4 Participatory and Community-Based Contemporary Art Practices With People With Disabilities

Mira Kallio-Tavin

In this chapter, I discuss problems and possibilities of participatory and community-based art practices with people with disabilities. First, I introduce my personal involvement through the Art Without Borders project, which included professional artists, art educators, and people with disabilities who made me ask critical questions on collaborative art projects. I continue by exploring how collective art practices and their intentional critique toward a new liberalist art world have taken different forms within the past 20 years and how the intended ethos might have failed. I then elaborate on a philosophical perspective on the notion of community and the rhetoric of participation. I discuss the nature of participation, collectivity, and agency in the context of marginalized communities. I offer a critical framework for community-based thinking, presenting, exploring, and critiquing contemporary and collaborative art practices. I examine how the agency of people with disabilities has been discriminated against throughout history as objects of treatment, isolation, control, and regulation in societies. I contemplate why it is crucial to draw attention to the practices of artists, educators, and curators when working with people with disabilities.

In addition to my own experience in the Art Without Borders project, I offer two other artist-driven community art practice examples, a photography project by artist and art educator Pekka Elomaa and the Lyhty Ensemble. The third example, *Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät*, serves as an example of a self-organized artists' community. Through practical examples and theoretical analysis, I discuss normalcy, agency, and ability in cultural participation. I conclude by raising new questions and offering some suggestions.

Reshaping Collaborative Practices

My personal perspective on collaborative art practice with people with disabilities came through my involvement in the European commission-funded project Art Without Borders. I was a collaborative artist and researcher on the project, which took place in five European countries from 2004 to 2005. The partner institutions of the project consisted of a boarding school specialized in caring for mentally disabled children, an educational institution, a university, a development center, and an autism foundation. In each country, ten pairs of practicing artists and individuals with disabilities were formed for the purpose of artistic collaboration. The intent was to work on a regular basis to produce collaborative and individual artworks. Each participating country organized national and international exhibitions at a prominent location with public exposure. Art Without Borders was a typical, well-intentioned collaborative project that had many problems.

The participating institution in Helsinki, Finland, the Autism Foundation, provides specialised expert services for mature and young adults within the context of the autism spectrum. The participants in the project were practicing artists or individuals diagnosed

with autism or Asperger's syndrome. The goal was to explore new and alternative ways of communicating through art. The project's underlying philosophy was based on the belief that a person with autism has a rich inner life, one that cannot be expressed with verbal communication but, nevertheless, could potentially be expressed and communicated through artistic interaction. The local official written goals for the Finnish part of the project expressed the need to view autism with "a new understanding in society" by offering insight to the inner lives of people with autism and to open new possibilities by treating visual artistic work as rehabilitative action. It is my understanding that through the project and the exhibitions in prominent locations, the aim was to increase knowledge and awareness of autism amongst those considered "normal" in society and to improve the status of people with disabilities through artistic dialogue. The project received considerable media coverage and was supported by prominent institutions (see also Kallio 2008, 2009; Kallio-Tavin 2012, 2013, 2015a, 2015b).

For two years, I worked with my collaborative peer, Thomas, exploring the possibilities of varying modes of "dialogue" and non-verbal and non-cognitive interaction through collaborative artistic work. By cognitive interaction I refer to goal-oriented learning, in which progress depends on the participants' cognitive abilities. Through the course of the collaboration and my research, it became evident that the cognitive-constructivist notion of learning, which justifies human existence through abilities and capabilities, was not a sufficient or even an appropriate framework for Thomas and me. The goals of my research were to transform pedagogical (researcher) and educational traditions and, hopefully, make an impact toward more inclusive views of society. Working as an artist and an art pedagogue with a colleague made it possible to become more aware of the possibilities for shared and community-based, participatory processes. What was most significant for me as an artist and educator was to learn and reshape pedagogical notions of the visual arts, which I had previously found necessary and essential. I started to realize how meaningless some of my art educational aims were to Thomas, and I questioned my assumptions about how artistic learning is understood when working with people with disabilities. In brief, these artistic engagements with my research partner stimulated criticism, questioning, and a re-conceptualization of art-pedagogical approaches. I also realized how the intentions of the project, which were planned to be democratic, were not that democratic after all. The participant artists, including myself, chose the materials, the working methods, and times for collaboration; the produced art followed the aesthetics and contents of the artists' own art making. While it is easy to understand why artists often make most of the decisions in participatory projects, it is important to recognize how democratic intentions might then fail and collaboration might hence become politically problematic.

Systematic exposure and the attention given to the public gaze—such as the TV documentary *Autister & Artister*[1] made about the project, art openings, international travelling exhibitions, and several publications—indicated a public interest toward the Art Without Borders project and helped stakeholders and the public decide what was politically essential and worthy of financing. The pursued public attention also raised several questions, such as: "What and where was the intended and targeted audience?" and "For whom was the project developed?" As a collaborative artist in the project, I wanted to claim that the person I worked with was at the center of the project, and I wanted his "voice" to be heard. However, people with autism do not necessarily crave publicity, and it was clear that Thomas did not desire grandiose exhibition openings. After the TV documentary *Autister & Artister* was produced and the exhibition openings had been held, I could not help but wonder what the given roles were for Thomas and the participants and who the intended audience was that would learn about neurodiversity. I wanted to better understand the reasons for the project and the politics behind collaboration and

participation, the power relations within and around the project, and the level of exposure as an example of a European Union-funded project that calls for a wider audience and a project accessible to "everybody."

I was left with a need to develop an art practice from a non-normative starting point and without therapeutic goals. The project made possible a professional art practice without a therapeutic dimension. However, many needs of the participants were left with unanswered questions. Perhaps the most important questions concerned the motivations of the project, the ethnicities of the organizers, and the problematic agency of the participants.

Collaboration and Participation

Collaboration has become characteristic of many contemporary art practices in the 21st century. According to Hal Foster (1996), community-based art is defined as collaborative and interactive art making between an artist and a local group. Community-based art situates the reciprocal relations between art, artwork, and the audience to be reassessed (Sederholm 1998, 242–46). Logically, it follows that people who take part in art making are seen as co-producers and participants rather than audience or viewers. The boundary between the collaborative partners and the artists becomes ambiguous, and the role of the artwork is understood in a potentially novel fashion through the collaborative process. Often, the artist is conceived of as a collaborator and producer of situations and events rather than a person who creates objects.

Participatory and community-based art practices are considered by many to be a logical step toward a meaningful relationship between artists and participants and an efficacious means of shrinking the distance between the traditionally separate poles of art production and reception. As such, community-based art is often considered an artistically and politically critical and progressive practice. Criticism has been directed toward the way right-wing, neoliberalist, and consumerist cultures have dominated the art world through art market-centered thinking. As Claire Bishop (2012), among others, has stated, for many artists and curators participation is important as a form of practice:

> It rehumanises a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalist production . . . the argument goes, artistic practice can no longer revolve around the construction of objects to be consumed by a passive bystander. Instead, there must be an art of action, interfacing with reality, taking steps—however small—to repair the social bond.
>
> (11)

Bishop (2012) refers to Paulo Virno, who pointed out that while historic avant-garde practices were encouraged by centralized political parties, today's collective practices are connected to the decentered and heterogeneous net of social co-operation. Examples of these early social networks were "exhibitions and events like 'Collective Creativity' (WHW 2005), 'Taking the Matter into Common Hands' (Maria Lind et al. 2005), and 'Democracy in America' (Nato Thompson 2008)" (12). Social justice and human rights have been the key roles for activist artists through collaborative art making. For example, artists working with people with disabilities have wanted to increase societal knowledge of and offer a voice for people who have been silenced.

Bishop (2012) reminds us that

> [C]ollectivity and collaboration have been some of the most persistent themes of advanced art and exhibition-making of the last decade. . . . Individualism . . . is viewed

with suspicion, not least because the commercial art system and museum programming continue to revolve around lucrative single figures.

(12)

Collaborative practices were, hence, strongly connected to new liberalist critiques of art world market values, first advocated by artists and curators on the political left.

Ten years after the early social networks that Virno and Bishop discuss, the critique has moved on to question the real possibilities of democratic collaboration, and, at the same time, new liberalist practices have benefited from participatory discourse. Due to this new capitalist approach to collaborative practices, what started as a critique of dominant art markets supplying artistic commodities has lost its criticality and unfortunately serves the markets. New liberalist politics, such as New Labor in the UK from 1997 to 2010 (Bishop 2012), are busy benefiting from the avant-garde and interested in changing its practices according to the will of the consumer.

Many artists, educators, and curators would like to work critically in collaboration. They "are interested in devising social situations as a dematerialized, anti-market, politically engaged project to carry on the avant-garde call to make art a more vital part of life" (Bishop 2012, 13). What remains as relevant questions is how these artists, educators, and curators work and what the inherent problems are in collaborative, participatory, and community-based work. I explore the first question in the first section of this chapter and revisit it in the conclusion. The next section focuses on the second question: the inherent problems of collaborative, participatory, and community-based work, which raises more questions rather than offering soothing answers.

Critique Toward Community-Based Artistic Work

Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) developed his ideas of community with Maurice Blanchot (2004), stating that the notion itself is suspect and that efforts toward democracy within a community are impossible. According to these scholars, community is not something to which one can belong. A community cannot be a subject with an idea, mind, destiny, or meaning of its own. Instead, a presupposed structure or community, according to both Nancy and Blanchot, rejects all that connects its members and might afford a persistent essence. Just as a dialogue between two people cannot be decided beforehand (according to Buber [1958], dialogue either happens or does not happen—one cannot plan it), so, too, a sense of community does not exist in completed form; it can be composed momentarily in togetherness of its members' "sense" of community, and then the community splits up (Kallio-Tavin 2013, 2014).

Community art-based projects rely on an existing idea of community or presuppose that the act of making art collaboratively might build a purpose for community. Furthermore, many community-based art projects aim to develop a stronger community identity by distinguishing social needs and community relations at a local level. In practice, the goals are often to improve community relations, to develop feelings of acceptance and belonging in the community, to support active citizenship and local involvement in governance, and so on. One could claim that all these efforts to support a sense of community are good and well intentioned. However, the problem is that community is then understood as "presupposed," already physically and geographically existing. The identity is given, not formed by its members. Characteristic of presupposed communities is that their members are embedded in the idea of a shared or communal mind. In order to belong and "practice collectivity," to remain a member in the community, one must adopt and hold a position in a collective subjectivity (Kallio-Tavin 2014, 343). Extreme examples are political parties

and religious groups. The identity and subjectivity of the group is given, and a new member must adopt it in order to fit in.

While community-based art projects often aspire to a sense of "true togetherness" and create an understanding of the differences amongst minority cultural identities in society, such as ethnicity, gender, ability, age, language, location, social group, race, and religion, they commonly end up inventing artificial ideologies of sublime existence where a shared identity is built based on someone else's politics and superficial efforts to create "togetherness." Gerald Raunig (2013) criticizes the word "participation" because it suggests that people take part in something that is whole. Like the idea of a presupposed community, one can then only gain a (small) part of something that is already predetermined. Raunig states that so-called "community building" often remains as rhetoric of participation and involvement and actually becomes pseudo-participation. The terminology is appropriated and made dominant by creative industry and right-wing politics and does not give true agency to the people involved (Raunig 2013).

Marginalized Communities

Over ten years ago, Miwon Kwon (2004) pointed out how community-based art projects usually address the concerns of marginalized community groups focusing on social issues in order to strive toward developing politically aware community events or programs. While many projects aim for social justice and are inherently building toward a more just future for people with disabilities, there is a need for critical analysis of these projects. Questions, such as the issue of characterizing people based on their human diversity—for instance, disability, race, ethnicity, or gender—need to be raised.

Naming a group based on its ethnic features, for example, is questionable, especially when working with people with disabilities who might not be able to speak for themselves. "Master status" (Couser 2006, 399) is the condition of many art projects with people with disabilities, and it is often stigmatizing. Many art and art educational projects strive to de-Other marginal groups, but this does not often happen. One could ask if it is even possible to de-Other a group that is identified based on its members' human qualities. In the section that follows, I introduce Pekka Elomaa's work, a non-disabled artist and an art educator working with people with disabilities. With this example, I develop my thesis on complex, collaborative art projects and question if Elomaa's project strengthens the participants' agency in a positive manner or if the collaboration stigmatizes the group members as "Others" in society and hence ends up practicing "pseudo-participation" (see Plate 1).

Elomaa has worked for over 15 years with a group of people with disabilities through the Lyhty community, which is a short-term home and workshop for adults with disabilities in Helsinki. Elomaa's goal as a photographer and art educator has been to guide the participants to document and structure their lives through photography. Along with documentation, the group explored their fantasies. The role of performance became increasingly important to the participants. By giving cameras to the participants, Elomaa offered a voice and power of representation to the people he worked with. However, this empowerment invites multiple interpretations and raises critical and ethical questions. These include issues about representation and stigmatization of marginalized people, methods of collaboration, and criticality toward "true" participation. Is the project possibly "Othering" the participants? If so, it is important to clarify the artistic intention and the nature of participation during collaboration.

Images from the "Nice to Meet You Mr. Holbein" exhibition and a photography book are from one of the latest workshop projects by Elomaa and the group (Elomaa and

Jaatinen 2014). After playing with masks for ten years, the group wanted to perform more candidly and make images without them. Although physical masks were discarded as the work evolved, masking continued with different meanings. The spontaneity of role playing remained a prominent method for Elomaa and the group. The "Nice to Meet You Mr. Holbein" project followed the early 16th-century Renaissance painters' aesthetics and were created through an intense sense of drama. The photographs, inspired by Hans Holbein, captured the concentrated presence of humanity in Renaissance paintings. Elomaa's intention was to point out how humanity has not changed in five hundred years. Elomaa (2011) revisited the early stages of portraits that were meant to be representations of humanity rather than individuals. Elomaa (2011) described their work as a collaboration based on many years of friendship and reciprocal confidence.

There is something refreshing about Elomaa's approach to collaborative art making. While many contemporary and participatory art projects claim to have democratic working relationships among the collaborative artist and the participants, they cannot always be totally democratic: the artistic outcome is evidence that the artist made many of the crucial decisions. Elomaa acknowledged his role as an artist who makes the final decisions and takes responsibility for the project and hence did not claim the project to be fully democratic. Therefore, he did not purport to build togetherness, shared identity, or democratic ways of thinking about community. Instead, these photographs introduce respectful and beautiful representations of people performing their reactions to 16th-century aesthetics. Most importantly, taking part in this project was not meant to be therapeutic but rather to make professional art together.

The images are not problem free, however. While the disability of the participants is not a major characteristic of Elomaa's work, or for anyone in the working group, I wonder if it's possible to look at the images without wondering why these people were chosen for the project. It is clear to the spectator that these portraits include only people with disabilities; as such, the question of selecting and belonging becomes significant. In Elomaa's project, the sense of belonging is given to the participants, perhaps as a "master status." Elomaa, a non-disabled artist, might then determine the nature of "belonging." Yet the participants with disabilities, working with and for Elomaa, might not experience his sense of "belonging." It is impossible to bypass the ethical question that the group of pictures creates, especially if one is not familiar with the nature of the long-term working process of the artist and the group. Why were these particular individuals chosen for the project? It could be argued that the portraits represent a collective subjectivity of disabled people. Presented as a group of people with disabilities, the participants might be seen from a normative lens as representatives of people with disabilities rather than disabled practitioners with agency.

On the other hand, the nearly two decades of Elomaa's working history has built shared trust and strengthened ethical values. While in other projects artists arrive and then leave the collaborative community, that has not happened here. Elomaa has stayed, and the collaboration has become a lifestyle.

(Dis)ability and (Ab)normalcy

In this section, I describe the meaning of disability in society as I understand it. I think it is crucial to include this perspective to clarify why agency is so important when working with people with disabilities and to understand why good intentions are not enough in such art projects. Similar to the discrimination of people based on ethnicity or gender, historically people with disabilities have been objects of abuse and control. This is why it is crucial to draw attention to the practices of artists, educators, and curators who work in collaborative art projects.

Figure 4.1 Pekka Elomaa and the Lyhty Ensemble, Kari, chromogenic color print on aluminum, 2010.

Source: ©Pekka Elomaa and the Lyhty Ensemble.

Throughout history, disability has been difficult for normative people to relate to, even though it has always been part of human societies. Simo Vehmas (2012) suggests that during Antiquity and the Middle Ages, disability was believed to be a consequence of a transgression or a result of moral wrongdoing. People with disabilities were either isolated from society or killed (Stiker 1999; Vehmas 2012).

More recently, disability has been understood, controlled, and managed through scientific and medical classifications and diagnostics (Vehmas 2012). Therefore, disability is generally understood as an individualized physical or mental deficit and an object of treatment and oversight. The origin of disability was associated, and is often still associated, with bad luck (an accident), bad habits (wrong diet and intoxicants), or bad genes. Normalcy became a measurement of humanity, a standard that we learn early in life, and abnormalcy an undesirable deviation from the norm. The definition of, and reason for, abnormalcy has been changing throughout history. What has remained constant, however, is that people want to keep a distance from abnormalcy (disability), partially from fear of our own mortality (Swain and French 2000; Wexler 2005).

Both approaches to disability—the moralist and the medical—are criticized for their paternalism. The freedom of individuals and the right to make their own decisions are limited, which are sometimes imposed against their will (Vehmas 2012, 270). In the medical approach, disabilities are perceived as potentially curable via various treatments and therapies. This idea is largely accepted in societies and is problematic for many reasons. Disability studies scholars show how disability is not primarily a biological condition but at the intersection of society and its discourses, which create and maintain disability through values, conventions, and consequences. (Davis 2006; Derby 2011; Osteen 2008; Siebers 2006; Vehkakoski 1998; Vehmas 1998; Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson 2004). The so-called social model, or socio-political approach to disability, has challenged earlier approaches. Acknowledging all bodies as socio-politically constructed, and disability as other than a personal tragedy that is distinguished from impairment, has helped to represent disability as a socially constructed phenomenon. As Tom Shakespeare (1992) noted, the real cause of disability is discrimination and prejudice.

While non-disabled people might assume that disabled people lack "normalcy," this is rarely experienced by people with disabilities themselves, who consider disability to be a natural part of their identity. Disabled people are subjected to many disabling expectations, such as "adjusting" to and "accepting" their situation. These types of expectations can be more disenfranchising than the impairment itself (Swain and French 2000).

John Swain's and Sally French's (2000) firsthand experiences of disability demonstrate how the primary problem of impairment is the discrimination and prejudice of the non-disabled. They introduce Colin Cameron's (Tyneside Disability Arts 1999) writings published in the Tyneside Disability Arts poetry group of young people with disabilities. In his introduction to the anthology, Cameron writes:

> We are who we are as people with impairments, and might actually feel comfortable with our lives if it wasn't for all those interfering busybodies who feel that it is their responsibility to feel sorry for us, or to find cures for us, or to manage our lives for us, or to hurry us in order to make us something we are not, i.e. "normal."
>
> (577)

This quote is an example of how people with disabilities suffer from lack of agency and the reactions and interference of others in their lives.

More recently, the socio-political notions of disability have been developed toward a so-called affirmation approach (Swain and French 2000). The affirmative model (Eisenhauer

2007) directly challenges the presumption of personal tragedy based on the values of non-disabled people. While the social model, also generated by disabled people, offers a viewpoint of those living within a disabling society, the affirmative approach to disability values disabled individuals' own lifestyles as cultural identity (Swain and French 2000).

While disability is recognized as a cultural identity comparable with other cultural minority identities, disability culture refers to a diverse group of people with diverse physical or mental conditions who often experience cultural discrimination, stigmatization, segregation, and medicalization (Eisenhauer 2007). These diverse groups and individuals also have different identities and different understandings of their own (dis)abilities. Individuals with disabilities do not want to be treated as "special" (Derby 2011) live in segregated spaces, receive a segregated education, and suffer a loss of rights (Blandy 1994). Also, people experiencing disabilities often do not want to be perceived as "curious" or their artistic production categorized by designations such as "outsider art," "mad art," or "l'Art Brut" (Blandy 1991; Wexler 2005).

Agency

The two examples I have discussed thus far have a similar arrangement: non-disabled artists working with people with disabilities who offer possibilities for artistic expression and societal inclusion. While these projects are well intentioned and the artists, organizers, audience, and—most importantly—participants are often quite pleased with the process and the outcome, I argue that there could be even more ambitious goals for cultural participation and agency. In this section, I consider more inclusive practices for community-based and collaborative art projects.

An example of agency, art as activism, and advocating disability rights through the firsthand perspective of art making is the Finnish punk band *Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät* (Pertti Kurikka's Name Day), whose members are developmentally disabled. Through their music, the band is actively producing and implementing cultural activity by expressing their ideas and opinions and, hence, using social power. Decisions are made by its members, not by an external community artist, art educator, or facilitator. This band has gained wide publicity and popularity and was chosen to represent Finland in the European song contest *Eurovision*, thus exposing the band's voice to millions of people. They make clear statements in their lyrics and in conversations about social questions of human and disability rights, such as quality of life and the politics of services and decision making in public environments. One of the most discussed topics in the songs of the *Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät* band is the right to decide about one's own life, such as where and how to live. Kari Aalto,[2] the songwriter and singer, would prefer to live in a different neighborhood:

> I live in a group home in Töölö, but I don't like it because the area is too quiet. People in Kallio are nicer and there are records stores and bars. . . . In Kallio I see drunks, drug addicts, rock musicians and police officers every day. The song *Kallioon* is my view on life in Kallio. It takes a couple of minutes to write lyrics for a song, and I find the subjects in society and the way I look at the world.
>
> (Aalto 2016, para.1)

The significant difference of *Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät*, compared to the other projects, is the agency and ability of the artists. Interestingly, they do not have the right to live where, how, and with whom they would like, but they are able to travel around the world and play their music in front of thousands of fans. The band consists of an active art making community whose members are not "pseudo-participating" in a "presupposed
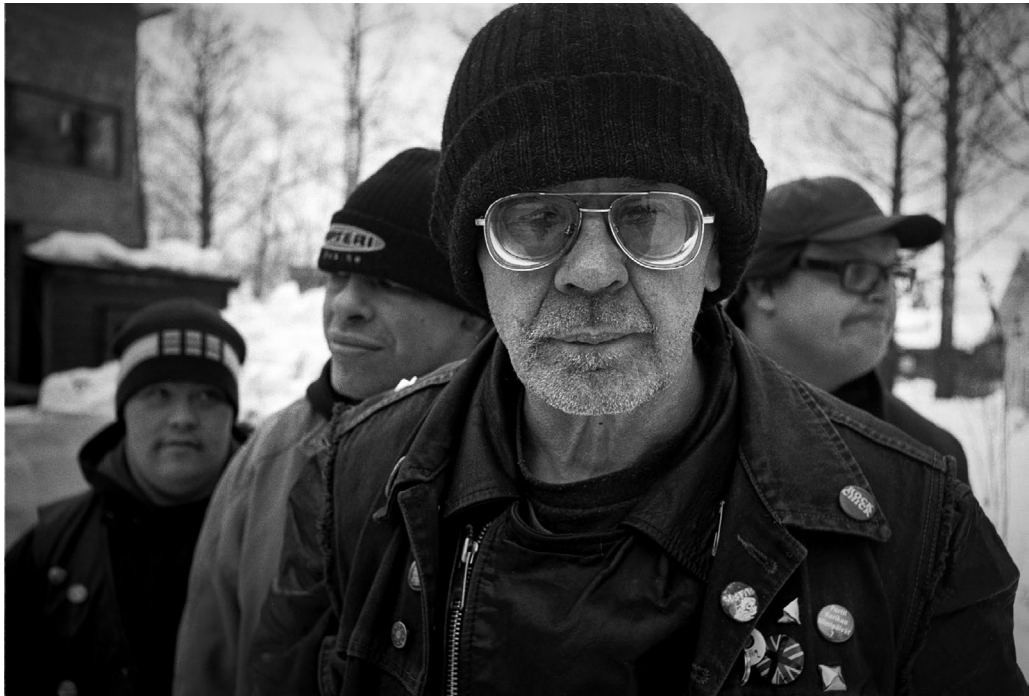
Figure 4.2 Photograph of Kalle Pajamaa, *Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät*, 2011.
Source: © 2011 Kalle Pajamaa and PKN.

community" but who live through and reshape their own community. Certainly, this might be considered a somewhat unrealistic and idealistic statement about the lifestyle and art practice of the band members. In real life, there are rules to follow and gatekeepers to acknowledge. I would, however, like to imagine a speculative future where our normative society and its artistic and community practices might welcome the full authority and agency for people with disabilities.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Many arts-based community projects have made a significant difference in the lives of the participants (Jokela et al. 2015; McLeod and Ricketts 2013; Powell 2008). Indeed, they are extremely important, self-critical, and well-planned participatory activities. In countries not identified as so-called welfare countries, and in which the state does not offer certain services to its citizens, community art projects have sometimes taken a substantial role in improving conditions in people's lives.

However, I find it ethically crucial to acknowledge and critically discuss several aspects and issues of collaborative art-based practices with people with disabilities, such as: Who creates the community and by what means? What are the politics behind the groupings, and whose interests are being met as a result of these groupings? It is also important to raise questions such as how we define a community without stigmatizing the people participating in it. How can artists, educators, and curators create positive identities

without limitations? The defined characteristics for any community, be it self-organized or organized by an external authority, reveal the values, wishes, and aims of contemporary society.

"Nothing about us without us" and "art belongs to everybody" are well-known disability rights slogans. Academics, artists, and activists have been working for two decades toward the fulfilment of these slogans. Still, people with disabilities as equal representatives in public and private art and media institutions and decision-making bodies are rare. People with disabilities are still controlled and regulated by non-disabled "experts." While there might be services available, there are few possibilities to actively produce and implement actions in art and culture or to take part in policy-making decisions in society, even in one's own life.

Finally, I return to the most challenging question: How might artists, educators, and curators work in collaborative projects, especially when working together with people with disabilities? If one is interested in working with dematerialized, anti-market, politically engaged and pro-social justice, and human rights perspectives, what should we keep in mind? Is it even possible to prevent collaboration from becoming an empty rhetoric of neoliberalism?

Recent developments in the arts, education, and curating fields have emphasized the actions of "thinking together" and "self-organizing." Several projects have turned toward the ideologies of historic avant-garde practices and invite individuals to think together as partisans by emphasizing collectiveness rather than participation. Activism and politics are important when community-based art becomes an all-purpose handy tool.

While disability can be an important, affirming, cultural identity for an individual, defining groups of people only (or primarily) by ability potentially emphasizes tragedy and loss. It is also important to encourage self-organization for disabled people rather than non-disabled people organizing projects on their behalf. Firsthand perspectives instead of the interpretations of external specialists are more accurate representations of disability culture. Maintaining the freedom of individualism and avoiding paternalism should be a leading principle for projects such as Art Without Borders. Perhaps artists, educators, and curators, such as Pekka Elomaa or me, would benefit by working as participants with a self-organized artist community, such as *Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät*, who are too often defined, organized, and understood as "just" participants. It is always important to ask whose interest, agenda, ideology, or orientation is being driven when working and thinking together. Who provides spaces, who funds the collaboration, and for what reasons? It is also important to recognize and critically evaluate the level of democracy the collective claims to practice.

Notes

1. The TV documentary program by Eero Wallén is a Finish-Swedish television production, *Autister & Artister*, Finlands Svenska Television (FST), and it is part of the *Seportaasi* series. It was first nationally broadcasted in the spring of 2005, and it has been reshown several times since.
2. The songwriter Kari Aalto has also worked with Pekka Elomaa for many years, and he is portrayed in one of the Mr. Holbein images.

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