministry of Culture);
- Local Authorities (city Hall; Museums);

- Albane Buriel (Ateliers du Reve, France, researcher and art activist);
- Inês Azevedo and Joana Mateus (Casa da Imagem, Photograph Museum who hosted the exhibition of the pilot study in GAIA);
- AMASS Portugal (APECV; ASSOL; VF; SF; Paradinha);

Among the audience were also several scholars and artists from the Arts Education field. (See here: <https://amassproject.weebly.com>)

Some quotes from the participants about the experience:

What did I like the most?

The conviviality, the interaction with people. At first, we didn't know each other, we were ashamed to talk, but then we all became friends. (L.S., October, 2021, S. Felix: Being Together)

In these sessions, what was most important was the conviviality. We get along more, we learn more. We get out, it's an easy context. For those who are very much at home, it is the opening of horizons. (M.S., October, 2021, S. Felix: Being Together)

At first, I will be very honest, I didn't like it, but then I started to like it. Is different. I am very shy, very reserved, then I got to know people and now I like to come in. I feel good. I feel the ambience, I feel good. (A., October, 2021, S. Felix: Being Together)

Personally, I became more enriched. I'm really enjoying!

Is a pity that there are so few initiatives like these ones. (H.D., October, 2021, S. Felix: Being Together)

14 Spatial skills development for socially challenged children

An in-service art teacher training programme

*Anna Eplényi, Rita Terbe, Gertrúd Schmidt
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Introduction

Mentors of the project at the GYIK-Studio

This case study will explain a 60-hour teacher training programme on 3D art activities organised by the very well-known, Hungarian alternative afternoon Art Workshop, the GYIK-Studio. The Art Studio for Children and Young People (in Hungarian: GYIK-Műhely, www.gyikmuhely.hu) was founded 47 years ago under the leadership of the artist-teacher Á. Szabados (later Dean of the Hun. University of Fine Arts) (Szabados 1978), and has since become a creative studio developing young talents, talent under the auspices of the Hungarian National Gallery. The aim of GYIK is the integration of issues of contemporary art into art teaching, and at developing children's artistic creativity by artists and art teachers in afternoon groups. The topics of these classes are established every year, in an effort to explore the links between a project topic and the forms and techniques of creation. The Studio published nine books on art-pedagogy and more than 70 articles (Eplényi 2019). In 2019, the GYIK-Studio was awarded by the *Great Pedagogical Grant* of the Hungarian Art Academy.

Our research and books on spatial creativity: LANDSCAPE-SPACE-REPOSITORY+

In 2015, four colleagues of the Studio selected certain activities from the Studio's repertoire, which are embedded in spatial problems; therefore, they could be applied in developing the 3D skills of kids more than others (Eplényi et al. 2013, 2017, 2018). The English book "LANDSCAPE-SPACE-REPOSITORY+ (Eplényi, Terbe, Szentandrás, and Schmidt 2018, 2021)" was published to share best practices. The creative processes presented in this edition can be used to broaden the concepts of space (Dénes and Skalitzky 2015), expand the tools of modelling, and enrich technical-structural solutions. The examples of cartography (Eplényi and Terbe 2021), land modelling, and landscape architecture were innovative, as were the abstract or constructive exercises, which are not based on figurative but on spatial concepts. In 2018, a DLA-dissertation was dedicated for this topic by one of the authors on the Faculty of Architecture of BME Budapest (Terbe 2018). Another PhD research is ongoing by Dóra Szentandrás at MOME Applied Art University of mapping the development of spatial skills.

All this knowledge has been transformed into a training programme with the same aims in 2017 (*Accredited by the Ministry of Human Capacities: "Practice-Oriented Training to Boost Visual Spatial Intelligence and Spatial Creativity", reg. no. 575/52/2017, Educational Authority*).

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Methodology and procedure

Target population

Some of the applicants are the art teachers or educators dealing with schools or afternoon visual activities. The exercises discussed and explained in our training programme have since been successfully used in various drawing classes for children from the age of 7 to 14 and even in kindergartens. The topics studied such as landscapes, maps, landforms, local architectural details, and settlement analysis make it possible for all places around the country to be applied from big cities to small villages; even children with social challenges can get to know their suburbs. The art tasks can be applied to environmental education, and architectural and local history workshops. They can serve as an inspiration for architects or colleagues creating spatial installations, sculptors, and art instructors, as well as teachers and kindergarten teachers who choose to take the more experiential path in order to provide a spatial experience (Eplényi et al., 2017, Szentandrás, 2019a,b, Eplényi and Szentandrás, 2018, 2019, Szentandrás et al., 2012).

Educational objectives of the GYIK-Studio

The mood in the GYIK-Studio is pleasant and comfortable, like an “atelier”. Creative privacy and social interactions as well as games are typical for the lessons. In addition, learning the rules and regulations of artistic creation are communicated in a non-rigorous, easy way. The atmosphere is based on equality and friendship. The Studio is located in the hidden backstage of the museum, above the city, above our everyday world. This “Atelier-space” space has an atmosphere of familiarity and openness – without parental control.

The topics of our creative afternoon sessions are planned according to the thematic sequences of artistic problems. We pre-plan the storyline which can be based on a book, a tale, a location, an abstract concept, an actor, material, or even a scientific expression. There is a specific topic-frame for each group, the whole year long, which connects the sessions with each other and offers a story-flow. Although we, the teachers, are the ones planning the sessions, there is always room for digression, experiment, and adventure.

Ten observations about teaching spatial creation

- 1 Children are born with spatial thinking and with the ability to create in space. We need to nurture this ability and support it with an inspiring and encouraging presence. Our suggestions should embolden them to think and move forward. Children have an intrinsic desire to build, and they love spatially creative challenges.
- 2 Our creations should be based on experimentation and on encouragement to experiment. Visuality should not be looked upon as a statically perceived or final state, but rather as something that inspires, raises questions, and opens up new possibilities for the recipient so that what is seen is transformed and becomes a process and an experience.
- 3 When choosing a topic for the creation, try not to start from a well-worn topic with a fixed preconceived notion that can be routinely solved. This considerably limits children’s imagination (e.g., a house, a castle, or a car) and is difficult to move on from. A good choice of topic is the introduction of an abstract problem promising complex content and riddles to be handled. In this way, abductive reasoning is enhanced.

- 4 Playing – which is closely linked to being a child – is a key element in the creative process. It allows children to be open, free, and soaring. It creates an easy path between the course of the activity and the transfer of knowledge. A fun task gets children completely out of the rut of familiar patterns and allows them to put their own ideas into practice by abandoning a concrete model.
- 5 Unusual materials provide a space for experimenting and lend themselves to new spatial creations (balsa wood, foam board, metal sheet, cellophane, pins, etc.). Feel free to include materials from the building industry (concrete, Styrofoam, tile adhesive, plasterboard, tile mosaics, mosquito nets, wire ties, etc.).
- 6 The choice of material should go hand in hand with the choice of technique. Poorly thought-out fixing techniques can make it difficult to work smoothly. If too much energy is spent on fitting, the experience of creating is diminished.
- 7 Observation of 3D models, their shadows, intersections, and negative spaces can be used for the drawing and graphics-creating phase. Planar and spatial tools can be combined in various and intriguing ways.
- 8 The adaptation of different art movements (Land Art, Minimal Art, Kinetic Art, Concept Art, etc.) helps learners to think artistically in space and to explore the tangible relations between material and space.
- 9 Complex spatial constructions allow for varied, illusory optical light and shadow animations and short films, which make even older participants accept them as their own creations.
- 10 The complexity and combination of “pictures + landscapes + codes” of maps provide a board game-like framework for many exciting visual tasks, alongside which many other creations and activities can be inserted.

Methods of the training programme

The goal of our Spatial Modelling and Three-Dimensional Artistic training programme is to develop spatial thinking based on contemporary artistic and architectural topics, and to improve manual skills in modelling and spatial creation. It has four methodological clusters: in the first part, teachers are given theoretical presentations (20% – 12 hours) on main topics listed below: contemporary architecture, landscape design, terrain modelling, cartography, sculpture, installation, and land art. In the second phase, teachers are taking part in the creation process together of 35 “DIY activities” to expand teachers’ manual skills and practice in 3D modelling exercises (70% – 42 hours). At the end of the programme, they show all their artwork at a pop-up exhibition and give oral feedback as well. In order to sum up their knowledge, they should create a booklet with five individual art tasks in detail, related to the five main topics (inspiration, artists, description, techniques, outcomes, group-work, social side, etc.) (Figure 3.9).

Five main topics of the training programme

The training programme has five big cluster-topics related to our book chapters. These allow the participant to follow a clear structure and think in connected – activity chains to support associated, combined art tasks.

- 1 “MAPS, PLAN-VIEW, SHIFTS IN SCALE”: Contemporary art maps; map-coding and legends; ancient maps; cartography; body-maps; aerial photography: landscape from above, landscape patterns; local maps of our neighbourhood; board games.



Figure 3.9 Participating teachers in GYIK-Studio painting highway spaghetti junctions.
Photo: G. Schmidt.

- 2 “TERRAIN MODELLING, SURFACE, RELIEF”: Local topography, field names of mountains, caves, quarries, contour lines, terrain – relief, industrial forms, 20th-century sculpture, reliefs.
- 3 “NONFIGURATIVE, SPATIAL INSTALLATIONS”: 20th-century and contemporary sculpture, land art, kinetic art, installations: artists working in greater space.
- 4 “ARCHITECTURE OF FLORA AND FAUNA”: Special places for animals and birds; cages, nests, structures built by the nature; natural geometry and its adaptation in architecture and open space design, playscapes.
- 5 “CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE”: 20th-century and contemporary architecture: modern designers, the Dutch school of architecture, the German Bauhaus, contemporary trends and tendencies in architecture, form and function, designers and new structures ([Figure 3.10](#)).

Assessment methods and outcomes

All 18 participants were mainly primary and secondary art teachers from all over Hungary, and others were artists with afternoon classes, or art therapists. Five teachers are teaching disadvantaged student groups in underdeveloped areas. All of them have good visual skills, an intermediate or a high level of material-use and composition abilities. The duration of the final exhibition was 4 hours. All of them presented their artwork on a table and gave responses about the 60-hour programme. The exhibition-set showed a great variety of materials, forms, colours, artistic problems, and their solving ([Figure 3.11](#)).



Figure 3.10 Example of practical art tasks: wooden labyrinths for marble ball. Photo: E. Tamás.



Figure 3.11 Final pop-up exhibition of each participant 18th June, 2021, GYIK-Studio. Photo: I. Juhász.

A selection of artistic task to develop spatial skills from the programme:

- Seascapes, fantasy maps, sea-paintings/montage + painting
- Polynesian “*mattang*” stick maps – navigation/sculpture form wood, sticks, knitting
- Google Earth landforms, landscape pattern analysis/painting in groups with mixed materials
- “Stoneman” pillars from pebbles and rocks/painting with a cooperative technique
- Hole-finding labyrinths from wood/individual woodwork and painting
- Amorphous play sculptures from the ‘70/individual paper montage
- Social playground surface – relief inspired by I. Noguchi/white clay activity with tales
- Paper-flex composition inspired Mobius/paper-sculpture
- Ice floating composition of plastic foam cardboard/modelling with paper and needle
- Fantasy structures built on bamboo legs/modelling with sticks and knots

Teachers’ assignment: portfolio with new tasks

All 18 participants handed in a portfolio-booklet with their own, new art activity tasks. They were based on the five topics and were explained in detail. These were inspirational pictures, sources, links, artistic problem, social aspects, detailed descriptions of the creation process (tools, timing, steps, etc.). To help each other and to give the best comments for this final summary-work, we had three Zoom discussions and debates at the end of June. The teachers handed in high-level portfolios.

Feedback by course participants

At the end of the programme, the teachers needed to fill a questionnaire in order to give their opinions on technical and theoretic improvements. The results showed that they were looking for new ideas, fresh thoughts, and innovative inspiration. They wanted to improve their practice-based art-knowledge, technical know-hows, and their competencies on contemporary art. They wanted to learn about and acquire:

- new materials/combinations
- new ideas
- knowledge on contemporary art
- new technical know-how
- methods to develop spatial skills
- learn about 3D modelling as a spatial development method
- new educational methods
- sense of colour
- compositional skills
- new facts, knowledge on the world

Which of these skills/abilities were developed the more during the training?

Teachers preferred the “MAPS- MAPPING” topic the best; and they had difficulties to understand the “NONFIGURATIVE sculptures” topic. The “best thing” they commented was experience of creation, the loose mood of joint activities, and the positive

inspiration received by others. According to the results, 90% said that their pedagogical aspects had changed a lot, and they had developed more in areas such as techniques, concepts, and cooperative work.

Policy implications

We learned from this AMASS programme that teachers must be given opportunities to work in the “Atelier” for more days in a year. As artists are surrounded by their atelier/studio, so teachers also need to have a place/workshop to enjoy the joy of art. Only empirical finding, personal experience, and cooperative work will have an imprint on teachers in order to change their educator-role from the frontal position into an accompanying guider. Teachers need training programmes where they are not listeners but active, productive participants!

Conclusion

We expected the teachers not only to learn from us, not only to copy the offered art-techniques, but we also wanted them to explore new concepts, new combinations of materials and techniques. We believe that adaptive creativity is a crucial factor in teaching, especially in socially challenging regions. The tasks of the training programme had numerous inspirations and cross-references to allow later combinations, depending on the school-programmes, ages, and abilities of children. We hope that teachers will be able to set brand-new art activities in the future and not only copy ready-made ideas from web sites or Pinterest.

There is no better summary than the way teachers answer the question: “What was the biggest surprise about yourself, which you had not expected during the program?”

The new ideas based on abstract problems – I had big success with theses abstract concepts with kids!

Except for one activity, my brain started up every time! I had a great desire and openness to everything! I became enthusiastic!

There were activities where I supposed that I would be surely wrong, and then, it turned out to be good, and I found the thread!

I could cross my borders and these GYIK activities have broadened my boundaries!

I was open-minded – I didn’t reject anything!//What joy it was to touch and combine the various materials while creating!//The training proved how good it is for the creational process, if we take the situation as a play!

An important recognition of achievements of the GYIK Workshop is the he UIA Architecture & Children Golden Cubes Award allocated for our book, “LANDSCAPE-SPACE-REPOSITORY+, Creations to boost visual-spatial intelligence” in the printed media category. he laudation states that “This well-structured methodical handbook makes landscape education easy through an architecture and art approach. The book starts with providing tasks from abstract spatial concepts gradually and smoothly till actual three-dimensional arts, crafts and design tasks.” (UIA, 2023).

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15 AMASS-AMAS-WEIRD

Community-based art education project in the Sápmi area, Finland

Mirja Hiltunen

Theme

This chapter analyses a community-based art education project carried in the province of Lapland, Sápmi region, Finland. In Northern Sámi language, *amas* means weird or strange, so the word was selected to be the leading theme of the project. The project aimed to develop the participants' relationship with their surroundings and the local area while giving them a way to broaden how they picture their own culture and how they place themselves within it through art in a playful way. We paid attention especially to cultural sustainable development by focusing on socially activist art. Cultural sustainable development considers local conditions and culture as well as builds awareness of cultural expressions and heritage and recognises diversity while emphasising the importance of respect for human rights (see Härkönen 2021).

The themes are part of the Finnish national curriculum's extensive objectives in the practice of teaching, which support the perception and development of learners' cultural identity and how to develop into an active participant in one's own society (<https://www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/national-core-curriculum-basic-education>). The workshops also aimed to enhance one's creativity and increase the interactions within a culture and between cultures. In the larger picture, the project was contemplating the role of social justice and decolonial thinking in the context of the Arctic region in Finland and art teacher training (see, e.g., Hiltunen et al. 2021; Jokela and Hiltunen 2023).

Target population

The project was carried out with the Utsjoki River Valley School and the Sámi Upper Secondary School in Utsjoki. The entire school community 100 participants took part in the activity for a week in May 2021. Utsjoki is the northernmost municipality in the European Union and is situated at the border areas of Finland and Norway. The Tenojoki River, which separates Finland and Norway, flows next to Utsjoki.

For locals, the river is not so much a separator as it is a joining factor: the borders of the states, which have a Sámi population majority, are not the same as the countries' official borders. The families' stories and history have been combined on both sides of the Tenojoki River for dozens of generations. Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures affect each other and are bound to nature in the same location. The Sámi culture is evident in Utsjoki. Among other things, the Sámi language is spoken daily in the area.

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Methodology

The local curriculum in Utsjoki emphasises Sámi culture and its inclusion in education alongside national content. A group of six art education students from the University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, took part in the project as animators, tutors and student teachers at the school; they also conducted socially engaged art with the community.

Throughout the process, our challenge was to find ways to promote active interaction and dialogue between Sámi culture, contemporary art and encounters through art in the Northern multicultural school context. For our methodological approach, we chose art-based action research (Jokela et al. 2019).

The art education student team was divided into three groups during the planning stage, which started one year before the activity week. The contents of the three different workshops planned by the art education student team were formed in cooperation and dialogue with the teachers, consisting of themes such as history, locality, identity, environment and active citizenship. The local teachers were involved from the first planning stage to the implementation of the project and held different roles.

Since the project focused on planning and implementing a multidisciplinary learning entity, curricula have naturally guided the project. The entity was focusing on art in collaboration with other school subjects like craft, geography, history and English. Among other things, aspects related to community- and environment-based art were in the background, for example, the aim to include community members through artistic work and consider the environment as part of work (Jokela and Hiltunen 2023; Huhmarniemi et al. 2021). In practice, the whole school week was planned so that the three different workshops could be carried out by art education student team during each lesson, taking place in a whole week. The primary school pupils went around the workshops while being led by their teachers in the mornings, and the workshops for lower and upper secondary schools were held in the afternoons. Hybrid modes were also used; some student teachers were tutoring the workshops through distance learning.

The first workshop was named as “Map workshop”. The idea for this workshop came from the principal of the Utsjoki schools, Pasi Oikarinen. The region of Utsjoki was studied from above, asking the following questions: How does a familiar area look from a different perspective? What weird forms do satellite and map applications bring out? How does a person’s own identity become more detailed in a broadened view? The participants from all grades considered the environment and the Utsjoki community. The goal was for the maps to be understood as visual, ideological and experiential productions.

The different art-based exercises generated by student teachers also focused on bodily experiences, personal and mental images and memories of place. Attention was paid to the students’ own symbolic and mental images when reviewing the environment’s map forms. The aim of the exercises was to create a peaceful, ambient working atmosphere for the participants, one in which each person’s work, stories and discussions would be supported in a teacher-driven manner but in which the students have wide-ranging freedom to decide on the content and visual image of the works (Figure 3.12).

The participants had the opportunity to verbally express their experiences and consider their own experiences and observations about the environment and those of others.

In addition to discussions, as an assignment, poems were created describing the pupil’s and students’ emotions concerning the workshop and the weird theme of the entire week (Figure 3.13).



Figure 3.12 The participants use various pens and colours to draft the image of a place they chose: the entity is enriched with various unique individual- and community-based elements and named “As Individuals in the Community”. Photo: Mirja Hiltunen, 2021.



Figure 3.13 The different elements of the map trigger discussions about experiencing the place. Alongside work, students are encouraged to discuss, bring out their own opinions, listen to others and compromise. Photo: Mirja Hiltunen, 2021.

At the second workshop, which concentrated on art and craft, the participants created self-images as part of a collaborative artwork combining all different grades. The workshop was led by art education students Sara Kangas-Korhonen and Elisa Pölönen. Personal identity in relation to others and location was studied: What makes me and us special, and what connects me and others? The student teachers also introduced to the pupils the contemporary artists' way of working with recycled materials and collage techniques (Figures 3.14 and 3.15).

The third workshop concentrated on media and was led by art education students Henna Mattila and Pulmu Pitkänen. The workshop consisted of assignments that had been separately implemented for primary school, upper secondary and lower secondary students. The primary school pupils worked in groups to create a weird story in Utsjoki. Coincidences were utilised in creating the narrative. Each participant was given one scene of the story to illustrate, and the entity was implemented as a group work by painting or drawing on a long roll of paper. Finally, the stories were dramatised into short plays.

The lower and upper secondary students also worked with stories, but at this point, the work was based on experiences of the place, the region and history of Utsjoki.

Computers and personal mobile phones were used as tools and techniques. The workshop started with joint discussions and conceptual mind maps. Some participants



Figure 3.14 The self-images were created using a mixed technique by laying various materials on a wooden blank. The materials took into account locality and ecological sustainability, for example, excess art materials that the students brought from home and that would have otherwise possibly ended up as rubbish. Photo: Mirja Hiltunen, 2021.



Figure 3.15 The workshop ends with the creation of a public artwork, “Made from the same tree”, which is displayed in the school’s hall. Photo: Mirja Hiltunen, 2021.

combined the photographs they had taken with those from their family albums as part of their work.

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

We used an arts-based action research approach (Jokela et al. 2019) to explore contemporary arts possibilities in all three workshops for increasing the dialogue between different school subjects and crossing the boundaries when focusing on cultural competence, interaction and expression between Sámi Indigenous culture and other local cultures. The student teachers introduced to the pupils the contemporary artists’ way of working with different medium, materials and themes; for example, how Indigenous artists have raised awareness of the Sámi people’s position and history as a minority culture (Hiltunen et al. 2021).

From the perspective of learning, the central features of contemporary art to be emphasised are diversity, performativity, eventness and the simultaneous existence of the familiar and the odd. Contemporary art can be seen as a learning environment by utilising community-based shared expertise. Contemporary art as a learning environment is playful but challenging, connecting elements and is thus potentially meaningful, concurrently communal and considerate of individuality. Contemporary art at its core, like community-based art education, offers an environment to have dialogue with the world, means to embrace it and to learn (Desai 2020; Dewenhurt 2014; Hiltunen 2009; Kester 2004; Venäläinen 2019).

During the activity week in May 2021, there were approximately 100 participants, 80 of which were students. Ethical issues were considered at every phase of the project:

planning the workshops, interacting with community members, data gathering, consideration of the rights and the positions of the researchers and publication of the results. Consent forms were offered in both the Sámi and Finnish languages.

The research data collection methods consisted of participatory observation, research diaries, visual data, focus group interviews, images and videos. Content and visual analyses were used, and the art education student team made a project report based on their findings. Two of these were carrying out their master's theses based on their own experiences as student teachers. The theses will be published by the summer of 2022. One of the student teachers reflected on the process and found it very educative for herself as well:

As an experience, AMASS was both a community-based activity and experience that broadened activities. I gained a lot from it in the form of the environment and its residents, but at the same time, I hope that my efforts were visible in the community. The tasks of the workweek and entire project supported us all and provided a new type of encounter between different people.

Student teacher, workshop leader

An essential part of the assessment of the whole project was conversation and community-based activities and dialogue, here as part of the working process. The evaluation of the student's learning experiences considered active participation during lessons and expressed personal stories and opinions. The primary school students' weird stories, that is, several-metre-long, colourful graphic narrations, were hung in the school's hallways. The media productions were presented at the final celebration. At the end of the week, all the artworks created in the different workshops were reviewed in groups with the participants. This assessment made by joint discussion in groups highlighted visual observation and thinking, graphic production and aesthetic, ecological and ethical evaluation.

The participants also had the opportunity to peer- and self-evaluate both the working process and products in written form. For example, one upper secondary school student reflected her experiences after the activity week:

At the map workshop, I had a lot more creative thoughts after reviewing the map; at the art workshop, I learned that not everything had to be controlled and that sometimes it is good to just "work with what you have". At the media workshop, I learned that it's quite alright if the end result of the work does not meet expectations; it's not the end of the world.

And one primary school pupil stated:

My memories include the use of excursion maps and drawing together, designing at the art workshop and expressing myself while working, joint activities at the media workshop and story illustration. It was fun, and all the workshops were well planned.

Participant, Utsjoki primary school

Most of the local teachers were excited about the activities and gave us positive feedback; collaboration increased the entire school's sense of community and supported the

school's operating culture during the age of COVID-19. As stated by one of the local teachers who actively participated in the activity week:

The AMASS project was a great entity formed in cooperation with the Utsjokisuu School and University of Lapland. Joint planning was started in good time, in the autumn, and all of Utsjokisuu School's teachers and the university's art teachers and students participated in it several times. All those interested had the opportunity to generate ideas for workshops; these became interesting and great entities. During the week, the pupils visibly enjoyed creating art together. [...] Hopefully, we will get more opportunities for similar art-related cooperation in the future.

Participant, a teacher

However, criticism highlighted that other study subject contents could have been further included in the art activities. The workshops' guidance and implementation, which were partially carried out remotely, caused its own issues, alongside communication challenges. The project involved many uncertainties, a challenging project design and community members active participation due to COVID-19. The activity week was presented in social media, but because of COVID-19, the pupils' parents, relatives and other village residents could not be invited to the final celebration or to the exhibition's opening, which ran against the original plan.

The collaborative artworks are permanently exhibited in the Utsjoki Education Centre. Visibility is important. Later, the AMASS-AMAS-WEIRD poster was made and exhibited at the exhibition in Malta 2021 and the collaborative artworks were displayed in Rovaniemi at the Valo Gallery as part of the "Active witnesses" exhibition 2022.

Policy implications

This art-based action research project emerges from research interests in place-specific issues in art teacher education and their importance to teacher education in Finland in general. In this project, the Sámi people's perspectives have been essential and studied as part of the art education students' own studies at the University of Lapland. For example, awareness of the Sámi people's position and history as a minority culture has been an essential factor throughout the entire project and will have implications for art teacher education in the future, as well.

The new national core curriculum for basic education in Finland focuses on school culture and an integrative approach, where the active involvement of pupils, meaningfulness, joy of learning and interaction is the focus. Considering the transversal objectives of core curricula, our workshops are a good example of an interactive approach. All the workshops involved discussions and shared activities, aiming to inspire creative work and diverse expression while introducing visual storytelling through contemporary art. Sámi culture is a subject of focus in Utsjoki, and it was essential for our project, but more attention should be paid on Sámi culture all over in Finish school system. Discussions of location and history experiences help in the development of attitudes towards a culturally sustainable future. Visual methods are good means for expressing past and current stories, visualising possible futures and renewing hope.

Dialogue requires that everyone participates, listens to and hears the thoughts and needs of the others from the first planning stage to implementation (see, e.g., Desai 2020). This requires a lot of effort in time, willingness and resources to find new ways to

develop the school culture: the teachers need guidance and time for planning multidisciplinary teaching. Based on our findings and considering the transversal objectives of core curricula, we highly recommend the Finnish school system to

- develop the school culture by promoting instructions with an integrative, art-based approach
- focus on contemporary arts ways of working in interaction with the different school subjects
- pay attention to cultural sustainable development by focusing on socially activist art
- be aware of our Northern context and how contemporary artists have lately claimed current societal and future threats like climate change, openly discussed, for example, Sámi rights, oppression, discrimination and marginalisation.

Conclusion

The AMASS-AMAS-WEIRD project deepened and strengthened the participants' understanding of their own identities, both as individuals and as part of a community and society. We created an inspiring, creative and safe atmosphere for artistic work and discussion, one in which every individual's voice was heard.

By joint planning and collaboration with the locals, we managed to create an operating environment promoting communality, learning and participation. The activity week was the entire school's collaborative effort, in which everyone, all the pupils, students and teachers, participated as learners. The pupils and students had the opportunity to share stories about themselves and their communities and create new stories. Art operates as a gateway to self-expression and strengthens individual and community-based identities.

Evidence shows that the participants understood the relationship and interdependence between different learning contents and learned to combine the knowledge and skills provided by different subjects to form meaningful wholes. As a conclusion, the AMASS-AMAS-WEIRD project developed the school culture by promoting instructions with an integrative, art-based approach. Contemporary arts offer the possibilities for increasing the dialogue between different school subjects and crossing the boundaries when focusing on cultural competence, interaction and expression.

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Part IV

Media-based social interventions

Film, photography, and social media
for empowerment and inclusion



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16 #daimieiocchi: participatory photography workshops for marginalised young people in Italy

Theoretical foundations and methods

Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa and Silvia Remotti

A multidisciplinary approach

The #daimieiocchi series of participatory analogue photography workshops, aimed at vulnerable children and adolescents living in marginalised neighbourhoods in five Italian cities, was developed with a multidisciplinary approach that, in practice, was based on the complementation and coordination of methodological practices belonging to different disciplines to address a topic. In this way, individual professionals from each discipline work on the basis of his or her expertise in collaboration with others, contributing to the parts of the process where he or she can add most value.

In this case, the disciplines of Design, Pedagogy, and Photography were merged to offer their maximum potential during the workshops. This approach allowed the different actors involved in the project (i.e. designer-researchers, educators, and photographers) to freely experience the activities and reflect on their own perceptions, enabling them to make their own evaluations during the sessions under their unique points of view, which would then be confronted to reach a different level of interpretation and knowledge (i.e. $1 + 1 + 1 = 4$).

The project involved a total of 62 children and adolescents between 6 and 13 years old, organised in one or two groups according to the number per city to allow a more personalised follow-up in each session (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021).

About design

Designer-researchers from PACO Design Collaborative were responsible for the overall project. First, their role consisted of proposing the organisational basis of the workshops (a process structured in phases with a beginning and an end), its objectives, related methods, and instruments to be used, with the aim of making meaningful connections. Second, they were in charge of graphically visualising the information and data for a better understanding of every actor involved in the project, such as the participants, their families, the educators, and the photographers, and also creating a graphic communication that would give shape and credibility to the project, both in person and virtually, supporting its effective dissemination.

About pedagogy

Twelve educators from the Tree of Life foundation participated in the project. Their role was to provide support and guidance to the participants, helping them to make sense of the exercises of reflection and interpretation of their photos. Being familiar with the participants' families and the realities they face enabled them to ask the right

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Figure 4.1 Two boys from Ponticelli, Naples sharing their first developed photographs (Left). Participant of Aranceto, Catanzaro proudly shows the page of the catalogue where her photographs appear (Right).

Source: Photos by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

questions to spark dialogue. Pedagogy encourages and guides children and adolescents by giving structure to their learning. Especially when working with vulnerable young people, who lack solid formative structures, it is of utmost importance to give them concrete objectives to guide them appropriately in order to maximise their experience (Figure 4.1).

About photography

The workshops focused on the use of photography as a means of imaging and interpreting reality. Seven local professional photographers were involved in the project. Their role was to lead the participants through the world of analogue photography and support them with technical issues, which was important because this technique served as the participants' new instrument of expression (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021). It was a medium that helped them express deep and complex feelings and thoughts about their lives in their neighbourhoods in a more manageable way (Figure 4.2).

On the one hand, this multidisciplinary approach provided advantages for the participants to effectively develop the proposed activities attending to their varied needs, and, on the other hand, advantages for research—to have a rich understanding of the experience lived by each participant during the progress of the workshops. While the designer-researchers monitored the process and achievement of the objectives, the educators focused on the formative experience of the participants, and the photographers on their progress at a technical level, such as the use of the camera, as well as at a narrative level, paying attention to the composition of the photographs taken.

A structured collection of data both quantitative and qualitative for subsequent cross-assessment is essential when a project aims to evaluate rather subjective variables, such as changes in the participants' behaviour during and after an intervention. Further, when a project has a complex nature due to the number of actors contributing to its implementation and the variety of activities that compose it, it becomes necessary to cross-reference data gathered by the different actors in order to arrive at meaningful conclusions that demonstrate accurate learning.



Figure 4.2 Photographer guiding a participant trying the analogue camera for the first time during the first lesson of the #daimieiocchi workshop in Sampierdarena, Genoa (Top). Participants proudly posing with the catalogue of their photo exhibition during the opening at ZEN 2, Palermo (Bottom).

Source: Photos by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

Assessment goals and assessment methods

During the #daimieiocchi workshops, which were executed and guided by the team of designer-researchers, it was paramount to document each session in detail in order to be able to further assess the progress of the process and its results once the lectures were completed. Consequently, the utmost attention of and on-site evaluation by the team of professionals for the optimal development of each activity during the sessions allowed for continuous improvement of the workshops, making it possible to immediately address the challenges that arose in each city (Figure 4.3).

Specifically, the following aspects were assessed:

- Participation in the project;
- Verbal and non-verbal communication;
- Perception of their neighbourhood;
- Perception of their role in society;
- The attitude to change and to become agents of change.

Some ethical principles were considered, such as respecting the authorship of the young people's photographs, giving them control of ownership, and avoiding manipulation of the data, leaving everything duly written down in paper and digital records shared with the project collaborators. The procedures for the management of the youth's data and produced materials consisted of communicating about the programme and its objectives to their families by the foundation's coordinators. Subsequently, enrolment in the workshops was done by signing two consent forms. The first gave the designer-researchers informed consent for the collection and use of all types of material generated within the workshops, whether audio, video, or images, in academic publications, social networks, exhibitions, and events. The second form was a copyright release for the exclusive use of the material generated within the AMASS project (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021).

Diverse data collection and assessment methods were used, and since all the workshops followed the same methodology, the same methods were proposed throughout. The main objective was to understand what the participants thought and how they felt about their life in their neighbourhood before, during, and after the workshop, and whether the participatory art-based process contributed to their understanding that every vision and



Figure 4.3 Participants select their photos for the exhibition (*Source*: Photo by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa, Left). Participants of Sampierdarena, Genova posing with the team of educators, photographer, and designer in front of the exhibition (*Source*: Photo by PACO Design Collaborative, Right).

opinion has value, that our actions can influence our environment, and that we can all become agents of change.

A selection of data collection methods was defined according to the variety of aspects to be assessed:

- Observation and note-taking;
- Digital photographic record of all sessions;
- Voice recording of two of the five sessions and their respective transcription;
- Collection of all the participants' photographs;
- Focus groups with the educators and photographers during and after workshops;
- Individual participants' interviews after the workshop.

For each of the five sessions that composed the #daimieiocchi workshops, a different data collection method was implemented according to the activities held in each session:

- The first session corresponded to the introduction to the workshop. It was led by the designer-researchers, who observed and took notes on the conversations generated, as well as a digital photographic record. The educators and photographers assisted in the activities and also in observation.
- During the second session, mainly guided by the educators, a dialogue was generated for the reflection and interpretation of the participants' first photographs. Voice recording, with its subsequent transcription, was key during the group discussion. Observation, note-taking, and a digital photographic record were also carried out by the designer-researchers. The educators and photographers participated in observation.
- The third session consisted of a practical photography lesson around the neighbourhood that was led by the photographers, who observed and created a brief digital photographic record. The educators supported the activity and participated in observation.
- During the fourth session, a group discussion mainly led by the educators and photographers was held with the participants. It was the second reflection activity and the co-creation of the workshop's closing exhibition. The designer-researchers did voice recording, observation, and note-taking, as well as a digital photographic record.
- The last session, mainly led by the designer-researchers, corresponded to the closing of the workshop with a photographic exhibition in the neighbourhood. In some cities, brief interviews were conducted with the participants in front of their work to determine their impressions and reflections upon completing the course.

Weeks after the workshops ended, two online focus groups were conducted: one with the photographers, and the other with the educators who took part in the project. In both focus groups, notes were taken of their assessments of the process and its results, as well as their experiences.

Outcomes

The assessment process was carried out throughout the course of the workshop by the designers, educators, and photographers. Providing a structured path with clear phases and objectives through visual instruments such as a video teaser, a project presentation, and shared calendars for all the actors involved in the project was decisive for the optimal

management of the data collection and its subsequent assessment. This helped to increase the awareness of the team, both in the process of the workshops and in the objectives of the research that ran in parallel.

The purpose of the data collection was to capture the impact of these workshops on:

- the participants' attitude towards their lives in their neighbourhoods;
- the awareness of their actions;
- the understanding of the consequences of their choices;
- the collection and clustering of their opinions;
- the value of their points of view and choices.

The researchers' analysis of the voice transcripts, cross-checked with the observations and note-taking of the sessions and the focus groups, yielded a number of results.

The first considers the value of the multidisciplinary approach. The permanent guidance and accompaniment of the participants by the educators throughout the workshop, but particularly in the reflection sessions where they interpreted and selected photographs, were key. Facilitating the young people's explanations by asking them the right questions allowed for unblocking their flow of thoughts and enabled them to construct meaningful narratives. This had a direct impact on strengthening the young people's self-confidence and self-esteem to take ownership of their reality.

The continuous feedback from the photographers on the participants' photographs was important to reinforce the value of the effort and to encourage the young people to persevere with this communication technique. If only ten photographs came out of a film of 36, the positive aspects of that selection were celebrated. Participants, in turn, felt empowered and free to express their thoughts through photography (Figure 4.4).

Ethnographic outcomes

The strategy of developing the same workshops in five different cities spanning Northern and Southern Italy motivated a review of the collection of all the participants' photographs in addition to a clusterisation of their final opinions. This enabled the researchers to better understand the similarities and differences experienced by children and adolescents in situations of geographical and/or socio-economic marginalisation, as well as to deepen the participants' attitude towards their lives in their neighbourhood (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021).

In every city, the young people generated two types of photographs: planned and spontaneous. When they had to share them with the group, in the first case, the narrations were the expression of already elaborated ideas. In the second case, the authors had to stop and reflect on the motivations for that image. Furthermore, creating their stories from the description of concrete, printed images helped them to see beyond what even they could have imagined. This exercise, which was unusual for digital natives, awakened their reflective and critical thinking.

There were also appreciated the differences concerning the surrounding geographical context in which the children and adolescents lived. As the photographs were not mounted or edited, it can be stated that they were a true reflection of the participants' reality. There were several differences in what the young people paid attention to depending on the environments they inhabited. It was common to see many photographs of animals in rural contexts in the southern regions, as well as many photographs of nature taken by



Figure 4.4 Collection of analogue photographs of the participants.

participants living in urban contexts in the northern regions, pointing out, for instance, the absence of and their desire for it.

It was also possible to observe differences in the photographed objects according to age, with the youngest participants' photographs being linked to their closest world, such as their family, friends, and pets—mainly, situations in which they experience joy, security, and love. In contrast, the adolescents predominantly selected objects

outside their immediate circle and began to look at the wider world with a more conscious and critical gaze.

The varied and significant results of the workshops revealed the great value that a multidisciplinary approach to project design, monitoring can have. Considering all points of view, it was possible to identify and understand the different variables that influenced each participant's experience, as well as the overall impact of the process and effectiveness of the proposed methodologies. The continuous cross-analysis of the assessments of the different actors revealed in greater detail the unique perspectives of the children and adolescents, which led to more in-depth and personalised work with each participant. Considering the multiple motivations behind young people's attitudes and opinions, this project allowed us to genuinely consider their perception and positive appraisal.

Reference

Gutiérrez Novoa, Carolina, and Remotti, Silvia. 2021. #daimieiocchi Participatory Photography Laboratories. In *Arts-based Social Interventions: First Results of the AMASS Testbed*, edited by Kárpáti, Andrea, and Sarantou, Melanie, Rovaniemi: University of Lapland, Faculty of Art and Design.

Appendix

Remotti, Silvia, and Gutiérrez Novoa, Carolina. 2022. *Italy Narratives*, AMASS. https://amassproject.weebly.com/italy_narratives.htm

17 #daimieiocchi: Participatory photography workshops for marginalised young people in Italy

Collaborative creation and results

Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa and Silvia Remotti

How can the approach of an artistic discipline such as photography to young people in vulnerable situations, either economically or educationally, who live in marginalised contexts where cultural opportunities are scarce, help them become positive agents of change in their communities?

In this chapter, we present our findings of the project by combining what happened during its implementation with an analysis of the situations and their outcomes.

Through the continuous assessment of the series of participatory photography workshops #daimieiocchi, the hypotheses that the team of designer-researchers proposed at the beginning of the project to answer this question were tested. The proposed methodological criteria, such as active participation, maker activities, and a multidisciplinary approach, proved to be critical to involve digital natives in art-based activities and drive them to awaken the desire to become positive agents of change.

Active participation, maker activities, and a multidisciplinary approach

Active participation consisted of giving participants part of the responsibility for the final outcome of the workshop. Inviting them to play a leading role in their first photographic exhibition worked very well, as it meant a major commitment for them session by session, since the presence of invited family and friends created a desire to perform well. As the workshops progressed, the participants could see their progress concretely, receiving their printed analogue photographs and working with them—moving from individual to group activities and from reflective to decision-making exercises. Their active involvement in the project enforced the idea that with perseverance, they could actually achieve their goals. One aspect that can be further explored in future interventions is to increase the amount of time of active participation, as we have seen that over time, the relationship of the young people with the proposed activities and the adults who guide them improves exponentially.

The maker activities positively served to keep the young people in a continuous learning process, where they themselves were the ones who directly carried out the different tasks, such as experimenting with the diverse photographic variables, expressing their ideas when selecting and cropping their photographs, and finally, collaboratively creating a photographic collage with a meaningful narrative with their peers. In some cases, giving the participants so many responsibilities that they were not used to managing may have been overwhelming, but with the assistance of the designers, educators, and photographers, they could put their agency into practice.

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For children and adolescents to understand the potential of their opinions and actions, it was necessary to acknowledge and validate the value of their contributions, providing them a safe space and time to speak up—combined with active listening to give them constructive feedback. This recognition directly influenced their attitude towards the activities, as well as their self-esteem and self-confidence. It was here where the multidisciplinary approach found its value:

- **The discipline of design:** by designing and visualising processes and objectives, the designer-researchers could structure the creative processes of the participants and interpret their results. A concrete example was the photographic exhibition at the close of the workshops organised by the designers, along with all its graphic communication, catalogue development, and dissemination, which was a moment of celebration and pride for the young people.
- **The discipline of pedagogy:** by helping the young people structure their learning and express their deepest feelings and reflections, educators provided guidance for meaning-making behind the pictures taken, ensuring an atmosphere of safety and trust during the reflection sessions.
- **The discipline of photography:** by teaching analogue photographic processes to the young people, the photographers brought new means to help them express and value the insights of their life in the suburbs, along with providing technical support and constructive advice on the narratives they generated (Figure 4.5).

This multidisciplinary approach made it possible to achieve an alignment between the research and educational objectives and the interest in achieving optimal final results.



Figure 4.5 Children from ZEN 2, Palermo in their first practical session of analogue photography.

Source: photo by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

Encouraging continuous dialogue among all the professionals in charge also led to mutual learning, making the experience as fruitful as possible for the young people.

Educational achievements through art

There were four aspects of the proposed methodology that brought educational achievements during these workshops, which aimed to teach an artistic discipline (i.e. analogue photography) to young people in situations of marginalisation and poverty:

The power of an object: fostered democratic participation

Providing the same toolkit to every participant meant that everyone started the workshops with the same opportunities, leading to democratic participation, where no participant had any advantage over another; therefore, no one felt excluded. This allowed them to avoid differences among each other and facilitated unity in the groups since they faced the same challenges. Since an analogue camera was a completely new tool for the majority of the participants, it was important to explain simple gestures, such as how to hold the camera, how to observe through the viewfinder, and how to shoot photographs. This would not have been possible if we had asked them to work with their own digital devices, as was the case of the pilot project; for example, on the one hand, not everyone had the means to own a device, and, on the other hand, the devices might have different features. The participants had to learn how to turn on the flash when they were in places with low lighting conditions and to not take pictures directly pointed at the sun. This required time and many tests. They understood that every shot depended on their decisions, and that they were wholly responsible for obtaining good final results. Democratic participation promoted a collaborative work environment and teamwork that supported connections between peers and created new friendships (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021a) (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6 Portraits of some of the project participants.

Source: Photos by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

The power of waiting: enhanced responsibility and patience

Working with an analogue camera that the participants owned from the first day of the workshop, and whose proper functioning throughout the sessions depended entirely on them, gave the young people a sense of responsibility. In turn, they discovered a mechanical, physical, and chemical process where the production of an image was based on capturing light on photosensitive film, which was easier to understand compared to a digital camera that requires highly technical skills. However, the non-immediacy of analogue photography (i.e. waiting for the photographs to be developed) helped them to exercise patience. They were given an unfamiliar tool that they had to rely on ‘with their eyes closed’, without being able to see the results immediately, as is the case with a mobile phone. Prior to discovering the results of their photography, they had to wait two weeks before we brought their prints to the next lesson. This waiting time taught the young people to be patient and to respect the time of the process. In a digital world where one can obtain all information in a few seconds, they learned the power of waiting. This waiting time increased the value of the final results. When the participants finally had their photographs in hand, they were all proud of their results, even if they could only print 10 out of their 36 pictures due to technical problems (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021a) (Figure 4.7).

The power of participation: promoted commitment and respect

To receive their developed photographs and a new 35-mm film canister, the young people had to attend the workshop. This gave them an understanding of the meaning of commitment and taught them to respect the timing of an analogue process. With a digital camera, young people often shoot many pictures and then select the best ones. On the contrary, with an analogue camera, you cannot select photos immediately after shooting, and, more importantly, you cannot delete a picture from the film. This meant that the participants had to be fully present during the practice—actively involved and focused on the process—in order to make the most of the limited number of shots available to them.

Additionally, the implementation of participatory art activities was invaluable in engaging the young people throughout the process, as well as encouraging them to share their results in a public exhibition that depended solely on their efforts. The support of the educators also contributed to enhancing the commitment of the participants while involving their families, as they are a fundamental component to foster discipline. During the exhibitions, we could see their joy and pride upon seeing the result of their work on public display and showing their photographs to their friends and families. The catalogue also played a fundamental role, giving a weight of greater meaning to this experience, as it was the first time that something they had created was printed and shared with others (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021a).

The power of reflection: raised self-awareness

On the one hand, the fact that the number of available images was limited due to the length of a physical roll of film forced them to think about what they were going to photograph, contrary to the practice of using a mobile phone. They had to take time before



Figure 4.7 (From top to bottom) Group of participants in Ponticelli, Naples in their first practical session of analogue photography. The young people from Sampierdarena, Genoa and Ponticelli, Naples, respectively, collaboratively create a collage to structure the narrative of a photographic exhibition. Young people from Aranceto, Catanzaro, actively participate in the final exhibition of the workshop.

Source: Photos by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

shooting to decide whether the subject was worthy to be captured. On the other hand, the impossibility of editing, deleting, or previewing their photographs on a screen immediately after shooting made them consider technical aspects such as focus, framing, and available light. This added a greater complexity to the exercise of taking photographs; as the process replaced the one they were used to, it pushed them to be ‘more conscious’ of what they are doing, to be intentional, and to consider the meaning behind their decisions, as opposed to the emotional impulse and immediacy of digital photography.

Through the structured analysis of the audio and photographic recordings of all the reflection sessions, it was possible to appreciate how the exercise of selecting, interpreting, and making sense of the photographs helped the young people to better articulate their ideas. It pushed them to stop, observe, and reflect on their lives with their loved ones and in their neighbourhoods, which were practices that were unfamiliar to them. A greater depth in their spoken reflections was noted from the second to the fourth session of the workshop.

Thanks to analogue photography, all participants in a group were able to see their photos at the same time, creating a trusted sharing moment. This put into practice reflective and critical thinking, as well as what it means to work with intent, providing an invitation to value the potential of their thoughts, opinions, and actions while being validated by their peers in shared and collective sessions where a respectful atmosphere and active listening were created. These positive conditions promoted a sense of greater self-awareness, allowing them to awaken the idea that if they want to achieve some kind of change in their reality, it is not only possible, but they have the power to do so (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021a) (Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8 Youngsters holding their own photos during the public photography exhibition at the Parco Fratelli de Filippo, in Ponticelli, Naples. Photo: Claudio Menna.

Dissemination

The systematic digital photographic record throughout the workshops allowed for visualising the impact of the project and disseminating it through various channels, such as social media, newspaper articles, the AMASS project website, as well as related conferences, seminars, and exhibitions.

@_daimieiocchi Instagram account

This channel was used to disseminate the results of the workshops to a wider audience, sharing mainly photos taken by the participants. The posts were mainly photos taken by the participants. The channel currently has approximately 100 posts and 150 followers. In the stories, the sessions in progress in each city were shared, giving insights into the methodology. Of course, there were also publications dedicated to all the final photographic exhibitions. In the highlighted stories, it is possible to visit all the workshop sessions in the different cities (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021b).

Articles in newspapers

Thanks to the positive impact of the workshops on the communities and the professionals who contributed to their development, two of the five initiatives had the opportunity to share the experience in local newspapers. In these, both the AMASS project and the workshops in particular were featured, which gave the project greater visibility, reaching local administrators and the wider population, as well as being a channel for publicising the final exhibitions. In both cases, the impact that the publications had on the participants, their families, the photographers, and the educators was very positive, making them feel proud of the work they had done (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021b).

Conclusions

The value of analogue photography as a tool for social engagement was accomplished through the material process that the participants followed during the workshops, which themselves were sequential and required active participation. This was because analogue photography is not immediate: shooting, developing, and printing are interconnected and sequential steps. Unlike digital photography, the curiosity of children and adolescents (in individuals and as a group) during the process increased their involvement and active participation, leveraging different learnings that valued their reflections, choices, and actions. Visualising the unique perspectives of vulnerable young people living in marginalised societies will possibly provide a seed in the shaping of individuals who believe in themselves and understand that being agents of positive change is also in their power (Gutiérrez Novoa, Remotti, 2021a).

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18 Cultural empowerment through social media

The Roma Cultural Influencer Project

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Research theme and objectives

The cultural heritage of the Hungarian Roma minority, representing about 10% of the population of our country, is not exhibited permanently in a dedicated museum, not integrated into the school curriculum, and consequently, it is not recognised even by the members of this social group. A literature review of remedial and support programmes for the Roma community revealed that the programmes targeted mainly children and focused on social and learning to learn skills. In the framework of the AMASS project, we wanted to support young women, a community with multiple challenges: unfinished or insufficient education due to poverty of their family, resulting lack of workplace skills, joblessness and early parenthood. In real life and social media, they seem to lack inspiration and support for changing their fate. The major objective of the Roma Cultural Influencer training programme was to empower members of this social group to represent their cultural heritage and provide successful, empowering life stories on social media. The training programme involved verbal, visual and digital communication skills development that we considered useful for young Roma girls and women, whether at school or in search of employment. As a result of the training, 18 young Roma women established themselves on social media and successfully introduced positive communication in the unilateral and biased media landscape.

Target population: Hungarian Roma girls

The Hungarian Roma, about 780,000 in number, is the biggest majority in a country of less than ten million inhabitants. The Lovari, Romungro and Beash constitute the “Romano Rodó”, the Roma nation. Large family unit regulates everyday life – the Roma are a responsible community with *a high level of social consciousness and strong national identity* (Kemény and Janky 2005). Language is a cultural feature that constitutes an important part of Roma identity and adherence to traditions and family roots. Roma stakeholders seem to agree that acquisition of the language of their social group, and through this, *appropriation of their native culture* (oral history, dances, songs and instrumental music, visual arts and crafts) is of utmost importance in the enhancement of their social prospects (Policysolutions 2019). However, the Roma tribes have deeply different attitudes towards heritage reservation versus assimilation. Members of the Romungro tribe are integrated in the culture of the majority Hungarians; they do not speak their tribal language, neither do they adhere to ancient customs of the Roma community. The Boyash (or “Beás”) have retained their art forms (music, dance, crafts) and their language as well (Figure 4.9).

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Figure 4.9 Roma Cultural Influencers meet a role model: Erika Varga explains how she uses traditional Roma folk motives in her fashion design at an exhibition of the Romani Design fashion house. Photo: Zsófia Somogyi-Rohonczy.

Roma youth suffers from educational segregation in primary level education, where “special” classes with lower attainment expectations are formed that become dead alleys as they do not prepare for secondary level studies. In recent years, more and more new programmes with textbooks in minority languages have been published and support for the training and subsequent enrolment of Roma teachers is available, but the elimination of damages caused by segregation will need decades of hard work on all educational and social fronts. Only about 40% of young Roma continue their studies on secondary level, and vocational schools often fail to provide them with qualifications that guarantee employment in a rapidly transforming economy. Too short or inappropriate education and unemployment are intricately related and the social distance between the Roma minority and the social majority constantly increases (Kertesi and Kézdi 2011).

Roma culture (apart from music) is underrepresented in Hungary. Appropriation of the cultural heritage is difficult, as there is no dedicated museum of Roma art (although several artists gain international reputation) and folk traditions are also underrepresented in regional museums (Kárpáti et al. 2014). An example of success in social and cultural enhancement of young Roma is the Real Pearl Foundation, a private initiative led by Nóra L. Ritoók, art educator (for an English language overview, cf. Oates and Ritók (2018), but see also <https://igazgyongyalapitvany.hu/en/home/> with reports and striking child art).

As the major information source for young people, social media have a biased and gloomy picture on Roma life and culture. An Instagram survey to identify related content on Hungarian and international sites (Rétvári et al. 2022) revealed that the #*cigány* (Gypsy) hashtag included entries about the misbehaviour of Roma people in urban areas



Figure 4.10 Collage of positive images of the Roma on social media by Márton Rétvári.

(80%) and news about events (20%). Content tagged *#cigány* was predominantly pejorative that reinforced prejudices among majority Hungarians. When other hashtags were used in conjunction with *#cigány*, for example, *#cigányzene* (Gypsy music) and *#cigánytánc* (Gypsy dance), two-thirds of these posts represented images and names of musicians, and only one-third contained negative comments about venues where Gypsy music was played. Posts tagged *#cigányság* (Gypsy community) were rare and contained historic information (Figure 4.10).

The researchers found two accounts only that included posts with the hashtag *#romakultura* (Roma culture): a fashion studio run by the Roma designer Erika Varga that produces highly acclaimed garments with Roma motives (see the exhibition of Romani Design in Figure 4.9) and Salföldi Oldal (“A Page about Salföld” – a Hungarian region) that highlights a music festival organised there, but also adds related cultural context. The international Instagram sites showed a much brighter and more sophisticated interpretation of the Roma heritage. These pages indicated how much social media channels may contribute to cultural appropriation, empowerment and recognition. Through our training programme on social media for Roma girls, we hoped to catalyse similar positive changes.

Methodology and procedure

Communication skills of young Roma, who are mostly visualisers, while education is predominantly verbal, are often underdeveloped and therefore most of them are unsuccessful at school (Kyuchukov et al. 2017). Visualisers may be, however, very successful, when communicating on media platforms. In these popular arenas of self-expression, using visual language may facilitate their conceptual development, too. Authentic media personalities represent more than their individual interests and value system but stand up for their community. Representing a culture means to deeply understand, process and reveal cultural values that may be important for followers (Pouloupoulos et al. 2018). The effects of influencers go far beyond raising awareness for a product or idea. They call to

action, change life(styles) and deeply influence the way their fans think about themselves and their communities (Nandagiri 2018).

With the objective of making the rich and authentic cultural heritage of the Roma visible and inspiring for young members of this community and Hungarian majority youth as well, the Visual Culture Research Group at Corvinus University of Budapest decided to train a new type of media personality: a Cultural Influencer. Our hypothesis was that *using social media channels will be more effective for raising awareness about the positive aspects of Roma life: cultural heritage as well as current achievements in arts and science, than traditional ways of cultural communication*. The training involved two consecutive media skills development programmes of 120 lesson hours in total, followed by five months of mentoring by a trained journalist and coach. The stakeholder community around our training team included local municipal decision makers, educational politicians and community members from cultural and political associations of Hungarian Roma who reflect on course content and mentor participants. This way, we hoped to avoid cultural colonialisation – a practice that filters authentic content to suit majority ideologies (Figure 4.11).

Our arts-based intervention used the Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube platforms as a creative environment to mentor young Roma girls in social media use. Personal mentoring was necessary, as the girls encountered harassment through comments by those who have general, negative attitudes towards the Roma population and criticism from family members for stepping in the limelight. We found two methods



Figure 4.11 Participants of the Roma Cultural Influencer Course in the media room. Photo: Lajos Kovács.

especially useful for teaching future Cultural Influencers about the choice of relevant topic, authentic visualisation, striking image and emotionally charged, still accurate text:

- *Photovoice*, a participatory methodology of working on the boundaries of art, anthropology, sociology and politics (Latz et al. 2016; Photovoice Ethical Photography n.d.).
- *Visual Storytelling*, a method of filmmaking and photography that uses objects and life events as sources of inspirations (cf. Hsu et al. 2020).

The final work of our course participants was to create a media piece all on their own. They undertook organisational tasks, filmed and edited interviews for a social media channel of their choice, adding text and images where necessary. Through this task, they represented nationally acknowledged Roma artists, designers, teachers, social workers, etc., who may serve both as role models and as sources of cultural identity.

Influencer personality research shows the necessity to integrated netiquette, internet law and personality assertion training in a developmental programme (Szcurski 2018). In the second phase of the programme, we employed a psychologist-coach also active as a journalist and is aware of media regulations. Mentoring was organised individually or in small groups online and face-to-face, on a weekly basis.

Our course participants represented the whole cultural spectrum of the young Roma community from the 18-year-old young mother to the doctoral student in her twenties to the experienced social worker in her thirties. Their training needed to be personalised and responsive. We motivated them to explore and represent their cultural heritage integrating it with contemporary social issues concerning Hungarian Roma and utilise their life experiences. We enhanced their communication skills in primarily digital media, but we intended to provide a wide spectrum of other creative opportunities. Combining digital technologies with traditional means of expression like drawing, writing, singing, playing music or engaging in creative drama showed new genres and styles for the work of our Cultural Influencers. (For an illustrated description of the course programme, cf. Kárpáti and Somogyi-Rohonczy 2021.)

Assessment methods and outcomes

The training programme was accompanied by mentoring, participatory observation and portfolio assessment study to reveal the development of the participants and the usability of the training programme for similar future interventions.

Mentoring

The future influencers received support from an experienced journalist and coach, Julianna Nyári. She based her consultations on an online survey followed by personality tests and interviews. The girls described their short- and long-term achievement goals, expectations about the training programme, professional skills and personal characteristics they needed to develop. They also revealed their perceived strengths: a likable media personality, special technical skills, community network, previous experiences with the arts and media. The mentor, experienced both in coaching and in journalism, established personal developmental plans, discussed them with the course participants and also offered reviews of their media works. Reactions by the audience were also discussed and response strategies developed. The developmental plans were adjusted several times

during the programme to include new objectives resulting from creative experiences and feedback from tutors and peers. Problems concerning the workload of producing media content were a significant obstacle to face, but in most cases, it was overcome through coaching in time management. At the end of the training programme, the mentor gave a detailed feedback to all participants about their development of personality characteristics important for the role of influencer (self-assertion, goal setting, resilience in accepting and responding to or ignoring comments) and evaluated their media pieces as well. Eleven of the eighteen participants manifested significant development and were ready to realise their professional goals; seven needed more training and coaching.

Participatory observation

The media tutors observed the work of the girls in the media lab of the university and at the end of a study module, gave feedback on their development and technical skill to acquire or develop. During the tutoring process, the girls selected media genres they felt most comfortable about. One of them opened a podcast channel with interviews about contradictor issues of supporting young Roma; another dedicated her Instagram channel to striking images about the contrasts of Roma life. A third girl decided to focus on the importance of family life, a core value in the Roma community, and shared her experiences as a working mother both on Facebook and on Instagram. There were five girls who realised that the constant need for posting to keep a social media channel alive is more than they can undertake and opted for becoming irregular participants of channels of others. Eight participants left the course because they could not face aggressive criticism.

Portfolio assessment

Complete with tutoring and mentoring reports, the collection of photographs, newspaper articles, blog entries, television appearances and posts, the portfolios showed the developmental phases of beginning social media workers. With increasing professionalism, they learnt how to co-ordinate text and images, how to apply the rules of media law and ethics and how to remedy a problematic situation concerning an ambiguous post or harsh comment. Their development is continuous and so is their mentoring need – therefore, we added a third semester of individual support to ease the tensions of becoming a minority voice in a biased, male-dominated social media environment. Here are a few examples of works by participants of the Roma Cultural Influencer Training at Corvinus University Budapest realised from September till December 2021.

Anette was born in a small village in the Mátra Mountains of Northern Hungary. Her source of inspiration is her grandfather, from whom she inherited a bicycle and a fancy pair of ballroom shoes. When creating her Visual Storytelling video, she explained the personal and cultural significance of these objects. The old man was proud of his possessions and kept them in such good shape that the granddaughter can use them even today. His active working life (supported by the bicycle) and love of Gypsy dance and music (where he put the ballroom shoes to good use) represent diligence and joy of life for Anette. She is a social worker at a state institution for the support of disadvantaged youth, where she helps girls with a troubled past to continue education, find a job or a place to live, enter the health care system, etc. She has created a podcast channel where she gives voice to everyday social problems of her community, rarely heard about even in public media, and interviews experts who can offer solutions. She also uses TikTok

to popularise ideas that come up in podcasts. The two channels mutually support each other, as potential podcast audience is informed from TikTok about themes of interest, and those who listen to an interview register for her TikTok channel to keep updated.

Bettina has been working at cultural centres facilitating the appropriation of Roma culture by majority Hungarian youth. Her job involves constant confrontation with prejudices against her community; therefore, she selected a penknife as her centrepiece for Visual Storytelling. A dangerous weapon in a fight, a symbol of Roma violence and a simple household utensil used for eating or carving beautiful wooden objects – Bettina emphasised the twofold meaning of this heirloom piece that belonged to her grandfather and asked for benevolence and openness towards new interpretations.

Hajnalka defines herself as a wife and mother and wants to reinforce the existence of these values in her community. As her husband is a musician and host of television programmes about music, she considers it her mission to showcase the authentic music culture of the Hungarian Roma community. She also posts on Instagram and TikTok about the presentation of Roma in films, emphasising her major messages: “Dare to dream, step forward, become a role model!”

Vanda comes from a Romungro family that does not connect to the Roma community. In the last two years, she has been searching for her roots and joining the Cultural Influencer course was part of this process. The object she selected for her Visual Storytelling video was a guitar that she presented as a work of art – a beautiful object to admire – and as a musical instrument associated with the traveller lifestyle of the Roma. A talented painter, she enriches her posts on Instagram and TikTok with her works. Her major message is that association with a community is not a matter of looks (her features do not show her Roma origin), but a matter of choice (Figure 4.12).

Mira (Maria) was born in a small village in Borsod County, one of the poorest areas in Hungary. She belongs to a Roma community that does not adhere to traditions. Maybe therefore, she has chosen to tell stories through garments and spaces. Her series, “Your other face”, shows young Roma women, fashionably dressed, in shabby, still striking



Figure 4.12 A Roma guitar. Photo from the Visual Storytelling sequence by Vanda Pintér.

village spaces. This juxtaposition of model and surroundings has given rise to vehement discussions on Instagram about the attachment to the place of birth and intentions to break out, fight prejudices and show “the other face”. (See her photograph on [Figure 4.10.](#))

Szabina came to the course as one of the most famous Roma influencers, and anchor at Dikh TV, the television channel of the Hungarian Roma community. Her Facebook and Instagram pages attract hundreds of thousands of followers. As a result of her studies with us, her messages became less glamorous and are now targeting life choices for Roma women: the importance of realising potentials on the job, having the courage to negotiate traditional female roles in the Roma community and the problems and joys of being a divorced mother of a small child.

Policy implications

The Roma nation (estimated for seven to nine million) is the *largest minority in Europe*, and 80% of this population lives in Central and Eastern Europe. Despite decades of political efforts, their social situation does not seem to get any better, while their proportion in the population is on the increase (Policy solutions 2019). The European Roma Strategy calls for integration through long-term, sustainable strategies that enjoy the support of the majority population. At the core of these strategies, educational interventions should enhance the cohesion of the Roma community and facilitate the reattachment of rootless Roma youth with their cultural traditions and values (2020-2030 EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020).

Stakeholder meetings organised by the Hungarian research team also reinforced the central role of linguistic and cultural appropriation. Representatives of the municipality of the large and extremely diverse district 9 in Budapest, where a huge cultural centre borders on an equally substantial “Roma ghetto” of miserable social housing, discussed the problems of Roma integration with teachers and school principals, educational researchers and NGOs. Key players in the cultural and political lives of the Roma community such as artists, journalists and politicians were also involved. Their suggestions were incorporated in the Roma Cultural Influencer Project and the other experiments of the Hungarian AMASS team (cf. the chapters by Anna Eplényi, Erika Kugler and Andrea Kárpáti, Zsófia Albrecht and Zsófia Somogyi-Rohonczy in this volume).

An often repeated, key requirement in the discussions about the situation of Roma was *strengthening Roma culture and self-esteem of the community*. Introducing the Roma language and traditions to Roma youth in an inspiring way was found essential to establish a strong Roma identity. Transparency and communication about the work of the different actors were also found essential. Besides regular roundtables, open forums and other policy-related events, the Roma Cultural Influencers substantially contribute to popularising cultural events, revealing hidden treasures of tangible and intangible heritage and inspiring Roma youth for learning about and developing their language and culture. The channels of the influencer girls may raise interest and appreciation of Hungarian majority youth as well. Ideas and ideals – the posts project both in a captivating and authentic way.

Conclusion

The main aim of the project briefly reported here was to empower young Roma girls and women to *effectively express their cultural heritage, contemporary, social issues and achievements* through social media and thus disseminate knowledge and change negative attitudes about the Roma minority. Some communication skills are essential in

this mission: creation of oral and written media pieces, photos and videos and different genres in journalism.

The target group of the project was disadvantaged on multiple levels: the Hungarian Roma are a socially undervalued, educationally and economically disadvantaged minority. Moreover, in Roma culture, the women – especially young girls – have even more limited life perspectives and possibilities to decide about their future. The expected attitude in this community is to prefer motherhood over further education and professional career. This attitude is more stressed in the countryside, where the scarcity of jobs forces women to give birth and support their families through childcare allowance. Despite these factors, strong-willed Romani women are often the catalysts for change and the driving force in the families.

Educational empowerment may lead to the formation of a native group of media professionals who may represent the interests of Roma more effectively. The Cultural Influencers have launched new channels and started creating relevant, inspiring and educating media pieces for their own community and for the Hungarian public as well.

After two semesters of training in Roma culture, media skills, legal regulations and online journalism, 18 girls have successfully established themselves on social media. When disadvantaged minorities try to raise their voices, the response is often characterised as hostile and biased (Glucksman 2017). We analysed the social media iconography (Drainville 2018) of the Roma on Instagram and TikTok in Hungary and on the international scene and identified the scarcity of authentic cultural content. Our course participants appropriated and successfully presented their heritage and contemporary culture. Not hiding gloomy reality, their intention was to show achievements and personal growth against all the odds. The Hungarian Roma Cultural Influencers are more than content providers – they are role models for their peers.

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Part V

Social interventions in nonformal settings



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19 Is money a dirty word? The entrepreneurial worlds of art and sculpting

Melanie Sarantou and Niina Karvinen

Introduction

Artists, like everyone else, need to make sustainable livings, but they enjoy very little success in this regard. However, they often find themselves, economically, at the margins of our societies with only a few professional opportunities for employment. Most artists do not turn to museums, hospitals, law firms, schools or the public sector for employment after they have earned formal education. And many of those, formally trained or not, deliver excellent value in terms of critical, psychological and educational development and the mental and physical well-being of the societies they live in (Clift and Camic 2016; Daykin et al. 2008; Jenkins et al. 2021).

The artistic experiment *Is Money a Dirty Word?* explored the disappearance of certain art forms due to market forces and the historic conditions that enable art to be practised as a culturally significant, autonomous and valuable activity beyond, for example, capitalist market forces (Peters and Roose 2020; see Adorno 1947, p. 162; Vanderbeeken 2016). However, McQuilten (2013, p. 1) argues that financial resources are an important factor in ‘personal, social and political lives’ and questioned whether the division between market forces and autonomous art practices is reasonable. She reminds us that ‘art, even in its most aesthetic and critical forms, is nevertheless entangled within social and economic systems’ (McQuilten 2013, p. 5).

Although the entrepreneurial potential of the arts is widely recognised in cultural policy, this potential is also represented in cultural policy as ‘external motivation, emotional distance, self-control, seizing opportunities, competition, individualism, and business’ (Peters and Roose 2020, p. 4); many artists find themselves in marginalised positions in the business world. Therefore, money is sometimes considered a dirty word in the art world, and power structures and capitalist dominance are widely discussed topics in artistic communities (Sarantou and Karvinen 2021). However, the arts are closely linked to money, income generation and funding. Even the artists who want to distance themselves from money often count on receiving funding to achieve their artistic project goals. In addition, the business world is also gradually learning how to harness the power of the arts and integrate creativity in business and organisational practices (see Naiman 2021).

This artistic and design-thinking experiment investigated artists’ attitudes after engaging in an empathy-hack with business mentors and service designers. The empathy-hack was based on the Self-Hack concept used for individuals to engage in life design and life-skill development. Self-Hack was developed by Creativity Squads (2019), a Finnish association established at the Tampere University of Applied Sciences. The concept was created during an active workshop in which individuals sought to solve the challenges,

roadblocks and bottlenecks experienced in everyday life by disrupting traditional ways of learning. Self-Hack is based on the concepts of design thinking (Stanford University 2018), positive psychology (Seligman 2002; Positive Psychology 2004) and creative confidence in the recreation of personal lives (Burnett and Evans 2016). The empathy-hack drew on this method and employed arts-based methods and storytelling to create deeper empathic experiences amongst the workshop participants.

The aim was to experiment with new possibilities of enabling artists to engage in the business world. New means for artists to find pathways towards sustaining their livelihoods were sought in a fast-changing world in which margins have become blurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a growing need to function and work in virtual spaces via the internet and mobile applications.

This experiment was part of the 35 experiments implemented in 2020 and 2021 by the project *Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS). The experiment explored how the arts can function as a vehicle for constructing entrepreneurial worlds, especially for artists who often operate on the margins of entrepreneurial environments. Furthermore, the experiment encouraged artists to improvise by delving into their own unique talents and abilities and collaborating with business mentors and service designers to take a bold leap and cross the divide between art and business worlds. Bringing art and business together in a multidisciplinary context, this specific experiment was one of five experiments conducted in Finnish Lapland as part of a testbed involving seven European countries.

Target population

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals and families found themselves isolated from the rest of the world. The pandemic resulted in further marginalisation of communities and individuals living on the peripheries of societies (Editorial 2020). This experiment sought to bring together artists and businesspeople with bold approaches and attitudes to engage in an empathy-hack. Eleven practising artists and designers (nine women and two men, aged 24–49 years), of whom some were geographically marginalised, lived in isolation, were removed from their families or experienced some form of disruption at the time of the experiment, collaborated to implement the experiment with a service designer (female, age 35 years) and a business consultant (female, age 42 years).

The experiment involved two experimental cycles. The five participants in Cycle 1 were linked, either as students or as researchers, to the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi, Finland. Cycle 2, with six participants, was initiated after Cycle 1 using snowball sampling and employed a global approach to overcome the North-South divide. The experiment's scope illustrates the far-reaching impact of online artistic initiatives that were prevalent during the global pandemic. In Cycle 2, the participants were linked, once again as researchers or as students, to either the University of Lapland or the University of Desarrollo in Santiago, Chile. It may be argued that, as university-linked individuals, the participants were not marginalised; however, all participants were living and working, like most communities and individuals in the world, in peculiar circumstances. More specifically, they were either international students and researchers living and working in remote locations or local students without access to usual university services or income-generation opportunities for their arts and design practices due to the global pandemic.

Most of the five participants of Cycle 1 wanted to practise and work with the arts but struggled with being able to sustain themselves (Figure 5.1). The creative artist-participants did not see how (and why) they could use their talents in entrepreneurial worlds or



Figure 5.1 One of the participants experimented with inexpensive materials for making jewellery, thus breaking with traditional ‘fine’ jewellery. Photo: Michelle Olga van Wyk.

engage with art markets. Therefore, in addition to developing their own unique (research) questions, the artists collaborated with a business mentor and a service designer to improve project planning and decision-making. The participants were challenged to explore how living in the margins could become an opportunity for growth and self-realisation.

Methodology and procedure

The project implemented arts-based action research (ABAR) approaches and experiments over two four-month periods, January–April 2021 and August–November 2021. The two research cycles were used to collect data via ten online workshops (64 hours in total) involving focus-group discussions and storytelling, online ethnographic observations and individual sketching, doodling and note taking. Each workshop cycle comprised five online workshop stages scheduled approximately at two-to-three-week intervals. The stages included (Figure 5.2) the following: (1) online introductions, during which the



Figure 5.2 Outline of the empathy-hack workshop process consisting of five key phases: online introductions, Miro planning and brainstorming, the empathy-hack, prototype, and audiences and online environments for dissemination.

participants had to discuss a personal place, present a photograph and engage in storytelling; (2) planning and brainstorming in the online Miro environment to develop individual research aims and questions; (3) the six-hour online empathy-hack workshop; (4) individual arts and design-based prototyping (six hours online); and (5) an exploration of online audiences and environments and the delivery of an arts or design portfolio outlining the developed prototype. This chapter focuses on the first research cycle, and the second cycle will be published elsewhere in the future.

The experiments were guided by the following overarching research questions: How can the arts function as a vehicle for constructing entrepreneurial worlds? How can artists living in the margins of entrepreneurial environments explore their own unique abilities to cross the divide between the art and business worlds? Is it possible to remove yourself as an artist from the power structures of capitalism? How can personal, artistic, creative and technical skills be developed to generate empathy and participant connectedness in online environments?

Ethical considerations

The ethical principles and guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity were followed throughout the course of the research. Ethical issues were considered at every phase of the research process, including data collection. The documentation of the experiment and the creative activities by the artists, the service designer and the business consultant only proceeded after informed consent was obtained from the participants. The participants had to submit formal applications to participate in the experiment due to the potentially sensitive nature of the empathy-hack, which required participants to delve into their current and past life situations during a global pandemic. The participants were encouraged to explore their own unique talents, skills and attitudes and to experiment with what could be, or even what ought to be, one's unique contribution to a fast-changing world. Crossovers between the worlds in which money means everything or is merely a dirty word were envisaged.

As the participants had to deal with their own life journeys, the project process could potentially be emotionally difficult. The facilitators were sensitive to never coerce participants at any point in the research process into sharing whatever the participants were uncomfortable with expressing. Ethical concerns, therefore, included not compelling the participants to share or deliver their project outcomes as potential good business ideas or to partake in processes that they were not comfortable with. In addition, the researchers avoided to coerce participants to reveal their novel business ideas. Therefore, the participants' portfolios were not digitally stored by the project facilitators. Presentation sessions enabled the participants to discuss and reveal the outcomes that they chose to reveal. The need for establishing a common trusted, empathic and sharing environment for the artists was central to the ethical conduct upheld in the experiment. Art making is a sensitive and ambiguous activity. The artists had to sense their ways through whether they were willing to share and reveal their processes of making, which usually involve risk taking, failures and successes.

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

Projects involving artistic activities rarely report on evaluation practices for measuring project impact, and if they do, such reports resort to generalisations and anecdotes (Kárpáti 2020). Consequently, the value of this study lies partly in documenting the work and evaluation processes applied in the experiment. The assessment methods used

to evaluate the study impacts were based on the Stanford design thinking model (2018), which was used not only to directly guide the five-stage empathy-hack but to further assist the participants in developing self-reflective and cognitive skills. As Kárpáti (2020, p. 34) pointed out, ‘engaging participants of an arts-based intervention in a Design Thinking process will result in sustainable improvement of cognitive, affective and psychomotor skill clusters’. The empathy-hack enabled the participants to define their problems at a personal level: what hampers or enables them to realise opportunities and how they can explore possibilities and solutions by embracing the arts, design and their own creative practices, skills and life experiences.

In addition, pre- and post-experiment interviews provided opportunities to examine the participants’ attitude changes and personal development. Reflective interviews and qualitative online surveys, specifically life story interviews, were used to capture the participants’ personal recollections of the important lessons learned and the experiences gained. Personal histories were used to encourage reminiscence, reflection and future life planning. Survey and interview questions included the following:

- How do you sustain yourself? How can art sustain the future of your livelihood?
- How do you use design-thinking techniques or principles in income generation?
- How do you interpret income generation? Do you embrace it, or is it a challenge?
- How do you reach out to and interact with your audiences? How do you use digital marketing to connect with your audiences?
- How can new solutions to audience engagement impact the way you envisage sustainable and real-life outcomes when dealing with income generation?
- How do you think this activity (the art experiment *Is Money a Dirty Word?*) could be scaled up at the business, community or municipal level? Can you reflect on this experiment and provide practical suggestions and activities?

In addition, multi-media self-documentation and portfolio presentations by the artist-participants were presented to the other participants, and mutual constructive feedback was shared at the end of each workshop cycle. The outcomes were disseminated via a website and social media (Instagram), the AMASS narrative platform, an exhibition, artistic performances, artist residencies and academic articles.

The outcomes of the experiment were as follows:

- Twelve participants developed life design maps based on the guidelines of the empathy-hack experiment.
- Twelve portfolio presentations in the form of videos and PowerPoint presentations were delivered during focus-group discussions.
- Two research papers and two conference presentations in 2021 (ICASS X 2021 and Pivot 2021) by Marija Griniuk (2021). One book chapter and a conference presentation (AMASS Conference 2022) by Michelle van Wyk (2021). One paper along with a supporting video was presented at the conference Arts in Society Research Network: Voices from the Edge – Negotiating the Local and the Global, 16–18 June 2021. This annual conference series is organised by the Common Ground Research Networks.
- Five artistic and storytelling-focused video productions (see the Appendix). One of the videos was on a unique artistic workshop by Marija Griniuk titled *The Nomadic*

Radical Academy. Griniuk facilitated the workshop and the video showed how artists can create unique experiences with sustainable communities. The video communicated the idea that sustainable art practices do not only entail making marketable products; rather, artists can generate income from service or experience offerings.

- The researcher and first author of this article participated in all the activities of Cycle 1, including the self-exploration of the empathy-hack. For Phase 4, the prototyping phase, she produced laboratory experiments based on bioart. The outcomes inspired an interdisciplinary collaboration between the researcher and researcher-technologist Tomi Knuutila. The outcomes were exhibited as part of a group exhibition by the BioARTech collective at the University of Lapland, a group of artist-researchers exploring the boundaries between bioart and digital technologies. The exhibition, entitled Growth, Death and Decay, was held at the Hämärä Gallery at the University of Lapland (Pietarinen et al. 2021).
- Workshop entitled Re-Stitching the Double Diamond: Visualising Thoughts, Perceptions, Apprehensions and Emotions through Improvisation and Materiality was held at the International Visual Methods Conference (December 2021).
- At least ten social media posts were posted on Instagram by the participants (@ismoneyadirtyword) and one researcher. Several blogposts were also prepared for the AMASS narrative platform (see Griniuk 2021; Kuo 2021). The blogs, photos and videos provided narrative and visual accounts of the project's artistic and media outcomes.

The participating artists' perspectives on engaging with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge clearly show that the artists, even after the experiment, had neither developed ideal solutions for income generation nor become more accustomed to the idea of money and the influence it may have on their lives and careers as artists. Some of the narrative accounts are quoted below:

Everyone needs to get paid for the work that they do ... everyone needs to get paid ... it's really often the situation that I really don't have a clue what I'm even selling, but I'm just selling my hand style.

Participant, female, age 36

I don't produce objects as such or, well, there are some artefacts from interactions and performances, but it is mainly not that kind of artworks which can come into, let's say, interiors or become part of decoration ... it demands some other kind of income which I do not have because I'm extremely unsuccessful with scholarships.

Participant, female, age 38

I'm more confident in saying what I need, which takes away this strange shame attached to talking about money as a creative because it seems that the assumption is that if you are in the creative field, you're going to struggle to make money, whereas now, you can say, you know, what I actually need to find or clarify my market and see or my initial step now is I'm working on a prototype, and I've got seven people I've identified that I can work with.

Participant, female, age 36

In my opinion, [money is not] dirty because, for me, art is a kind of abstract compared with design because design you need a solution, you have to target a user. But, when I come up with an idea, I try to use my arts thinking. It's sometimes more emotional. But finally, I use these emotional ideas to create more concrete solutions, so for me, it's not a dirty word.

Participant, male, age 24

I think it's changed for me ... being able to make a living off a creative practice that I love. Now I think I've got a starting point to actually engage conversations and being able to highlight what it is that I need. So that's a very different way to approaching a conversation because now even if the common thing is that you didn't know the answer, but now it's not a bad thing. It's not a dirty thing to not know the answer to how to get to your money. It's just that it's the beginning of your getting to your money.

Participant, female, age 36

The artists revealed several different positive attitudes towards wanting to know more about entrepreneurial practices, business models and marketing strategies. They were all interested in exploring more economically viable and sustainable futures. Markets will continue to pose challenges for the arts as they do in other fields of expertise. In all business fields, knowledge of users, customers, markets and competitors is needed to succeed, and these kinds of knowledge can be understood as the guidelines for validating your business ideas, which is an important entrepreneurial skill. Markets are also very diverse – for example, public funding is a kind of market in which many artists compete for income to realise their ideas. There are all sorts of other markets for artists, from selling products, one option mentioned by the participants, to selling creative and artistic services as designers, as mentioned by another participant.

Policy implications

The difficulty of generating a sustainable livelihood through the arts will continue to be a problem for the majority of artists. The situation will only be ameliorated when more focused actions and policies are implemented to substantially integrate creativity and the arts into business teams through multidisciplinary approaches. Key players, such as art schools, academies, universities and training institutes, should include practical courses built on the research forthcoming from experiments such as the ones discussed in this chapter. Such courses are best to be set up around real-life situations, offering learners opportunities to discover potential business avenues for their creative outcomes.

Many funding institutions are adopting multidisciplinary approaches and offering opportunities for artists – for example, to become valued members of highly successful and diverse teams. In addition, the North-South collaborations that developed organically through snowball sampling after the experiment's first cycle illustrate the broad impact that virtual workshops and initiatives can have in reaching individuals across margins, borders and other boundaries. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, governments must consider implementing policies that can strongly support artists – for example, by directing funding and new training initiatives that stimulate new art practices and audience participation through online initiatives.

Conclusion

The main outcomes of the experiment illustrated a kind of social sculpting that lasted while the experiments were ongoing. Although the long-lasting effects of these sculpting initiatives are unknown, and the experiments too short to create an immediate impact, the potential for mental growth and self-discovery offer avenues for ongoing research. The positive attitudes of the artists towards wanting to turn their creativity into better business, for sustaining themselves, and how the artists used the limitations of isolation as opportunities for growth and self-realisation, justify further exploration. Following the assumption that training and education institutions wish to prepare learners for sustainable futures the current research should be continued and adopted by such institutions to better assist artists to earn their livelihoods. In addition, different methods for this kind of social sculpting to activate entrepreneurial mindsets should be explored, tested and evaluated in follow-up studies.

The unique opportunities presented by the empathy-hack in virtual environments can be leveraged via interdisciplinarity. The virtual connectedness between the artists stimulated and supplemented in-situ practices, studio work, artistic performances and digital documentation practices, while the portfolio presentations created opportunities for constructive peer discussions. However, the outcomes of the experiments should be documented, analysed and understood when applied wholly in-situ, when artists immerse themselves in business environments and vice versa.

Artworks alone may constitute insufficient data for evaluating practices, but the digital documentation of the portfolios enabled the participants to present their artistic outcomes broadly and engage with online audiences while exploring and understanding their personal needs in shaping their own futures. As Shaw (Dweck 2006) proposed, ‘Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.’

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20 Museum: The bridge between art and society

Museum education programme and teacher training at the Ludwig Museum

Zsófia Somogyi-Rohonczy

The context

What is a collection of art worth if it is not used for the benefit of society? Collecting art and supporting artists can be an important activity in the cultural life, but how can it become the milestone of education? Perhaps these were the questions on the minds of the famous art-collecting couple when they founded their first museum in Aachen or donated works of art to the Hungarian state to interpret contemporary art. The Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art was established by the famous and wealthy German art-collecting couple Peter and Irene Ludwig in 1989, just a few months before the changing of the political system. The importance of this act is undisputed, as their collection gave a glimpse of Western modern art to audiences on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain. Creating a culture bridge and giving people from disadvantaged backgrounds the chance to experience contemporary art is still the mission of the Ludwig Museum. As defined by the International Council of Museums (“A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment” (resource: <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/>)), a museum should be accessible to all members of society for learning and entertainment. It therefore follows that a museum needs to be an essential venue for everyone to visit.

Although John Dewey’s idyllic vision of the museum-school relationship (Hein 2004) is unrealistic, the two institutions have been working together successfully for decades. The research project at the Ludwig Museum tried to find responsible and effective methods of this cooperation in the use of contemporary art in school education. The museum of the 21st century is a field of knowledge-sharing, learning communities and the creation of common knowledge.

Literature background

In preparing our programme, we sought to review the background and literature of art and museum education projects with people from disadvantaged backgrounds. In developing the programme, we drew on methodological approaches from Hungarian literature published in recent years and international museum education literature. Among the Hungarian language publications, the publication *Eséllyel a múzeumban* (*With a Chance in the Museum*) edited by Rita Dabi-Farkas (Dabi-Farkas 2018) is outstanding,

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which presents how Hungarians work well with people with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds (visually impaired, mobility impaired, people with comprehension difficulties, homeless people). I would also highlight the Collaborative Art Partnership Programme (CAPP) volume with the Ludwig Museum, in which art programmes with people from disadvantaged backgrounds brought art closer to the people concerned outside the museum walls. The volume (Simon and Szipőcs 2018), which describes the project over several years, also describes in detail the socio-cultural situation of the group concerned and their embeddedness in Hungary. The basis for the structure of our programme, the triological learning model, was better known from the work of George Hein and adapted to our own activities (Hein 2004); the museum background for teaching and training in a museum environment was provided by the work of Hamilton and Margot (2020). Research with children requires particular care, and the methodological background and international practice to guarantee the greatest possible safety for participants and their real participation were taken as a guideline in *Being Participatory: Researching with Children and Young People: Co-constructing Knowledge Using Creative Techniques*, by Catherin and Samantha Wilkinson (Wilkinson and Wilkinson 2018). We have also drawn on international examples in the compilation of our methodological collection, notably Arja van Veldhuizen's Museum Toolkit (Veldhuizen 2017), which is also available on the ICOM website. In our work, a new methodological practice was slow looking, which allowed us to observe the artefacts in depth, recording our sensory and emotional reactions. The book by Shari Tishman provided us with a literary support for this new practice (Tishman 2018).

The development of our accredited training course, Art is our Contemporary, was a milestone in the life of the museum. Art training and museum education courses are available in several institutions in Hungary:

- Hungarian University of Fine Arts Master of Fine Arts
- Hungarian University of Fine Arts in Budapest Hungarian University of Fine Arts
- University of Pécs MA in Design and Visual Arts
- ELTE Savaria University Centre, Berzsenyi Dániel Teacher Training Centre, Department of Visual Culture
- Eszterházy Károly University, Eger, Institute of Visual Arts, Teacher of Visual Culture MA
- ELTE – Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, museum pedagogical advisor training

As a non-academic institution, the 120-hour accredited training course of the Deák17 Children and Youth Art Gallery should also be highlighted. The training course was also discussed in detail in the Online Ped.keddp programme for teachers organised by the Ludwig Museum (Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_njH9y0).

Target population

In the “It is your life” museum education programme, the museum educators worked together with two Budapest-based schools (the Burattino Primary School and Children's Home and the Tandem Secondary Grammar School), and the museum provided a 30-hour accredited in-service training course with national access for teachers.

Students

Children with different types of disadvantages (social challenges, learning and integration problems).

Primary and secondary school groups

Fourteen children, mostly of Roma origin from the **Burattino Primary School (13–14 years old)**, mainly from Children's Homes (state care), and 18 students from the **Tandem Secondary Grammar School (16–17 years old)**. The students typically come from families with a good financial background but are still considered disadvantaged. They typically have special learning needs and difficulties in respect of integration and learning, and have changed schools several times. The flexible timetable in these schools ensures that the comforting atmosphere and personal development opportunities fit their needs and ability. The National Core Curriculum contains traditional art and visual culture lessons, without an emphasis on contemporary art and no compulsory museum visits. The visual art classes give free vent to instinctive creativity, but without enough time for creation, conscious observation and understanding. After the first occasion, we perceived the interest in the children for the works of art and their reluctance to participate in creative activities. They were not used to employing their subject knowledge in analysing artworks. Therefore, the first step was to show them that they knew more about the historical background of the artworks than they had believed before.

Teachers

As part of the Ludwig Museum's "It is your life" programme, implemented in the framework of AMASS Hungarian research, we not only dealt with the methodological development of activities with school groups and students, but also implemented a 30-hour accredited teacher training course. In the "Art is our Contemporary" training, the museum educators sought to share their decades of experience with educators by presenting a set of methodological tools that teachers can implement in a school setting with their own students, tailored to their own needs. The two rounds of teacher training were open to applicants from all over the country, with 35 selected from the 83 registered teachers. The teachers involved came from a variety of backgrounds. From an institutional perspective, professionals from nursery, primary and secondary schools, children's homes and higher education institutions were also involved in the training course. The course was not only aimed at art teachers, so the usability of methods could also be examined to teach other subjects (Somogyi-Rohonczy and Kárpáti 2021).

Methodology and procedure

The base of the methodology in this special learning situation is a **bi-directional learning process** where the museum educators and the teachers also learnt a lot from the pupils and gained new perspectives about young people, and Roma children especially. The strong collaboration between teachers and museum educators ensured a deeper understanding of the educational context of art education.

Museum education programmes

Work with the school groups took place in the school environment and the museum space. To make the results comparable, we worked in the museum's permanent exhibition, so the museum environment and the artwork provided a familiar context for the students.

The systematic work with the Time Machine exhibition was planned according to these topics: **personal identity, modern city life and memories, minority and majority society**. Each thematic unit consisted of three elements: a **preparatory lesson in school**, a **museum programme** and a **follow-up lesson in school**. Each programme was built on the other, based on continuous consultation and evaluation discussions between the museum educator and the teacher.

The programme was linked to age-appropriate primary and secondary school curricula and emphasised developing skills such as independent learning and creative work, group work, association, and visual and verbal expressions.

The programme began with an **interactive guided tour** of the Ludwig Museum's Time Machine exhibition with each group, where we observed which works caught their attention. Based on these impressions, the original programme was modified. During the museum programme, there was no expectation or obligation to create your own works of art, but rather an emphasis on experiencing the artworks personally. The creation of objects was carried out in the school environment, in the context of the discussion lessons to broaden and deepen knowledge about contemporary art (Figure 5.3).

Several factors influenced the evaluation process. During the research, it was not possible to conduct the tests with the same students in the two school semesters at either school. Due to the constantly changing group, we were not able to organise the development and pedagogical objectives of the museum lessons in the long term. Still, we had to set short-term objectives for each thematic unit (Figure 5.4).



Figure 5.3 Scene from the video documentation about the preparatory lesson in Burattino Primary School. The arrangement of the desks and the colourful walls in the classroom show that this space is dedicated to creative workshops. During the class, listening to music and chatting were allowed. Still from the video.



Figure 5.4 The museum space provides an educational opportunity that is different from the classroom. The more unrestricted use of the space, the proximity of the artworks provides new inspiration, while other visitors and the new location can be a distraction. Photo: Zsófia Szabó – Ludwig Museum.

The following pedagogical objectives could be defined during the preliminary survey and the students' familiarisation:

- developing verbal skills – reasoning, debating, expressing emotions and perceptions
- developing group work
- developing individual concentration-time and the perseverance needed to solve a complex task
- solving tasks requiring complex activities in a step-by-step structure (each step is carried out on the same occasion)

A practical method of working with students in the museum was the **slow looking** technique, where they were asked to observe the artwork for 5 minutes according to set criteria and record their thoughts on the task sheet. The given criteria (write five material characteristics of the painting or what would you ask the artist, one of the characters in the painting) were used as a guide to help the students to learn. The maximum time frame recommended for the observation was 5 minutes, which was still manageable for all students, even those with attention problems. At the beginning of the observation exercise, several strategies were offered to the students, such as moving from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner, in turn, or focusing on colours.

For students who often had attention difficulties, it was a challenge to **increase the length of the concentration**. However, we were able to increase from 10 minutes to 30 minutes in several cases with individual help or background music. The musical

background created a homely atmosphere for the students, breaking the silence of the museum and giving the session a time frame. During the sessions, classical music was chosen to underpin the programmes, such as Maurice Ravel's *Bolero* from 1928, whose gradualness (instruments entering one after the other) helped to create a flow experience. In other cases, the choice of music was justified by the theme of the session, so we chose an appropriate excerpt from Béla Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin* to experience the city. In both cases, the children's feedback and associations confirmed the success of the choice.

We also aimed to use the museum exhibition spaces as a **mobile classroom**. The historical background of the creation of a work of art and the artist's life also provided an opportunity to introduce the knowledge of history and literature. For example, the era of Pablo Picasso allowed us to compare the international and Hungarian events of the turn of the century and learn about the era's explosive development. We guaranteed the students' sense of security by printing out headings in advance and grouping the facts and headings thematically together. The knowledge organised by the mind map can be successfully recalled after one week of the museum lesson, based on a discussion with the teacher in the school processing lesson. By repeatedly recalling the knowledge and using it in different ways (role-playing, creative works), the integration of the knowledge into school studies can be further enhanced.

The research programme for the two school terms was significantly affected by online education and the forced closure of museums due to the COVID-19 epidemic. Consequently, the sessions were implemented over 1.5 months during the first semester (May–June 2021) and the second semester (September–January 2021). Unfortunately, several changes occurred between the two semesters, both in the groups and in the teachers – change of teachers, new museum teacher, reorganisation of the school group, arrival of new students – and for this reason, the originally planned comparative studies could not be carried out and the progress of the individual students could not be clearly assessed. During the sessions, we asked for feedback from the students, both verbally and in writing, and the evaluation interviews between the teacher and the museum educator provided partial information on the success of the programme and changes in individual attitudes, but not a complete picture. One important outcome of the programme was the compilation of a methodological collection of scripts of our sessions in the AMASS research, as well as scripts of the teacher training programmes related to the Time Machine exhibition, which are available on the Ludwig Museum website.

“Art is our contemporary” – an accredited teacher training programme in the Ludwig Museum

Based on the experience of the education department at Ludwig Museum involving working with schools, as well as on feedback from teachers, we concluded that there is a need for a training course for teachers on contemporary art museum education methodology.

Furthermore, our art-based pedagogical training course is a rarity in short supply on the list of accredited training options.

During the teacher training, the teaching material had to be tailored to the needs and interests of the current group of teachers. Each training group also functioned as a separate learning group. Their previous pedagogical experience and their approach to



Figure 5.5 Part of a reflective map created with students on the historical events of the turn of the century and the life of Pablo Picasso. Source: Photo by Zsófia Szabó – Ludwig Museum.

individual and group tasks further enhanced the knowledge transferred by the trainers. The first three days of the training course were online, alternating between lectures and individual and group tasks.

Training was divided into thematic units presenting the museum's collection and museum pedagogical methodological tools. The first three days of the training, delivered online, were designed to be more dynamic, alternating between lectures and practical individual and group tasks.

- Day 1: the collection and functioning of the Ludwig Museum, a service museum for the 21st century
- Day 2: art history overview, introduction to 20th-century art, interpretation possibilities, art analysis exercise
- Day 3: good practices in museum education methods, interpretation tools, museum education for disadvantaged people, project methods and drama in the museum

On the fourth day, the participants were introduced to the museum's temporary exhibitions through personal presence, and then worked in teams on their own museum education activities in the Time Machine collection exhibition.

The participating teachers successfully used the methods they learned in the training below in their school programmes. They had to choose one artwork from a selection, which they could use in their introduction on the first day of the training. They used a method to **present a current emotional state** with students in a school. The **slow looking**

technique was a novelty for teachers. Observing the artworks for a relatively long time (5–10 minutes) based on a set of criteria guided students to focus on unfamiliar artworks.

Teachers were also encouraged to approach contemporary works in a new way. Our experience has shown that even teachers are reluctant to approach works perceived as “sacred”, thus limiting their creativity. The distance between the work and its viewer can be reduced through role-playing, novel pairings, startling parallels or even inspiration from music and film extracts.

The second phasis was a five-week mentoring period. The museum educator and teacher developed their own museum education session plan, implemented it and documented it with their group. The museum educator helped the teacher design a session that met the participant’s needs and their group.

The training concluded with an online presentation session where the participating teachers could present their projects. The trainers and other participants commented on each piece of work.

Assessment methods and outcomes

In terms of evaluation methods, an important aim was to investigate the usefulness of the methods used in museum education sessions and their integration into school education. We also evaluated the planning, implementation and analysis phases from the perspective of the collaborators.

The analysis of the implemented programme is based on **the schedule** of the school lessons and the museum visits (criteria: link to the objectives of the course, contemporary art background information, methodology, feasibility). The objective assessment of the implementation of the session plan was based on the **video documentation** and the **participatory observation**. In school and classroom research, video documentation has been used successfully for years to evaluate teachers’ work. The recordings help the researchers to conduct the study, but they are also a valuable source of self-reflection for the teacher. In our study, we found that this method of analysis is less successful in a museum setting. It can be used to record events, examine the use of space and record signs of non-verbal communication in a measure. However, it does not allow for the documentation of verbal communication. The failure of the method to be used can be explained by the less constrained use of the museum space, as opposed to the frontal location that is common in school education, and by the frequent group work and non-linear communication during the sessions.

Evaluating discussions between the teachers and the museum educators after the programme were one of the methods that provided the most information in the experiment. The museum educator and the teacher mutually participated in each other’s programmes and evaluated the same pedagogical situation during the discussion. In this way, the different perspectives of the parties could be examined for the same programme. The conversation also allowed for recording verbal exchanges and minor interactions not captured on video.

The aims of the **portfolio assessment of student artworks** were defined as developmental trajectories in visual skills development. The analysis was managed for each occasion based on developmental tasks of the school and museum programmes. Unfortunately, in the school groups, there are changes in the history of the two semesters, so we were not able to analyse the yearly progress of all students.

One of the biggest challenges was to examine the changes in the emotional state and attitudes of the participating children. The verbal expression of emotions can be

problematic for socially disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and behavioural problems. The emotional colour diagram helped the students to express their emotions without words. The meanings of each colour were occasionally defined together.

The evaluation criteria of the teacher training were based on the Quality Assurance Questionnaire issued by the Education Authority, the main points of which concerned the organisation of the training, the usefulness of the theoretical and practical knowledge imparted, the relevance of the assessment and the professionalism of the trainers.

Results of the museum programmes

The museum education programmes were primarily aimed at developing students' skills and changing attitudes. Towards the modern artefacts, contemporary art and museums, contemporary art is understandable and accessible only to the highly educated elite. The participating students showed an improvement in their visual literacy when they spent time observing the works of art and expressing their emotions and thoughts.

We also achieved significant results in terms of attitude change. The artworks and creative exercises helped students learn about themselves and find their voice, showed that they have the right to express their opinions and that art and creative processes can be used for self-expression. The students discovered that in the museum, art can be the "place" where everybody is able to have an opinion, and others must respect these ideas, even if they do not come from a curator or an art historian.

Research questions and answers

The research questions defined before the study started focusing on the cooperation between teacher and museum educator, the coordination of the methods of the two educational arenas, the development of students through the new opportunities offered by artworks and the museum environment.

1 How can museum education school-based learning be integrated?

The cooperation of teachers and museum educators, the units we jointly developed for the school lessons and the museum visits could prove that it is possible to organise more and more museum learning sessions in collaboration with educational institutions. The attitude of the students and teachers during the programme became more and more favourable, despite the organisational difficulties. Changes in the students were tracked through videos of the sessions, the quantity and quality of their responses to the questionnaires and slow looking cards, and the amount of time spent in the creative process. A typical change was that both the expressions of their opinions, their involvement in discussions about the artworks and the time spent creating and their elaboration increased over the months of the programme.

2 Can art help to elaborate traumas and find new perspectives for the future?

Although art is not a wonder substance to undo past mistakes or grievances, it can create an open and safe environment where participants can open up more quickly during the creative process (e.g. painting, teamwork), and may arrive at a deepened state of consciousness. Regardless of the work's quality, the paintings facilitate a deeper understanding of the maker and can therefore be used as an analytical tool for child and youth support professionals. Through their artefacts, museums can provide a safe

space to work through trauma, as they can be situated in space and time away from real trauma. Depending on the depth of each theme, expert consultation is always recommended for this supportive work, and for real therapeutic processing, the training of a drama teacher or art therapist is necessary.

3 How can we share our experiences in the most effective way?

Learning from a creative process and sharing our experiences is the most effective way to disseminate the methodologies of art education. The accredited teacher training demonstrated that the incredible intellectual resources of educators are not sufficiently utilised in our country, and that collaborative knowledge construction is the best form for peer learning.

- Which research tools give the most accurate picture of the usefulness of a museum education programme and the cooperation between teacher and museum educator?

Our experience has shown that the usefulness of video recordings in museum spaces is less than that in classroom research. However, we certainly need to include an objective research tool in museum education research. For measuring attitudinal change, a visual survey tool we call the emotional heat map was found to be valid. Although evaluation interviews were the most time-consuming method in our study, we obtained most of our information about the nature and quality of the interaction.

- What factors help children with special educational needs deepen their creative process, and how can the time spent on an activity be increased?

Our experience shows that multi-sensory activities (listening to music while creating), frequent changes of location or position, precise time limits and task descriptions, and individual assistance can significantly increase the length of time spent on an activity and the child's sense of achievement.

Policy implications

The interpretation of contemporary art in school education and teacher training is a complex issue for many reasons. The Hungarian Professional Development Programme for Teachers, an obligatory career path, requires 120 hours of accredited professional training every seven years. The required continuous self-development aims teacher's knowledge and skills up-to-date and ensures a high-quality pedagogical standard at schools. In fact, this learning obligation means a measurable learning attainment target for the teachers. The teachers' feedback showed that they have difficulties in finding a training course that would provide new knowledge in a museum setting.

However, teaching through the arts is arguably the most effective way to transfer knowledge about art and making art, working simultaneously with students from different social backgrounds. Our experience shows that the most effective way to teach museum education and contemporary art interpretation techniques to teachers who have been teaching for several years is through professional development. We would consider it advisable to teach art history and interpretation techniques in one or two semesters as a separate course in teacher training, independently of the subject, since art is the most effective field for the combined teaching of natural science and humanities sensual transfer of knowledge. Pending the introduction of complex and well-established teacher

training courses, we consider it essential to support museum institutions in launching teacher training courses.

Conclusion

How can an artwork be brought to life and expressed in a language that can be understood by a given age group or social group? As an active artist and art teacher, I was no stranger to making contemporary art. But communicating art is different! This is an exciting question, because it encourages active communication and the creation of new interpretative frameworks. During the training, I was able to gain insight into this complex process, which requires multi-directional knowledge, creativity, and cooperation, and to put the knowledge I gained into practice in my own lessons. It was a decisive experience for me: I was enabled to look at the works of art freely, with fresh eyes, and to build the sessions on the experience created. To experience the freedom of reception, to become open to the works. In the past year, I have been able to use the experience I gained in a summer camp and in an interactive event organised as part of a festival.

Quotes from teacher participant on our teacher training

Both the year-long collaboration with schools and the teacher training have proven that contemporary art can be accessible and understandable to a wide range of audiences if it is interpreted according to their needs. The arts mediator needs to have a good understanding of the target audience, especially for disadvantaged groups with special needs. By asking the right questions, considering the viewer's needs, creating an open and safe atmosphere and using the right methodological tools, contemporary art can reach a wide range of audiences, from social background to age.

In our studies in museums and schools, we have seen that shared knowledge, questioning and discourse through art in small groups, or even in a wider professional context, can be an opportunity for individual and group development and knowledge enhancement.

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21 Glass is a treasure! Teaching art and culture at a primary school with Roma pupils

Marie Fulková and Magdalena Novotná

In this case study, we would like to describe a visit by Romani children to the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague; and to introduce the potentialities of the educational programme that accompanies the exhibition *Pleiades of Glass*. The study focuses on key thematic moments in the thinking of the museum educator, who reflects on the lessons. We try to point out how the structure of an educational programme and the discourse of “high-brow art” are interconnected; we ask whether introducing the canon of national icons of the glass industry to children from the Romani community is an asset to their cultural education. An interesting aspect is the participants’ socio-cultural background, as well as our dilemma as to whether to approach Romani children as an “ethnic group” with their own, specific culture or whether to communicate with them just like with any other children who are supposed to acquire cultural competences through education.

Target population

The target group of this project were the pupils of a primary school Cimburkova, Prague 3, their teachers and teaching assistants who visited the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague to see the exhibition *Pleiades of Glass* and to take part in an educational programme focused on learning through creative activities. Primary school Cimburkova endorses the ethos of an inclusive approach to education and promotes equal opportunities for all while respecting educational and cultural requirements. The school looks after children with learning and behavioural disorders, provides them with an individual approach to education, integrates them into the larger community of the other school-children and functions as a community centre.

However, the school is known for the work it does to meet the needs of its Romani pupils who currently make up approximately 70% of the student body (Kocurová 2018) and fosters good relations with the families in the surrounding area inhabited by a sizeable Romani population. Given the intention to create functional relations between the museum and the school, the group also consisted of staff members of the educational department at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, as well as students participating in the Teacher Training Programme in Arts at the Department of Art Education of the Pedagogical Faculty, Charles University, Prague.

Methodology and procedure

Conceptual background

The educational research project presented here at the exhibition *Pleiades of Glass* at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague was initiated by several factors. Among them is the current inclusive trend in education, corresponding with many aspects of the AMASS project, as well as the previous experience with the management of educational programmes for Romani children with support from the Open Society Fund Prague at the National Gallery and at the Galerie Rudolfinum (Fulková et al. 2004; Hajdušková 2013). Last but not the least, it was a wish expressed by colleagues from the Education Department at the Museum of Decorative Arts who have been working on innovations of the ongoing educational model entitled “Touch the Museum” and on its different versions when adapting it for visitors with special needs.

However, the following questions came up from the outset, which we found almost absurd: is a Romani child a visitor “with special” needs? Is a Romani child not the same as any other child? How do people know that a child is of Romani origin? These questions lead us to the need to state that the position from which we will be making our case and arguments is one of non-Romani people and members of the majority socio-culture. Another perspective we want to draw attention to is the experience we have obtained during our educational practice and the resulting relationship with schoolchildren, whom we regard not as a homogenised aggregate of pupils but as a group of unique beings with whom we share the lifeworld. Our professional interest lies in the discipline of art pedagogy and visual arts, not directly in subject areas concerned with Romani studies or specifically with Romani culture. Nevertheless, the issue of equality and inclusion in education, communication through visual art languages, the media diversity of artistic testimonies and the questions of wider social functions of art often lead us to the field of cultural anthropology. Here, we find the conceptual background for thinking about the specifics of educating Romani children and about the role of teachers in cultural education in general.

Given the above, we find ourselves at the methodological intersection of several disciplines, of which we would like to highlight 3 key areas. Two are established as sciences and one as art. The first area of study is cultural anthropology, specifically targeted at Roma-related issues from the vantage point of the current scientific conceptualisation of culture (Fremlová 2021; Fulka 2005; Jakoubek 2005; Merhaut 2019). Researchers with this specialisation study the Romani minority in a complex manner, within the context of the socio-cultural and political questions related to the constructions of identities, subjectivities, gender, language, stereotypes, myths, education, poverty, well-being and other critical questions concerning multiculturalism, assimilation, integration, inclusion, segregation or the impact of economical or media factors on the perception and acceptance of Roma in society.

In these theoretical and interpretational frameworks, we see correspondence with research methodologies in art education (Fulková and Jakubcová 2014). The second area our research project is related to is didactics of art education, corresponding with the requirements of current pedagogy. The third area is visual arts, in our case the combination of art and design and its cognitive aspects.¹ The methodological background of the case study is therefore based on a hybrid research model, dominated by participatory ethnographic approaches combined with participatory action research (PAR) based in pedagogy and sociology. We created protocols for collecting data in the field that can be used as a standard; their qualitative evaluation focused on a thematic analysis inspired

by theory-based methodology. It also included an analysis of the curatorial processing of the exhibition contents and the museum educator's approach. In the artistic area, the present case study is based on museology's current approaches that uncover the functions of artefacts in relation to historical, individual psychological, sociological and educational determinants (Petrová 2018).

Whose culture?

Among the topics that soon emerged as pivotal was the topic of culture and identity. Fierce debates among academic groups as to determining an approach to studying Romani culture lead us to a cautious treatment of seemingly unproblematic concepts. The exact opposite is true: on a more general level, the concept "culture" itself is a category that changes within the social scientific discourse depending on the current state of research and discursive regulations in relation to socio-economic and political circumstances.² Another concept, Roma (or Gypsy, in the pejorative tradition of the Czech language), is an equally explosive conceptual mixture (Fremlová and Fulková 2021).

From common empirical knowledge, we know that the majority frequently perceives Romani culture as a strange, folklore-tinged aggregate of cultural expressions and artefacts with certain typical traits: colourful patterns in clothing, appearance, music, singing, dancing, lifestyle, etc. Media representations and linguistic or artistic reflections correspond with this perception, too. These notions are also stereotypically linked to a cohesive, generalised identity, associated with inborn personal "attributes", a genetic base or a set of inherited or acquired cultural practices, including gender roles, language and traditions. It is necessary to resolutely reject these imposed notions and constructed collective fantasies and instead endorse a non-judgemental, non-genetic conception of culture. Let us understand the concept of culture primarily as a tool: "[A] tool that is of more or less usefulness to us as a life form and its usage and meanings continue to change as thinkers have hoped to 'do' different things with it" (Barker 2004, p. 44).³

"But who are Roma?", you may ask

A complicated question: is it necessary – yet all the more difficult – to approach the question without sentimentality, an emotional charge, romanticising or stereotypical ideas? Here, it will be more appropriate to cite scientists who investigate Roma-related issues. We have borrowed the subtitle from a recent publication authored by social scientist L. Fremlová, who provides the following explanation:

Roma are a diverse, heterogeneous, transnational ethnic minority scattered across continents as varied as Europe, North and South Americas, Australia, Africa and, according to some scholars, even Asia (Hancock 2002, xx). Roma are often referred to as a nation without a territory or a state. In the European Union (EU) alone, Roma are estimated to number between 10 and 12 million: this makes Roma the largest ethnic/'racial' minority group. Roma differ significantly from continent to continent; from country to country; from region to region. This heterogeneity is also reflected in the different names coming under the umbrella term 'Roma': Vlach Rom, Rumungro Rom, Kalderash, Sinti, Lavari, Manouche, Ashkali, Boyash, Tattare, Kale, Ursari, Luri, Romanichals or Romany Gypsies, Yenish, Gitanos and many more.

Fremlová 2021, p. 1

Let us add that in the territory of the Czech Republic, Roma are often called Gypsies/Cikáni and have been historically perceived negatively as a problematic group living in excluded localities, in Gypsy ghettos and characterised by “inadaptability”, criminality and social benefit abuse. The other side of the binary, black-and-white concept of the Gypsy is a romanticising, exotically predisposed version of a social outcast as an independent, natural being endowed with magical powers (Sekerková and Šusterová 2017). Nonetheless, especially in exposed social situations, this view is quickly followed by a media whirlwind of hateful and racist diatribes, at times accompanied by real crimes, which tends to be a regular occurrence in the majority society (and not just in the Czech Republic). Fremlová confirms this as follows:

In countries as varied as Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Denmark, the COVID-19 pandemic has served as a magnifying glass, uncovering the actual extent of racial inequalities and anti-Romani racism.

Fremlová 2021, p. 2

In the Czech lands, antigypsyism has traditionally been a serious issue that has persisted even after the socio-political changes associated with the collapse of the communist regime in 1989. Although a series of government strategies have attempted to introduce measures to address it (Strategie rovnosti 2021), everything remains at the level of proclamations on paper and the reality of everyday life remains unchanged (Merhaut 2019). With respect to a sociological study of the factors causing the toxic spread of hostility towards dissimilar ethnic groups (Bauer et al. 2018), we believe that the set of prejudice against Roma is strengthened by and interconnected with aspects of the so-called culture of poverty and social exclusion.

Research procedure

The design of the experiment was based on this conceptual background. We do not rule out the possibility that our position does not allow us to glimpse all the pitfalls of the interpretations present in the case study. Eighty pupils aged 6–14 participated in the event at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague. Based on their age, they were separated into five teams, or classes, i.e., into co-educated groups accompanied by their teacher and assistants: a total of ten adult research participants. Mostly, the teachers did not specialise in art education: just one teacher was qualified to teach art. As it turned out, this did not present a problem since the interviews expressed richer and more diverse opinions concerning the function of art and the educational programmes on offer. A key member of the research group was the museum educator, Dana, who provided us with very motivated reflexive notes following each lesson. The groups were complemented by two senior researchers – specialists in research in art education and action research in museums and galleries; two documenters, recording visual data; and two assistants recording field notes.

We asked ourselves the following questions that emerged from our curiosity and were also supposed to bring impulses aimed at achieving change in educational approaches as envisaged by the museum’s educational department.

- a What are Romani children/school needs to complete the programme at the museum?
- b What characterises the Romani culture, education and social background/habitus?

- c What forms of creative work – apart from the online version – will be used and which ones will be effective?
- d What characteristics would a work of art need to have to be engaging for Roma people?
- e What should the conditions and motivation of communication with children and teacher/visitor be in order to create functional, cognitive online educational programmes that will mediate knowledge of culture and develop an awareness of individual and collective identity (identity of a specific culture, ethnicity, employability, etc.)?
- f How to articulate challenges within the Roma population/community and what is the language of this articulation?

Answers to some of the questions are woven through the following part of the text; others – and there are many of them – remain open for further research with this group of participants. What has been invaluable for the future is the creation of a communication group of educators from the school, the museum's educational department and university researchers. It is up to us to determine how we are going to use this opportunity and mutual trust; and how we are going to continue to develop the reflected praxis with a social impact or through changing the approach to communication between the museum and the school.

What happened during the visits to the museum

The design of the educational programme has the structure of a museum visit (just like with the previous experiment with children from the deaf community). Therefore, it is a certain standard, which educator Dana adjusts to the situation at hand and to anticipated reactions by the children. Dana worked with her own, meticulously prepared scenarios for the educational programme. They differ in terms of the difficulty of the assigned approaches and the complexity of the structure based on the children's age group. There are three scenarios: for preschoolchildren and Years 1 and 2 primary schoolchildren; for Years 3–5 primary schoolchildren; and a programme for Years 6–9 primary schoolchildren. Preparations consist not only of a structured description of the curriculum, outputs and links to the curriculum of the framework educational programme but also a spatiotemporal plan and an assignment of partial tasks before Dana and the children move to the active zone. It is a part of the exhibition where it is possible for the children to sit down; it is a place for group dialogue, for activity and for verifying its communication effects. The main creative activity takes place in the active zone. This activity is a kind of scaffolding: a support framework of different interpretations of concepts from the previous, visual, verbal and demonstrative parts of learning. Here, in the active zone, creative transfers of contents between various symbolic systems (verbal, visual, haptic) take place; alternatives, re-conceptualisations of the use of tools, application of alternatives to task resolution and other variants of cognitive activities are generated.

But what is behind the educational standard of a museum programme?

Data analyses point to the existence of a hidden curriculum, consisting of a value and symbolic structure that corresponds with the "classic" mission of a museum: to preserve, manage and educate the foundations of national cultural identity, to ensure the transmission of the majority culture, of which the museum is historically a part and fulfils its function such

as, for example, the presentation of the so-called “high-brow culture”. In fact, in educator Dana and the teachers’ reflections, we find a series of key terms that confirm this, for instance: “exclusive”, “rare”, “art”, “beauty”, “precious”, “national”, etc. Here, we would like to point out that it is a statement, not an assessment since describing the way an educational situation has been constructed lies at the centre of our interest. It is evident that the programme mediates the values of “high-brow culture” to an audience from a specific socio-cultural background, with a different “culture”. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to use Bourdieu’s term “habitus”, by which we understand a set of permanent values, activities and assumptions, taste-related judgements and attitudes. Put simply, one might say that habitus is a “generative and unifying principle, which uses characteristic relational traits that are typical of a certain position in order to create a cohesive lifestyle” (Bourdieu 1998, p. 16).

In short, visiting a museum is not customary or popular in the environment many Romani children come from. For that matter, we have had a similar experience in other research studies exploring the cultural hobbies of pupils from the majority society (Fulková 2004). From this viewpoint, the teachers’ testimonies tell us that without this research cooperation, a visit to a cultural institution such as an art museum would most likely not have taken place spontaneously because the children spend their free time differently. A statement made by one of the teachers captures this notion aptly: “... if I am to choose where, it usually tends to be something to do with sports, the zoo or (...) even the theatre, always some sort of a musical thing. Actually, for me, those galleries and ‘the artistic’ come in last, as it were”. The teacher suggests that she would definitely go if the museum gave her an interesting impulse to motivate her. In short, the teachers and Romani children are all in the same boat. As we learn from one of the teachers’ parodical reply to the question of whether they perceive any barriers while visiting a gallery or a museum:

Very much so. The ladies, or what should I call them, those curators or custodians who were there were continuously treating our children like this: “Don’t touch it, go away, don’t shout, calm down ...” (...) The lady literally followed only our children and kept telling them off, so much so that even our children found it very unpleasant ... (...) “And why do you think it was like that?” “It is because even she sees that 90 per cent of our children are Romani, or a Roma ... I mean our children and her immediate reaction is ‘Watch out, these ones, they’re gonna do something’.”
(*Teacher’s quote in HU 4, Fulková, 2021*)

Here, the situation was getting serious; we are glad that the teachers’ unpleasant recollection is related to a different institution and a different situation that reflects the persisting societal negative perceptions of Romani children whom the said custodian prejudged on the grounds of their appearance. A textbook example of stereotypical behaviour based on internalised stereotypical prejudice.

How to take care?

The role of the educator and her style of communicating with the teachers, not just the children, are irreplaceable. Her attitudes and openness to a situation, for which she is prepared only partially, are essential: the success – or failure – of integrative and inclusive education depends on them. We will briefly refer to two examples here. After several stages of reflecting on education, Dana achieves a shift in managing the programme. She is allowing the

children to have more freedom in the exhibition because she is realising “that they are different from other school groups”. In what respect? To this effect, she says:

These children are obviously entering an unknown environment, which they find overwhelming. (...) The programme seems to restrict them. They enjoy being amidst artefacts, watching and absorbing the atmosphere, touching things, admiring the decorated space of the museum se. Rather than listening to a lecture, they want to talk about what they see, share their way of seeing and have their views confirmed. They want space to be able to express their admiration, they ask questions, are interested in the titles, stories, technologies and the value of the objects.” In the same reflection, she also expresses a certain contradiction between institutional praxis and her wish to let the children explore the environments and the artefacts in a spontaneously, emancipated way. She is looking for a solution: “Regarding ‘wild groups’ that bring a certain risk to the items on display, hence unacceptable behaviour towards other visitors and the lecturer in the exhibition and at the museum, I find that initial communication with the teachers is essential when first planning the visit to the museum. (...) Though I also found that the role of the teacher in the programme is still very important: it allows her to have control over the group and I can focus on managing the programme”.

Yet, the most positive reflection emerged on another occasion, following a visit by Year 1 schoolchildren, when the educator was using an “overhauled scenario” and counted on a certain degree of liveliness and restlessness in the children. It appears that back then, she succeeded in fine-tuning both the timetable and communication, and in strengthening dialogical and activity elements in a way that enabled the educational process to be dynamic but smooth. That is most important for both the educator and the children. To this effect, Dana wrote:

I give everyone the space to be able to try to tell us all what they would tell their mum at home: where they have been and what they have seen. Not everyone uses the opportunity to express themselves, but they all say that *it was beautiful*, even *cool*. When they say that it was beautiful, they are utterly enchanted with contentment: you can actually see it in their faces. (...) At the end, I reiterate what they have seen, I emphasise the cooperation between the artist and master glassmakers, I thank them and end the programme. The children are smiling, they really do not want to leave. We say goodbye (...) and I’m cleaning up, I am absolutely gobsmacked by how quiet they have been, I did not expect it in the least. (...) I reworked the scenario and it all worked out fine; moreover, the group was a real reward!

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

The following illustration refers to the finding of the analysis of documents concerning educational situations. The documents contained standard layers of the educator’s reflexive notes, her preparatory scenarios, the transcripts of interviews with five teachers and Romani teaching assistants, a group interview with all the teachers at the school, transcripts of field notes, photo and video documentation, a set of follow-up artistic activities at school (Figure 5.6).

"Children that no one wants anywhere. We want you here. We are here for you. Safety. The luxury of an individual approach. Here and now."

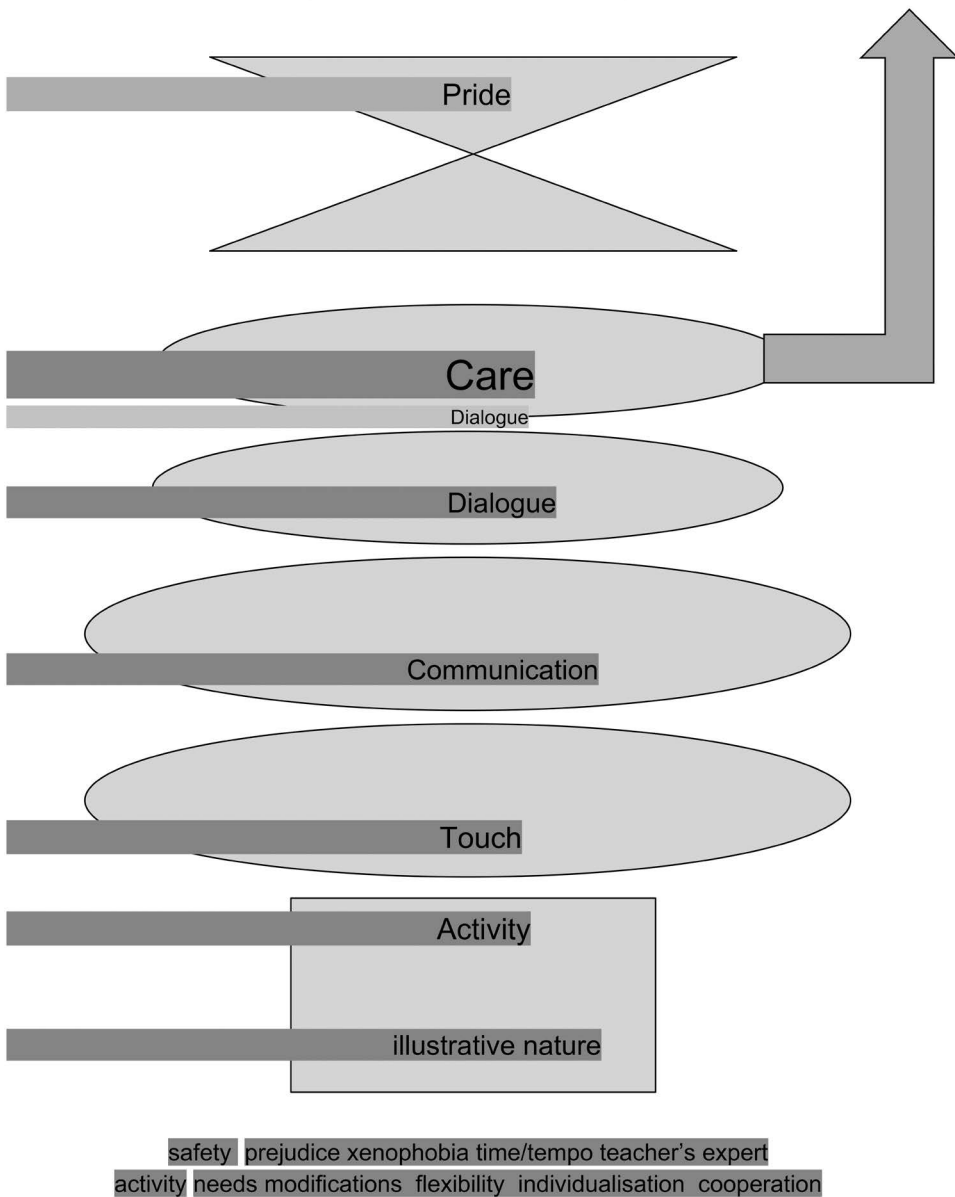


Figure 5.6 Aspects of the analysis of interviews with the Roma children.

All the primary documents from this experiment are assembled in the hermeneutic unit HU 4; they also contain informed consent for all the participants and the school's consent – general assent. For the purpose of data collection, we created a multi-layered structure of the basic protocol and procedures, based on the following items that could be repeated in other cases as well. The protocol consisted of the following: three teaching

scenarios with key topics developed by educator Dana. Following each lesson, she made her written reflexive notes available to us. The field notes taken by both university researchers were complemented with one-off notes and records taken by student assistants/observers. Other team members were photographing and videoing the teaching process. In the second part of the lesson, the teachers and assistants formed couples and went to the studio where they were interviewed; the interview was then transcribed. The next visit took place at the school, where the whole group of teachers, assistants and researchers Marie and Magdalena met up; the interviews were recorded and transcribed. All the documents underwent three stages of coding, during which key semantic nodes were identified. Manual coding was undertaken in line with qualitative research methodology such as Grounded Theory at the level of super codes. Several conceptual maps were created and mutually compared. This assessment (evaluation) was rather complex to ensure the validity of the conclusions. However, we trust that the research protocol model may be used at a later stage, by other researchers interested in conducting similar research.

So, what does the map show us? At the museum and in lessons, it is necessary to keep a constant flow of communication and practices in a way that enables teamwork and mutual help in unexpected situations. Everything points to the model of mutual care, and this has been the case since the first, preparatory phase before the visit to the museum. It is essential to pay attention to the structure of groups, their preparation at school, the teacher and assistant's personal commitment and interest and the process of getting to know the educator, or, as the case may be, the exhibition and the institutional environment. The visualisation of the relations between the individual objects on the map presents the dynamics of teaching, which was characterised by "smooth operation" and manifestations of multidimensional, allocentric perceptiveness (Fox Keller 1994). It is a form of perceptiveness concentrating on others and it applies to both objects and people. It assumes a temporary putting aside of the perceiver's egocentric thoughts and efforts, all prejudices relating to the self and self-esteem, and turning completely to the other.

The map also shows the so-called "tacit knowledge". In teaching discourse, it is a well-known category that describes non-verbalised, intuitive knowledge based on long-term experience, often associated with precise and effective decision-making on the basis of "in-action" reflection or "knowing-in-action" (Fulková 2008, p. 105). Not only did the educator alter educational strategies whenever it was necessary; she was also able to evaluate and describe the lesson in hindsight. Her detailed reflexive notes were part of the research strategy, which the teaching model focused on and drew inspiration from with respect to effectuating changes to the structure of the scaffolding and spatiotemporal planning.

If we come back to the questions that we asked ourselves at the outset, we are unable to offer brief answers in the form of an itemised list of ingredients for a recipe in a cookbook. Each question involves a complicated and ambiguous commentary. What remains is the participants' experiences and their reflection, which provides a basis for answers to the questions that emerged at the stage of planning the experiment: Is a Romani child a visitor "with special" needs? Is a Romani child not the same as any other child with needs that are always special? It depends. If we disregard the fact that even the term "child" itself is a changing construct and a function of research discourse, then we can state our position: yes, in our group, we believe that a Romani child is the same as any other child and a claim to individualised approach in education is legitimate in relation to all children. However, the aforementioned unpleasant experiences of teachers and

children in public spaces show that xenophobic views and hidden stereotypes in society pose tough, almost unbreakable and impenetrable obstacles to changes in education that we would like to see. How do we ensure that a school is multicultural and does not become segregated over time? After all, we know that if the percentage of pupils from Romani families exceeds a certain level, “white” parents will stop sending their children to that school (“white flight”).

As shown by the transcripts of field research journals, we cannot ignore the potentialities of learning in an altered environment, under different circumstances and in a different mode of emotional well-being. As educator Dana has observed in her notes: “The teacher is resolutely controlling the children’s words of admiration ‘ah, oh’ as if they were undesirable”. However, the children do not let her discourage them, interjections of excitement can be heard and the children are engaging in a lively dialogue. “I talk at length about our museum creating collections and I go on to ask whether they collect anything”, Dana asked. The response by one-year-old children was really funny: “No, we don’t collect anything, just money”. Monetary interests then reappear several times in relation to artefacts, the price of which is so hard to imagine that it becomes abstract. Could this become a new definition of an artefact’s aura?

Glass is a treasure! A treasure for initiating cognitive processes. We cannot think of a better and more magical motivation to learn. “What kind of glass do you have at home?”, educator Dana asks the children at the beginning of the visit to the exhibition. “A bowl, a glass, dishes, a window, a door”, say the children. In time, glass art always ends up enchanting the spectator, transporting them to the land of imagination. Dishes? No way! “It is exquisite, it was beautiful, the head, that it was so nice, beautiful and colourful. A golden egg, inflated balloons...”. We find poetic tropes in the children’s comments: “It is like a fiery ring, a car made from glass, it is like a lemon, a bowl, it is kind of upside-down, it is made of several vases”.

Following the analysis, the recorded reactions of the participants (children, teachers, assistants, museum educators) show that both the exclusive art glass exhibits and the utility glass objects at home can be understood as cultural artefacts that are a source of knowledge. Obviously, knowing cannot be separated from feeling because cognition takes place simultaneously in both areas. Similarly, it can be stated that vision is part of a multisensory dynamic in which perception takes place in general and creative-cognitive processes are inextricably linked to all the use of a cultural artefact (close experience). Furthermore, it is demonstrable that controlled collaborative creative processes in relation to incentives provided by a cultural object and in cooperation with a more experienced peer (a classmate, an educator, an artist) have transitive phases: they take place only in such didactic conditions that allow the use of speech (discourse). Here, metaphor and story (narrativity, dialogicity) play an important role as open systems, allowing open interpretation and inspiration to create a novel artefact that represents the most complex and creative level of new knowledge. In regard to the complexity of the educational domain and its subsequent manifestations, we confirm five levels that characterise the “receptive profile” of art museum visitors in primary school pupils: (1) Acceptance, (2) Completion, (3) Elaboration, (4) Paraphrase and (5) Inspiration. The cognitive stances of this system may be rearranged and may not appear in this order. This refers to the dynamics of the interconnection of activity and speech in collaborative activities (the zone of proximal development) and the semantic nature of cognition, whether in visual, haptic, bodily, musical or linguistic systems, which allow each participant a unique cognitive experience.

Policy implications

Once again, we can prove that encountering original works of art in galleries and museums is an irreplaceable source of authentic teaching and learning. Once again, we can start convincing policymakers in the educational field that cultural education has an irreplaceable place in the educational system and that all children have a right to it. And once again, in March 2022, we find that in the Czech Republic, this area is marginal since cultural competences are missing from the design of planning the curricular framework. Despite concentrated efforts by theory and practice in the field over the past 30 years, art education remains among the group of subject areas that occupy a marginal, feebly accented curricular position. The unclear position of art education is also exacerbated by its association with visual arts and its traditional conceptualisation that understands art within the context of its aesthetic functions but also sees it as something useless and incomprehensible. During the extreme periods of social turbulence, e.g., during the pandemic years, the position of art and the status of the artist have emerged as most problematic, or literally dispensable, as if the ignoble Marxist economic theories of the “base” and the dispensable “superstructure” were resonating here again. From our own experience “on the ground” in education, we know that the instructions concerning COVID issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports even recommended that art and music be not taught. In discourses on education, the so-called expressive subjects are considered weak, conceptually undeveloped, non-cognitive, with blurred boundaries and an unclear mission. In the last reviews of the state curriculum, we find an explicit shift towards a preference for teaching digital literacy and a turn towards those trends that strengthen the country’s industrial potential, not general levels of education. It is not quite clear what this trend hides, particularly in the current situation of the entirely unprecedented war tragedy and a crisis of humanist values.

Conclusion

In art pedagogy discourse, the influences of various academic disciplines intersect, offering tools for both analysis and the construction of new educational designs in response to economic and political issues, including social exclusion and disadvantage. In a situation where, despite all governmental proclamations, Roma-related issues are in a state of inertia, it was of utmost interest to us to mediate a meeting between Romani children, their teachers and museum educators in a museum setting that represents high-brow culture; and to try to initiate a dialogue. The Romani children and their teachers form a group with strong internal bonds that characterise the school’s culture against the backdrop of Romani families and the habitus of the middle-class majority culture, which the teachers and Romani assistants come from.

Gallery and museum education is undoubtedly a source of a specific type of education, which may transcend the boundaries of common cliché ideas and passive attitudes. It stimulates the cognitive process in contact with original works of art, which provide impulses to investigate truisms and social mythologies that are too unequivocal. The museum and its educators, who create a climate of openness and friendliness, invite everyone who passes by; everyone whom someone will figuratively “take by the hand” and carry them over the threshold that they would not be able to cross otherwise. This role tends to be fulfilled by school: understandably, by this synecdoche, we mean teachers, educators and teaching assistants. They are effectively those who tend to be invisible

(Novotná and Fremlová 2021) but without whom the children's introduction to the world of culture would not have occurred. Let us cite the research map and specifically, what it says above the central category Care. There, supported by a thematic analysis, it literally reads: "Children that no one wants anywhere. We want you here. We are here for you. Safety. The luxury of an individual approach. Here and now". And a bit lower, once again located at the centre, are the unmissable words: "Pride" "Dialogue".

To conclude, we are asking the urgent questions: Is a Romani child a museum visitor "with special needs"? Is a Romani child not the same as any other child with needs that are always special? How can one tell that a child is Romani?

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- 1 This is apparent, for instance, in the debates of multiculturalism and integration policy, which – in the field of pedagogy – have been transformed into discourse on inclusive education.
- 2 We explore the processes of constructing Romani (Gypsy) identity more closely in the text Fremlová, Vendula, and Marie Fulková. 2021. "The Case of a Stolen Tomcat. Artist Iconoclasm as a Possible Way of Questioning the Authority of Image and Stereotypes Reproduced in Culture and Education." In *Documents of socially engaged art*, edited by Vella, Raphael, and Melanie Sarantou. Quinta da Cruz: InSEA.
- 3 What is behind the success of (Romani) pupils at Babington Academy? Research has shown that where the school demonstrably offers high-quality teaching and learning to all the pupils and prepares them well for secondary/higher education (e.g., Primary school Trmice near Ústí n/L, Primary school Grafická, Prague), the number of non-Romani pupils increases and the school does not become (or stops being) segregated (Fremlová 2015, Roma Education Support Trust/Fremlová 2021). https://www.rommuz.cz/file/other/odborna-verejnost/bulletin/bulletin_mrk_24_2015.pdf, www.zalezinakazdemditeti.cz

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22 Cut for New Times

A collaborative project at the School for the Deaf and the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague

Marie Fulková and Magdalena Novotná

The main aim of the case study described in this chapter is to acquaint the reader with the affordances of the pedagogical design of educational programmes applied in the environment of an art museum and their connection with subsequent creative activities at the school. Attention is focused on the potential for artistic interventions in the daily life at a school for children from the Deaf community. The study offers a perspective on how to initiate communication, as well as to stimulate cognitive development and imaginative thinking, based on the insights from an educational project prepared for the exhibition *Pleiades of Glass* at the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague and how these aspects relate to the artistic performance *Cut for New Times* with didactic incentives, which was led by a teacher/performer at school. Another interesting aspect of this case study is the socio-cultural background of the main actors of the project and their alternative ways of communication, a phenomenon which is little known to the hearing majority and the everyday educational routine in the Czech Republic.

Target population

The target group comprised students from the Primary and Secondary School for the Deaf, Škola Výmolova, Radlická, Prague District 5, Czech Republic. This school's philosophy can be characterised by an active and systemic approach to the education of deaf children. The school uses mainly Czech sign language as a means of communication, education and individual and cultural development that goes beyond the traditional, frontal educational approach. The use of sign language also mediates the relationship of this minority culture to the majority Czech culture as well as its relationship to the pro-inclusive tendencies of the education system, which still favours the majority. Although the identity of school culture is strong and confident, students and teachers find themselves in a variety of difficult situations embedded in multiple types of isolation, caused by the following factors: general misunderstanding and the conservative relationship of Czech society towards different individuals and social groups; institutions and, in addition, the two-year period of isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology and procedure

Background of the study

Initially, we would like to point out that the following explanation will be offered from the point of view of hearing members of the majority culture, who specialise in research in the field of didactic modelling for art education and museum education. We are in the

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Deaf community for the first time, so our position as “naïve conceptualists” or “ignorant” school ethnographers has been (and still is) to learn from the experiences of others; it also means that our view has plenty of misconceptions and errors that we are now trying to correct. Colleagues from the educational department of the Museum of Decorative Arts asked us to jointly examine the development of an educational programme for deaf students, their approaches to the current exhibition of Czech art glass, their creative reactions to expressive qualities of contemporary glass medium, reflections and, above all, needs. We were also interested in how the school “follow up” led by the performative artist would take place, initiated by an authentic encounter with the art of glass and a first visit to the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design. In addition, we sought to understand how the collaborative teamwork – both in the museum and after visiting the museum – of all the participants would be planned and carried out, as well as the views of the school community.¹

Methodologically, we reference the current debates concerning the view of “deafness”, which is characterised by a changing paradigm of the domain, viewed from two main perspectives. One of them is the paternalistic view, which sees deafness as a “deficiency” and necessarily results in the strengthening of an unbalanced relationship between the caregiver or benefactor and his mentee. The second is the view of “differentialists” who see deafness as a cultural fact, not as a sensor of deficiency, and support the efforts to create an autonomous culture, given the active and creative use of sign language and an active relationship with the majority culture. This subculture uses a capital letter to indicate its identity: the Deaf culture or community. If we look at the recently published professional literature, which studies the historical development of Western thinking about sign language, education, the position of the pedagogical subject and the position of the “Deaf Community”, we come across the following explanation of the persisting problems of the deaf view:

In the *Mask of Benevolence*, Harlan Lane² has admirably analysed what he calls the ‘audist psychology of the deaf’ (Lane 1999, pp. 50–66). This ‘psychology’, dictated by a paternalistic approach of hearing experts towards deaf people, consists of a set of largely negative attributes ascribed to deaf subjects: lower IQ, the tendency to mental disorders, inferiority of sign language, etc. (Lane compresses these attributes to those ascribed by the colonisers to the colonized). Despite the fact that this ‘psychology’ presents itself as scientific and appears to be founded on rigorous research and testing, the results of which were published in peer reviewed scientific journals, Lane shows, that on closer inspection, there is no consistency behind such statements and that the ‘psychology of the deaf’ seems to be little more than precisely an *imaginary construction* of the above-mentioned ‘experts’: ‘There is no psychology of the deaf. It is, in fact, not clear that there *can* be one. The term inevitably represent the pathologizing of cultural differences, the interpretation of difference as deviance’ (Lane 1999, p. 65).

Fulka 2020, p. 152

Methodology

A heterogeneous group of 11 elementary school students from 11 to 14 years of age, a teacher of art education (deaf), a class teacher (deaf), two specialists in museum education, two interpreters of Czech Sign Language, speech-to-text reporter (STTR), three

senior researchers – a specialist in research in art education and action research in museums and galleries, one artist/teacher/researcher – leader of the follow-up phase after returning from the museum at school took part in the experiment with a visit to the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague. The questions we asked ourselves were as follows:

- What do the deaf visitors need to complete the programme at the museum?
- What characterises Deaf culture?
- What forms of creative work will be used, and which will be effective?
- What characteristics would a work of art need to be engaging for children from the Deaf culture?
- What should be the conditions and motivation of communication with children and teacher/visitors with special needs (the Deaf) if the aim is to create functional, cognitive online educational programmes that will mediate knowledge of culture and develop an awareness of individual and collective identity (identity of a specific culture, ethnicity, employability, etc.)?

Some of these research questions can be empirically conceptualised and answered, as we will summarise briefly below. Many of them, however, require further study and research. The need for a longitudinal study of the long-term effect on the change of opinion in the majority society is proving.

At the stairs of the museum entrance

Our position, as we envisaged and confirmed by the experience of activities with deaf subjects of the project, is culturalist and differentialist. From the very beginning of my visit to the museum, I did not see any shouting, shyness, or incompetence. Children are curious, confident, attentive, and extremely focused. They follow Dana's welcome very closely and take an active part in the first stained glass conversation: they see and describe everything, they explain. If anyone is worried, it's us. Notes from field diaries constantly confirm this: "Probably the most expected visit to the museum with children, because we do not know how the communication will take place. The preparations are already complex, there are 3 communication groups with different 'languages', i.e. also with different semio-domains (semiotic domains, domains organised within different sign systems) and their practices. Iva, the children, they all sign, the interpreter's sign, they keep talking and we stand and we don't know. I feel stupid. What are they still talking about? I have to ask an interpreter".

Marie, diary. Fulková 2021

The interpreters form a bridge of understanding: "At the first questions, individuals who want and are not afraid to communicate, say what they think and share their thoughts [...] to the question of what the museum does, what its work is, the boy expressed with lightning speed very well and accurately" (Dana, HU 3, reflection, Fulková 2021).

Entering the museum

Dana (the museum educator) leads the children to the exhibition and the first pitfall emerges. The architecture of the exhibition creates narrow corridors that do not allow for effective communication, as they prevent the frontal position of the speaking educator

and lead her interpreter into sign language. They must be visible! Sign language is supremely visual, gestural, performative: it is a heuristically negotiated space of meaning and significance.

In the second hall, where the space opens up, the narrow corridor problem disappears and children can be given individual tasks, can walk freely around the exhibition and examine objects. The educator's dictionary is interesting: the subjects are "exhibits" that are "unique", "rare", "special", the emphasis is on presentation and representation, national identity – it is an institutional approach and Dana "discursively" in the context of the mission museums and high cultures. The impression of inaccessibility and the beauty of art are created here. In the active educational zone, where children examine and reflect on completed tasks, the pattern of communication changes. It is the application of close experience, as is known from object learning, which makes the museum's collection accessible in the contexts of the use of the object and the changes in its social function. In the active zone, direct manipulation with glass "things" is possible, not with untouchable exhibits. Dana uses her own collection of selected interesting objects and children also receive a touching gift here – a small glass candy, an artefact to be kept in memory. At the end of the activities at the exhibition, we clearly see what will require a follow-up at school and what is the task of the artist Jan: to create an imaginative space in which physical performativity, open structure for creation, experiments with different media, evocation, narratives and transformative thinking. This perfectly corresponds to Jan's idea of developing imagination and open thinking through artistic work (Figures 5.7 and 5.8).

Back at school

To continue his educational activities, Jan created a specific piece of art, based on the layout of the workshop space (various activity zones), a performative table, a debate



Figure 5.7 Children are free to move around the hall, observe, choose and watch the commentary that creates the meaning between "word", "gesture", "look" and "space". The second hall of the Pleiad of Glass exhibition is characterised by a good disposition of active cognition and learning.



Figure 5.8 Jan's performance Cut for New Times. A black-covered table on which Jan played out the evocation of a visit to the museum, an imaginative open form and a communication space. The children worked both directly on the table and in the entire area of the school hall. Their creations were immediately shown and commented on – they used a medium of coloured fibres, glass objects (shelves in the corner of the room), large-format drawings, photographs and narratives.

table, walls, a drawing board, a corner shelf displaying the glass we have at home and other free movement space. The education took place in an incredibly energetically rich communication space, which we usually do not know from the “normal” teaching of art education. The work was characterised by high intensity, energy and subsequent reflection, turning into a series of unexpected, provocative artistic statements. The interpreter comments: “When I learned that I would be interpreting for children a ‘visiting artist’ – a teacher, all I needed to know was what the teaching artist was. Actor? Artist? Musician? In short, what field he deals with.... ”

It was such a beautiful lesson! It took place in the language of the deaf, albeit through me as an interpreter. I don't feel like an art expert, I'm just a bridge of communication, but I still noticed the ability of art to relax and allow children to be themselves. The clubhouse, where the lessons took place, suddenly became a space for the creative development of deaf children's personalities, where everyone could be themselves, where each child found the opportunity to self-realise and talk to themselves, perhaps a place to rest and unwind from the accumulated energy. I wish the deaf would be allowed to attend such or similar drawing courses under such great guidance as Mr. Jan Pfeiffer MA attended! I noticed that the children enjoyed creating. Perhaps this is greatly aided by the fact that deaf individuals have a specific need to communicate in a way other than audio-oral (by hearing and articulation by mouth), i.e. perception by sight. And the truth is that we don't need hearing to create art. It's a way to portray the unnameable and release the forbidden, though natural.” (Interpreter's quote in HU3, Fulková, 2021, transcript reflection).

According to all the people involved, education resembled the creation of a work of art, and there was no difference between art and art pedagogy.

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

All primary documents of this experiment are collected in the hermeneutic unit labelled HU 3. For data collection, we have created a multi-stage structure of the basic protocol and procedures, based on the following items, which could be repeated in other cases.³

- a Prior to the visit of the museum: Written reflections on the online guide to the exhibition, *Pleiades of Glass* authored by the education department of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague. Reflections have been made by schoolteachers.
- b Events – at the museum: Written reflections on the action. Reflections have been made by the museum educator.
- c Events – at the museum: Written reflections of both interpreters, partially structured. Executed by interpreters and a participating researcher.
- d Events – at the museum: Transcript from the field diary executed by a participating researcher.
- e Events – at the museum: Photo documentation for subsequent analysis of interesting moments.
- f After the event – at the museum studio: Transcript of the interview executed by a participating researcher and a schoolteacher.
- g Action – at school: Preparatory documentation. Curricular documents: Written teaching preparation – performance and didactic structures. Executed by one researcher and an artist. Documentation contents: a transcript, one piece of structure drawing, a timeline.
- h Action at school. Performance and teaching/learning. A transcript from the field diary, photo documentation, video documentation, focused on interesting moments.
- i Informed consent of all participants, consent of the school – general assent.

Results

Primary research documents (Hermeneutic unit HU 3, items a–i) have been analysed. Subsequent coding (open coding, axial and selective coding) has been executed manually to the level of grouping codes into “supercodes” and concept maps with methodological support from a qualitative research approach, namely Grounded Theory. The triangulation was accomplished by members of the research team by emails, calls, shared documents and during three personal sessions. This is proved by the final map with the central category: Emancipation. There are other categories related to it: Emotions, Passivity – Activity, Trust – Distrust, Accessibility – Inaccessibility. As a cover category can be recognised the pair Art and Culture in conjunction with Space. The relationships between the categories established an interpretation that relates to crucial question whether art, art making and culture in the broadest sense of the word are accessible or inaccessible to a given cultural and linguistic minority. The central category points to a fundamental problem that Deaf culture and students of Deaf community face: How to achieve the emancipation from the art-education cliché as commonly practised at current schools, and how to emancipate participants from the common understanding of art education as a relaxing school subject without any cognitive and intellectual ambitions.

This case study experiment proves that a completely new concept of art education can be achieved in the practice of schools for the Deaf. It is possible to design a non-traditional, non-reduced didactic structure, which is in accordance with the organic origin of the work of art and merges with it. In this way, students become authentic creators

and literally “auctors” who carry out their work. They thus become emancipated agents with their own artistic and life opinion, identity and self-confidence. Rather than criteria, we can set out certain features that characterise the above-mentioned concept of teaching which connects artistic and teacher’s thinking in one intertwining strand: the activity is ambiguous; creative work involves all the participants simultaneously; the open form produces situations; the open form is a specific form of happening within which the individual ego recedes in favour of common action and its results. Correspondence with pedagogical principles includes transformative and imaginative effects; learning through a dialogue; learning by doing; situational learning; sensibility to inclusive issues. Above all, the artistic open form supports imagination and creative work as a social event. The open form also functions as an open didactic system, which we have called the plug-in system, with students, teachers and artists choosing the order of the elements to use. The individual modules are presented in open imaginative words-concepts. This is well seen in picture entitled *The Black Board*.

Policy implications

From the overall overview of the general practice of conducting art education and other creative subjects in the general education system, where the curriculum in the Czech Republic is currently reducing both content and time allocation for these subjects, the conceptual structure described above can clearly be generalised and applied to the domain of art education for the whole school population. It also requires that these conditions be provided: system support for the cooperation of all actors and the possibility of atypical detachment from the usual time model for creation in school. This is preceded by an encounter with an original work of art and related education.

We see three levels of entitlement:

- 1 The management of the museum/gallery is in line with the educational objectives and will create such conditions that the mission of the museum and the educational mission meet in synergy with each other.
- 2 Curators, educators and exhibition architects can work as one team. The atmosphere of the museum/gallery is open to atypical activities, all visitors and open dialogue. A friendly relationship is established between educators and visitor-teachers so that all components of education take place: school preparation, a museum visit with an educational and creative component, and subsequent school activity that allows the most creative, even controversial, views through various art media. This is the second level, namely the right to open culture and freedom of opinion of the school.
- 3 The third level is in the legislatively guaranteed provision of optimal conditions for the interconnection of all three components as mentioned above and moreover defining the possibilities of adaptation for the educated with special needs, in our case support and expression of respect for the Deaf culture, and support paradigm shift understanding “To fulfil its legally guaranteed access to education” (Kováčová 2013, p. 277).

Conclusion

From the quoted more extensive research by the author Kováčová and the company EDU in the workshops for the Deaf, we know that there are long unresolved issues that form the societal background on which is our experiment Cut for New Times – between school

and museum. We consider some of them to be particularly serious (cited according to Kováčová 2013, p. 277): very low competencies of deaf teachers in Czech sign language, significant reduction of the curriculum in schools for the hearing impaired, critical lack of quality teaching materials for the Deaf (participants pointed out). Paradoxically, here, within the individual integration of a deaf child in mainstream schools, there are shortcomings in meeting the communication and social needs of the child. Thinking about the Deaf, however is “a particular story about the relationship between norm and normality, about the way in which one dominant group continuously marginalizes and disables another, how it constructs an image of difference that is in fact cultural and linguistic difference...” (Fulka, 2013, p. 270).

Moreover, to answer the mentioned central category of emancipation and inclusion, in conclusion, we would not like to omit the serious and optimistic voice of my colleague Iva, who sees the matter from within the community of the Deaf and their teachers:

The view of those teachers is a little different, the art. They look after them again, they evaluate the children according to how the children behave, whether they respond adequately to the assignment. There, again, the teacher looks at it from a slightly different perspective, which is simply different. As you said, “Everything is allowed, no one will evaluate anything”, so it’s a little different for those teachers. Because those children are in charge. They need to think more about how those kids act outwardly, like a group. But I think you can get involved with the fact that you take the children and go out with them. You take them and go to the museum with them, and it’s important that they’re not really locked up here in that can, in that school, but that they’re going out into the world. Because here in that school, the surrounding majority cultures don’t show up too much. And that’s how they go after her and leave the segregation, just that we’re locked in that can. So, to get into the majority culture, to have the feeling of being included, to be close to it and to be able to communicate there, i.e. an interpreter, QR codes, and videos. (...) For me, the huge topic is that the deaf can now work in such art and museum institutions. And that it works that way, that it just works in the world, is important to us, and that we could just work on it. This should be an advantage for the deaf community because, as has already been said, the deaf will get along much better. With a deaf employee, he connects to him much better. It is a positive identification for the students themselves, something else “that I could do in life”. For example, working in a museum.

*Deaf teacher Iva’s quote in HU3, Fulková, 2021,
an interview transcript*

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Notes

- 1 Fortunately, the fact that a deaf art teacher from the above-mentioned school, who is also a doctoral student, studying the possibilities of improving art education and the potential of links to direct encounters with the fine arts, became a member of the research team and live work under the guidance of a teacher and a visual artist. We have also established consulting cooperation with the Institute of Deaf Studies, Charles University, Prague.
- 2 Selected studies from authors whose thinking on the issue we consider innovative and inspiring: Lane, Harlan. 2007. "Ethnicity, Ethics, and the Deaf-World." In *Surgical Consent. Bioethics and Cochlear Implants*, edited by Komerasoff, Linda; Lane, Harlan. 1999. *Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the deaf community*; Kristeva, Julia. 1969. *Le geste, pratique ou communication?*; Sicard, Roch-Ambroise Cucurron. 2006. "Course of Instruction for a Congenitally Deaf Person." In *The Deaf Experience. Classics in Language and Education*, edited by Harlan, Lane; Tomasello, Michael. 2008. *Origins of human communication*; Ladd, Philip. 2003. *Understanding Deaf Culture. In Search of Deafhood*.
- 3 For all project data storage, we decided to use the standard capabilities of Charles University in the "ownCloud" service platform for data security (provided by the CESNET association) and requested the establishment of a special repository.

The repository storage has set technical parameters in the required quality to allow access only to a selected (authenticated) number of researchers, who are also authenticated through the "eduID.cz" service. The storage size is set to 200 GB so that all materials of the five tested experiments (text, audio, visual and audio-visual data from the action research) can comfortably fit on the storage, and the data are also stored only in the Czech Republic. The system allows users to work flexibly with data.

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23 SENSational art

An educational programme for children with behavioural issues and Special Educational Needs (SEN) and an in-service training programme for their teachers at the Hungarian National Gallery

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The Hungarian National Gallery – a place to look, create and learn

One of the museum's particular goals is to engage and support students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, as well as those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) through art. The programme, which was initiated by the Hungarian National Gallery (HNG), provides both students and their teachers an opportunity not only to connect their classroom-related activities and the relevant curricula to the collection of the museum but also to develop certain skills, improve their emotional intelligence and help them with their difficulties (dyslexia, the ability to concentrate, attention deficit, communication skills and fine motor skills). The topics chosen for the museum classes are closely linked to the history and literature curricula (9th and 10th grades), covering cultural-historical periods from medieval times until the middle of the 20th century. The package created for high school teachers encourages them to use both the online databases and the exhibitions of the HNG in their teaching practice, giving new perspectives to the curricula and fostering knowledge sharing between the educators to match European trends in fostering students with special needs (Kállai and Mile, 2021).

Schools participating in the project

The partner schools of the museum were Gorsium High School (Székesfehérvár) and the Premier Art Secondary School (Budapest). Both institutions provide special training in the arts. The key criteria for the schools' selection into the programme were their inclusive approach and the students' socio-economic background (in many cases difficult). Their location was also taken into consideration. The participating students from both schools were in the 10th grade with various group sizes (26 students from the Gorsium and 7 from the Premier Art School) and with different educational needs. The latter includes SEN development (calculation, writing and reading, motor skills or developmental delay in school skills) and professional mental health care services. Four of the students from Gorsium High School were living in adverse poverty at the time of the interaction ([Figure 5.9](#)).



Figure 5.9 Understanding different historical perspectives and listening contemporary music (auditory assistance to learning) reflecting to national history – session for the class of Premier High School in the permanent collection of the Hungarian National Gallery.

Description of methodology and procedure

Programme for the students

The methods and tasks used in the exhibition space were based on the fact that there is a correlation between learning methods and the quality of memory: the more experiential and active participation is required in the (learning) process, the more effective memory is, i.e., the more senses are activated, and the more movement tasks are given, the better the children are expected to remember the information, feelings and thoughts they receive (Hooper-Greenhill 2004, Dovigo ed., 2017). The structure for each class contained a preparatory and a follow-up lesson held in the students' schools (formal learning space) and multiple museum visits paired with studio work, where the students tried out and worked with different artistic techniques and materials (informal learning space). In accordance with the institution's COVID-19 prevention guidelines for the Gorsium High School group, three extended museum programmes were held; hence, less time was needed for travel. The class of the Premier High School visited the HNG six times (Figure 5.10).

For both school groups, each museum visit began with a short warm-up task or game which was then followed by an interactive guided tour primarily in the permanent collection supplementing with the current running temporary exhibitions where the scheduled topics and the shows paired with each other. The schedule of the exhibition room



Figure 5.10 The students from the Gorsium High School painting with tempera in the studio after the guided tour in the temporary exhibitions.

sessions was prepared but some time was made available for any on-the-spot adjustments made by the students. The focus was on an interactive participation, creation of a safe, relaxed space (considering the background of the students and the limited opportunities they had had to visit museums beforehand) and the possibility of self-interpretation.

Children with SEN more frequently tend to struggle with reading and understanding other people's facial expressions, emotions and gestures; maintaining personal space and explicitly communicating their thoughts, emotions, impressions and needs (Mlakár, 2018). During the discussions about the artwork, the museum educators of the HNG paid attention to these difficulties and chose drama games accordingly as they are perfect to create an open interaction where the participants can adjust to its process and at the same time develop their personalities. In addition, sensory games and tools were used: the students were asked to guess different smells and scents and find out whether they could match them with the paintings in question; there were also auditory tasks where different genres of music were played and the students discussed them in relation to the exhibited pieces. For a special occasion, a professional singer was invited to emphasize the ambience of the selected paintings ([Figure 5.11](#)).

Based on each topic and exhibition hall sessions, the students created their own work of art in the museum's studio (alternating group work with individual work) using numerous techniques and media: collage technique, tempera painting, video creation and lenticular poster creation. The collage technique focused on the improvement of fine motor skills, abstract thinking and spatial vision (the students were asked to recreate a historical painting using only cut-out and drawn geometrical shapes). The sequence of the techniques was gradually built up; in the middle of the programme was the painting



Figure 5.11 The class of Premier High School with their paintings in the studio after their third visit.

task (individual work) which was the least directed one, and which allowed them the most space to express themselves. In some cases, the works were painfully personal and raw, but it also showed that they could really use art to “speak about” themselves.

In-service teacher training

The 30-hour teacher training course was held in a hybrid mode (three online occasions and one in person) for which out of state teachers (from Transylvania) were allowed to join. The structure of the training course was based on what the teachers expected from the museums: the topics should be that the training should be of high professional quality, authentic, reliable and provide detailed knowledge. During the online and in-person training days, both theoretical (e.g., history of collecting and museums) and practical information and tasks were presented (in the form of individual and group activities); the teachers finished the training course with individual projects which had to be carried out during their classes. They were required to present a detailed written description of their projects, supplemented with a self-reflection part. The training course was created primarily to help history and literature teachers, but the highlighted artwork and pre-prepared museum classes can be tailored and used for other subjects likewise. As part of the course, the participants were introduced not only to the HNG’s online educational resources but also to other partner institutions’ very professional digital material. During the in-person session, the teachers became familiar with similar games and tools which were used for the students’ visits – the smelling games and auditory tasks; they also had the opportunity to paint with tempera as the children did (Figure 5.12).



Figure 5.12 The museum educator of the Hungarian National Gallery is presenting one of the pre-worked themes for schools for the participants of the teacher training.

Summary of assessment methods and outcomes

Programme for the students

The museum visits (exhibition room activities and craft work in the studio) – for both schools and the teacher training – were documented with photos and videos. The audio-visual material is supplemented with written documentation of the programme. After each session, there was a peer-to-peer discussion and analysis between the museum educators (observations of the group and on the peer's work) and there was always oral feedback from the teachers of the classes. With the latter, the museum educators could establish a more personal relationship with the teachers who, as a result, became more committed to using the museum as a resource in their practice. The created works of the target group participants and teacher training participants (artwork and videos) have been collected and are kept archived in the HNG's Museum Education Department. For the students and their teachers' evaluation, questionnaires were handed out before the first and then after each museum visit. The first pre-visit form asked about the students' previous museum experiences – based on the answers, we could understand that almost none of the students had ever been on a school trip to a museum and very few of them had visited such institutions with their families; however, answers of the last survey showed an increased interest in visiting a museum either with an organized school group or with family – more than half of the students who answered the survey said that they might want to join similar activities and a third of them expressed that they would be glad to participate in the same programme.

In-service teacher training

The online sessions of the accredited in-service teacher training course were recorded; this way, not only the organizing museum educators but also the participant teachers could access the past events. After each session, and the final in-person visit to the museum,

the participants filled out a survey focusing on the structure of the session and then on the overall satisfaction. The answers given confirmed that the presented themes could be easily adapted to the daily practice of the teachers and not only to the Hungarian history and literature curricula, but to science or language classes. Based on the feedback of the (mainly) high school teachers, there is a major need of similar training courses (in Hungary, there is a compulsory annual target time for teachers to spend on training).

Policy implications

Hungarian legislation on SEN students

The regulation on SEN students and their integration can be found in the Institution Public Education Act (CXC of 2011). The Hungarian legislation distinguishes under the “requirement of special attention” three categories: children who need special treatment (physically disabled or have perceptual, mental difficulties or speech disorder and/or simultaneous occurrence of these), children with different psychic disorder (concerning learning or the control of attention or behaviour) and exceptionally talented children. At institutional level, there are difficulties in lack of expertise, infrastructure and material conditions regarding SEN children and their education.

Inclusion

The programme of the HNG highlights the fact that on many occasions, marginalized groups of children and/or children with difficulties (physical, mental or struggling because of their social-cultural background) tend to get that care and education what really serves their needs. As a start, it is not so obvious for many of these students to have access to (any) cultural institutions and further, to any programmes, tailored to their special needs. During the HNG’s programme, all participants were encouraged to take part at their own pace and give a voice and space for their thoughts and ideas.

Museums in the education process

Developing and implementing diverse packages for other museums and high school teachers could adjust to the current situation which was complicated because of the outbreak of the pandemic. However, due to several lockdowns and the switch to digital education, it drew attention more than ever to the role of the museums in the process of education. The outcome of this digital turn might bring a change of attitude regarding using museum materials as resources and considering the integration of the arts as main pillars of education, even on legislative levels.

Conclusion: how can museum education assist students with SEN?

Within the AMASS project, the Department of Education of the HNG could reach out to and accommodate students living outside of the capital city of Budapest and students with SEN, who are less likely to visit cultural institutions. An aim to provide a different learning environment and an inclusive museum experience for students with SEN, a new way to express themselves and learn about their identity, was fulfilled. The programme created an awareness and curiosity in the students to explore what they could learn from

diverse perspectives while at the same time establishing a different approach to Hungarian history and literature. The creative activities could start to foster their skills' development in various areas, which were implied by the accompanying teachers and monitored by the museum educators. The most common behavioural issues included their ability to concentrate and to pay attention. These significantly improved as the students adapted to the same script and to the museum educators during each visit, and they started to integrate to the exhibition halls and the studio's space. A progression could have been observed regarding the fine motor skills, especially with the children diagnosed with special needs in reading and writing. Along with the previously mentioned skills' development, the students' cognitive skills were elevated as well. In the post-visit surveys, we could read that they could form great connections between the introduced historical times and the current issues, while channelling them to their own lives.

During its accredited teacher training, the HNG aimed to mediate the good practices and form knowledge sharing between teachers and the museum. The outcome clearly showed that similar structures could make teachers more committed and motivated, and there is a strong need of teaching materials from the museums to help with the curricula. As a result, the museum could assist in complementing their teaching motivation and objectives in the classroom, combining art, history and literature, and fun museum learning.

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Conclusion

Andrea Kárpáti

The power of the arts is conveyed in their potential to support self-expression, to develop life skills, and to give people on the margins a chance for creating a better future for themselves. Participatory actions through the arts help people to address challenges they are facing: segregation, marginalisation, denial of appropriate education, and misrepresentation of their culture. The central objective of the AMASS project was developing multidisciplinary methods for capturing, assessing, and harnessing the societal impact of the arts. We built national and local strategies that are being widely disseminated to achieve active cultural participation in our countries. We used the advantages of activating communication networks between cultural institutions, civic initiatives, and experts and reached out beyond traditional spaces by using public venues to create access for communities to arts-based activities. We used digital technologies to stimulate and disseminate social and place-based identities through the arts.

The participants of our arts-based interventions addressed social and health-related challenges by making their voices heard, by performing, creating, designing, and standing up for a brighter future, with others. As a result, the challenges seem to be less threatening; life becomes more manageable. An example for such an artistic effect is the sensitisation projects of the University of Malta with participants from the migrant and HIV-AIDS patient community. Participatory artmaking, utilised in the projects of APECV, the Portuguese association of art educators, invites community members to make their voices heard: to formulate their arguments and showcase their solutions to problems in their environment through creative work labelled with their names. Cultural appropriation is achieved through creation – a process more powerful in marginalised communities than repeated verbalisation of issues.

Artworks narrated the present and hypothesised about the future. We found that community participation in cultural policy processes can be enhanced using arts-based methods. Arts as tools offer communities more inclusive ways to express complex needs, values, and visions of their futures. Two examples for supporting authentic expressions of a marginalised community suffering from prejudice and cultural exclusion are the “Dai miei occhi – Through my Eyes” project of the PACO Design Collaborative, which showed how children of the disadvantaged communities of the Italian South seek beauty in their surroundings in photo sequences, and the Roma Cultural Influencer Training Program undertaken by the Corvinus University of Budapest. AMASS arts-based tools, such as visual storytelling through photography, film making, and multimedia, helped sustain engagement and support free expression.

Even the most benevolent interventions may have negative effects. Awareness of community values should be the foundation of arts-based interventions. Some communities

or participants may feel that the use of arts-based methods is inappropriate for their contexts. Negotiating and translating community needs helped us understand local relations to different art forms and the best methodology to utilise artistic expressions for voicing, discussing, and eventually solving social issues and personal problems. Arts-induced actions should result in a collective, communal stability. A good example for that is “SoftPower Art”, the project of the University of Lapland, that facilitates the acceptance of the pluriverse through non-harmful activist actions that help revitalise a river and increase salmon growth rates.

The power of the arts may put neglected, “invisible” social groups in the limelight. Theatre group participants of the University of Malta project were not bothered by their age – they were concerned about the invisibility of elderly in society. Hearing-impaired students of the museum education interventions of Charles University have learnt to accept their situation in their supportive educational environment but suffered from the scarcity of cultural offerings available to them. Once their special needs were considered, they could engage with arts and benefit from their therapeutic effects. In this and other AMASS projects (like the photo project by PACO in Italy and the spatial skills development project through environmental design by the GYIK Workshop of Children and Youth in Hungary of the Sámi cultural revival programme by the University of Lapland), art and design were integrated in the teaching-learning process. Design for ideating and planning, art for self-expression proved to be a good fusion! We, artists, and designers should keep on working together.

The AMASS project emphasises the cultural rights perspective of marginalisation and its links to other forms of exclusion. We developed sustainable cultural projects that can be adapted to national needs all over Europe and perhaps also beyond the boundaries of the continent. Assessment of the effects of our methods, showing how they utilised the power of the arts, constitutes the basis of potential adaptations. We developed an assessment framework (Kárpáti 2020) that includes authentic assessment methods for a wide range of visual arts-based interventions. In adult learning projects focusing on problem formulation, community building, and self-assertion, we employed participant observation, self-reflection blog, and interviews. In projects that enhanced creativity and skills development projects (like “MathArt”, a scientific visualisation methodology to help students with underdeveloped conceptual understanding to learn mathematics in Hungary), we employed standardised skills tests to show cognitive growth. In therapeutic arts-based interventions, we collected works of participants in process-portfolios that were used to show individual trajectories of personal development. We monitored collaborative processes through the analysis of messages and visual stories shared within the group, using the methodology of our partners from the University of Leeds. Success was measured in terms of sustainable growth: change of mindsets, development of creative and communication skills, increase in learning motivation, readiness to collaborate with fellow citizens in social projects, preparedness to act and improve the life of the community.

We developed two documents to support such actions: a booklet of regional policy roadmaps for seven European countries (Marengoni 2022) and the AMASS Policy White Paper (Lindström Sol et al. 2022). *Seven key themes* were identified from the analysis of the seven regional roadmaps that were based on the results of the AMASS projects:

- *Build national and local strategies* that are widely disseminated to achieve active cultural participation of communities to achieve impact at the local level.
- *Use the advantages of activating communication networks* between cultural institutions, civic initiatives, and experts. Improving communication in the promotion

of artistic interventions (through media and communication tools) builds networks and generates impact that is meaningful to local communities.

- *Reach out beyond traditional spaces* by using public venues to create access for communities to arts-based activities.
- *Use digital technologies* to stimulate and disseminate social and place-based identities through the arts.
- *Accelerate cognitive and affective development through art education* to empower participants to be more successful in education and in the workplace.
- *Collect, analyse, and evaluate data to measure impact*: how assessment of arts activities can produce evidence of the socio-economic value of culture to the local and global communities. Broadening the concept of the impact of culture and art can be achieved by identifying evaluation criteria and qualitative impact indicators.
- *Innovatively sustain projects after the termination of funding*: these case examples illustrate the relevance of implementing funding strategies that are innovative, diverse, and sustainable in the creative/cultural industries.

To support the realisation of the policy roadmaps, we also developed a White Paper for policy makers in education and culture (Lindström Sol et al. 2022). We identified *four key needs*, and formulated our recommendations to meet them and improve the cultural and democratic participation of marginalised people and communities in Europe:

- 1 *Sustainability and diversification in funding* – Recommendation 1: financial support from diverse sources to sustain innovative development in arts and culture.
- 2 *Assessment of outcomes of projects*: accountability of funded projects is a key factor in making them adaptable and sustainable. Assessment results are convincing arguments that also help broaden the concept of the impact of culture and art by identifying evaluation criteria and qualitative impact indices. Recommendation 2: create publicly accessible guidelines to articulate results using well-defined concepts.
- 3 *Participatory and intersectional governance in decision making*: inclusionary policies need an educational philosophy that may foster social inclusion and culture on a long-term basis. Recommendation 3: the active participation of individual artists, associations, and groups working in arts and culture should be promoted to include their perspectives and involve them in decision making.
- 4 *Broadened social participation in the arts and culture*: we need a greater understanding of art and culture as related to people's well-being and broader public involvement. Institutions, artists, and the public need to be open to new approaches to artistic practice to break with the elitist offer that is normally ascribed to culture and the arts. Recommendation 4: promote access to physical and digital spaces for active participation of citizens.

Education through the arts supports valuing and learning through alternative knowledge systems with the purpose of decolonising institutions, enables communication, and implements policies. A key to sustainability of the results of a project is accessibility of methodologies and findings. We hope that this collection of successful arts-based interventions will provide inspiration and insight into the life of marginalised communities and the role of the arts to improve their future.

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