MALTA REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Volume 15, Supplement Issue, pp. 1-6
Faculty of Education©, UM, 2021

Socially engaged art and global challenges

Raphael Vella
University of Malta
raphael.vella@um.edu.mt

Milosh Raykov
University of Malta
milosh.raykov@um.edu.mt

The artist Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) developed his concept of 'social sculpture' in the 1970s to describe the politically transformative potential of creative work in everyday actions (Harlan, 2004). While other artistic movements in the twentieth century like Dada and Fluxus also worked to blur traditional distinctions between art and life, Beuys focused on more explicitly political questions about the moulding of democracy and societies through cooperative, creative action (Gyorody, 2014). The influence of Beuys' belief in human creativity and his expanded definition of art has been felt in various fields: from the field of art education and creative pedagogies (Buschkühle, 2020) to the Occupy movement in North America (Biddle, 2013) and social practice in the work of artists like Suzanne Lacy and Rick Lowe in the United States (Jordan, 2013). In particular, the importance of socially engaged artistic practices in pushing the remit of art education in directions that encourage interventions in spaces characterised by social injustices has been noted by many scholars in the fields of contemporary art practice and art education (Naidus, 2009; Helguera, 2011; Schlemmer et al., 2017).

Since individuals still face discrimination as a consequence of stigmatisation that is often based on a person's ethnic origin, religious beliefs, gender and age, the EU-funded research project 'Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture' (AMASS) seeks to study such societal challenges and the potential impact of the arts in exploring new forms of community engagement and pedagogical work. When work on AMASS began in earnest in early 2020, the world was on the cusp of a new health crisis that would influence the lives of

hundreds of millions of people. This crisis affected academic work and research just like it created obstacles for workers in all areas of employment and leisure. Needless to say, it particularly affected individuals and communities that were already facing difficulties due to various other issues associated with health, unemployment, and various forms of discrimination. Cultural practitioners working in all fields of the arts were also strongly affected by new COVID pandemic regulations. Suddenly, AMASS became more relevant than ever. The project's focus on geopolitical challenges in different parts of Europe made the planned research more urgent than before.

With the support of other specialised organisations and stakeholders like NGOs, AMASS is expected to help generate research outcomes and policy recommendations that could address the needs of various communities by engaging in innovative artistic projects and design thinking strategies. The project's goal of 'sculpting' society during these difficult times was addressed directly through collaborations with culturally marginalised and underprivileged groups, simultaneously offering new experiences and challenges to artists. This project tests arts-based methods to find new ways of tackling exclusion and promoting the creative potential of many different individuals and non-professional groups.

This Special Issue of MRER brings together several scholars and artists involved in explorations and the promotion of socially engaged arts, who contributed studies that revolve around three areas that are central to AMASS research: arts-based research with persons affected by discrimination in daily life and/or educational contexts, as well as by cultural policies insufficiently sensitive to challenges of marginalised members of society. All the articles were written by researchers involved in the Europe-wide AMASS project.

The first three articles discuss AMASS studies in three different contexts: Finland, Malta and Portugal. They describe and analyse the role of participants in arts-based research, artistic processes engaged in and evidence of research outcomes. The article by Mirja Hiltunen, Pieta Koskenniemi and Melanie Sarantou from the University of Lapland presents the work of researchers, artists and art educators involved in promoting different forms of dialogue and interaction amongst people living in Rovaniemi. While restrictions caused by the pandemic challenged the possibility of developing many physical connections and planned 'blind dates' among neighbours, the article describes various musical and other collaborative activities that still managed to support

research strategies in the circumstances and provide researchers with very relevant data about participants' meaning-making and other intercultural impacts.

The article by Isabelle Gatt, Milosh Raykov and Raphael Vella presents some data emerging from the University of Malta's AMASS pilot study, which focused on misinformation and stigma affecting persons living with HIV. A script and play about HIV in Malta produced by the creative enterprise Culture Venture on the basis of semi-structured interviews with people living with HIV provide this article with the basis of its study of the relationship between societal challenges and artistic creation in the context of a pandemic that highlighted the vulnerability of persons affected by a health crisis on various levels.

Similar changes to research plans resulting from the lockdown are referenced in the article by Ângela Saldanha, Teresa Eça, Célia Ferreira and Raquel Balsa on an AMASS pilot study conducted by the teachers' association APECV in Portugal. Their article asks how researchers in the arts and education can develop collaborative projects and other interventions with marginalised communities. Working with a specialised NGO with extensive experience in working with persons with multiple disabilities, APECV employed various methods including person-centred planning, gentle teaching and Photovoice to facilitate participation, feelings of social inclusion, a sense of belonging and other values and attitudes amongst project participants. Inspired by Freire's ideas about popular education, APECV's research develops new ways of understanding learning encounters.

The fourth article by Zsófia Somogyi-Rohonczy and Andrea Kárpáti (Ludwig Museum Budapest and ELTE Doctoral School of Education, and Corvinus University Budapest, respectively) presents methods used to mentor art educators working with socially disadvantaged children and youth who rarely visit art exhibitions and cultural institutions. Using democratic inquiry processes, E-learning and blended training modes that became inevitable during the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing measures, the article discusses mixed methods research in the context of an in-service teacher training course that introduces art educators to innovative pedagogies and approaches to contemporary art in order to develop students' interpretations of artworks in a museum setting.

The last three articles present different perspectives on generating cultural policy recommendations, particularly during workshops with stakeholders involved in the field of culture, social work and the arts. Research on the possible impact of arts-based research on policy is one of the central goals of AMASS, and the research project's multilateral approach to combining literature, good practice and policy documents is reflected in these articles. Melanie Sarantou and Mira Alhonsuo (both from the University of Lapland) and Carolina Gutierrez Novoa, and Silvia Remotti (both members of PACO Design Collaborative in Italy) write about the generation of data about policymaking during stakeholder workshops that made use of participatory service design. They employed the Miro platform to enable online participant communication and collaboration among different AMASS project partners and found that well-designed and experimental stakeholder workshops can provide researchers with an effective approach to policymaking.

Making use of the online platforms designed by the authors of the previous article, Raphael Vella and Karsten Xuereb first introduce Malta's new national cultural policy (2021) and underline references to inclusion and other challenges associated with discrimination within a broad theoretical framework informed by intersectionality. Their article then presents a bottom-up approach that engages stakeholders directly in online workshops in which opportunities for cultural inclusion and specific challenges are discussed. Given the difficulties of organising face-to-face meetings during the pandemic, online digital platforms like Zoom and Miro were employed instead to offer opportunities to create dialogues and capture important data related to possible changes to local cultural policy.

Finally, Karsten Xuereb's article also analyses Malta's cultural policy, focusing on issues of diversity, sustainable development and investments in research that can inform cultural policy. The article addresses social change through cultural enterprise, notions of progress and its relationship with economic development, the value of heritage, cultural tourism and social entrepreneurship. It indicates the central role that cross-curricular education and skills development play in supporting researchers and academics in exploring new directions in cultural enterprise in Malta and beyond.

This is the first Special Issue of MRER that focuses exclusively on artists involved in socially engaged arts, with submissions that examine outcomes and barriers to socially engaged arts and art-based research. The invitation to

submit articles also encouraged submissions that use existing physical and other restrictions in 2020 as a springboard for the development of innovative research approaches and relationships between artists, marginalised communities and various stakeholders.

All AMASS pilot studies included in this Special Issue were conducted during a health crisis and present experiences that can serve as a unique opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of traditional research methods and the impact that restrictions may have on artistic production, researchers' and participants' positionality and consequently research outcomes. The contributions included in this Special Issue explore new possibilities of community engagement in the margins, different approaches to the mediation of knowledge and empowerment, the meanings of heritage and memory in times like these or the effects of digital technologies on arts-based research. The papers refer to the role of participants in testbed studies, as well as arts practitioners' relationship with their audiences by focusing on the research objectives defined in the AMASS project.

The main objectives of the AMASS project are:

- Developing multidisciplinary methods for capturing, assessing and harnessing the societal impact of the arts
- Reducing isolation amongst women, children and minority groups from peripheral EU regions through various forms of participation in the arts
- Educating women and children through various educational models and philosophies of participation that are informed by arts-based approaches
- Evaluate and develop new policy frameworks for using arts to overcome societal challenges
- Valuing and learning through alternative knowledge systems with the purpose of decolonising institutions, enabling communication and implementing policies

The central problem AMASS addresses is still insufficiently explored, and it is important for researchers and others involved in socially engaged arts and arts education to understand better the possibilities of harnessing the power of the arts to address societal challenges through comparative and Europe-wide action. The challenges addressed by AMASS are geopolitically oriented: the

future of work in creative, cultural and other sectors; radical ideologies and extremism; societal polarisation and stratification; lack of civil society participation; populism; migration.

The aims of this Special Issue are to contribute to the exploration, analysis and discussion of the underpinning structures, educational practices and policies that influence social engagement in the arts. This Special Issue examines and evaluates some innovative artistic productions, experiments and case studies from the perspective and position of European countries "on the margins". In addition to the contribution of the much-needed evidence base about the possibilities and effects of socially engaged arts, this Special Issue also provides some policy recommendations that are expected to foster inclusive, innovative and reflective societies.

References

Biddle, E. (2013). Re-animating Joseph Beuys' "Social Sculpture": Artistic interventions and the Occupy movement. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 11(1), 25-33. https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2013.830810

Buschkühle, C.–P. (2020). *Joseph Beuys and the Artistic Education: Theory and Practice of an Artistic Art Education*. Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004424555_001

Gyorody, A. (2014). The medium and the message: art and politics in the work of Joseph Beuys. *The Sixties*. 7(2), 117-137. https://doi.org/10.1080/17541328.2015.1043800

Harlan, V. (ed.) (2004). *What is art? Conversation with Joseph Beuys*. Clairview.

Helguera, P. (2011). *Education for socially engaged art: A materials and techniques handbook*. Jorge Pinto Books.

Jordan, C. (2013). The evolution of social sculpture in the United States: Joseph Beuys and the work of Suzanne Lacy and Rock Lowe. *Public Art Dialogue*. 3(2), 144-167. https://doi.org/10.1080/21502552.2013.818430

Naidus, B. (2009). *Arts for change: Teaching outside the frame*. New Village Press.

Schlemmer, R.H., Carpenter, B.S. & Hitchcock, E. (2017). Socially engaged art education: Practices, processes, and possibilities. *Art education*, 70(4), 56-59. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043125.2017.1317564

Acknowledgement

All articles in this Special Issue of MRER form part of the AMASS research project. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 870621.

MALTA REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Volume 15, Supplement Issue pp. 7- 27
Faculty of Education©, UM, 2021

Not Safe for Work (NSFW)- Persons living with HIV A study of a socially engaged theatre work-in-progress

Isabelle Gatt
University of Malta
isabelle.gatt@um.edu.mt

Milosh Raykov
University of Malta
milosh.raykov@um.edu.mt

Raphael Vella*
University of Malta
*Corresponding author: raphael.vella@um.edu.mt

Abstract
The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is one of the most severe health challenges that affect the lives of an increasingly large number of people in the World. Lack of information, stigma, and marginalization of people with HIV are serious challenges that prevent early diagnostic of HIV infections and timely interventions that can improve the conditions of the affected people and the transmission of HIV. The existing body of research provides some evidence about the potential of socially engaged arts to expand knowledge, influence attitudes and empower participants to regularly take tests and visitors to understand and accept people affected by HIV. However, studies in this domain are scant and usually conducted in the areas with the highest prevalence of the HIV epidemic. Due to the limited evidence and the need to examine the potential of socially engaged arts in empowering people with HIV, this study examined and presented the initial results from an experimental theatre production focusing on participatory design and co-creation by applying a mixed method research design. A set of structured interviews with the participants, and discussions during the experimental reading session were used to study participants' experiences, complementing pre-, and post-reading survey results of this small sample of participants. Results demonstrate very high interest in and expectations from socially engaged arts and a particular value of participatory design and co-creation during the development of the evaluated artistic creation.

Keywords: HIV, prejudice, socially engaged arts, participatory theatre intervention, mixed methods

Introduction

After almost 40 years of identification of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the outbreak of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is still one of the most serious global health problems. According to the most recent estimates of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), in 2020, approximately 37.7 million (30.2–45.1 million) people were living with HIV and approximately 1.5 million (between 1.0 and 2.0 million) people acquired HIV during this year. As stated by the same report, in 2020, approximately 2.6 (between 2.3 and 3.0) million people lived in Europe, and at the same time, 170,000 (between 140,000 and 200,000) people in Europe acquired HIV.

More than 30 years ago, when the estimated number of people infected with HIV was between 5 and 10 million, the director of the World Health Organization Special Programme on AIDS (Mann, 1988) identified three phases of the new global epidemic in a speech at the UN General Assembly: the epidemic of human immunodeficiency virus, the epidemic of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, and the third phase of social, cultural, economic and political reaction to AIDS in the form of stigmatization and discrimination of infected people. According to this statement, the third epidemic is as challenging as HIV and AIDS (Mann 1988, p. 130). Several consequent studies confirmed the growing social challenges, including stigmatization and its detrimental impact on the health and quality of life of people with HIV (Mawar, Sahay, Pandit & Mahajan, 2005; Cao, Sullivan, Xu, Wu & Team, 2006; Hatzenbuehler, Phelan & Link, 2013).

There are many consequences of stigmatization of people living with HIV, including limitation of their rights and health services, freedom and social interactions (Arefaynie, Damtie, Kefale & Yalew, 2021). Stigma as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman, 1963, p. 3) and consequent discrimination have a strong negative impact on the ambitious UNAIDS (2014) target to diagnose 90% of people with HIV, to provide antiretroviral therapy to 90% of and also viral suppression to 90% of people with HIV. Since the identification of HIV, the advancement of medical aid led to the development of effective solutions for the treatment of AIDS, but stigma and discrimination remain serious challenges that prevent the early identification of infections and timely interventions that could improve the conditions of affected people as well as the transmission of HIV (Stangl, Lloyd, Brady, Holland & Baral, 2013). According to Parker and Aggleton (2003) and the UN preventative actions,

negative stigmatization and discrimination of people affected with HIV are the main reasons the AIDS epidemic remains highly pervasive. Through a comprehensive critical analysis of the intervention programs, Parker and Aggleton (2003) acknowledged the limitations of the individualistic models to mitigate stigma. They recommended a focus on social change and interventions that emphasize the resistance of stigmatized HIV-affected individuals and communities.

Research provides the evidence that dominant information-based approaches in the form of written information and brochures are not highly efficient (Stangl, Lloyd, Brady, Holland & Baral, 2013). Similarly, some health awareness campaigns and educational interventions are more likely to suppress than to change negative attitudes and stigmatization of people with HIV (Andersson et al., 2020). Despite considerable efforts to confront and mitigate HIV-related stigma and discrimination (UNAIDS, 2010) and efforts to understand stigma (Andersson et al., 2020; Cao et al., 2006), there are still evident knowledge gaps (Grossman & Stangl, 2013) and a need for more efficient forms for attitude change, increased tolerance, care for people with HIV. There is a need to understand the impact of different interventions on the reduction of stigma and the duration of such interventions (Brown, Macintyre & Trujillo, 2003). Many scholars agree that more research is needed to identify the effectiveness of various interventions and factors that influence the development and change of attitudes toward people with HIV (Stangl et al., 2013).

A relatively small number of studies that examine the impact of arts-based interventions on the reduction of stigma toward people with HIV found that such interventions can increase knowledge about HIV and improve attitudes of the general public and at-risk populations (Nambiar, Ramakrishnan, Kumar, Varma, Balaji &, Rajendran et al.. 2011). An extensive study of the impact of science theatre performances on students' behavioural intentions (Walker, Stocklmayer & Grant, 2013) based on standardized and previously validated pre- and post-performance surveys demonstrated that such performances could attract students' interest in learning and increased knowledge about HIV risk. The multivariate regression analysis applied in this study identified a significant association between emotions and enjoyment of informal learning on students' motivation to change their behavioural intentions.

A study of the participatory theatre approach conducted at the Bagamoyo College of Arts by Mabala and Allen (2002) found that such an approach can encourage communication about transmission and HIV and the measures that can reduce transmission. This approach is perceived as an effective way to identify risk behaviours and develop popular culturally appropriate promotional materials for HIV prevention. A more recent qualitative study (Logie et al., 2019) that focused on the exploration of the potential impact of a participatory theatre intervention on the reduction of stigma and the promotion of health equity for LGBT people found that this performance was perceived as exciting and likely to improve participants' knowledge about HIV. This study was based on in-depth interviews and focus groups with students, health care professionals, educators and community members. The study found that such participatory interventions could contribute to the reduction of stigma and, in this way, mitigate barriers to HIV prevention and treatment, particularly in countries with a high prevalence of HIV.

Since only a small number of studies examine strategies for reducing stigma toward people with HIV, this study explores how a theatrical production focused on the stigma of people living with HIV influences participants' attitudes toward the possibility of reducing stigma and empowering participants to engage in social life. The main research questions were focused on the exploration of the perceived impact of theatre advocacy for the rights of HIV positive persons and the impact of these theatrical productions on participants' attitudes towards discrimination towards people with HIV.

Methods

The study being discussed here was based on a mixed methods approach that combines the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007) to explore the complex issues related to the stigmatization of people living with HIV in Malta. The data collection included in-depth interviews with people with HIV and online pre- and post-performance surveys of the members of the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement (MGRM) who attended a pre- and post-reading session of the 'Not Safe for Work' (NSFW; later called '*Il-Pożittivi*) experimental online session. The study is part of a larger European AMASS project that examines the impact of socially engaged arts on the empowerment of marginalized groups and focuses on promoting resilience and inclusion of marginalized social groups.

The study examines the complex issues related to the stigmatization of people living with HIV, focusing on the presentation of the results of the pre- and post-reading session of the *NSFW* experimental online session. This ongoing research was conceptualized as a critical and dialogical mixed methods study that was found helpful for the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings from mixed methods studies conducted by researchers with different methodological orientations (Taylor & Raykov, 2020). Due to the small number of participants, the main focus of this article is on the qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews and mixing methods in a qualitatively driven way (Mason, 2006), while quantitative results mainly illustrate some tendencies regarding participants' perception of this experimental reading session that was inspired by the in-depth interviews of people with HIV. The presentation of the quantitative findings was focused on the graphical presentation of results (Rose, 2016) to visualise results and identify some tendencies through their combination with the findings from qualitative analysis. The quantitative data are integrated with the findings that emerged from the qualitative analysis of five in-depth interviews with persons living with HIV conducted in the preliminary stage of the research project. Other combined data were the opinions which the members of the audience gave immediately after watching a live-streamed performance of the work-in-progress on Zoom (recorded 1/4/2020).

The main objective of this analysis was to examine attitudes of the participants towards socially engaged arts and discrimination and how theatre can influence or change people's attitudes towards discrimination and marginalization of people affected by HIV. This report includes answers from 8 participants who completed the pre- and post-performance surveys. The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Board. Written informed consent was obtained from all the study participants, and the interviews were administered by the MGRM (Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement) and anonymised.

Background to the research study and the socially-engaged performance *NSFW*

The objective for the interviews with the five interviewees had a dual purpose: one was to collect their stories, ideas, fears, hopes, desires, challenges and opinions so that the script writer would base the *NSFW* script on these, and the other was to collect data of their perceptions about living with HIV, their attitudes towards socially-engaged arts, their perceptions as to how theatre can

influence or change people's attitudes towards discrimination and the marginalization of people affected by HIV. During an interview with the scriptwriter, Simon Bartolo, he said that he gained much insight from the interview transcriptions and, in writing the script, he ensured that certain research-informed perspectives come through clearly. One important aspect was, for example, respecting the interviewees' insistence that they do not want their life to be portrayed as dramatic but as a normal life and to bring out their positive attitude to life nothwithstanding the challenges of living with HIV. He opted not to have five characters living with HIV, each representing one of the interviewees, and he did not limit the characters in the plot to only HIV-infected characters. Bartolo created six characters, three of whom are affected with HIV, one of these three affected is a heterosexual woman. There are also two young gay men and the mother of one of these. In this way he creates narrative possibilities that highlight the challenges faced by the HIV positive persons. Bartolo manages to weave the different anecdotes and opinions in a cohesive storyline, with dramatic intense moments but many humorous moments which offer comic relief, cutting the tension.

Due to the various Covid restrictions in 2020, the performance could not be held live as originally planned. Actors stopped meeting for rehearsals in March due to Covid restrictions in force and there was so much uncertainty that the theatre space bookings had to be cancelled. As the restrictions continued, it was decided to have online rehearsals and eventually show a reading of an online work-in-progress only to an invited audience. The reading of the play affords an opportunity to both performers and audiences alike to get closer to the real-life experience. The format is similar to what Saldaña (2011) categorizes as one of the approaches to ethno-drama, that is, ethno-dramatic dramatization of interview transcripts (p. 17). Performing ethnography is a useful and appealing form to present research (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010, p.23), interconnecting phases of fieldwork, analysis, interpretation and representation (Wolcott, 1995) and such practice influences and enhances the researchers' theatre making practices. Bartolo's script had a strong element of ethnodrama with a good dose of fantasy. Having read the transcipts prior to the reading, the researchers could identify the ethnographic instances which ran through the whole reading clearly.

A key aspect of sharing work-in -progress with an audience is the fact that it can give the creative team valuable feedback which will impact the eventual script/performance. After the performance the audience is invited to ask

questions, discuss and offer feedback to the writer, the director. The audience invited to view *NSFW* stayed on after the reading and was extremely articulate in the feedback given. This audience was carefully chosen and specific, in that it consisted of other artists, MGRM officials and their members, including some of the interviewees who kept their video camera switched off but still gave their verbal feedback. The support, the constructive criticism and even negative comments of other artists is invaluable for the improvement of such a production. In this case, the creative team listened to the feedback of the MGRM members and the officials and, consequently, based on the feedback, made some substantial changes. The title, for example, was changed based on the feedback given and one particularly powerful scene was modified drastically, as a result of vehement objections from most of the audience who insisted it was disrespectful and perpetuated certain negative perceptions about male homosexuals, even if there were other members in the audience who disagreed and felt it should remain given it gave the storyline a dramatic twist.

Perceptions and knowledge about people living with HIV

Most participants who attended the online reading and completed the pre- and post-session survey indicated their interest in contributing to the promotion of rights of persons affected by HIV (87%), to contribute to the community (83%) and to learn more about HIV-related issues (79%).

The data from the interviews also highlighted the importance of society being made aware and informed about HIV-related issues and debunking certain misconceptions that society has about HIV. This category emerged clearly from the data and the argument came up spontaneously by the interviewees. Out of the five interviewed three of them stressed the importance of educating the public and mentioned the importance of schools including this aspect in the curriculum as from primary school:

> it's an unspoken – and I blame it on education, heavily....I think. Like HIV and certain chronic diseases should be taught to kids in elementary schools because, let's say, unfortunately not everyone gets a full education and this information needs to be taught to children growing up…. like in elementary schools, in secondary schools, so that they can have access to it. You know, my secondary education, tipo in PSD, sex was – the topics were very lightly touched upon. I think, in general, Malta still suffers of a type of taboo around the whole sphere of sexuality. (P1 interview)

P4 (a Maltese male who moved to the UK some years after being diagnosed with HIV and holds a managerial post) also spoke at length about the lack of education about HIV in schools locally:

> When I was diagnosed as HIV positive, I brought up the subject with my daughter and I asked her whether she had heard of HIV from school. She said "" isn't that when like they die after a short while" ...it all needs to start from school, ... as soon as they are the age of being actually active they should learn about HIV as part of sex education.

And he also spoke about the lack of knowledge about HIV in Maltese society in general:

> So this is the mentality, but it is even with my mates, I only could bring myself to tell them after 5 years I had been diagnosed and their reaction was very similar (avoiding me). Not so, here, in the UK, for example here at work, I make it a point that when someone new joins the office, I tell them about being HIV positive and they ask questions and discuss with a certain knowledge about this, but in Malta this is absolutely not the case.

P2 recounted an anecdote that highlights the need for society to learn more about HIV-related issues. Her story reveals that such lack of knowledge is found even in hospitals:

> Lots of ignorance. I'll give you an example and this is quite a while ago (16 years ago). I was hospitalised in Gozo for something very, erm, totally unrelated. I had an infection an ovarian infection and I had paratenitis and my partner rushed me to the emergency department and I ended up having an emergency operation to deal with that and that was absolutely fine, then when I was given the anaesthetic and was wheeled to the ward, the orderly wheeling me to the ward, was actually shouting at people to get out of the way because I have HIV!" As the participant recounted this she laughted incredulously. This anecdote was picked up by the scriptwriter and was acted out in what was a really effective tragicomic scene.

Findings about societal challenges and arts-related activities

Most participants indicated their interest in learning more about art-related activities (70%) and developing skills to cope with HIV-related issues (63%). A smaller but considerable number of the participants (28%) indicated their interest to develop drama skills (See Table 1).

Table 1: Participants motivation to attend socially engaged artistic events (%)

	Completely Disagree	Disa-gree	Nei-ther	Agree	Comple-tely Agree	Total Agree
... To contribute to the promotion of rights of persons affected by HIV	-	2	11	41	46	87
... To contribute to the community	-	2	16	48	35	83
... To learn more about HIV-related issues	-	3	18	41	38	79
... I would like to learn more about art-related activities	3	10	18	41	29	70
... To develop skills to cope with HIV-related issues	3	6	27	41	22	63
... To develop drama skills	14	24	35	18	10	28

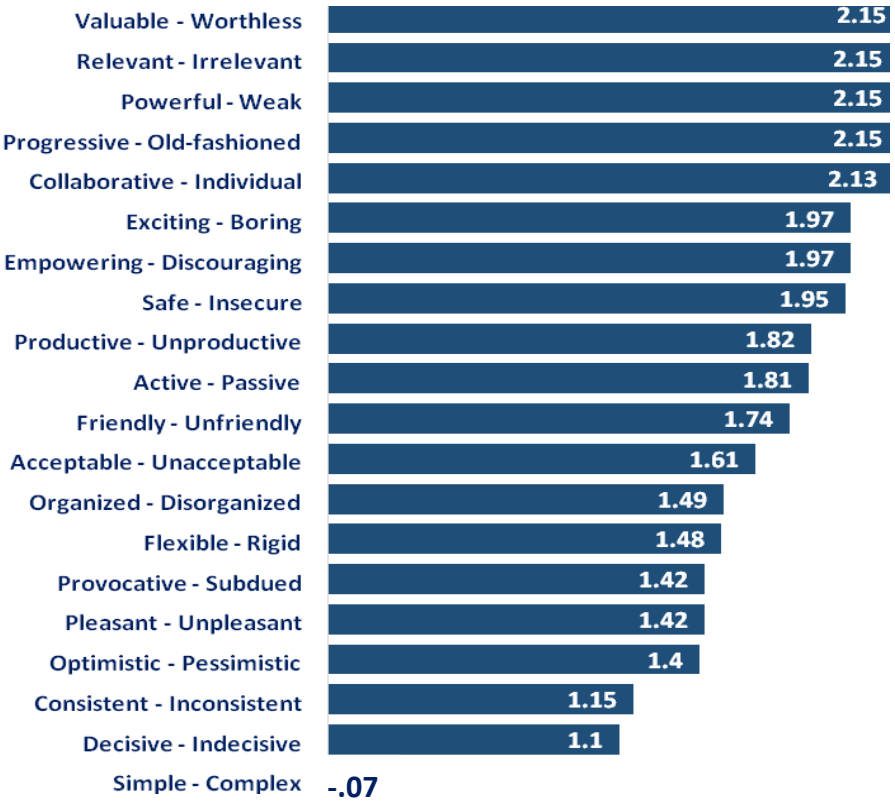
Most of the differences between pre- and post-session surveys were not statistically significant. Some discrepancies regarding the pre- and post-session responses are evident, but the differences are not statistically significant, probably due to the single, short exposure to this event and due to the limited number of participants who attended and completed both pre- and post-session surveys. However, the difference is statistically significant regarding the participants' interest to contribute to promoting the rights of persons affected by HIV (Chi-sq. = 8.869, $p < .05$). While almost all participants in the pre-session survey indicated their desire to contribute to the promotion of rights of persons affected by HIV (93%), a smaller but still large proportion of the participants indicated that they were actually able to contribute to such promotion (77%).

Also, a large proportion of participants in this study demonstrated an interest to learn more about art-related activities (69.9%). Before the online performance (the reading of the script), 78% of the participants indicated their interest in learning more about art-related activities. However, only half of the people (50%) who attended the online session indicated that they actually acquired new knowledge after they participated in the reading session of the

script. Due to the small number of participants, this difference is not statistically significant, but this finding indicates that the educational aspect of socially engaged arts is significant for participants and that an experimental approach, like this pre-performance reading session, can contribute to the refinement of the script and some other pedagogical interventions that can be taken to satisfy the interests (educational needs) of the participants. The smallest, but significant number of participants (27%) who attended the online reading and completed the pre- and post-session survey indicated an interest to develop drama skills. Some differences regarding the pre- and post-session responses are evident, but the differences are not statistically significant.

One of the main preliminary findings of this study is that most participants who attended the play's online reading have very high expectations of socially engaged art (See Figure 1). Also, most of the participants evaluated this form of socially engaged art quite positively after attending the online reading.

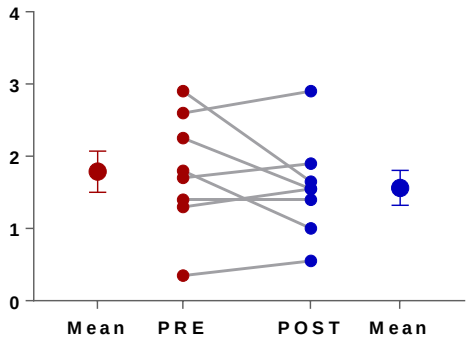
Figure 1: Participants' perception of socially engaged art



Analysis of the data obtained from the 7-point semantic differential with a maximal positive value of +3 and maximal negative value of -3 demonstrate that most participants perceive socially engaged arts as valuable, relevant, powerful, progressive and collaborative. The average values for this group of adjectives (qualifiers) attributed to the socially engaged art was above the value of +2. Also, many participants perceive socially engaged arts as exciting, empowering, safe, productive, active, friendly, and acceptable. The values of this group of qualifiers had a value between +1.5 and +2. Less favourably but still positively evaluated were the following aspects of socially engaged arts: organized, flexible, provocative, pleasant, optimistic, consistent and decisive. The average value for this group of qualifiers was between +1 and +1.5. Overall, on the 7-point somatic differential scale with a maximum value of +3 and a minimal value of -3, almost all evaluations are more or less favourable. The only expectation was the scale 'Simple – Complex' that was slightly negative (-.07) indicating that the participants in this study perceive socially engaged arts as complex rather than simple.

The difference between the mean evaluation scores of all socially-engaged art scales (see Figure 2) between the participants who attuned both the pre-assessment survey and the survey conducted after the online session is not statistically significant ($t=1.061$, $p = 0.32$). Results show that a larger number of participants evaluated socially engaged arts favourably, but a smaller number had a significantly less favourable perception. However, due to the small number of participants and certain other factors not controlled in this analysis, this difference was not statistically significant.

Figure 2: Overall evaluation of the qualifiers attributed to socially engaged arts before and after the online script reading



The effectiveness of socially engaged arts, particularly theatre, as a medium to communicate accurate knowledge about HIV, reduce knowledge gaps and misconceptions and help audiences empathise with HIV positive individuals all emerged as strong themes from the qualitative data:

> Like art is something that is projected from that person whose thinking, processing a viewpoint and putting it onto a canvas or a play or, you know, in some form of expression. I think it's a good… I'm trying to find the right words, erm… If you look at, you know, art, past art and like, you know, current art, they can lead to addressing social issues. They can address stigma, they can address fight against repression. (P1)

Participant 4 believes:

> Art helps, it takes time but this is a sensitive and hot subject - through art you can make people start to think, that would be the first step.

Participant 1 spoke at length about the effectiveness of socially engaged theatre and the important role that an artist has in helping society understand the AIDS crisis more realistically and humanely:

> I think artists have a very important role in society, in the sense that they can pioneer the liberties, they can pioneer expression, they can pioneer certain depths that not everyone has access to. So, I think, yes, it's a big yes actually, it's not "I think". (P1)

P2 highlighted the fact that theatre could present the complex perspective on the medical and personal aspects of the disease. portraying the whole human aspect of persons living with HIV rather than their HIV condition itself:

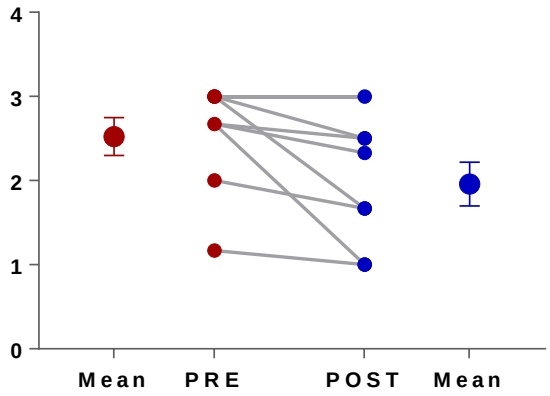
> Through theatre we need to see more about the totality of people's lives not just focusing on doom and gloom stuff. Because that makes people more human. That removes some of the stigma.

P5's comment about socially engaged arts was, on the other hand, more of a warning as to certain pitfalls when dealing with a sensitive subject that there is a stigma about such as HIV. He made reference to *Philadelphia*, the 2013, successful gay-themed Hollywood movie which many in the LGBTI community deem unethical in it being a purposeful misrepresentation of historically oppressed individuals and for its perpetuation of falsities and entertainment of problematically distorted realities (Kramer, 1994):

> Philadelphia is to gay people with HIV… as Jaws the movie is to sharks (laughs). I meant that as a joke, you know, Jaws, the writer of the book spent the rest of his life doing activism to save sharks, noting how much damage he caused the shark population.

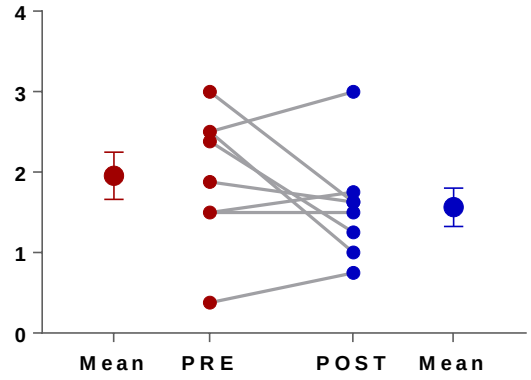
Further quantitative analysis shows that most participants had similar attitudes before and after, and the negative perception was related to the attributes of socially engaged art that were initially most highly evaluated on scales such as *Progressive - Old-fashioned, Powerful – Weak, Relevant – Irrelevant, Valuable – Worthless, and Collaborative – Individual* (See Figure 3). The mean difference regarding pre- and post-average evaluation was statically significant (t=2.643, p = .03). It is likely that the participants who most highly value socially engaged arts are also highly critical but also, the applied semantic differential scale is limited at the bot side, and it is not possible to provide higher evaluations if some of the participants want to do so.

Figure 3: Evaluation of the most positively evaluated attributes before and after the online script reading



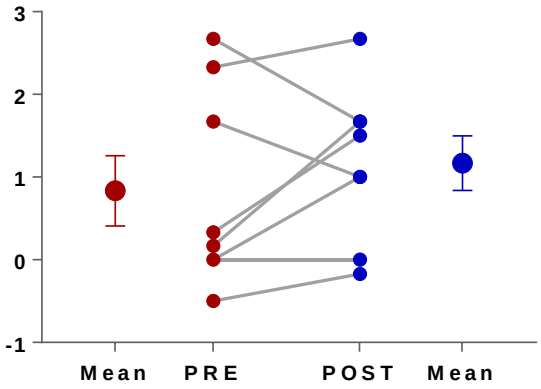
The comparison of the results at the summary scale on the relatively positively evaluated attributes indicates that there are no statistically significant differences (t=1.352, p = 0.210) regarding this group of attributes that include the following qualities: *Empowering – Discouraging; Exciting - Boring; Safe - Insecure; Productive - Unproductive; Active - Passive; Friendly - Unfriendly; Acceptable - Unacceptable; Organized - Disorganized; and Flexible – Rigid* (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Evaluation of the relatively positively evaluated attributes before and after the online script reading



Finally, comparing the results on the summary scale on the least positive attributes indicates that the participants in the post-assessment, on average, evaluate these attributes slightly higher. Still, this difference is not statistically significant (t=1.075, p = 0.32). This group of attributes includes the following qualifiers: *Pleasant – Unpleasant; Provocative - Subdued; Optimistic - Pessimistic; Consistent - Inconsistent; Decisive - Indecisive; and Simple – Complex* (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Evaluation of the least positively evaluated attributes before and after the online script reading



Despite the identified differences, all participants who completed the post-session online feedback during the reading performance indicated that they would consider visiting similar performances in the future if they have the

opportunity. More than a third (39%) indicated that they would 'probably', and almost two-thirds (61%) indicated that they would 'definitely' consider visiting similar performances in the future. Similarly, nearly all of the participants (94%) said they would consider recommending this performance to their friends or relatives.

The analysis of the mixed method data revealed that the arts are perceived to be an effective medium to contribute to the promotion of the rights of persons affected by HIV. This emerged in the pre- and post-assessment surveys and also in the interviews with persons living with HIV conducted in the preliminary stage of the research project. Also, the vast majority of the audience members who stayed on to give feedback after the online reading of the work-in- progress clearly expressed their opinion that the performance had the potential to inform and pass on accurate knowledge about HIV, reduce knowledge gaps and misconceptions and help audiences empathise with HIV positive individuals. The data from the audience feedback revealed that *NSFW* helped the audience understand the challenges that people living with HIV face because of stigma, lack of information and misinformation in Maltese society about this condition. Various members in the audience mentioned that, prior to watching the performance, they were not aware that the medication exists for persons living with HIV that helps them get an undetectable viral load, and that this means that they do not pass HIV on, not even through sex. The audience reported clear significant positive changes in HIV knowledge and HIV awareness after watching *NSFW* and consequently their attitudes changed and any fear of such persons declined substantially. This finding correlates with previous international research based on theatre-based interventions, also about sex health education, mainly targeted towards adolescents which have shown similar results (Munro et al, 2007; McEwan, 1991.) Forum Theatre and Popular Theatre, based on Freirean principles of education, are theatre genres that invite audience reflection, participation and create a space to address "taboo" issues in depth (Boal, 1985; Greene, 1995; Matarasso, 1997; Prentki & Selman, 2000).

The potential of theatre in terms of helping the audience to empathise with marginalised groups is significant (Munro, 2007). As the NSFW script develops, the story becomes increasingly compelling and emotionally engaging. The audience is presented with the characters' uncertainties, challenges, anger, frustrations and, at times, sheer desperation. The theatre experience moves the audience to critically reflect, empathise and

consequently become emotionally attached (Gatt, 2020) to the characters' feelings and their situations as they struggle with society's ignorance and stigma. Studies have shown that theatre based-interventions prove to have more impact than traditional teaching methods (Lieberman et al., 2012) and NSFW contains much information. This was commented on by during the post reading forum with comments like:

> "I have learnt much about certain social media, the dangers that young people run into for the sake of exploration and entertainment, chem sex for example. Things I was not aware of. Also that, with effective HIV treatment, the viral load can become undetectable and HIV positive people are safe to have sexual relationships with." (P x post zoom reading forum)

Even more important is the fact that the empathic impact is stronger when the actors resemble the audience in terms of age, gender and race. The actors were all professional and all but one were Maltese. This helped make them all the more relatable to the audience. In fact various people in the audience reported they found it extremely emotional. Research by Levine et al. (2002, 2005) reveals that empathy is stronger for people from the same social group; when people witness violence or bullying they are more likely to intervene if the victim is from their social group. Studies exploring the mirror-neuron-system using electroencephalogram (EEG) machines also reveal that the brain is more sensitive to race and ethnicity: there tends to be reduced motor resonance and experience sharing with racial out-groups (Gutsell & Inzlicht, 2010; Gutsell & Inzlicht, 2012). *NSFW* clearly had an impact on people's attitudes towards discrimination and this was done mainly through changes in HIV knowledge and HIV awareness and the empathy with the characters.

During their verbal feedback the audience also indicated that they would like to learn more both about HIV issues and about similar artistic activities. Many participants in the survey evaluated the online reading positively and indicated that their expectations of socially engaged arts are high. The majority also indicated that they would consider attending similar artistic events in the future, which demonstrates that there is definitely scope for other researchers and theatre companies to develop projects revolving around similar health-related societal challenges in Malta.

The thematic analysis of the interviews highlighted a concern felt by various participants. This was a lack of support for and amongst HIV positive persons:

> And within the superstructure of the health system there was nothing. In terms of psychological support, moral support. Nothing! (P5 – interview)

> As far as I know there's nothing. There's certain feeling of omerta almost when there is the day when everyone… my understanding is that people meet in the room, everyone knows that they are there for their check up but no one says anything and stays in his little bubble (P5 – interview)

This theme was picked up and given prominence by the script writer. It is Susan, the only female and heterosexual character living with HIV in the play, that champions the idea of creating a social club for HIV positives. She is a colourful, boisterous, energetic sixty-year-old who has made it her mission to befriend everyone in the GU clinic and invite them to join her in her mission. This is no easy feat, considering that everyone prefers to "stay in their bubble" as participant 5 put it. The end scene sees Susan finally bringing all the characters in NSFW together at her house for her 60th birthday. This is a climactic scene with an ultimate confrontation when many truths are revealed. The *NSFW* work-in-progress portrayed the challenges and hurdles of living life with HIV but also highlighted the important potential of a social support network amongst people living with HIV.

The audience feedback also related to the importance of having a support group for HIV people. One of the audience members said that most of Maltese society seems to be stuck back in the early 80's perception of HIV, and that is precisely why HIV positive persons keep their condition to themselves. The perception of negative value judgements in Maltese society often means persons with HIV do not reach out for help, not even from each other. This was the case with the lack of medication available in December 2020 when only one activist spoke out publicly, asking the government to resolve this issue. It just so happened that this person was a foreigner living in Malta.

Conclusion

The small number of participants was one of the main challenges to generalize findings about the impact of socially engaged arts on the empowerment of

participants. It is expected that the integration of comparable data conducted from participants in other testbed studies in Malta will provide more reliable and generalizable findings of the potential of socially engaged arts to contribute to the empowerment of participants and to influence perception and attitudes of the general public toward people with HIV. Co-creation was a leading strategy in this play and was particularly productive since the interviews of MGRM members inspired the play's development. Moreover, additional feedback from participants provided valuable suggestions for the refinement of the script and the performance that was perceived as a highly promising strategy for changing perceptions toward HIV and attitudes toward people with HIV.

Overall, the results from this testbed experiment demonstrate a very high level of expectations and significant potential of socially engaged arts to contribute to the improvement or mitigation of some of the issues that marginalized members of the community face. The results from the pre- and post-assessment surveys, together with qualitative findings, provide valuable evidence that the artists and educators can use or consider during the creation and organization of artistic events in order to maximize the effects of socially engaged cultural activities. The research evidence obtained from this study is also expected to help professional actors develop artistic performances that advocate for the rights of persons living with HIV, which was one of this study's objectives.

Acknowledgement

The authors of this paper would like to acknowledge and express appreciation to Toni Attard, director of Culture Venture, for his organization of the theatre production. Also, we highly appreciate the work of the Maltese AMASS study research support officer Margerita Cotter Pule for assistance with data collection and support during the entire preparation of the research component of this study. The authors of this paper are listed in alphabetical order.

References:

Ackroyd, J. and O'Toole, J. (2010), *Performing Research: Tensions, Triumphs and Trade-Offs of Ethnodrama*. Trentham Books.

Andersson, G. Z., Reinius, M., Eriksson, L. E., Svedhem, V., Esfahani, F. M., Deuba, K., et al. (2020). Stigma reduction interventions in people living with HIV to improve health-related quality of life. *The Lancet HIV, 7*(2), e129–e140. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-3018(19)30343-1

Arefaynie, M., Damtie, Y., Kefale, B., & Yalew, M. (2021). Predictors of Discrimination Towards People Living with HIV/AIDS Among People Aged 15–49 Years in Ethiopia: A Multilevel Analysis. *HIV/AIDS - Research and Palliative Care, 13*, 283–292. https://doi.org/10.2147/HIV.S299812

Bagamoyo College of Arts, Tanzania Theatre Centre, Mabala, R., & Allen, K. B. (2002). Participatory action research on HIV/AIDS through a popular theatre approach in Tanzania. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 25*(4), 333–339.

Bird, J. (2020). More than words: Performance ethnography as a research method that values sustained ethnographic orientation and imaginative theatre-making. *International Journal of Education & the Arts,* 21(22). http://doi.org/10.26209/ijea21n22

Boal, A. (1985). *Theatre of the Oppressed.* Theatre Communications Group.

Brown, L., Macintyre, K., & Trujillo, L. (2003). Interventions to reduce HIV/AIDS stigma: what have we learned? *AIDS education and prevention, 15*(1), 49–69. https://doi.org/10.1521/aeap.15.1.49.23844

Cao, X., Sullivan, S. G., Xu, J., Wu, Z., & Team, C. C. P. (2006). Understanding HIV–related stigma and discrimination in a "blameless" population. *AIDS education & prevention, 18*(6), 518–528. https://doi.org/10.1521/aeap.2006.18.6.518

Creswell, J., & Plano-Clark, V. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage.

Grossman, C. I., & Stangl, A. L. (2013). Editorial: Global action to reduce HIV stigma and discrimination. *Journal of the International AIDS Society, 16*(3 Suppl. 2), http://dx.doi.org/10.7448/IAS.7416.7443.18881

Gatt, I. (2020). Theatre—A space for human connection. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*, 19(2). https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/taboo/vol19/iss2/5

Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.* Simon & Schuster.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change.* Jossey-Bass.

Hatzenbuehler, M. L., Phelan, J. C., & Link, B. G. (2013). Stigma as a fundamental cause of population health inequalities. *American journal of public health, 103*(5), 813–821. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2012.301069

Kramer, L. (1994) *Why I Hated 'Philadelphia: A playwright and gay activist goes to see Hollywood's first major AIDS movie and comes away bitterly disappointed.* Los Angeles Times. https://www.newspapers.com/image/157228855/?terms=why%20i%20hated%20philadelphia&match=1

Logie, C. H., Dias, L. V., Jenkinson, J., Newman, P. A., MacKenzie, R. K., Mothopeng, T., et al. (2019). Exploring the potential of participatory theatre to reduce stigma and promote health equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in Swaziland and Lesotho. *Health Education & Behavior, 46*(1), 146–156. https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198118760682

Mann, J. M. (1988). Statement at an informal briefing on AIDS to the 42nd session of the United Nations General Assembly. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society.*

Series A (Statistics in Society), 151(1), 131–136. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/61546

Mason, J. (2006). Mixing methods in a qualitatively driven way. *Qualitative Research, 6*(1), 9–25.

Matarasso, F. (1997). *Use or ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts.* Comedia.

Mawar, N., Sahay, S., Pandit, A., & Mahajan, U. (2005). The third phase of HIV pandemic: social consequences of HIV/AIDS stigma & discrimination & future needs. *Indian Journal of Medical Research, 122*(6), 471–484.

McEwan, R. T., Bhopal, R., & Patton, W. (1991). Drama on HIV and AIDS: An evaluation of a theatre-in-education programme. *Health Education Journal*, *50*(4), 155–160. https://doi.org/10.1177/001789699105000402

Munro, B., Selman, J., Esmail, S. & Ponzetti, J. (2007). Are We There Yet?: Using Theatre in Sexual Education: A Combinationaion of Academic and. Theatre Groups. *The International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities, and Nations, 7*(3), 131–138. http://dx.doi.org/10.18848/1447-9532/cgp/v07i03/39376

Nambiar, D., Ramakrishnan, V., Kumar, P., Varma, R., Balaji, N., Rajendran, J., et al. (2011). Knowledge, stigma, and behavioral outcomes among antiretroviral therapy patients exposed to Nalamdana's radio and theater program in Tamil Nadu, India. *AIDS education and prevention, 23*(4), 351–366. https://doi.org/10.1521/aeap.2011.23.4.351

Parker, R., & Aggleton, P. (2003). HIV and AIDS-related stigma and discrimination: a conceptual framework and implications for action. *Social Science & Medicine, 57*(1), 13–24. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(02)00304-0

Prentki, T., & Selman, J. (2000). *Popular theatre in political culture: Britain and Canada in focus.* Intellect.

Presanis, A. M., Harris, R. J., Kirwan, P. D., Miltz, A., Croxford, S., Heinsbroek, E., et al. (2021). Trends in undiagnosed HIV prevalence in England and implications for eliminating HIV transmission by 2030: an evidence synthesis model. *The Lancet Public Health, 6*(10), e739-e751. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(21)00142-0

Rose, G. (2016). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* (4th edition). Sage.

Saldaña, J. (2011). *Ethnotheatre: Research from Page to Stage*. Left Coast Press.

Stangl, A. L., Lloyd, J. K., Brady, L. M., Holland, C. E., & Baral, S. (2013). A systematic review of interventions to reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination from 2002 to 2013: how far have we come? *Journal of the International AIDS Society, 16(Suppl 2)*, 18734. https://doi.org/10.7448/IAS.16.3.18734

Taylor, A. & Raykov, M. (2020). Towards critical and dialogical mixed methods research: Reflections on our journey. In F. Finnegan & B. Grummell (Eds.), *Doing critical and creative research in adult education* (pp. 127–137). Sense Publishing.

UNAIDS. (2010). Getting to zero: 2011-2015 strategy. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS. www.unaids.org/en/resources/ documents/2010/ 20101221_JC2034_UNAIDS_Strategy

UNAIDS. (2014). 90–90–90. An ambitious treatment target to help end the AIDS epidemic. https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2017/90-90-90

Walker, G. J., Stocklmayer, S. M., & Grant, W. J. (2013). Science theatre: Changing South African students' intended behaviour towards HIV AIDS. *International Journal of Science Education, Part B, 3*(2), 101–120. https://doi.org/ 10.1080/09500693.2011.633939

WHO. (2021). *Global progress report on HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections, 2021*. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240027077

MALTA REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Volume 15, Supplement Issue, pp. 29- 43
Faculty of Education©, UM, 2021

Intersectional Dialogues around Cultural Policy in Malta

Raphael Vella
University of Malta
raphael.vella@um.edu.mt

Karsten Xuereb
University of Malta
karsten.xuereb@um.edu.mt

Abstract
This article seeks to understand how social engagement and policy change in the cultural sector in Malta can cater for the needs of various individuals and communities, particularly minorities, based on the island. As it contextualises local cultural policy in the broad theoretical field of intersectionality, the article articulates a general backdrop linking geographical and political dimensions to the cultural scene and specific minorities in Malta. It then presents an outline of the recent National Cultural Policy issued by the Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government in 2021, giving an overview of some of the policy's references to social inclusion and cultural access in the work conducted by various public stakeholders in the cultural and educational sectors. Finally, it describes and analyses data collected from two meetings held with various stakeholders representing different sectors in the country in order to elicit some conclusions about the significance of socially engaged arts, training and other perceived needs in the sector.

Keywords: cultural policy; intersectionality; socially engaged arts; cultural stakeholders; policy recommendations

Introduction

Malta is one of the most densely populated countries in the world (Worldometer, 2021) and its cultural life is characterised by a complex, 'cross-roads' mindset combining insular and European value systems that have been formed by its geographical context, political development and other factors, including a hegemonic Catholicism in the past (Vella, 2008). The country's

history, particularly its colonial past, has influenced developments in various fields, from the arts and language, to the legal system and education, but since Malta gained European Union (EU) membership in 2004, it has experienced an influx of a number of different ethnic and cultural communities. Increasing use of the internet in recent years, particularly amongst younger members of the population (NSO, 2020), has helped to improve digital skills and expand social networks and access to information. Further connectedness has also facilitated the development of more global forms of community expression, from those related to gender issues to the assertion of marginalised groups in society.

The booming construction, iGaming and financial services industries, together with tourism, have attracted international investment and tens of thousands of European, African and Asian people seeking work and better economic conditions. This migration trend includes asylum seekers arriving mainly by sea from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, whose numbers fluctuate quite substantially from year to year (UNHCR, 2021a). The visibility of specific groups, especially those who arrive from sub-Saharan Africa, exposes them to the possibility of exploitation, racism and other difficulties associated with being perceived as 'strangers' (Bradford & Clark, 2014). Perceptions about migrants' transient presence on the island (Falzon, 2011) are likely to affect the possibility of a healthy participation in social and cultural life. In fact, perceptions about the suitability of other minority groups also affects their inclusion in various activities; for example, recent research shows that the daily lives, employment and leisure activities of persons with intellectual disabilities in Malta are restricted by overprotection, which bars individuals from living an ordinary life (Callus et al., 2019). A study carried out by the National Statistics Office in 2016 about cultural participation in Malta found that 78.1% of respondents with a health limitation had never attended a live theatre (or similar) performance during the 12 months preceding the survey, compared to 64.2% of respondents not limited by a health problem (NSO, 2017, p. 60). Similar discrepancies were evident in other areas of cultural activity, like visiting art exhibitions, museums or historical sites and attending concerts.

The need to research such challenges related to the participation of specific groups in cultural activities and the influence of intersectional factors on cultural access in Malta led our team at the University of Malta to become involved in a Horizon 2020, EU-funded project called 'Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture' (AMASS). Through its participation in AMASS, the research team at the University of Malta implemented five creative research

projects with different communities on the island. These projects were sustained by a belief in the contemporary relevance of socially engaged arts and life-long learning processes and the need to bring experiences from different individuals and communities affected by discrimination to the fore. In order to gauge others' views on the relevance of socially inclusive approaches to art-making and cultural access, the team also assessed a group of stakeholders' feedback on national and institutional cultural policies. This article describes and analyses this feedback. A theme that emerged in discussions with stakeholders was the complex intersectionality and invisibility of some vulnerable individuals whose very specific realities are often overlooked by strategy and resources. Comparably, perhaps, cultural practitioners were described as creative persons who wear many hats and spread themselves thinly, yet somewhat strategically, across different areas of practice that may hinder specialisation yet may further employment prospects and networks. The inter-connectedness of different, strategic fields of cultural practice in artists' lives (possibly leading to an expansion of creative possibilities for artists and other local practitioners) and the overlapping of different identities in certain individuals and communities (leading to a possible increase in discrimination) were therefore two seemingly opposing currents that occasionally crossed each other's paths in discussions with stakeholders.

Intersectionality has a long intellectual history, originally expounded by Kimberlé Crenshaw, who wrote that "the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). Crenshaw showed how theories that revolved around identity politics like feminism sometimes legitimised the marginalisation of individuals by restricting the critique of discrimination to specific issues of gender or race rather than the multi-layered vulnerabilities of women of colour. While the term 'intersectionality' is fluid and is not interpreted in the same way by different scholars and theorists, its general parameters are understood as referring to "the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape social inequalities" (Collins, 2015, p. 2). The analysis of intersectionality now engages with many different power dynamics and theoretical disciplines, and its incomplete nature means that it remains a work-in-progress (Carbado et al., 2013). Unitary definitions of race, gender, class and so on are challenged by more relational and overlapping intersectional

approaches to people's lived experiences that are impacting the discourses of artistic practices, cultural policy and even art education (Hatton, 2019).

National cultural policy and access

Since cultural policy deals with the ways cultural activities, arts education and heritage sites are regulated, supported and even restricted by official and unofficial structures, it is clear that an analysis of policy that is informed by the intersection of layers of social identities in people's lives can serve to regenerate policy in ways that cater for social justice and more diversity in cultural life.

The last 15 years of cultural policy in Malta coincide with accession to the EU. Supported by the Council of Europe (2002), this work led to legal and institutional steps that enabled governance, including direct funding for specialised entities, such as Public Cultural Organisations (PCOs). These entities fall under the Arts Council Malta (ACM) and can engage with private/commercial, non-governmental/not-for-profit initiatives. The Creative Economy Working Group advocated for cultural rights and inclusivity, along with the implementation of actions for governance, finance, professionalisation, and internationalisation (Creative Economy Working Group, 2012). The aim of these changes was to host a Creative Cultural Industry (CCI) and provide a tangible outcome of the National Cultural Policy 2011 (Parliamentary Secretariat for Tourism, Culture and the Environment, 2011) and the Create 2020 Strategy (Arts Council Malta, 2015). Heritage and film gained economic clout through their connection to tourism, and more specifically, the Foreign Direct Investment scheme for film. The performing arts, visual arts, and community-driven work developed a local and international profile as part of ACM's direction.

While funding for the arts and culture has increased in recent years, the state-driven nature of the cultural sector in Malta also means that priorities in this sector are decided by policy-makers and could be driven by instrumental agendas. The recent process of modernisation undertaken by the Maltese cultural sector ties local efforts with the broader European agenda for the commercialisation of the cultural and creative industries. In practice, the greater diversification in influence and spread in terms of the distribution of geography, nationality and genre has been accompanied by a narrowing of focus on the economic viability of cultural initiatives, as can be witnessed by the national cultural strategy spanning 2016-2020. Indeed, in 2015, the Maltese Parliament approved a new legal structure for ACM. This law, Act 15 of 2015,

shifts the mission of the Council towards one that encourages and promotes the culture and creative sectors within a wide perspective of socio-economic activity. The Council's objectives, as set by law, are now decidedly more tuned to economic and financial activity, than previously. They consist of efforts to advocate for knowledge-based cultural and creative development, education and training and business development, funding and investment, amongst other things (Arts Council Malta, 2015). The same economic shift may be argued of the new National Cultural Policy (NCP 2021) aiming to extend the operational guidelines for ACM and related state cultural organisations, until 2025. The emphasis of many of the discussions about NCP 2021 held during the consultation phase with various sectors of society lay on the economic factors that may contribute to the financial sustainability and development of culture and the arts in Malta. Following public consultation, the NCP 2021 (Government of Malta, 2021) is being reviewed and may undergo significant revisions that may require further assessment in the future.

The NCP 2021 prioritises participation, development of cultural rights, cultural socialisation and cultural inclusion, taking into consideration various social groups including senior citizens. Importantly, during a year in which provisions for arts education were reduced in the state primary sector in Malta due to the ongoing pandemic, the policy also "reaffirms the principle that access to cultural education is a cultural right" (p. 86) and advocates for stronger partnerships between schools, artists and cultural institutions. Apart from its objective of making access to cultural activities and education in the arts available to all children in schools, the NCP 2021 also states that it strives to increase cultural access by ensuring "that everyone, whoever they are, irrespective of sex, racial or ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief, and from whichever walk of life they set out from, has access to culture and the arts, and the benefits and wellbeing they generate" (p. 51).

The previous national cultural policy (Parliamentary Secretariat for Tourism, Culture and the Environment, 2011) can be used to measure development in the field over the past decade. From the point of view of institutions, it is quite centralising in terms of policies, strategies and institutions. Its goal of making creativity a pillar for society has not been implemented yet; Maltese economy and society are still structured on other priorities (construction, mass tourism, finance, gaming, partisan politics, underpinned by nepotism and corruption). The 2011 cultural policy argues that "Government is committed to enabling a society which fosters change, embraces competitiveness and provides tools for

each individual to flourish, while acknowledging the creative potential of its growing multi-cultural diversity" (p. 20). Competitiveness sneaks in snugly in a vision for apparent solidarity, inclusion and accessibility, and turns it inside out, building a roadmap for cultural development on market rules and the development of demand and supply. The social element seems to be there only to justify the commercialisation of culture, or its expediency, as Yúdice had written (2003).

The NCP 2021 acknowledges the shortcomings of its predecessor and states that it supports horizontal and coordinated policy approaches that connect culture and non-sector areas, including human rights, rights of persons with disability, the elderly and migrant integration. An objective like this is potentially critical for local developments in the fields of socially engaged arts and related pedagogical projects, but it still needs to be seen how it can be implemented sustainably and effectively. According to the NCP 2021, an effective way of achieving policy crossovers is by working with different Ministries and establishing "a national platform for arts and wellbeing" to "advocate for arts and heritage in community, health and social practices" (p. 57) and address societal challenges like racism. This process of integrating the arts and creative educational services into communities and different institutional contexts like health care can be facilitated by organisations and NGOs involved in working with and advocating for the rights of different people affected by discrimination. A number of civil society initiatives and organisations, including important ones that have contributed to AMASS research in Malta, take an active part and lead the process of societal integration in a number of ways, many times by focusing on specific communities and also by seeking to support diversity within the same groups. For instance, Teatru Salesjan teamed up with UNHCR and JRS Malta for a series of workshops aimed at helping female asylum-seekers from West Africa ease into Maltese society (UNHCR, 2021b).

Intersectional challenges facing many individuals, particularly those with a migrant background, affect their daily lives, protection status and the possibility of meeting targets they set themselves. Research following an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach conducted in Malta (UNHCR & Integra Foundation, 2014) has sought to understand the multifaceted characteristics of different individuals, rather than recognise them collectively as 'beneficiaries'. This research recognised the fact that the refugee population is heterogeneous, and includes persons with disabilities, women, children and individuals with

a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Employing a 'bottom up' approach, the research found that traditional group identifications can be misleading and showed how one's refugee status (and associated risks) is further complicated by other factors like age, gender, disability and LGBTI status. The research concluded that individual circumstances amongst refugees are varied and that, consequently, service providers "need to exercise caution when targeting interventions based on assumptions about categorization of people of concern" (p. 61). A similar caution clearly needs to be exercised in the cultural sector.

Developing policy recommendations with stakeholders

In view of the University of Malta AMASS team's goal of understanding how social engagement and changes in cultural policy in Malta can cater for the needs of different individuals and communities, two online focus group meetings were organised with a broad range of cultural stakeholders in 2021. The central aim of these meetings was to engage stakeholders in co-creative design thinking and problem-solving techniques to develop cultural strategies and policy recommendations related to cultural access, capacity building, alternative methods for tackling dominant power in institutions and related areas. Following the drawing up of a short list by several members of the University of Malta AMASS team, a smaller group of adult participants were recruited on the basis of their expertise in various fields, like music, visual arts, cultural management and social work conducted with different NGOs and communities. The first focus group was a pilot meeting with only three participants, a Master's student (as observer) and the research team, while the second focus group brought together twelve participants in a meeting with four members of the research team. Each meeting lasted between three and four hours and made use of the Zoom video platform and the Miro platform, which facilitated the collaborative process of adding ideas directly to an online 'board'. The participants in both meetings came from varied backgrounds, including a migrant NGO, representatives of the management in cultural entities and museums, gay rights activists, theatre practitioners and visual artists. The structure of the Miro platform was updated slightly following the pilot meeting, but both meetings involved the participants in a discussion of the following topics: cultural policy, local strategy, needs and opportunities related to local and national strategy, good practices and final reflections. Recommendations were also sought in relation to the financing of culture, cultural governance and the participation of minorities in culture and the arts. Data was collected by screenshot and voice recording, through the online

collaborative whiteboard, and through written notes taken by different members of the research team. Prior to the focus group meeting, data collection tools were approved by the university's research ethics committee.

The research team acknowledges the challenge of structuring a set of objectives on the basis of the workshops held in Malta and supporting research material. This study reflects the contributions and comments made by the participants with an aim to achieve an understanding of these participants' views on social inclusion in the arts. Even though the research team strove to include freelance as well as institutional stakeholders that were representative of a range of groups and positions, it is possible that the inclusion of other participants in the stakeholder meetings might have led to some different conclusions. The sub-sections below are based on a thematic analysis conducted following the two focus group meetings.

Experience of national and institutional strategies

Following a cultural policy overview that included references to historical perspectives, the financing of culture, an overall description of the system and international cooperation, the stakeholders in each meeting were invited to jot down their views on virtual sticky notes and expand by elaborating verbally in a follow-up discussion. Participants had different experiences of policy-making in the arts, but not all had direct previous experience of being involved in committees or management teams developing cultural policies. As expected, participants tended to link personal and professional training and practice experience to reflections on general policy and strategy. One participant referred to the development of a diversity and inclusivity policy in a creative arts academic department, including language use as well as curriculum review and access. The same participant also stated that her department conceives of education in a broad community dimension, giving students different opportunities to engage with a variety of types of work and communities. Another participant referred to the use of an AGD approach in policy-making to make sure that all persons fully participate in decisions that affect them. This includes the use of cultural mediators if there is a language barrier. A representative of an important cultural entity referred to policies developed in collaboration with other institutions, such as the University of Malta, as well as training that staff at the cultural centre she represented was undergoing in relation to the development of autism-friendly spaces.

Interestingly, while some participants recognised the tension between the instrumentalisation of culture on the one hand, and a prioritisation of communities for their own benefit on the other, most participants accepted the use of the arts for ulterior, not strictly artistic purposes, such as societal wellbeing and health. Therefore, a balanced approach to cultural policy was advocated, in order to support the needs of those who are traditionally excluded from cultural work, while avoiding the pitfalls associated with excessive instrumentalisation.

Marginalised individuals and communities

The inclusion of marginalised individuals and communities in policy was one of the central themes in the focus group, especially in the second meeting with a larger group. Participants in the workshops were in agreement that a people-centred approach to social inclusion in the arts would be more beneficial than one that focused on addressing minorities in silos, so that the potential contribution of culture in addressing social inclusion across different sectors would be maximised. Participants referred to the need of a better awareness of intersectionality in this sector, which tends to amplify the vulnerability and invisibility of certain individuals. While agencies like UNHCR work to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are included in national strategies, some vulnerable individuals like children and victims of gender-based violence are hard to reach. One participant noted the relatively poor data that exist on issues of representation and diversity in the arts in Malta. Participants also brought up examples of projects they have been involved in, like theatre projects with visually impaired persons and a project on cultural rights with persons from different social groups and backgrounds. Accessibility practices were discussed by many participants. They spoke about raising awareness about the contribution that persons with disabilities can make to the creative sector, the addition of inclusion officers within institutions, programmes that look at different groups and communities as creatives instead of programming that focuses on art for these specific groups, language policies that are not exclusive, and educational programmes that are more peripatetic in nature to ensure wider access. Funds could be channelled into artistic research and creative projects focusing on intersectional challenges.

The peripherality of community members sometimes is doubled when policy is oblivious to degrees of personal or small community discrimination and exclusion, within communities. Members of specific groups are sometimes asked to participate in creative projects that exploit these persons simply to

obtain funds. An imbalance between those who apply for funds and participating members of marginalised groups like migrants becomes evident when one realises that migrants may not have an easy route to access arts funds or even manage them, in light of the fact that their residency status may not be regularised or because they are not yet compliant with the regulatory processes associated with work and taxation. Similar to funding, research also needs to be inclusive. For instance, research based on the electoral register excludes many of the intended participants.

Needs and opportunities related to local and national strategies

A number of needs were identified in terms of cultural policy issues. These consisted of inclusion, accessibility, the need of a horizontal approach to arts policy-making with community arts practice at its core, greater attention paid to local-regional-national dimensions, sustained funding, encouragement of social enterprise in the arts and greater relevance to non-arts policy areas. Broader needs included better international connectivity, a more nuanced instrumentalisation of the arts, the adoption of short-term/ medium-term/ long-term perspectives, improved financing of culture, a stronger relationship between programmes for collaboration and funding supported by cultural institutions, and more effective internal and external communication. Training and practice in policy skills, strategising skills and a better use of technology aimed at addressing the digital divide are also important needs in the sector.

The use of technology to improve communication strategies, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the provision of access to marginalised individuals, was also highlighted. Accessibility needs to be considered as a need and basic priority, not as a bonus. This need requires a sensitivity towards the specific needs of individuals within different communities in order to inform policy and programmes that are effective, strengthening contact and collaboration between policy-makers, institutions, funders and beneficiaries (and potential beneficiaries). In order to avoid situations in which marginalised persons are merely added to projects as 'props', an emphasis on follow-up projects and longer-term approaches is required, paying attention also to language, communication, cultural mediation and translation through specific funding schemes and budgets.

While artists' exposure to internal cultural and other differences played a central role in discussions, the significance of international connectivity was also stressed. It is likely that Malta's insular context makes this need a priority

for local artists. Besides, in and of itself, the need to share practice on a cross-border platform has gained in significance in local artistic practice and funding structures, building on past traditions, and the importance of engaging with marginalised groups while practising international collaboration is seen as a necessary good practice in sustaining the integration and promoting the accessibility of communities within a wider, international context.

Best practices

The best practices identified consisted of a mix of examples that illustrated activity at various levels of society, including state, private, civil society, the Church, local organisations with strong community links, national ones as well as international collaborations. Urban overdevelopment, minority rights and the diversity of cultural belonging and expression are some of the more common topics referenced. Good practices invest time, human and financial resources in generating access on the basis of participation and trust, in spite of various logistical difficulties and competing priorities, in order to work with and for migrant communities. There is a growing awareness of the centrality of the human being in the development of arts projects involving migrant communities and the delivery of life-changing experiences to specific groups, like persons with disabilities. The organic development of projects from observation of and participation in community life to the generation of arts projects is also a clear indicator of good practice. At an institutional level, a better grasp of the importance of the participation of communities at different stages of development leads to more inclusive cultural programming.

Policy interventions

In order to implement policy recommendations, a call for needs-based interventions is required, including a more diverse and broader base for intervention. Other measures required for policy intervention include an approach that looks at short/ medium/ long-term perspectives, better financing, more effective public relations and media to allow efficient communication, adequate and inclusive technology, and encouraging a healthy mix of internal (community) and external (including international) participation. Policy changes are possible if close working relations with state partners, private sector and civil society are developed and if the diversity of community arts practices (including work with the elderly) and community spaces are acknowledged.

Apart from material and financial resources, it is necessary to acknowledge the fundamental work of those who selflessly dedicate significant parts of their lives to nurturing the involvement of different participants in creative projects. Individuals who are perceived as vulnerable should not suffer from a double level of discrimination, by being a kind of after thought of project activities. Real policy change can happen if these individuals' co-creative role is always prioritised. Change in perceptions about gender, sexual orientation and ability also relies on further explorations of innovative practices towards greater mutual understanding and collaboration in society. Easy labels and compartmentalisation, created for the sake of manageability, need to be replaced by an understanding of persons' complex realities and creative solutions that are sustainable in the long-term.

Conclusions

While participating stakeholders indicated that it was hard to envision the sustainability of policy change in the long term, there is a clear need to build structures that ensure long-term change, sustainability in practice and a frequent exchange of best practice. One way of working towards greater sustainability is to promote participatory policy-making and legislation. Countries which have a legislative commitment to community empowerment, participatory governance and budgeting provide a much stronger platform for the development of work with social inclusion and cohesion (Council of Europe, 2013).

Innovative qualitative and quantitative research exercises are needed to identify and evaluate cultural projects and processes that could lead to a greater inclusivity. A concise best practice guide to research and evaluation at national, regional and local level may be assembled. This may include a clear statement of principles to underpin practice and case studies. Reliable and replicable methodologies for monitoring and evaluation may be developed and piloted through collaborative means while more practical toolkits for cultural operators (for example, Vella and Pulè, 2021) may be assembled to illustrate positive approaches and methods, identifying their strengths and weaknesses in relation to different types of socially inclusive arts community practice. The dissemination of good practice in research and evaluation may be introduced across programmes that address socially inclusion community arts practice and mainstreamed into project design processes (Voices of Culture, 2018).

It is important to challenge exclusionary and discriminatory attitudes and to make the values of inclusiveness and solidarity a priority in cultural policy. The cultural, social and educational sectors can contribute significantly to this task. Inclusive policy making does not simply draw attention to unitary categories like race discrimination, class or gender but takes into account a wide range of power dynamics that make for a more intersectional analysis of social, political and even historical contexts. This inclusivity will only be possible if strategies adopted by cultural institutions promote a transversal and intersectional approach. There is a need to support cultural inclusion actions that are transdisciplinary, transgenerational, transcultural and transnational. A significant degree of cultural activity that has had social impact has not always been supported through funding sources that are dedicated specifically to arts and culture. A review of the impact of the cultural contribution to social inclusion across different sectors may inform improved programme / project funding design in the future. Cross-sectoral collaboration is a major challenge when trying to adopt a reciprocal approach wherein each sector actively participates in the various steps of the working process. Addressing this challenge calls for training, capacity building and professional development. It needs to involve different NGOs in the field of culture and social work, including ethnic minority groups, religious minority groups, migrants, people with reduced mobility and children, amongst other groups. Providing access to a broad cultural education reflecting the full diversity of actual lived cultures contributes to raising awareness and learning about differences and commonalities between cultures. It is especially important to reach persons whose circumstances make them a target for those who adopt exclusionary attitudes through various interconnecting discriminatory modes. The recognition that persons belong to various social groups helps policy-makers to avoid generalisations about power relations when developing strategies. It is not a matter of creating new hierarchies in which dominant and oppressed identities are merely reversed. Only by promoting more nuanced understandings of identities can policy begin to reflect a truly participatory attitude towards cultural access.

References

Arts Council Malta (2015). *Create 2020 Strategy.* https://www.artscouncilmalta.org/files/uploads/misc/English-Create2020_web.pdf

Bradford, S., & Clark, M. (2014). Strangers on the shore: Sub-Saharan African "irregular" migrants in Malta. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 12(1), 9-26. DOI: 10.1080/15562948.2013.877703

Callus, A.-M., Bonello, I., Mifsud, C. & Fenech, R. (2019). Overprotection in the lives of people with intellectual disability in Malta: knowing what is control and what is enabling support. *Disability & Society*, 34(3), 345-367. DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2018.1547186

Carbado, D. W., Crenshaw, K., V.M. Mays & Tomlinshon, B. (2013). Intersectionality: Mapping the movements of a theory. Du Bois Review, 10(2), 303-312. DOI:10.1017/S1742058X13000349

Collins, P. H. (2015). Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 41, 1-20. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24807587

Council of Europe (2002). European Programme of National Cultural Policy Reviews. https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680696404

Council of Europe (2013). Governance of Culture – Promoting Access to Culture. https://rm.coe.int/16806a2de4

Creative Economy Working Group (2012). *A report on Malta's creative economy and a strategy for the cultural and creative industries. Preface and part 1.* https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar//handle/123456789/27760

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*. 43(6), 1241-1299. https://doi-org.ejournals.um.edu.mt/10.2307/1229039

Falzon, M.A. (2011). Immigration, Rituals and Transitoriness in the Mediterranean Island of Malta. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38(10), 1661-1680. DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2012.711066

Government of Malta (2021). *National Cultural Policy* 2021, https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MHAL/PublishingImages/Pages/Consultations/NationalCulturalPolicy2021/National%20Cultural%20Policy%202021%20-%20Public%20Consultation.pdf

Hatton, K. (Ed.) (2019). *Inclusion and intersectionality in visual arts education*. UCL Institute of Education.

NSO (2017). *Cultural participation survey 2016*. https://nso.gov.mt/en/publicatons/Publications_by_Unit/Documents/C1_Living_Conditions_and_Culture_Statistics/Cultural%20Participation%20Survey%202016.pdf

NSO (2020). *ICT usage by household: 2020*. https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2021/02/News2021_028.pdf

Parliamentary Secretariat for Tourism, Culture and the Environment (2011). *National Cultural Policy 2011.* https://www.artscouncilmalta.org/files/uploads/misc/POLICY%20ENG%202011%209%20jun%20low%20res%20.pdf

UNHCR (2021a). Malta Factsheet 31 July 2021. https://www.unhcr.org/mt/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2021/09/Malta-Factsheet_2021-July-2021-final.pdf

UNHCR (2021b). Women aslyum-seekers eased into their full potential. https://www.unhcr.org/mt/15661-women-asylum-seekers-eased-into-their-full-potential.html

UNHCR & Integra Foundation (2014). *My Diversity. Age, Gender and Diversity Perspectives in the Maltese Refugee Context.* https://www.unhcr.org/mt/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2018/04/UNHCR-AGD_Acc_Report-Malta-.pdf

Vella, R. (Ed.) (2008). *Cross-Currents: Critical Essays on Art and Culture in Malta*. Allied Publications.

Vella, R., & Pulè, M. (Eds.) (2021). *Conducting participatory arts projects: A practical toolkit*. University of Lapland. https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/

123456789/66417/1/COND%20PART%20ARTS%20PROJ%20TOOLKIT%202-20%20link%200.pdf
Voices of Culture (2018). October, *Brainstorming Report. Social Inclusion: Partnering with Other Sectors.* http://www.voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/FINAL-Brainstorming-report-SD7-Social-inclusion.pdf
Worldometer (2021). July, *Malta Population*. https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/malta-population/
Yúdice, G. (2003). *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era.* https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smt88

MALTA REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Volume 15, Supplement Issue, pp. 45-68
Faculty of Education©, UM, 2021

Social change through cultural enterprise in Malta: a critical assessment of a nascent field

Karsten Xuereb
University of Malta, Malta
karsten.xuereb@um.edu.mt

Abstract

This article adopts a cultural policy perspective to address diversity and sustainable development in the context of cultural enterprise in Malta, where projects and scholarly research supported by European funded programmes in the promotion and protection of diversity in local and regional environments are at an early stage. This article first argues that engaging in a critical assessment of the field is timely because of the growing importance that matters of diversity and sustainability are having in the light of the cultural-driven and -led models employed that are having significant impact on human and natural ecosystems; this is particularly due to a booming population that is becoming more diversified, a greater economic activity especially related to tourism and travel and the consistent rise in the demand of creative products and services. In this light, references to the research conducted by the project Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture (AMASS) will support this argument. It then argues that cultural operators and educators who are drawn to this area of interest and whose work consists of evaluating the scene and proposing novel ways of collaboration and research contribute towards building sustainable models of operation. The methodology applied is based on a pertinent literature review and observations made directly in the field of practice.

Keywords: cultural enterprise, cultural tourism, European collaboration, higher education, social enterprise

Introduction

At the beginning of the current millennium, the notion of social enterprise was not highly featured in European debate. Since then, discussion about its significance to social wellbeing and the exploration of ways whereby European society could enable its informed practice has grown steadily (Defourny, Nyssens, 2008). Up to fairly recent times, the concepts of social entrepreneur,

social entrepreneurship and social enterprise, for instance, have been used interchangeably. However, to clarify, social entrepreneurship may be considered as the process through which social entrepreneurs create social enterprises (Hulgård et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, over the past years, growing research has elaborated a variety of definitions of, and approaches towards, such concepts. Among the many descriptions, one may refer directly to the importance of the local and entrepreneurial dimensions of social enterprise that are rooted in the experiences and practice of communities that generate wealth and wellbeing by adopting sustainable approaches towards their territory. The drive towards approaching traditional knowledge and aspects of intangible heritage in ways that open up their interpretation in innovative ways is of particular interest to the cultural sector, including cultural tourism, and will be focused on in the second half of the article in relation to Malta and Gozo. Therefore, this article follows research that suggests that social entrepreneurship may embody processes undertaken to discover, define and exploit opportunities aimed at enhancing social wealth by either creating novel ventures or managing existing organisations in innovative ways (Zahra et al., 2009).

The Maltese context provides many opportunities for assessing the dynamics of social change stemming from cultural enterprise. The territory enjoys a long history of voluntary activity that has enabled social economics to deliver community-oriented goals. The traditional role of religious organisations, particularly those related to the Catholic Church, have over time been supplemented, further supported, and at times even replaced by not-for-profit, civil society and voluntary sector practice that are secular in inspiration and perspective. It has been estimated that between 32 and 62 social enterprises in Malta meet the EU operational definition. A social enterprise is defined as:

> an operator in the social economy the main objective of which is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. (European Commission, 2021)

It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities. The majority address social inclusion, the environment, local development and

animal welfare. However, recent developments in society have nurtured innovative practice in the fields of community work, fair trade, waste management and energy, the integration of people with disabilities in employment and diversification in the cooperatives sector from fishing and agriculture to include sports and education (Caruana & Nogales, 2020, p.10). One area with further potential for development in the field of social enterprise is the cultural one. Indeed, this sphere of interest has attracted the research-oriented lense into the participation of particular groups in cultural programmes of the University of Malta in the shape of the Horizon 2020, EU-funded project 'Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture' (AMASS). This article will explore this field of practice with particular reference to its links to the tourism sector.

Cultural enterprise in Malta

On the 4th and the 5th of November 2019, the University of Malta hosted an EMES International Research Network workshop on the power of social enterprise in culture. EMES takes its name from the French title of its first research project L'EMergence de l'Entreprise Sociale en Europe (The emergence of social enterprises in Europe) completed between 1996 and 2000. In so doing it considered how social entrepreneurs have sought to achieve their aims of social access, inclusion and solidarity through or together with partners in the cultural sector. Interestingly, this workshop was the first of its kind in Malta to address this thematic aspect of cultural participation. However, what has motivated this article to be written is the fact that it is not the only such instance. Furthermore, it will be argued that further developments in this field are worth following and call for an extended analysis such as the one provided here.

Therefore, the article considers a number of actions that aim at encouraging and supporting local and international citizens in Malta, including migrants, who have become a sizeable and culturally significant sector of society, to address social change through enterprise and sustainable means of living. In the light of this approach, this article takes into consideration the multiple nature of references to diversity as including the demographic and social aspects of humanity and interaction among people, however within natural and urban environments that are contexts of diversity in and of themselves. Thus, diversity is considered as inherent to human society as well as its context. This angle on diversity follows current practice adopted by international organisations like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organisation (UNESCO) and expressed in recent publications like *Culture | 2030 Indicators* (UNESCO, 2019).

The actions considered by this article strive to challenge conventional thinking in Malta that considers many public and private spaces as dispensable, or as a means to an end. This can be witnessed from the overtly instrumental and utilitarian engagement of people of all walks of life within natural as well as urban spaces. Spaces are too often considered for short-term and immediate gratification and exploitation, with little consideration for wide-spread and long-term repercussions on society. Therefore, green spaces are considered as vacant opportunities for rapid incremental construction and development, which short-changes any vision for progress. The term 'progress' will be assessed in the coming section. A recent example in Malta at the time of writing refers to the appropriation of public space for private use in the capital Valletta, prompting Prof. Keith Sciberras at the University of Malta to note that the 'unabashed commercialisation of Valletta is now almost complete' (Times of Malta, 2021).

Therefore, this article pays most of its attention to the context in Malta and Gozo, the two small yet main and populated islands that make up the Maltese archipelago, a member state of the European Union (EU) since 2004. Particular attention will be paid to the impact of cultural tourism as an area of potential social change through social enterprise practice. Furthermore, all this will be situated in an international context. The international dimension is mostly addressed with reference to policy frameworks that position culture and tourism in a way that prioritises sustainable approaches to the sector. Moreover, Maltese trends in policy and practice are assessed through close analysis of international policy and strategy documents as well as statistics related to data at the local level.

The article does this in five main sections. The rest of this first section will establish a working definition of the terms 'progress' and 'development' in order to guide the following analysis and discussion. The second section focuses on one of the main socio-economic activities in Malta that is attracting more and more attention, namely that of cultural tourism. The third sector situates the discussion on research into cultural action and policy in the smaller of the two Maltese islands, namely Gozo. The fourth section shifts the discussion to consider other aspects of cultural entrepreneurship, including interaction with sustainable development. It does this by contextualising the

analysis in the Inner Harbour Area, a space that offers a significant contrast to Gozo. The fifth and concluding section sharpens its focus on the role education and research have to play, offering recommendations for future policy making and action.

A definition of 'progress'

The tension between 'development' and 'progress' has been expressed by a great deal of cultural thinkers and operators. This is because many aspire to reflect, critically engage with and implement progressive and socially motivating processes through their engagement with diversity in the cultural field.

A process that engages with building a vision *of* the future within a European and Mediterranean context, which is the one Malta is situated in, can lead to one that builds a vision *for* the improvement of society on the bases of equity, participation, engagement and justice. Images and metaphors used in the elaboration of a construct may lead to a deep understanding of what type of change is being experienced and envisaged. For instance, the British researcher, based at the University of Naples, Iain Chambers (2008, p. 52) refers to 20th century Italian left-inspired politically engaged figures Antonio Gramsci and Pier Paolo Pasolini in the way they distinguish between what constitutes real development from actions and trends that are a waste or detrimental to society. In doing so he recalls Pasolini's efforts to separate 'progress' from 'development' and 'uncouple them and set them in a critical relationship which strips them of their purely instrumental and economical logic.'

Writing in 1975, Pasolini (1999) notes the two terms were key elements in discourse at his time of writing. He attempts to awaken public consciousness to the relationship between individuals and groups by inviting the public to consider whether these terms were synoymous of each other. Alternatively, if they were not, whether they described different moments of the same phenomenon. Furthermore, if not that either, whether they described separate phenomena which however came together. Finally, if none of these were the case, whether they described 'opposite' phenomena that only seemingly and fleetingly coincided and reached out one to the other. Pasolini is adamant that one needs to clarify both terms in order to understand everyday reality and life.

Although the use of terminology varies, and at times even clashes, these concerns are shared by a number of other thinkers and writers, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world, which is sometimes perceived as the catalyst for the head-long rush into economic development in a way that is detached from other social, environmental and cultural realities. Kirkpatrick Sale (1999) is one such contemporary writer who critiques the compromising stance in favour of 'progress'. He refers to other writers who, already in the early decades of the twentieth century, and hence contemporaneously to Gramsci, expressed similar concerns.

One such writer is e.e. cummings who calls progress a 'comfortable disease' of modern 'manunkind'. Sale notes that at any time since the triumph of capitalism only a minority of the global population may be said to be really living in comfort, and that comfort, continuously threatened, is achieved at considerable expense. Another writer worth invoking is Leopold Kohr, the Austrian economist. Sale argues that his seminal work, *The Breakdown of Nations*, published in 1957 and arrranged with a foreword by Sale himself in 1978, is an essential tool for understanding the failures of political progress in the last half-millennium.

A particularly striking image is used by Kohr to illustrate the state of affairs he feared was taking shape:

> Suppose we are on a progress-train [...] running full speed ahead in the approved manner, fueled by the rapacious growth and resource depletion and cheered on by highly rewarded economists. What if we then discover that we are headed for a precipitous fall to a certain disaster just a few miles ahead when the tracks end at an uncrossable gulf? Do we take advice of the economists to put more fuel into the engines so that we go at an ever-faster rate, presumably hoping that we build up a head of steam so powerful that it can land us safely on the other side of the gulf; or do we reach for the brakes and come to a screeching if somewhat tumble-around halt as quickly as possible?
> Progress is the myth that assures us that full-speed-ahead is never wrong. Ecology is the discipline that teaches us that it is disaster. (Sale, 1999)

Tensions inherent to the management of cultural tourism in Malta

This section situates the theoretical reflection elaborated in the previous section in the practical and challenging field of cultural tourism in Malta. It does this by assessing the import of international policy and practice in cultural tourism to recent local trends. The realisation of the importance of the connections between the environment, heritage and tourism in the development of cultural products and services of value to communities that contribute towards and benefit from cultural tourism is steadily growing.

The research area addressing social enterprise and tourism, while still in its nascent phase, is nevertheless present. Social entrepreneurship is increasingly being considered as an 'important vehicle for sustainable development of destinations' by acknowledging that tourism enterprises play a 'critical role in delivering desired community development outcomes' in developing their products and services (Matošević Radić, 2020, p. 6-7).

The cultural element has been recognised as an important and vital aspect in the wellbeing of all stakeholders and participants in tourism and travel on a global level. It has been observed that since the 1980s, the interaction between culture and tourism, on the basis of a growing recognition of the value of sustainability and heritage, has attracted growing attention in academia as well as that of the industry and practice (McKercher & Du Cross, 2015).

The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) *Strategic Priorities 2016-2022* (2015) that call for local and regional authorities to become more proactive in setting agendas, provides a good sounding board for the assessment pursued here. The aims of the strategic priorities for local and regional government are of significance to stakeholders in Malta and Gozo. They highlight how far a study of its long-term perspective may influence the implementation of international agendas in relation to issues influencing cultural tourism actors in Malta.

Together with an assessment of the value of these priorities to the Maltese context, the following sub- section takes into consideration the importance of the Council of Europe 2005 Faro Convention. In so doing, it introduces the value of acknowleding the importance of intangible heritage to this type of discussion which will be expanded upon later.

Local practice in an international context

The UCLG Strategic Priorities 2016-2022 urge local and regional authorities to become more proactive in setting cultural tourism agendas. The organisation calls on local and regional government to gain more respect as stakeholders in the international arena, so that their experience may inspire the definition and implementation of global agendas on issues influencing the lives of communities. Furthermore, it supports local partners through international networks and sharing of best practice.

This international setting is reflected in Maltese cultural and tourism policy and strategy. Although the consultation process on the upcoming cultural policy is still ongoing, the current one in effect does recognise the role of local engagement in the setting of cultural policy to take centre stage in cultural development and sustainability (Parliamentary Secretariat for Tourism, the Environment and Culture, 2011).

The values and tools for action identified by the UCLG in its present policy cycle stress the following areas: i. closeness between decision makers and the community; ii. decentralisation of the structure that develops and asserts the directional framework to guide cultural action; and iii. political leadership that is visionary and able to listen and discern the implementation of long-term and inclusive actions. A key element that can be found in current international cultural policies and strategies tries to strengthen the bases on which local action is informed is that of internationalisation.

Over the past decades many activities related to cultural and tourism policy were previously implemented by the environmental camp. This is already true of the 1980s, with a growing awareness, particularly at UNESCO, that global environmental action aiming at sustainable development benefitted when it focused on the role of people within their environment, in ways that were soon followed and paralleled in cultural discourse. The Millennium Development Goals, the renewed goals aiming for more sustainability, namely the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, are all signs of this convergence between ecological concerns and those addressing local and regional actions within the artistic and creative realms.

Furthermore, the Faro Convention has been one of the main international frameworks that supports relations between local and international best

practice. It has stressed the important aspects of heritage as it addresses human rights and democracy. The Convention promotes a broad concept of heritage and its relationship to communities worldwide. The Convention supports the idea that objects and places are not, in themselves, what is important about cultural heritage. Rather, these are important because of the significance and uses that people attach to them and the values they represent. It may be argued that the value of our heritage lies in what it means to communities. Whether the heritage is tangible or intangible, what communities feel is of value is that something special that people invest in the structure, site or monument, on the one hand, and the ritual, celebration or festivity, on the other. If we suffer the loss of one or the other, this matters intrinsically, i.e., in the value it carries in and of itself, as well as in the lives of the people and the communities that shared a bond with that outward sign of culture and civilisation (Brusasco, 2018).

The Faro Convention may be described as a framework tool. This means it draws up an agreed space for the main issues, objectives and areas of intervention for state parties to address. State parties are free and empowered to decide on the most convenient means to implement the Convention according to their legal or institutional frameworks, practice and experience. In comparison to other conventions, the structure of a framework convention does not impose specific obligations for action. It suggests, but it does not bind.

On the basis of a more sensitive definition of heritage and heritage communities and the principle of shared responsibility, the Faro Convention looks for creative ways of assessing and addressing heritage assets with the involvement of active civil society. Through its heritage-led work, the Convention supports local stakeholders and the Council of Europe's institutional knowledge and experience to be shared and brought together around concrete actions, setting examples for innovative society models.

Taking the lead from the Faro Convention principles and criteria, civic initiatives are then in a position to enable both institutions and communities to shape decision-making processes and to manage their development processes. This process enables the contribution of heritage to the social and economic dynamics of the communities within the fields of culture and tourism.

Applying theory to practice

One of the main interests of organisations addressing or practising cultural tourism in Malta is the applicability of local and international experience to the contexts of cities, towns and villages in the Maltese islands. Indeed, the role of institutions addressing cultural tourism and applying theory to practice, such as that of the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture at the University of Malta, includes dealing with this timely challenge.

The global trends observed above have applied to Maltese policy work. In particular, the Arts Council Malta strategy for cultural development for 2016-2020 is the most clear, recent and still valid example of such an approach (2016). Ongoing initiatives taken to strengthen local and regional action aim to address current challenges stemming from the detachment between the theory and practice. They do this by supporting more proximity between operators in different fields of action, encouraging real decentralisation in the management of power by stakeholders in ways irrespective of financial or political influence, and advising political leadership that is able to listen and be capable of honest rather than opportunistic assessment and vision.

Recalling recent developments in global trends in the management of cultural resources at local level, local and regional authorities in Malta seem to express a belief in being enabled to administer more of the tools in hand and generate new ways of interaction within their own and other communities, both in Malta and internationally. They may also be perceived to relate to cultural tourism in ways that may benefit them on the basis of their own perspective and understanding of their ways of living, main needs and priorities.

Trends in Malta and Gozo

An analysis of quantitative data sourced from the Malta Tourism Authority for 2005-2017 points towards what seems to be a growing awareness of the community-oriented and sustainable administration of heritage sites and other tangible as well as intangible resources. Findings suggest that many localities have maintained their share of visitors to Malta by increasing numbers in proportion to the overall increase, circa by 100%, of inbound tourism to Malta.

The stability of percentages of tourism attraction, calculated on the basis of actual visits, across many localities, is indicative of overall positive trends. With the occasional increase and decrease, notably in areas still not overcome by

urban construction, and most tellingly in the Three Cities known collectively as Cottonera (from 27.8% in 2005 to 35.8% in 2017) and areas in the still relatively green island of Gozo (for instance the Citadel from 80.5% to 86.8% between 2015 and 2017), findings suggest that local and regional authorities are managing to balance urban development and transportation stresses on their territories, in ways that are directly and indirectly related to the two-fold increase in tourism over more than a decade, with the development of a model that has worked so far.

Research into recent trends highlights the way urbanistically-complex centres of tourist attraction have interpreted their resources in ways that try to prioritise sustainability. It is not surprising to note that tourism visits to Valletta, the capital city, tapered at 89.7% in 2017, on the eve of the European capital of culture; Mdina and Rabat maintain a standard trend of 69% by the same year; while the highly urbanised and densely populated Sliema, St Julians, St Paul's Bay in the north and even Marsaxlokk and Marsascala in the south seem to lose percentage attraction in spite of the traditional presentation travel agencies and commercial enterprises still assign to them according to the image of one-time fishing villages evoking maritime traditions now overtaken by misguided building sprees and dead-end transportation planning.

Therefore, two main questions policy makers and strategists at this moment of cultural tourism policy-making are: i. where does one go from here, and ii. what comes next with regard to investing in plans for implementation in the near future?

A call for further research that is both local and international

In order to address these questions, the necessary resources addressing the key areas of research need to be identified and procured. An approach that is sensitive to the territory in question stands to be more incisive in any policies it may inform if a number of conditions are met. These include: i. identifying significant resources dedicated to key stakeholders; ii. consulting with cultural tourism operators and researchers as well as students of this and related areas, and iii. seeking long-term and innovative approaches towards addressing the pressing challenges various localities and regions face in Malta.

The environmental degradation across the island is tied with the cultural stasis that faces a number of areas. Competing priorities, short-term financial gain and unsustainable development that is often part of its instrumental use for

financial and gain need time and resources to be assessed outside of easy frameworks that compromise research, cloud judgement and negatively influence a vision for the future.

As observed above, the UCLG points out how local and regional authorities that address cultural tourism can benefit from the development of networking at local, regional and international levels that may stimulate new ways of addressing challenges that are shared across various territories. Such challenges consist of, among others, overdevelopment, climate change, drought, lacking public transport and mutual social exclusion among different sub-communities within larger ones.

Such networks may support local authorities by building on the relatively successful model of town twinning and local festivals that has allowed localities to build links with other communities, locally and internationally, particularly for travel, promotional and tourism purposes. While such actions characterised the first two decades of the existence of local councils in Malta and Gozo, as well as the first decade of EU membership, such networks may help exceed the establishment of safe and somewhat stale practice. They may encourage the investment of resources in the development of research centres, monitoring structures, advocacy groups and traditional and digital communication means that enable commonalities to be shared, challenges to be addressed, common positive outcomes to be celebrated and action taken on a wider scale than is common practice.

In order to outline practical outcomes, key actions may consist of: i. documenting members' practice; ii. supporting pilot projects; iii. identifying fund-raising opportunities to support members; iv. supporting decentralised cooperation activities developed by members; v. promoting the development of programmes supporting UCLG members in localisation.

The role of joint up research in European projects supporting cultural entrepreneurship

The role of combining resources in the field of research is important in informing policy and action. The AMASS project has shone a light on a number of Maltese local projects that provide interesting examples of cultural entrepreneurship. Based on the EU-wide definition of Small & Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), a small number of these initiatives supporting cultural

enterpreneurship do so in the guise of micro-enterprises (European Commission, 2015).

One such example is The Windrose Project, run for a number of years by the Rubberbodies Collective, nurtured by the artistic vision of Jimmy Grima who together with his creative colleagues garnered the support of four coastal communities in Malta and Gozo that have attracted various degrees of touristic attention in order to engage with the people of the localities in mutually beneficial contexts. In so doing they attracted the financial support of the European Capital of Culture held in Malta in 2018, that of the national creativity centre Spazju Kreattiv, and gave something back by leaving a legacy that includes permanent artistic creations that now act as landmarks. A second example may be provided by the work of artist Kristina Borg who regularly works with small, diverse communities in order to shine a light on issues that are pertinent to particular aspects of their everyday lives. Arts Council Malta funds are attracted to support such ventures that manage to engage with the commercial communities involved thereby bringing about sustainable steps towards social regeneration. A third and final practical example is provided by Culture Venture, a micro-enterprise founded and led by Toni Attard, that through a varied and sustained approach at applied research on a local community level (e.g. with people with a disability through the Opening Doors project, as studied by AMASS) or a global policy level (e.g. through consultancy) manages to engage and remunerate cultural professionals and other creatives.

Shifting further the focus onto research projects within an academic setting, an example of how research to practice may boost the sectors of professionalisation and academic research in cultural tourism may be made in relation to a recent collaboration between the University of Granada in Spain, the Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre in Portugal and the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture at the University of Malta which have been optimally placed to disseminate their collaborative vision by using their educational means and expertise to enable the formation of appropriate and forward-looking policies and strategies.

As witnessed by their local influence as well as their international networks including European universities and higher education institutions, Mediterranean higher education institutes and EU training programmes, the partners of the Erasmus+ project called 3Economy+ have the capacity and

responsibility to invest in highly qualified people, their own networks and professional communities, and support them in the development of their research and policy tools.

As demonstrated at the level of European engagement through this and similar collaborative initiatives, the partners engage with the cultural tourism sector through a number of key formative contexts. These include those provided by the provision of blended learning and higher education experience applied to economics, marketing and tourism targeting operators, managers as well as local and regional authorities.

The importance of investing in research and training capabilities by higher education institutions that address the needs of economics, marketing and cultural tourism can hardly be overstated. A virtuous cycle may be established by public and private investment in this area of training and capacity building. For instance, a key contribution to the improvement of cultural tourism practice through the further linking of local and European experience lies in the identification of areas of key skills and related skills gaps. This is particularly true of research, policy drafting, project application and implementation phases. The significance to developing the appropriate skills in funding application and procurement is not to be diminished.

The application of research outcomes and training programmes to operators and professionals in cultural tourism allows beneficiaries to assess current and forthcoming economic and social contexts in relation to their contribution towards the sector, including cultural heritage tourism, on an international level. Joint up action may have a significant impact on parties involved in processes that engage with assessment, informing policy and its implementation. The creation of round table discussions, formats that enable the exchange of best practice such as workshops and placements, analogue and digital mapping of existing resources, and models that support the envisaging of possible future scenarios may all be components that breathe further oxygen into the various work engaged in on local and national levels by linking them to each other on an international sphere.

Gozo: a micro lab for research into sustainable cultural tourism

This section will conclude by looking in detail at how the European and local levels are already closely linked but well able to tighten relations between them. This will be done with reference to the island of Gozo.

Measuring 67 square kilometres of surface area, at a distance of about 7 kilometres from Malta and with a local population of circa 35,000, since EU membership Gozo has tried to make the most of novel tourism-oriented opportunities. Some initiatives have been more successful than others. Below are four reflections that are worth drawing special attention to:

i. Gozo abounds in heritage assets. This is one of the strong points of the island, together with the fact that when compared to cultural heritage management in Malta, Gozitan heritage assets enjoy a relatively better social context within which to function significantly in terms of the value assigned to them as intangible cultural heritage as defined by the Faro Convention. The island has the comparative advantage over Malta of still being able to offer a relatively high level of wellbeing and quality of life for its citizens. This also contributes towards attracting internal tourists, namely Maltese residents, international workers in Malta who seek Gozo for its calm and quiet, as well as day trippers and other tourists. It may be noted how in general Gozitans do not want to replicate the overdeveloped environment endemic in Malta in their own island.

ii. Gozo seems to enjoy another comparative advantage, intimately related to the first point made above. This is the natural geographic identity which marks Gozo from Malta and distinguishes many levels of cultural life on the island. The geography of the island predates any formal or informal regional boundaries defining governance, giving Gozo a natural sense of identity and belonging that has nurtured a close, roots-inspired, bottom-up approach to cultural, religious and popular life. A Ministry for Gozo has been in place since the end of the 1980s, with great consistency and stability afforded by the size of the jurisdiction, only later supported by the formation of local councils (1993) and regional ones.

iii. A clear priority for Gozitan efforts towards assessing and supporting the development of strategic priorities in the culture-led regeneration of the island is contemporary culture with regard to tourism and its largely unexplored appeal to visitors. While the management of natural and heritage assets seem stable and religious and carnival activities are relatively locally owned by active communities including band music and crafts related to the production of marches, passion plays and processions, the contemporary aspect is still largely untapped. This in spite of the fact that a good number of

contemporary artists are from and reside in Gozo. Arguably, this micro-reality can help sustain the development of other strategic areas for development.

iv. Finally, a key goal for the nurturing of a forward-looking cultural ecosystem that cherishes the local as well as the international is provided by preparations for the European Capital of Culture in a decade's time. All players need to be considered together by a strategy aiming to support and guide the development of the sector. Therefore, the ministry, the regional council, the local councils and the culturally active communities, be they artists, other creatives, schools, parishes, clubs and community centres, need to be addressed, involved and encouraged to keep working together.

v. As has been documented widely, culture is not neutral and its political connotations and uses have to be acknowledged, assessed and addressed (Bennett, 2018). As has been debated with regard to the example of Gozo, future local and regional action that addresses cultural tourism would stand to gain if revisited and informed through a strategic approach that is both in tune with current, and foreseeable, scenarios of development, and optimistic and visionary in its approach towards the development, adoption and adaptation of international models that may enable local and regional approaches to respond and interact with today's challenging societal make-ups.

Cultural enterprise in the Inner Harbour Area

This section considers another dimension of cultural enterprise with local parameters that aims to develop capacities rooted in and imported into particular localities and thrives on community participation, particularly where a diverse population is concerned. This section argues that on a tangible level, any number of interventions, actions and deliverables are to be closely knit to the role of the community therein, be it autochtonous or migrant. In this case, particular reference will be made to a human and natural environment that is radically different from that previously discussed, namely Gozo. In fact, the Inner Harbour Area, and the locality of the relatively new and increasingly populated town of Ħamrun, on the suburbs of Valletta, displays different challenges, attracts people for business and residential requirements that are more urban, and therefore invite alternative cultural approaches to their social life. The key deliverables mentioned above may be directly recognisable in these main areas of interest:

i. The communities that are directly influenced and impacted by both adverse and positive cultural and environmental change they themselves should, and could, be part of, in terms of ownership of plans and project implementation. The local residents and their extended families, as in the case of Ħamrun, a little distance away from Valletta and within the Inner Harbour Area, included a few thousand people that are part of the social fabric of the town that is undergoing a period of renewed cultural, economic and social revival that is accompanied by rapid change.

ii. The local communities that traditionally inhabit the area of and around Ħamrun have been intermingling and exchanging local identities and traditions, as well as current changing practice in living, business, family rearing and children upbringing with a mix of European and extra-European new Maltese citizens that are contributing in various ways to the liveability of the locality. Culture, sports, business development, voluntary activities, cleanliness, religious life are all aspects that are witnessing a sort of revival, that should be, and would benefit from, being accompanied by a greater environmental sensitivity.

iii. The urban distribution of Ħamrun precludes natural green spaces and the maritime zone lies outside its confines. However, the paucity of open, natural spaces is a prime reason for the *raison d'être* of this project. Therefore, the revisioning of habitation and public buildings as platforms for outdoor green spaces, for instance, in the shape of rooftop gardens and areas for the generation of naturally-fuelled energy, may impact society positively in terms of economic regeneration, community ownership and pride and the identification and management of common, shared public/private goals with long-term outcomes for future generations.

iv. Recent activity initiated by civil society organisations and supported by local authorities addresses the linking of cultural, environmental and economic priorities in relation to local and wider European perceptions of sustainable development. The European Commission Circular Economy Action Plan is instrumental for achieving sustainable production and consumption tied in particular to Sustainable Development Goal 12.

v. Players on the ground aim to put into practice the Circular Economy Action Plan aims for the smart combination of legislative, financial and support initiatives, emphasising ground-level progress and stakeholder engagement,

while creating the right framework for sustainable investments. Efforts are addressing the 2030 Agenda, since it empowers public authorities and stakeholders to address, identify, support and accelerate the transitional processes that are inherent to the circular economy. As has been widely documented and supported at EU level, the circular model promoted by the project aims to secure jobs at the local level, promote innovation in thinking and practice, create competitive advantage for businesses at local and EU levels, and protect the environment through sustainable practice.

Recent efforts seem to aim to encourage a transition to a circular and more solidary economy where: i. the value of products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and ii. the generation of waste is minimised, and then, reintegrated into the natural and human ecosystem as much as possible. These criteria form part of an essential contribution to the EU's efforts to develop a sustainable, resource efficient and solidary economy that thrives, rather than stygmatises, difference and diversity.

Main challenges in the local context

This challenge is particularly acute in Malta. As noted in the *Environmental Implementation Review 2019* for Malta, the Circular Economy Action Plan emphasises the need to move towards a life-cycle-driven circular economy, reusing resources as much as possible and, for instance, bringing residual waste close to zero. Malta has been urged to begin by developing and providing access to innovative financial instruments and funding for eco-innovation and the creative industries (European Commission, 2019). Malta introduced new relevant policy frameworks as a follow-up to its ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2016. For instance, the low-carbon development 2050 strategy announced by the government in 2017 identified the circular economy as key area of action for the decade to come. The Maltese government indicated it will promote a transition towards a more circular economy, particularly for waste management. However, Malta does not have a national circular economy strategy or roadmap, and comprehensive action is needed to support circularity and solidarity through a research-based approach to managing diverse communities of people within urban contexts under strain.

The circular economy process advocated by this article and visible, albeit in a small way, on a local level, can help protect the business communities against scarcity of resources and volatile prices. It can do this by helping to create new

business opportunities and innovative, more efficient ways of producing and consuming goods and services, including creative ones. It aims to contribute to the creation of local jobs at all skills levels and opportunities for social integration and cohesion, which are issues of particular social importance in a locality like Ħamrun in the light of social factors mentioned earlier.

Such projects aim at maximising their contribution to the transition to a circular economy by saving energy and thus helping avoid the irreversible damages caused by using up resources at an excessive rate. It has been noted how public support has yet to turn into strong engagement by the private sector and civil society. It has also been noted that industrial symbiosis is weak among Maltese SMEs, as well as design or future plans to design products that are easier to maintain, repair or reuse.

Actively promoting social engagement

One of the key priority actions recommended by the European Commission with regard to Malta for 2019 and future years has been the strengthening of the policy framework to speed up the transition towards the circular economy and make incentives for SME resource efficiency more effective. Actions supported by national and local authorities need to address the necessity to plan and implement areas of activity that are achievable, reaching out to various levels of governance, engaging the different stakeholders and communities, and promoting transition and sustainability of creative and diverse models.

Indeed, the Circular Economy Action Plan is both a policy as well as a strategic instrument with high replicability: its focus on cooperation and comprehensive action, covering the entire product's cycle, makes it suitable for different political and economic contexts. Such actions should aim to address the different complexities within the Maltese scenario, and facilitate cooperation and collaboration at local, national and European levels.

Conclusion

This article has argued that one of the most important elements in one's education is gaining experience and gaining the opportunity to apply it. Experience of a direct kind, through exposure to a work environment and learning by looking, and expecially doing, is a great asset to a young student charting their career paths in particular areas of interest to them. However, in

many contemporary societies, and equivalent work spaces, a great deal of flexibility is encountered and called for by individuals, and groups, taking part in social structures, be they addressing paid work, student experiences such as internships, voluntary work or other forms of social collaboration.

Thanks to its adherence to AMASS, the University of Malta research team supported the implementation of five creative research projects supporting a vision for the growing significance of socially engaged arts and long-term learning processes through the kind of practice advocated for in this article. It is also worth noting that the team based its recommendations for policy action on the feedback sought from participants and other stakeholders.

Flexibility in making connections

The 'liquid' nature of our age, to borrow a term from the late Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (2000), which he applied to our modernity to signify the changeable and changing nature of our social and technological contexts, spur us on to resist narrow foci on particular skills, and engage in what may be described as a diffused approach to education, training and work. Therefore, the development of crosscurricular skills, which are the subject of this article, are fundamental to engage with work environments we do not only inherit, but create through cooperation, collaboration and co-working.

A key contributing factor to this highly volatile environment, which is in constant flux, is the globalised and interconnected nature of our world. Malta may be described as a microcosm of this larger reality. International economic and financial interests and investments have made society, and industry in general, highly diversified in cultural terms, complex and inter-disciplinary. High levels of mobility, economic and political migration, global transfers of money, transnational political agreements that enable and encourage cross-border collaboration and investment and global activities that range from business interests to activism, for instance, with regard to climate change, engage young people in multiple ways. The rapid rate of technological change only adds to the need to keep up and stay on one's toes. As noted, this is characteristic of our contemporary age. As argued by David Harvey (1990) about our postmodern era, roughly dated to the early 1970s, at least at the time mostly applicable to the Western world, tradition struggles to keep up with novelty and changing working methods. People are under pressure to remember, save and value anything from the past they may feel is worthwhile preserving and appying to the present, and the future.

The term crosscurricular is itself a challenging term because it refers to a description of past ways of educating oneself, while hinting at current and future approaches. Curricula are rarely the structured, immobile and rigid learning paths that may have featured in education institutions' agendas and prospecti years ago. Today, in the light of higher education organisations' constant forays into competitive markets providing traditional, online and blended learning educational programmes, universities and other institutions are regularly adapting to dynamic work environments and market requirements by altering and improving their education programmes to respond, as quickly and efficiently as possible, to economic and financial demands.

A great deal of effort, and many resources, and nowadays dedicated to professionalising the different stages young people go through in developing their educational path and gaining the necessary skills with which to adapt to changing work environments. Particular skills in areas of high sensitivity, be they in micro-economic aspects, macro-economic assessments, digital marketing for particular demands and needs by clients and the various areas of tourism at a time when sustainability, cultural sensitivity and personalised itineraries are paramount, are necessary. Crosscurricular approaches cannot cut corners and prefer low-level, generalised education that camouflages itself as diverse and wide. A balance still needs to be struck between highly specialised competence in particular areas of knowledge and practice, and a wide perspective on the changing, wide-ranging demands of today's markets.

Education for creative citizenship

One other important challenge of crosscurricular developments relates to resisting the temptation to focusing on technical issues that are disconnected from the human element. The 'what' still needs to be accompanied by the inquiring and investigative thrust into the value of why technical matters are to be tackled through particular solutions. It is easy, tempting and relatively common practice to focus crosscurricular education on generating a plethora of solutions to technical problems that however are disconnected from deep, long-term repercussions on human as well as environmental wellbeing.

The European Commission (2018) reflects on the great significance that a crosscurricular approach may bring to the formation of new European citizens within the changing landscape in and around Europe through one of the more

dynamic areas of value, namely culture that is applied to societial relations. In 'A New European Agenda for Culture', we read that:

> Culture promotes active citizenship, common values, inclusion and intercultural dialogue within Europe and across the globe. It brings people together, including newly arrived refugees and other migrants, and helps us feel part of communities. Culture and creative industries also have the power to improve lives, transform communities, generate jobs and growth, and create spill over effects in other economic sectors.

In addressing the value of a creative approach to crosscurricular education in European territories, it is important to develop an awareness of the multiple components that are necessary to engage with education and skill development through an educational path that encourages curiosity, application of practical examples and the movitational factor on personal and group bases. Following a tryptic approach such as that develop by Amabile (1998), ongoing and proposed research projects should shadow and foreshadow developments in the dynamic way a blended type of education may support young people, researchers and academics in going beyond standard practice and seeking innovative ways at improving skills and exploring new frontiers.

Afterword

Between March and September 2018, the Goethe Institut of Brussels, acting on behalf of the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture, facilitated the Structured Dialogue process that brought together policy makers and cultural operators in the field of culture with others selected to represent sectors that were not culture-specific. These included the elderly, people with a physical disability, efforts towards combatting racism and anti-terrorism. While this type of Structured Dialogue was a first in itself, this article chooses to end with this reflection because what was also remarkable was that for the first time a Maltese cultural association, namely Inizjamed, and represented by the author, took part in the process. Developments in the field of social change through cultural enterprise were happening concurrently in mainland Europe and various of its peripheries, including Malta, and particularly thanks to its civil society and cultural operators that sought collaboration across sectors on a European dimension. In spite of the challenges they face, cultural managers and policy makers in Malta are showing they are engaging in practice that is promising and worth following in the future.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Toni Attard at Culture Venture, Dr Marie Avellino and Dr Ċensu Caruana at the University of Malta and Gianmarco Santirocco at CircE for their valuable insights.

References

Amabile, T. (1998). How to Kill Creativity, *Harvard Business Review*, September-October 1998, https://hbr.org/1998/09/how-to-kill-creativity.

Arts Council Malta (2016). *Strategy 2020*, https://www.artscouncilmalta.org/pages/guidance-advice/resources/strategy-2020/

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Polity Press.

Bennett, T. (2018). The political career of the culture concept. In T*he Routledge Handbook of Global Cultural Policy*, Durrer, V., Miller, T., & O'Brien, D. (Eds.), Routledge, 607-620.

Brusasco, P. (2018). *Dentro la devastazione: L'ISIS contro l'arte di Siria e Iraq*. La nave di Teseo.

Caruana, V. & Nogales. R. (2020). *Social Enterprises and their Ecosystems in Europe. Country Report Malta*. European Commission.

Chambers, I. (2008). *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*. Duke University Press.

Council of Europe (2005). Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680083746.

Defourny, J., & Nyssens, M. (2008). Social enterprise in Europe: recent trends and developments. *Social Enterprise Journal, 4*(3), 202-228.

European Commission (2021). *Social enterprises*, https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/enterprises_en

European Commission (2019). *The Environmental Implementation Review 2019. Country Report Malta*, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/pdf/report_mt_en.pdf

European Commission (2018). *A New European Agenda for Culture*, https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/strategic-framework-for-the-eus-cultural-policy

European Commission (2015). *User guide to the SME definition*, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/conferences/state-aid/sme/smedefinitionguide_en.pdf

Harvey, D. (1990). *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Blackwell.

Hulgård, L., Pestoff, V., & Defourny, J. (Eds.), (2014). *Social Enterprise and the Third Sector: Changing European Landscapes in a Comparative Perspective*. Routledge.

Matošević Radić, M., Jukić, I. & Roje, A. (2020). Increasing tourism through social entrepreneurship – the case of Croatia, *Journal of Corporate Governance,*

Insurance, and Risk Management, 7(1), 25-38. https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/66682

Parliamentary Secretariat for Tourism, the Environment and Culture (2011). *National Cultural Policy*, Government of Malta.

Pasolini, P. P. (1999). 'Sviluppo e progresso', *Pagine corsare: Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*. Meridiani Mondadori.

Sale, K. (1999). *Five Facets of a Myth*, Resurgence, 192, https://www.resurgence.org/magazine/author287-kirkpatrick-sale.html

Times of Malta (2021). Large metal platform eats up Valletta's Merchants Street, https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/large-metal-platform-eats-up-merchants-street.897058

UNESCO (2019). *Culture | 2030 Indicators*, 12, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371562

United Cities and Local Governments (2015). *Strategic Priorities 2016-2022*, https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/strategic_priorities_2016-2022.pdf

Zahra, S. A., Gedajlovic, E., Neubaum, D. O., & Shulman, J. M. (2009). A typology of social entrepreneurs: Motives, search processes and ethical challenges, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 24(5), 519-532.

MALTA REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Volume 15, Supplement Issue, pp. 69-96
Faculty of Education©, UM, 2021

Isolate with love

Saldanha, Ângela; Torres de Eça,
Teresa; Balsa, Raquel; Ferreira, Célia
APECV, Association of Teachers of Expression and Visual Communication

Abstract
This article reports on a pilot project, developed within the scope of the AMASS project 'Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture', in Portugal, by APECV (Association of Teachers of Expression and Visual Communication) in the year 2020. This is the year in which the Covid-19 pandemic plagued the world and changed the way we live and relate to each other. In Portugal, the project was started during lockdown, forcing constant changes to the initial plans, given that society's challenges are constantly changing and contexts change methods, populations and objectives. Here, we explain the choice of the population that collaboratively participated in this study (people with multiple disabilities), the work context (the Covid-19 pandemic in Portugal), the participatory methodology, the use of artistic and artistic techniques, the affective pedagogies and the importance of poetry, metaphor and love in a work process rich in meanings, understood by all, emancipatory and impactful on the surrounding society.

Keywords: Lockdown; Community Arts; Participatory Design; Relation Aesthetics; Transformative Learning; Artivism; Mental Health

Introduction

APECV is a non-governmental organization from Portugal, which has been working for more than 30 years in educational projects through the arts in a formal, non-formal and informal context.

In 2019, it became a partner of the international project AMASS, funded by the European Union research and innovation programme Horizon 2020 (agreement nº 870621), coordinated by the University of Lapland (Finland) and partnering with Karlova University (Czech Republic), University of Malta, Hogskolan i Boras University (Sweden), Corvinus Egyetem University (Hungary), PACO Design (Italy) and Leeds University (England). This project seeks to investigate the role of the arts in society's challenges, especially in places located on the margins. It aims to promote and investigate transformative actions from the arts with minority or disadvantaged groups from marginalized places in Europe.

In this article, and within the scope of the aforementioned project (AMASS), we will report on its pilot project, between June and December 2020 in Portugal (the year when the pandemic spread around the world). An experiment developed with a population from the margins of society (with the partnership of the ASSOL — an organization in which people with multiple disabilities participate). We worked with a population that is especially fragile in the context experienced, using Artivist techniques, Participatory Design, Relational Aesthetics, Transformative Learning and Gentle Teaching.

The experiment started with the following problems:

How do you develop a collaborative project, with a community on the margins of society, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, in Portugal?
Why should you develop a collaborative project...?
What causes (political, social, cultural, etc.) in this context make such interventions necessary?
And what assumptions are you making about the possibilities of such interventions?

To try to answer these questions, we followed a phased pilot construction methodology, which we set out as a narrative in this article:

1. Understanding the context;
2. Community identification;
3. Preparation of work with the community;
4. Development of work with the community;
5. Reflections on the study.

We will start with a short description of the Portuguese context during the pandemic, the weaknesses of society and the reference to the most marginalized groups in the context experienced, the problems developed in mental health and the compulsory social isolation.

Next, we will present the population, a community of adult people with multiple disabilities, users of the non-governmental organization ASSOL dedicated to experimental methods of treatment based on Gentle Teaching.

We will also discuss the methodology of the study presented: the idea and preparations for collective work, the gift "Isolate with Love" and the affective exchange contract, the importance of symbolic objects, the importance of love, the collaborative education and Gentle Teaching
based on affective relationships.

We will also present the work methodology and the participatory ideals, in which all participants collaborate in the plan and development of the "Learning Spaces" project. Here, we present the developed path, with the activities carried out and the evolution of the work until the devolution
to the community (with the exhibition and sale of the Kit "Isolate with Love").

In the last section, "Impact and New Paths", we present some reflections on the work developed: expected impact, weaknesses of the study and objectives achieved.

1. Context: Covid-19 pandemic in Portugal and in the world

In the first quarter of 2020, Europe began to feel, with the appearance of the first cases, the Covid-19 pandemic, and Portugal detected the first case in March 2020[1].

[1] At the beginning of March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) (www.who.int/eportuguese/publications/pt/), reports that the confirmed infected of Covid-19 already they had exceeded 200,000 cases worldwide. On May 6, 2021, the same organization reveals that 154 815 600 people have already been infected and 3,236,104 died by Covid-19, worldwide www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus -2019

In March 2020, little was known about the virus, which forced communities into total social isolation, and for several weeks, unjustified circulation and the opening of public spaces (such as shopping centres, museums, galleries, associations, administrative spaces, government buildings, schools, universities). This pandemic, which we still face in 2021, with successive lockdowns, has radically altered social structures, especially personal relationships and economic and social development. This made social, economic or individual gaps even more visible in Portugal, as follows:

- On a social level, the pandemic exposed more marginalized populations, further away from the majority of the population (Costa in Carmo et al., 2020). Despite the use of digital platforms to bring people together, share culture, education and training or medical and / or psychological support, the limited technological, social, educational and economic capacities of these minority populations increased the barriers, making evident the importance of working with these populations and the need to reformulate the practices used so far.
- At the economic level, given the temporary or total closure of many companies, the number of unemployed people has increased (Carmo et al., 2020), with an impact on various economic strata of society, but with greater predominance in the most fragile populations.
- At the individual level, there is a need to maintain and take care of mental health, given that social isolation and distance are problems that increase psychological and physical problems. At this level, it should be noted that the whole context of the pandemic (ignorance of the disease, fear, uncertainties, social pressures ...) increases distrust in others, lowers self-esteem and the importance of life itself, distances culture, art and education. This can lead to the development or potentiation of psychoses, hallucinations, various sufferings and depression. This reveals the enormous impact of the pandemic on the present and future of mental health in Portugal and in the world.

According to the World Health Organization (2004), mental health is:

> "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community ". (WHO, 2001, as cited in WHO, 2004)

Changes also felt by other researchers, who initiate a reflection and forecast of needs for the post-Covid-19 future, such as Lawrence Gostin refers:

"The world is experiencing a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, causing untold human suffering and death, unraveling of social relationships, and robbing individuals of livelihoods and countries of prosperity. The coronavirus pandemic has strained health systems, revealed inequalities, and upended international institutions. Here are 7 critical lessons:

1. Build Resilient Health Systems;
2. Leadership and Public Trust Are the Single Greatest Indicator of Success;
3. Defend the Integrity of Science and Public Health Agencies;
4. Invest in Biomedical Research and Development;
5. Focus on Equity: The Prevailing Narrative of This Age;
6. Adopt Evidence-Based Laws: Safeguard the Rule of Law;
7. Fund and Support Robust Global Institutions: We Are in This Together." (Gostin, 2020)

2. Population: Working with people on the margins (NGO: ASSOL)

ASSOL (Lafões Social Solidarity Association), a non-governmental organization in the center of Portugal, was founded in 1987. ASSOL was created as an instrument to facilitate the community's response to the needs of adult people with multiple disabilities without specialized assistance.

The Association's mission is to contribute to the social inclusion of people with disabilities or mental illnesses that generate disability, residing in the region of Lafões (interior-centre of Portugal).

Support for each person is decided jointly with them and should be enough so that they can be independent in the community where they live, which will help the person to become more autonomous and less dependent on institutional support. The specialists who work at the institution provide support and help the person to go through his/her plan, without deciding for him. This support is established according to the dreams and needs of each person and always negotiated with him / her and / or with the people who can represent him / her and negotiated annually. This negotiation results in the definition of the objectives to be achieved, the necessary support and the responsibilities that the person assumes to achieve them.

These contracts are discussed and evaluated together and also signed by all parties who assume responsibilities therein, with a detailed description of the activities negotiated.

The methodology that guides this process is Person-Centered Planning, 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 realization. Also in this organization the following method is used:

- Gentle Teaching[2], which is based on human rights, the right to equality, non-violence and social justice; in the affective accompaniment of each person so that they feel safe, loved, needed in the community and able to love.

All of these methodologies reinforce the power and capacity of each person to enter the community, with their differences and difficulties, increasing their quality of life, taking into account eight criteria, described in the "Gentle Teaching" Movement principles and adapted by the organization ASSOL (assol.pt):

- Body Integrity - having health, being well dressed, fed and cared for;
- Feeling safe - Enjoying being with others, not being afraid of those you live with and living relaxed in interaction with others;

[2] Gentle Teaching is about unconditional love. It recognizes that many people are burdened with memories of distrust and fear and that their hearts are broken. It focuses on teaching them a sense of companionship. Through this process, violent behaviors begin to disappear and new ones emerge." McGee, John J. In https://gentleteaching.com, access may 2021

- Feeling valued - Seeing yourself as good, being recognized as a good person, feeling proud, and being able to express your talents;
- Having a structured life - Feeling like you have a life plan, having daily routines and having your own rituals and beliefs;
- A sense of belonging - Having a circle of close friends, valuing and being valued by others and feeling companionship;
- Social participation - Being able to have contact with the community, to be among other people and to take part in the life of the community;
- Significant daily activities - Enjoy your daily activities and do activities that fit your life plan;
- Inner contentment - Feel inner harmony and feel free from traumatic experiences.

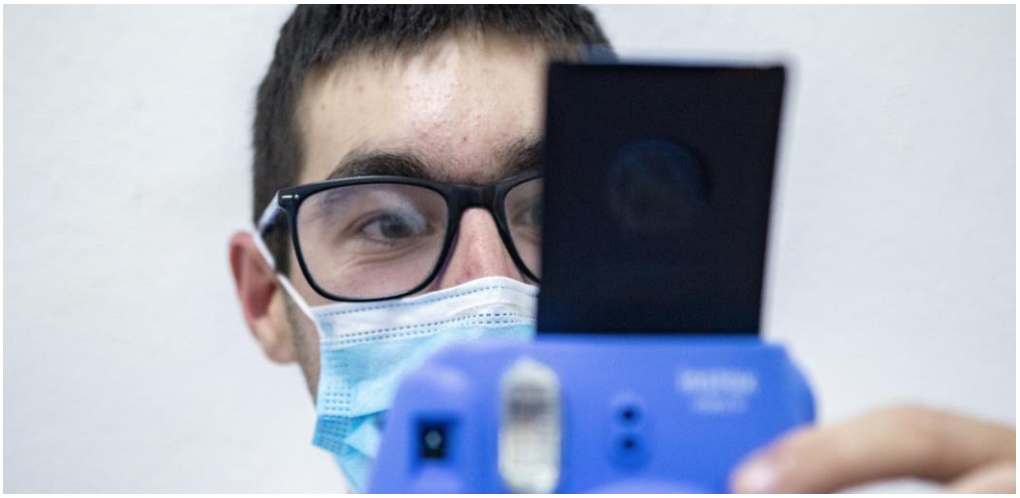
This non-governmental organization has been a partner of APECV for several years, which facilitated the work carried out during this experiment, where affection, respect and trust were essential for the continuation and legitimacy of the work (necessary factors for the development with a population of this type, always with time and dedication).

3. Methodology: relationships, metaphor, collective participation, time, artivism ...

> "The most beautiful and true thing is the hearts that pass through other hearts and leave in those hearts the optical instrument that allows you to see and contemplate more hearts" (Barata, 2012)

Any methodology to be used at the community level must take into account the different factors that make up the work, mainly: the context (social, political and economic), the population (with attention to each individual), the objectives, the time available for implementation and return (giving back and sharing the results/process with the surrounding community). In this case, after analyzing all the factors, the APECV artists/activists decided to prepare the work and presentation based on the motto "Isolar com Amor".

"Isolate with Love" is a manifesto of action for the present times, in which mandatory isolation can be seen as a proof of Love towards others, even those we do not know. We try here, by using a metaphor, to bring the most beautiful side of the pandemic to everyone's work and thinking table.



At this point, we are already working with the concepts inherent in contemporary art, in which relational aesthetics, as a proposal to inhabit and build a common world (Bourriaud, 2009), is visible in all thoughts of the work. Becoming, in the first instance, a gift of presentation, donation, work proposal and invitation, according to the concept of Derrida:

> "Derrida was interested in the gift as a philosophical question, in the very concept of 'gift'. That interest took him to the foundations of what constituted a free, pure gift and its aporia or impasse: the gift disappears at the very moment it is acknowledged as such, since any account, any recognition, any hint of the necessity to return a gift, turns it into a debt." (Derrida in Sansi, 2015, p. 108)

> … "The "pure" gift is not an impossibility and an aporia, but a radical gesture of subversion. (Sansi, 2015, p. 110).

We seek to transmit messages and change habits through gestures that approach artivism, bringing it to the work room, where artistic actions are used to draw attention. (Mourão, 2014)

Associating all these contemporary practices to the contributions of artistic making:

- Arts engagement contributions to mitigate the effects of adverse environments;
- Enables self-expression and empowers;
- Helps managing chronic stress;
- Helps to surpass social isolation;
- Contributes to self-understanding and reflection about life;
- Improves empathy and openness to the diversity and human experience.

Contributions that benefit the wellbeing, as the scheme refers (The Mental Health Foundation present five ways to wellbeing[3]):

After explaining the concept "Isolate with Love" and delivering the "Gift", the collaborative work started with time for conversations and for the knowledge of all participants, using PhotoVoice. This became the starting point for the actions that were developed (proposals and accepted in groups) and which we describe in the following point.

[3] font: https://mentalhealth.org.nz/five-ways-to-wellbeing

4. Process: Route of creations until arriving at Kit "Isolate with Love"[4]

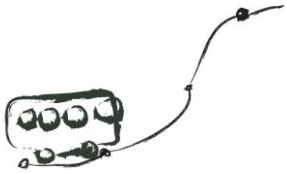
The Pilot Project was developed between June 2020 - December 2020 and was implemented gradually, according to the wishes of the participants
in 5 steps.

Step 1: We share ideas at ASSOL, in Oliveira de Frades Pedagogies of emancipation through the arts: Learning from the 'Other'

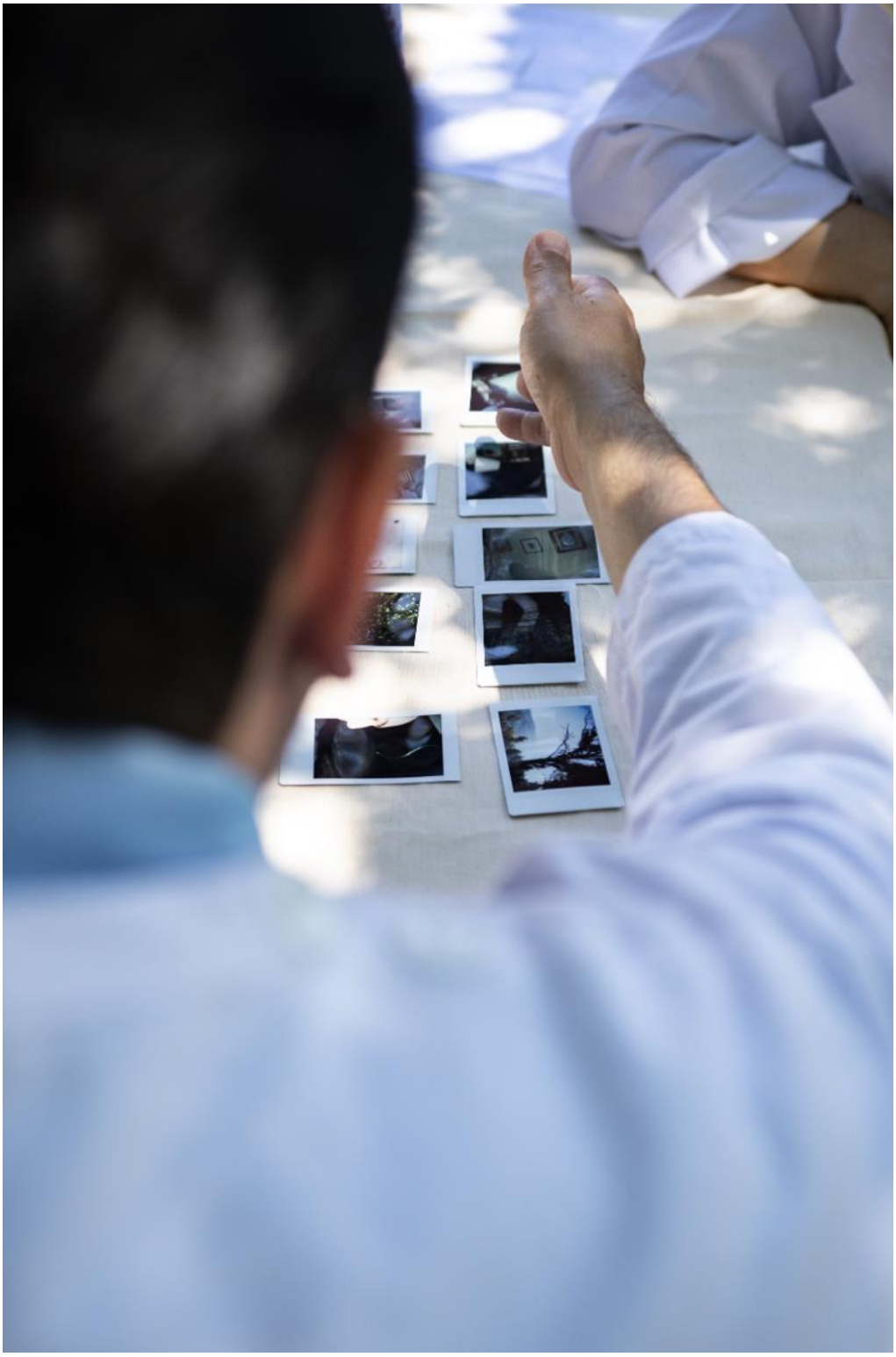
In June 2020, we went to a first meeting to explain the idea.

ASSOL agreed to do one more experiment with us. We proposed to start by discovering our places of learning - a way for us to build, in a group, a sharing of the important places in the individual history, to facilitate group dynamics, sharing and future perspectives - and we left a polaroid camera for each of us or each group to take photographs of these places. At the end of the month we came back, for a conversation about the places of learning from the photos. We learned that in the rawness of light and shadow are unstable places of relationship; learned in the family, on television, on the internet school; at work, on the road, in the village; in the river; with the people; with Raquel, with Pancho. We talked about what we could do next, what we would like to learn and how we could learn from the arts.

[4] 06 Process described in https://www.apecv.pt/pt-pt/amass



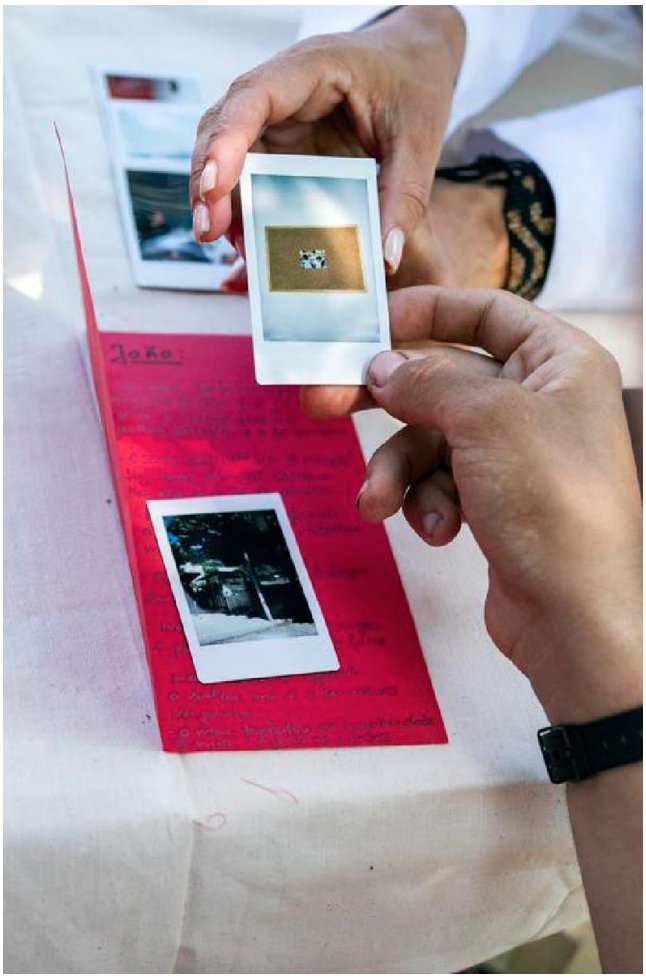
Our way of learning is a collaborative process, capable of creating new relationships and new ways of understanding the world. In this way, we learn deeply about pedagogy from the participants of the projects we coordinate. Learning spaces are learning encounters, and the learning process requires an affective relationship with space and people. Our methods, inspired by Paulo Freire's ideas about popular education, reside in relationships structured in humility; trust and love. We learned from the pedagogy of interdependence how to apply companionship and respect for others in collaborative artistic projects (McGee, 2019).



This is a quote from one of the participants of the AMASS project, made during the second session (photovoice):

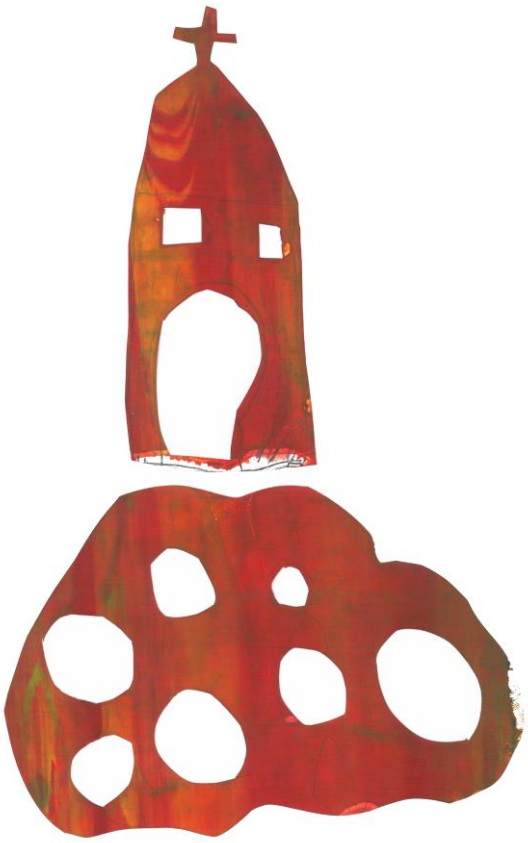
> "What cannot be defined turns out to be a mystery. Cruelty is in the image, in the light and in the shadow, that indefinite feeling.
> I call this art, the way we use it to explain, to demonstrate our feelings."
> JC, one of the study participants

Step 2: At ASSOL we talked about the photos and planned future actions.



We discover the legends of the lands of Lafões

Step 3: We told stories from here and beyond by the river
We designed at ASSOL.



Step 4: We print the legends of our land (Serigraphy)

The legends are brought by ASSOL users, we talk about them, we draw, we create purchases with old and current places and we create new stories and imaginaries with the drawn images.

With the images we produce a bag full of important things.

For three months we built a Product-Manifesto "Isolate with Love" that aims to react to the fragility of our times. A Product-Manifesto filled with symbolism, with the stories of Oliveira de Frades told by ASSOL people that we can symbolically transport with us:

- the drawings, starting from the legends of the places, to add to the images of our shared memories.

- the lace, in the form of a mandala - made by the participants - invoking timeless dreams, to help us keep what is most dear to us.


COM AMOR
COM AMOR

All the pieces were made with attention, affection, patience, rigour and time that an object made individually and by hand takes. We want to take care of others, dress affections and spread hope (APECV, 2020).

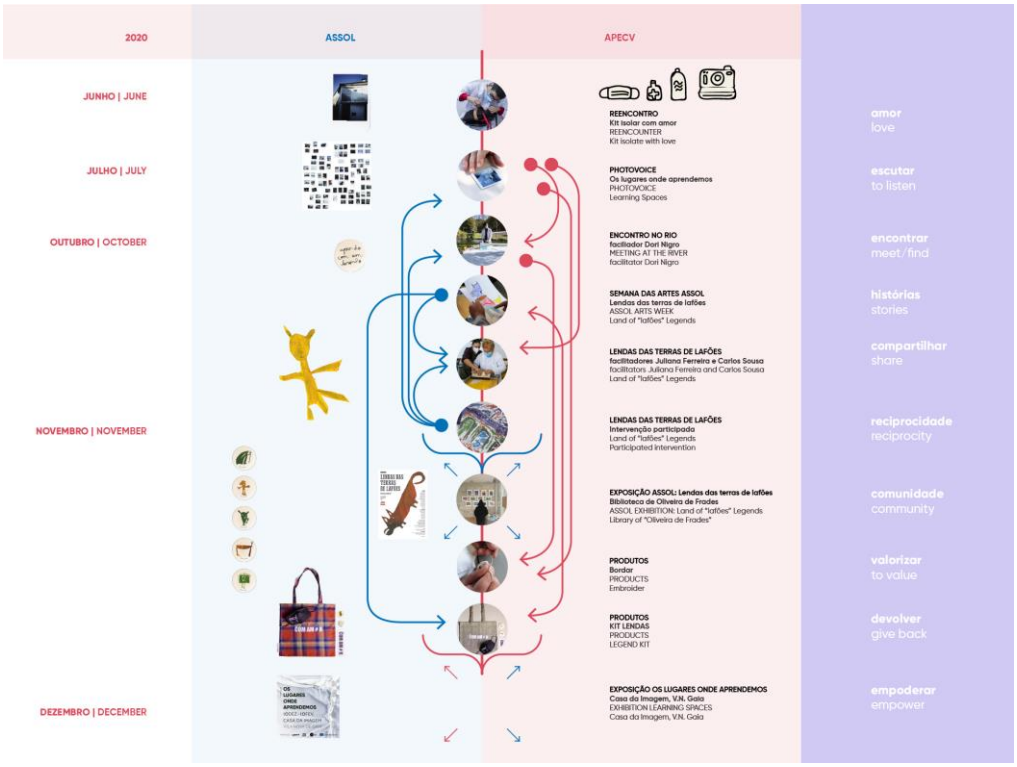
The realization tasks were divided by all participants. some made the drawings, others the binding of the notebooks with the legends, others the lace... each one produced what was easiest for him.

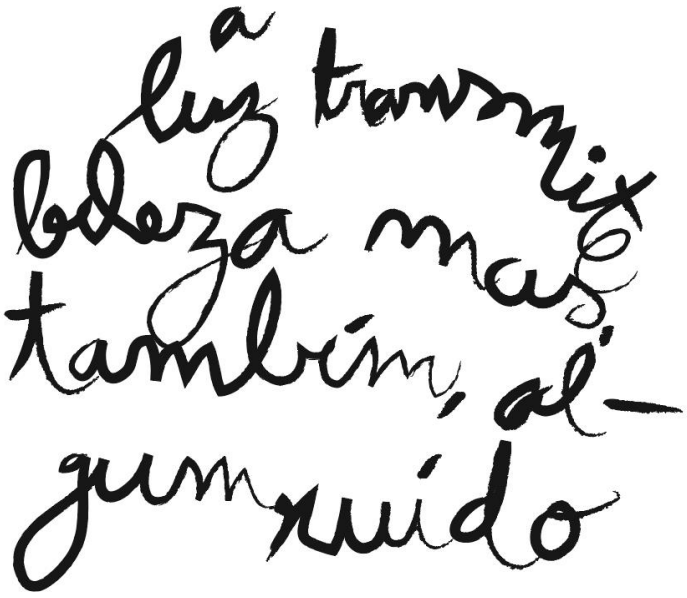
Step 5: We shared our trip at Casa da Imagem in Vila Nova de Gaia with the participants (through video and photography)

This exhibition is based on a collaborative and continuous work, through artistic processes, between members of APECV - Association of Teachers of Expression and Visual Communication and members of ASSOL - Association of Social Solidarity of Lafões - which supports adults with disabilities. (APECV, 2020)

We set out on other discoveries…

This year we will resume work, centered on what we can do and learn to sell and show to others.





the light transmits beauty but also some noise

5. Impact and New Paths

At the end of this pilot project, we have found that the artistic based methodologies used in the experiment "Isolate with Love" can be useful to increase degrees of internal equilibrium, taking into account the evolving concept of mental Health (World Health Organization, 2004):

"A dynamic state of internal equilibrium, which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health, which. Contribute, to varying degrees, to state of internal equilibrium."

We understand that the relationship created and the path developed, allowed us to understand its importance for the community, namely:

- Enabling participation;
- Empowering community gathering;
- Expressions of one's potential and fosters autonomy;
- Providing social and learning space for dialogue;
- Breaking the social isolation;
- Develop know how closer to the labour market;

In terms of Impact, the experiment enabled not only the visibility of the AMASS project but also the visibility of the capacities of the people involved in the study. The surrounding community had the opportunity with the exhibition and kit selling to get to know the marginalized community participating in the study and to value their work;

One positive aspect of the study was linked to the importance of involving participants in each stage of the experience's design and planning, not using directive tools. The used methods increased a sense of belonging and sharing. As a conclusion we can say:

- It is important that all participants have a voice in the construction and evaluation of the project;

- The importance of not doing charity, but enhancing the value of the work developed;
- It is everyone's responsibility to publicize the work in a way that dignifies and values the people involved;
- The importance of taking care and asking to take care;
- Research studies must contribute to strengthening a sense of belonging and haring of all participants.

There were also many weaknesses in this study, such as:

- The unexpected social isolations (lockdowns), mandatory of the pandemic, forcing a constant adjustment of the work agenda;
- The necessary social withdrawal, which did not allow touch and greater intimacy between participants;
- At the final public exhibition, due to the pandemic, the exhibition audience numbers were fewer than expected, and it was difficult for participants to visit in the planned timetable, (they only were able to visit the exhibition in April 2022, 4 months after the experiment).

In conclusion, we emphasize that the Covid-19 pandemic situation made the problems of society more visible and moved marginalized communities even further away from the majority populations, therefore we should address:

- Strengthening relations between local entities for joint work;
- Discussing publicly (cultural / artistic agents, associations, minority populations, educators ...) the problems we experience so that all citizens can be heard on an equal basis;
- Building practices that generate intimacy and social relationships;
- Not standardizing aesthetics;
- Developing artistic actions of visibility and social claim.

This study has been approved by APECV's ethics committee (https://www.apecv.pt/en/node/819)

References

Barata, G. (2012). *A Fenomenologia Enquanto Lugar Total da Vida*. Edições Sílabo.

Bourriaud, N. (2009). *Estética Relacional*. Martins Fontes.

Carmo, R.; Tavares, I.; Cândido, A. (2020). "Um olhar Sociológico sobre a Crise Covid-19 em Livro". Observatório das Desigualdades.

Gostin, L. O. (2020). The Great Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020—7 Critical Lessons. JAMA. 2020;324(18):1816-1817. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.18347. in https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2772746. Access 07/05/2021

Freire, P. (1975). Pedagogia do oprimido. Afrontamento.

Mourão, R. (2014). Ensaio de Artivismo. Museu Nacional de ArteContemporânea do Chiado

Sansi, R. (2015). Art, Anthropology and the Gift. Bloomsbury Academic.

World Health Organization (2004)."Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice (Summary Report). World Health Organization.


OS
LUGARES
ONDE
APRENDEMOS


ISOLAR
COM AMOR
ISOLAR
COM AMOR

MALTA REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Volume 15, Supplement Issue, pp. 97-117
Faculty of Education©, UM, 2021

Love Talks and Neighbourhood: Promoting encounters, tolerance and social inclusion by means of art in daily life and the living environment in Finnish Lapland

Mirja Hiltunen, Pieta Koskenniemi, Melanie Sarantou

Abstract

This article will introduce the *Love Talks and Neighbourhood* (later *Love Talks*) project, part of the AMASS, Acting on the Margin: Arts as Social Sculpture project. *Love Talks* was realised in Finnish Lapland in 2020, as part of an effort by local artists and art education students to explore how arts initiatives can build tolerant, community-focused neighbourhoods, while reflecting on how such activities can be scaled up to larger initiatives. The artists and art educators involved in the project took on the roles of teachers, developers, enablers, curators, facilitators, producers and creators of a new dialogic operational culture. The project asked whether socially engaged art can provide new tools for social interaction and increased collaboration. Can it lead to a new dialogue, critical discussions and new forums for participation? This paper highlights the importance of paying attention to how activities are organised and realised in the diverse and often challenging environments characteristic of socially engaged art and community-based art education. It explores how to promote encounters, tolerance and well-being through the use of art, and the role of culture and art in promoting social inclusion, capacity building, networking and participation in daily life and living environments.

Key words: Socially engaged art, participation, practising tolerance, marginalisation, art-based action research

Prologue

It all started when two Iraqi asylum seekers who had settled in Rovaniemi, Finnish Lapland were granted asylum. The moment was so important for them that they wanted to give a gift in return, to share something beautiful about their own culture. They came up with the idea to build a scale model of one of the most famous buildings in

ancient Babylon, the Ishtar Gate. The gate, known for its brilliant colours, was a show of love from King Nebuchadnezzar to his wife and was named after Ishtar, the goddess of love.

1. Introduction

An impressive art work graces the banks of the Kemi river in Rovaniemi. This work was created and installed by Iraqis Al-Fateh Ali Mousa and Saba Majid, immigrants to Finland, in 2020. The work was a gesture of their appreciation to the community of Rovaniemi for giving them a new home as refugees. The story of their art work is revealed in the prologue of this article. The essence of their gesture became the inspiration of a city-wide project that was implemented in 2020 across Rovaniemi.

Figure 1. Al-Fateh Ali Mousa and Saba Majid in front of the gate (4 meters high, 5,5 meters long, 1,5 meters wide) *at the opening ceremony. Photography: Mirja Hiltunen, 2020.*

In this article we will introduce the *Love Talks and Neighbourhood* (later *Love Talks*) project, part of the AMASS, *Acting on the Margin: Arts as Social Sculpture*

project (AMASS). *Love Talks* was realised in Finnish Lapland in 2020, as part of an effort by local artists and art education students to develop arts initiatives that can build tolerant, community-focused neighbourhoods, and to reflect on how such activities can be scaled up to larger initiatives. The project arose out of a desire to promote interactions between people – neighbours, strangers on the street, family members – that are open-minded and free of preconceived notions.

Figure 2. The artistic activities that constituted the Love Talks project were laid out in the shape of a love heart across the neighbourhoods of Rovaniemi as illustrated in the city map. Graphic design by Heidi Luokkanen, 2020.

The project approached the city as a common home for all its inhabitants. Pieta Koskenniemi, a local director, live art maker and art educator, began curating and planning the Ishtar Gate in 2019. Later, Pieta and her team invited additional collaborators – other artists as well as faculty and students from the University of Lapland Faculty of Art and Design – to join the AMASS project. The organizing group eventually grew to consist of two curators, two researchers, eight artists from different fields and four art education students.

Socially engaged art is defined for the purposes of this paper as an artistic practice that requires a meaningful interaction with communities and that has broader social, educational or political intentions at its core (Desai, 2020; Kester, 2004). These kind of art practices include collaborative and community-based processes, and often public and dialogic practices, that rely on social intercourse and exchange (Gablik, 1995; Kwon, 2002; Lacy, 1995; Olsen, 2019). When speaking about socially engaged art we refer also to relational art or relational aesthetics (Kester, 2004).

The city of Rovaniemi is home to different immigrant groups, experiencing various degrees of marginalisation. While many are refugees or displaced individuals and families who have been provided with new opportunities to permanently settle and live in Rovaniemi, many migrant workers, foreign students and knowledge workers also migrate to the city on an annual basis. The latter group migrate to the city for work and study purposes spanning from one to many years. To a varying extent, these individuals, families and even smaller communities may experience discrimination due to difficulties in learning the Finnish language, while many would also not be able to speak Swedish or English as alternative languages. Additionally, a lack of participation in local activities such as cultural events, and the harsh climate during the long and dark arctic winter, which forces people indoors further impacts the integration of immigrants within local communities. Like other socially engaged art projects in Northern Finland, we aimed to seek alternative solutions to societal problems by encouraging communication between different parties in a diversifying society and levelling access to cultural activities regardless of background for both locals, immigrants and other minority groups (Hiltunen, Mikkonen & Laitinen, 2020; Jokela, Hiltunen, & Härkönen, 2015).

The authors of this article are deeply aware that social issues are connected to power relations and politics in society, however, we still believe it is worthwhile to explore the potential impact of an art event, its meanings to wider society and how it might have the power to affect social issues such as the fostering cross-cultural understanding and integration of displaced peoples. As associates of the AMASS project, we share the project's conception of art's role in society, as stated on the project's home page (AMASS, 2020):

> The arts can move people, educate societies and question widely accepted narratives. The arts can also shed new light on the past, hold

up a mirror to contemporary life and launch new perspectives for the future. AMASS, an arts-based action research project, aims to create concrete opportunities for people to come together and accompany artists as agents in creative projects and interpretations.

In the *Love Talks* project, artists and art educators play the roles not only of artists or teachers but of developers, enablers, curators, facilitators, producers and creators of a new dialogic operational culture.

The research questions motivating this artistic experiment are based on the artists' various roles in the event. Our main research interests concerning such roles were how arts initiatives can build tolerant, community-focused neighbourhoods; what kinds of stories the artists connected to the activities and the unfolding of the processes; and how such activities can be scaled to larger initiatives. Key methodologies selected were open-ended artistic experiments, group discussions and interviews.

2. Role of artists: Interaction and connections with one another

The artist and art educator teams involved in the project implemented arts-based strategies to develop community and social development and to expand roles for artists in a small but multicultural Northern city. We explored ways to expand the powerful impact of the arts to benefit more people and communities by inviting artists to take part in all stages of the study, from planning to evaluation, and by offering open space for citizens to take part in the art workshops and public art events. The most important social impact of the art was promoting interaction and connections between people, opening up discussions about meanings and how they relate to intercultural connections.

As in all types of relational art practices, the conceptual or physical realization of a piece relies on human reaction: on the implicit or explicit exchange of information between the piece of art and the people who witness or take part in it (Kester, 2004; Lacy, 1995; Lippard, 1997). Socially engaged art relies on the participatory or the relational context, which depends on the capacity to build a relationship between collaborators and audiences (Olsen, 2019). Earlier studies have pointed out that successful socially engaged art depends on a combination of artists' and art educators' professional skills in their mediums, pedagogical capabilities and knowledge of participatory art methods

(Hiltunen et al., 2020; Hiltunen, 2010). The venue or public environment for the art also plays an important role in terms of actualising participation.

Our aim was to attract participants from the general public, including immigrants, elderly people, young adults and people from different cultural backgrounds. Members of the Rovaniemi public who participated in art-making events can be viewed as active participants as they contribute specific meanings and agency to the project through their expressions, for example in the mural workshop. Similarly, many of the artists also found themselves in active roles from the perspective of community participation, which is typical for conversational art in general. The role of art as a space of mutual knowledge creation and negotiation is vital in promoting socially engaged art. The question of shaping belonging, self-esteem and genuine understanding of one another highlights the importance of the encounter and the subsequent negotiation of meaning.

Initially, the team planned to include "blind dates" in the project activities, in which unknown members of Rovaniemi neighbourhoods would be invited to garden, home and front yard parties. However, these plans had to be changed due to the impact of COVID-19 in the summer of 2020. Instead, unique community arts meetings hosted in public spaces around Rovaniemi – amid the ongoing emergency situation of the pandemic – were incorporated into the project in late summer.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic began in winter 2020, the project invited special groups to join the exploration of the themes Neighbourhood and *Love Talks*. These preliminary workshops considered the fields of art, culture, health and social care. The operational environment encompassed art workshops carried out in Lapin Muistiyhdistys Ry [Memory association of Lapland], a daytime activity centre for the elderly. Art education students organized four art workshops; the participants were 12 elderly women.

Rovaniemi Youth Service was also invited to join and explore the everyday environment at the city centre with their young customers. All the art works from these preliminary workshops were later exhibited in the workshops space at the Revontuli shopping mall as part of the main activity week in September 2020.

Figure 3. The open workshops space at the Revontuli shopping mall invites the public to join. Photography: Mirja Hiltunen, 2020.

Socially engaged art derives much of its meaning from interactions and encounters with the public. *Love Talks* events were open to community participants, fellow artists and the wider public during the activity week (occurring during Rovaniemi-viikko, or Rovaniemi Week, 6.-12.9.2020). The workshops were set up in public locations to ensure access for audiences; community interaction with the exhibited works and ongoing workshops occurred at the centrally located Revontuli shopping mall. The number of active participants in the five open workshops was approximately 90-100. The number of passers-by with whom one of the facilitators had deeper discussions related to the theme was approximately 70-80, of whom many were migrants. The musical performances of the Finnish sledge songs and their Roma musical versions were well attended as all the concerts were fully booked.

Figure 4. A sticker-making workshop led by artist Juha Mytkänimi introduced the world of sticker culture; participants made handmade stickers on the themes of love and acceptance. Photography: Mirja Hiltunen, 2020.

Figure 5. A mural painting workshop led by artists Leena Pukki and Juha Mytkäniemi included indoors designing and outdoors painting days. Photography: Mirja Hiltunen, 2020.

Musical and performing arts activities were organized at the same venue, including performances of Finnish sled songs and their Roman musical versions and a street dancing workshop titled One Love Jamboree.

Figure 6. Musical and performing arts initiatives included Finnish sledge songs by Minna Siitonen and their Roman musical versions by Hilja Grönfors. Photography: Mirja Hiltunen, 2020.

3. Research methods

Collaborative working methods that are based on sharing experiential knowledge and learning involve situations that require understanding the experiences of others and seeking solutions together. Art-based action research develops participatory and dialogical processes and prioritises participants' agency and involvement (Jokela et al., 2015). It is a research strategy that combines artistic practices with development research in formal and informal education, regional development and community empowerment. Stakeholders and community members are often active members in the research processes. Art-based action research is especially rooted in process-oriented dialogical and place-specific forms of art, such as environmental and community art and pedagogical settings and practices of community-based art education (Jokela et al., 2019; Jokela et al., 2015).

The research data used consists of visual documentation of the process and artworks created, which illustrate experiences and symbolize value transformations, as well as participatory observation and interviews. As found in other arts-based research, the literature shows that the arts can enable non-verbal knowledge transferral (Brown, 2001; Leavy, 2017; Stevens & McKechnie, 2005). Images and art can offer a practical medium, through which facilitators and artist-educators can empower participants by facilitating expressions of complex ideas about their 'art worlds' (Becker, 1990). The consideration of multiple views and concepts, and its articulation fosters the participants' understanding of their role within a complex multicultural society.

In *Love Talks*, the key data collection methods included participant and external observation, focus group discussions and note taking. Workshops enabled the implementation of focused activities and processes according to how the artists envisaged the production of smaller events. The workshops were organised by lead artists. The artist-researcher and project lead rotated amongst the workshops over the period of the event (31.7-20.9.2020) to observe the artist-participants and audience members from the wider public. Group discussions were arranged before, during and after the event with the artist-participants. Data were collected using digitally recorded interviews, photos and video, as well as research diaries and notes. Analytical approaches used for evaluation purposes were photo and video analysis. Content and visual analysis were used for data analysis.

The evaluation in this article is specifically focused on the participating artists. We engaged the artists in focus group discussions after the event. The evaluations and assessments of results were collected through semi-structured interviews with the artists. At the end of the group discussions, we asked the artists about their experiences and what they found evocative. Interview questions for the semi-structured interviews included themes such as the stories that were conveyed through the art activities and their relation to neighbourhoods. In addition, the questions focussed on how artists used their art to understand and process ideas about inclusion, tolerance and engagement. The enquiry further included themes such as barriers that artists tried to bridge within their communities, how the experiments enabled them to generate new outcomes and how their roles impacted on their interventions. The artists were also asked about whether they recognised any novel aspects to the experiments and how the intervention *Love Talks* could be scaled up

nationally. The interviews ended by questioning the artists on their roles in policy making in their local communities.

The limitations of the evaluation were that the researchers followed a qualitative approach by using interview data, hence the findings were based on the meanings and understandings that the participant-artists formulated through reflections on the events. Quantitative approaches to evidence-based assessment are preferred in evidence-based policy, which is predominantly based on quantitative data and the perception that 'data' needs to be 'factual' (Toulmin, 2001, cf. Belfiore & Bennett, 2010, p. 134) to be relevant in policy making contexts. This approach to assessment has been critiqued in the field of the arts, as it is based on "socially and culturally constructed notions", hence some researchers propose assessments that use qualitative data and approaches used in the social sciences (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010, p. 126; Galloway & Dunlop, 2007).

4. Findings: "Different ways of encountering, even in passing by, in short encounters, you can touch on really big questions."

The stories that the artists used as inspiration for their projects were connected to their personal identities and their roles and careers as artists or arts promoters and curators. This event was used to express themselves and share their work for the benefit of their communities and careers. All artists saw strong connections between the audiences and how they worked to engage with people. Neighbourhoods and connectedness to people and other cultures were strong themes that emerged from the interviews, as were stories of seeking acceptance as people and artists. For example, one artist said in an interview:

> My project speaks about love – this thing in Lapland is a very big problem. Here the people don't like contact with one another. I once told people here to just open (their) minds. Just a smile for another people (because) another person (is) the same as you. My father always told me: "Love can build a bridge to light". I think the art thing is very important in the life. (participant, 2020)

The question of how tolerance can be promoted through arts was considered by many. While about three out of five artists felt that the project succeeded in creating or at least raising questions about tolerance, there were also strong opinions that the project failed to create awareness and that tolerance was not

improved after the project. One reason behind some such opinions was the impact of the pandemic.

All artists felt that questions of tolerance and inclusion are important and that the purpose of art is to ameliorate gaps and disconnections that cause these societal challenges (exclusion, intolerance, disengagement). Some artists commented on disengagement between cultural groups in Rovaniemi and said that the challenges are too great to overcome, which causes great suffering to marginalised groups in the city. For example, from one interview:

> If we create an atmosphere and an environment, and such a very permissive mood, I feel that the same space can be shared at the same time by teenagers and primary school children and the elderly, and immigrants alike. It is some concrete simple doing that can open up opportunities for dialogue and truly surprising events. It (doing) is that creates that encounter, discussion and dialogue. (participant, 2020)

Most barriers were identified to be those between people and cultures and the barriers artists face in securing meaningful work, income and the support needed to practise full time as artists. Lack of resources such as funding and time were identified as barriers to artistic production and sustainability. As stated by one interviewee:

> More possibilities to make participatory art which means of course that the artist should have a salary to do it. And specifically, sufficient funding to compensate for the time of the artist who needs to be with people, engage with people on a deep level and lead them through an artistic process. (participant, 2020)

Most interviewees did not relate to a majority culture but rather with marginalisation, mainly due to the cultural group they belonged to or due to their role as artist (as artists they felt marginalised and some, as non-artists, felt marginalised within artist groups).

Many artists reported that their activities were not novel, but that they were meaningful. One artist commented that the total project had little novelty as it did not surpass boundaries between neighbourhoods as it set out to do. This was greatly due to the pandemic, which limited the coordination of the project. Due to the pandemic, plans changed along the process, affecting the structure

of the actions (and leading to the open access art space). The semi-structured interviews, a qualitative method selected for the assessment of the project, presented valuable insights into the experiences of the participating artists. Their narratives reveal, for example, how flexibility was embraced and how arts projects such as *Love Talks* was perceived as opportunities for encountering one another as neighbours, how important the role of serendipity is in meeting one another and the role of location and bringing the arts to the people.

> I consider this (project) successful and for me rewarding – it being somehow flexible and going into many directions. The fact that things has changed and been on the move [referring to the COVID pandemic] may have enabled even more occasions to encounter [one another] if they had been determined closely half a year ago. (participant, 2020)

> It happened somehow forced [to respond quickly to changes during the COVID pandemic]. So, what we did was already scaling, like progressing from a traditional thinking about workshops we instead took the event to a place [the Revontuli shopping centre in Rovaniemi] where people already go so that we can reach a much larger bunch of people. (participant, 2020)

> Well, I learned or actually noted again that when you get people predisposed to the idea and they start to process: "OK, I see this kind of possibility here and now", then people are really open and become easily inspired. (participant, 2020)

All artists felt that the project was very suitable in terms of scalability – that it could be rolled out from a city centre in Rovaniemi across all of Finland and in many neighbourhoods, but that limitations to funding would be the main barrier. As one artist said:

> Activities in the art world are often based on project funding, relatively short projects like ours, with short-term funding. If we really want to create dialogue or connections between people, [such projects] should last longer. (participant, 2020)

> If we want to scale what we did, let's write up understandable directions how we did it [and] bring out the whole story. Then just proposing that the whole country of Finland is doing the same, for

> instance every September being the September of Love. (participant, 2020)

While some artists reported in the interviews that they were able to convey the meanings they intended, some artists reported that they were not able to deliver their meanings and messages as anticipated, and that the connections and meanings they hoped to be able to make across cultural and language boundaries failed. For example:

> When I started building Ishtar Gate I'm thinking maybe everything after that will change. But, I see nothing [has] changed. [It is] still [the] same. I need [for] the Suomi people [to] know who I am and from where [I] come and I need them [to] know me. (participant, 2020)

> It would have been nice to have more things intersecting, putting different cultures and groups in the same space and seeing what happens, but OK even like this – this is a good beginning. This seems to be topical now, there is this kind of motion, like I'm all the time hearing and reading about people missing these kind of things (encounters) over borders. (participant, 2020)

Artists felt that the question of influencing policy through arts was very important but that it was mostly not thought of or considered by artists. Much potential for collaboration between the fields of arts and public policy making was acknowledged. Artists said they do not sufficiently pay attention to policy and they do not participate in such processes, as they are not asked to or involved by policy makers. They all were interested to become actors in such processes. As one artist said:

> There are a lot of messages from communities wanting to have brief representations or concepts of art workshops. There are groups that are open to [this kind of] artistic work and those kinds of groups, but there are not many artists connecting them. The world of business and the fields of art and culture are not fronting each other. (participant, 2020)

5. Research outcomes, ethical considerations and project-specific challenges

General feedback from people just passing by with whom the artist had conversations was very positive in general. The love-themed murals around

the city centre and the Ishtar Gate are still enriching the public art scene in Rovaniemi and have since received positive feedback from locals

Figure 7. Love murals in the city centre of Rovaniemi. Photography: Mirja Hiltunen, 2020.

The project received a significant amount of attention on social media during the activity week; online, people expressed a desire to see somebody organize a second Love Talk in the future. The collaboration with the Lapin Muisti yhdistys Ry [Memory Association of Lapland], a daytime activity centre for the elderly, has continued; two art education students are organizing more art workshops with elderly people in the spring of 2021.

The research was guided by relational accountability, which promotes respectful representation, reciprocity and the rights of the participants. The ethical principles and guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK) were considered throughout the course of the research. Ethical issues were taken into consideration at every phase of the project: planning the workshops, interacting with community members, data gathering, consideration of the right to stay anonymous or act under one's own name, the positions of the researchers and publication of the results. The ethical approaches of socially engaged art, community art and community-based art education involving marginalised participants have been discussed by various researchers (e.g. Kester, 2004).

There were some project-specific challenges that prevented collecting consent forms from the wider public, but all the main collaborators and artists were informed that they were taking part in a scientific study conducted at the University of Lapland. In this article we are focusing on the artists' points of views. They knew that participation in the study was voluntary and that there would be no negative consequences for them if they chose not to participate in the study or to withdraw from it. All the artists were willing to participate in the focus group discussions and interviews and to participate through artistic expression and making, sharing and exhibiting art, whether physical or digital. Both the participants and the researchers were provided copies of the consent forms.

Some project-specific challenges also arose due to how the activities, and participation in them by the organizers, artists, receiver participants and wider public, were impacted by the COVID pandemic. Initially, activities were planned to include sites in neighbourhoods and at peoples' houses and in their front gardens. As a result of the pandemic, some events had to be moved to larger public spaces. Originally, the *Love Talks* events were spread across Rovaniemi neighbourhoods so that, when plotted on a map, the locations formed a large heart shape. The locations of the events alone thus formed a strong symbol of love and connection, conveying meanings related to care and creating connections across neighbourhoods in a small Finnish city.

Meanings related to intercultural connections were strongly present in one of the artistic works, created by Iraqis Al-Fateh Ali Mousa and Saba Majid, immigrants to Finland. As asylum seekers, they chose to build a scale model of the Ishtar Gate, in a show of love for their new home country, Finland.

Figure 8. A scale model of the Ishtar Gate standing on its site in the Rovaniemi public park, along the Kemi river. Photography: Mirja Hiltunen, 2020.

Meanings embedded in local actions and the workshops for the elderly and youth were also strongly represented in the symbolism of other artworks, for example in the use of pastels, floral colours and love hearts in the sticker workshops and in people interconnecting in the mural-making activity. Meanings that derived from the musical and sledge song activities were also symbolised, including intergenerational and intercultural crossings and meetings between the inhabitants of the city and between Roma and Finnish peoples. The meanings of the activities were sender-driven due to the artists involved, who took agency in engaging with their community. The artists were from different cultural backgrounds and had varied personal histories and identities, but all wanted to and worked to engage with people from the city. One of the artists reflected on the process and found it very educative for herself as well:

> [In the workshops] there emerges different kind of prejudices, also among the supervisors/facilitators – I discovered my own prejudices and therefore I was observing how I react to the participating people, if

> I am acting differently with this person because of him being a man with an immigrant background, or someone being transgender; these kinds of thoughts you have to face. And then I look at the photos like "well, I have been photographing more of these ones than those ones [laughing]". I find this very educative and this should be discussed more. (participant, 2020)

Members of the Rovaniemi public who participated in art-making events due to their active participation also ended up embedding specific meanings and agency into their expressions, for example in the mural workshop. Many of the artists were, however, also in receiving roles from the perspective of community participation.

> I'm quite self-critical and I challenge myself in my art. How can I [as a facilitator] somehow quiet down that critical voice and give people more space? But still, it's also important, when people are taking part in this kind of activity, especially if it's a public art work, it should be one that you can stand up for, that is good enough. (participant, 2020)

The *Love Talks* project results are relevant to cultural policy in the Finnish Lapland region as it relates to the integration of immigrants and minority groups in mainstream culture. The role of art was seen as an active contributor to society, while the project's potential was recognized also by the funding bodies, the Finnish Cultural Foundation´s regional Lappish fund and the City of Rovaniemi's cultural services which supported the event. The research data and analysis forthcoming from the focus group discussions and the interviews that were conducted post-event with the artists for assessment purposes, provided data about the scalability and potential impact of artistic projects to mainstream cultural events for social, health, educational and environmental policy making. The documentary video of *Love Talks* has been selected to be screened at the virtual annual conference of the Nordic Council of Ministers hosted by the Finnish Ministry of Culture and Education in June, 2021.

6. Recommendations for refinement of future projects

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project activities had to be limited and changed, which impacted the arrangements for and the scope of the event. The reach of the project was severely affected, but locally-inspired and bottom-up events like this, which follow the narratives of local (and marginalised) people and groups, sharing their stories, knowledge, skills and dreams, can be scaled

up to the national level. The various goals and objectives of the different parties involved should be turned into strengths that can serve as a basis for a new approach. As one participant suggested:

> More resources, more time, more stuff. More individuals for the production team to better prepare things before the actual happening. I think these kinds of public arts spaces are extremely easy to realise in other municipalities or countries. It is a workable concept. (participant, 2020)

In the evaluation of *Love Talks*, the artists discussed topics such as how to encourage people to experience the opportunities that can be offered by art to create spaces for encounters such as stepping into artistic workshops. The artists reported that most of the passers-by in the mall had not experienced this kind of activity before. What was found to be successful were the succinct and sincere explanations by the facilitator of what was being done and why. The confidence of the artists in the significance of the project was also important to conveying its meaning. The open access workshops aimed at providing opportunities to participation for all groups, including immigrant communities, that are not usually included in the public art contexts of Rovaniemi.

The *Love Talks* and Neighbourhood project began with a dream of increasing awareness of what kind of ambience we want to have in our shared home, the city. There was also a hope of making this home better represent its varied population visually. Artists involved in the project shared a belief that art alone cannot change reality, but that it can be a significant factor in making alternative perspectives on everyday life visible and begin wider discussions of them in society.

As Augusto Boal (2000), the founder of Theatre of the Oppressed, has explained, insights in the moment are valuable, but to have a political dimension and significance, the artistic acts should be repeated hundreds of times.

References

AMASS (2021). AMASS Narrative Platform. https://www.ulapland.fi/EN/Webpages/AMASS

Becker, H. S. (1990, September). Art Worlds Revisited. In *Sociological Forum* (Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 497-502). Kluwer Academic Publishers-Plenum Publishers.

Belfiore, E., & Bennett, O. (2010). Beyond the "Toolkit Approach": Arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policymaking. *Journal for Cultural Research*, *14*(2), 121–142.

Boal, A. (2000). *Theater of the oppressed*. Pluto press.

Brown, N. C. (2001). The meaning of transfer in the practices of arts education. *Studies in Art Education*, *43*(1), 83-102.

Desai, D. (2020). Educating for social change through art: A personal reckoning. *Studies in Art Education, 61*(1), 10–23.

Gablik, S. (1995). Connective aesthetics: Art after individualism. In S. Lacy (Ed.), *Mapping the terrain: New genre public art* (pp. 74–87). Bay Press.

Galloway, S., & Dunlop, S. (2007). A critique of definitions of the cultural and creative industries in public policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, *13*(1), 17–31.

Hiltunen, M. (2010). Slow activism: Art in progress in the North. In A. Linjakumpu & S. Wallenius-Korkalo (Eds.), *Progress or perish. Northern perspectives on social change* (pp. 119–138). Routledge.

Hiltunen, M., Mikkonen, E., & Laitinen, M. (2020). Metamorphosis: Interdisciplinary art-based action research addressing immigration and social integration in northern Finland. In G. Coutts & T. Eça (Eds.), *Learning through art: International perspectives* (pp. 380–405). InSEA Publications. https://doi.org/10.24981/978-LTA2020.18

Jokela, T. (2019). Arts-based action research in the north. In G. Noblit (Ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford University. 10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.522

Jokela, T., Hiltunen, M., & Härkönen, E. (2015). Contemporary art education meets the international, multicultural North. In M. Kallio-Tavin & J. Pullinen, J. (Eds.), *Conversation in Finnish art education* (pp. 260–276). Aalto University.

Jokela, T., Huhmarniemi, M., & Hiltunen, M. (2019). Art-based action research: Participatory art education research for the North. In A. Sinner, R. L. Irwin & J. Adams (Eds.), *Provoking the field. International perspectives on visual arts PhDs in education* (pp. 45–56). Intellect.

Kester, G. H. (2004). *Conversation pieces: Community and communication in modern art*. University of California Press.

Kwon, M. (2002). *One place after another: Site-specific art and locational identity*. MIT Press.

Lacy, S. (Ed.). (1995). *Mapping the terrain. New genre public art*. Bay Press.

Leavy, P. (Ed.). (2017). *Handbook of arts-based research.* Guilford Press.

Lippard, L. (1997). *The lure of the local: Senses of place in a multicentered society*. New Press.

Olsen, C. S. (2019). *Socially engaged art and the neoliberal city*. Routledge.

Stevens, C., & McKechnie, S. (2005). Thinking in action: thought made visible in contemporary dance. *Cognitive Processing*, *6*(4), 243-252.

MALTA REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Volume 15, Supplement Issue, pp. 119-136
Faculty of Education©, UM, 2021

Generating Stakeholder Workshops for Policymaking in Digital Environments through Participatory Service Design

Melanie Sarantou[1], Mira Alhonsuo[1], Carolina Gutierrez Novoa[2], and Silvia Remotti[2]
[1]University of Lapland, [2]PACO Design Collaborative

Abstract
This article presents the design and research process of a design team of four designer-researchers, who are also the authors of this article and collaborated to develop training guidelines and a toolset for stakeholder workshops. The intention was to use the series of stakeholder workshops as a key method for developing policy recommendations about the role of arts in mitigating societal challenges. The stakeholder workshops were implemented across Europe by the partners of the European Commission H2020-funded project, Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture (AMASS). Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the designer-researchers had to transfer all activities, such as face-to-face workshops and their own work processes, to a digital environment and online participation. The digital toolset and user guidelines were aimed at training the project partners to conduct stakeholder workshops and collect data for creating cultural policy roadmaps that would be context-specific for the European region where they were located. The design process for creating the digital artefacts, such as the digital toolset, user guidelines and online workshop environment, is discussed in this article, in addition to this study's opportunities and limitations.

Keywords: Participatory service design, co-design, digital environment, digital artefacts, digital participation, policymaking

Introduction

> *"A dominant narrative around policymaking highlights its failures in the face of complex societal challenges"* (Kimbell & Bailey, 2017, p. 216).

Policy action is mostly driven by evidence-based policy, which is based on motivations for seeking or receiving funding, resulting in policy decisions being mostly focused on a rational basis that is underpinned by factual data and quantitative approaches to data collection (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010; Galloway & Dunlop, 2007). From this perspective, it is argued that policy

decisions are often based on positivist and linear models of policymaking, a "symptom of the persisting higher prestige of logic over rhetoric", consequently neglecting qualitative approaches to policymaking that borrow from the social sciences (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010, p. 134). Galloway and Dunlop (2007, pp. 23–24) argue that cultural policy, with its symbolic, aesthetic and artistic needs, requires interventions based on more horizontal and flat hierarchies, as well as different methods informed by the social sciences. For example, cultural policy decisions should be based on a broad range of cultural activities and notions of what constitutes culture (p. 24). Additionally, linear and positivist approaches to policy endeavours support the top-down narratives associated with policymaking, posing a problem for grassroots-level participation, especially the involvement of marginalised communities in policy decisions, because policy often "reinforces existing power structures and elites" (Kimbell & Bailey, 2017, p. 223). The persisting challenges with policy decisions are that they often remain too abstract, distanced and removed from especially marginalised communities.

This article discusses the design of a practical toolset and user guidelines that would be used by the partners of the AMASS project (2020–2023) in implementing a series of stakeholder workshops as a method for policymaking. The project investigates how the arts can act as vehicles for mitigating societal challenges and aims to create concrete opportunities for people to collaborate with artists as agents in creative projects. It is aimed at capturing, assessing and harnessing the impact of the arts in this regard. Policy action in AMASS is aimed at overcoming societal challenges among marginal communities in Europe through the arts.

The purpose of the stakeholder workshops was to use collected data for making relevant policy recommendations for the European regions represented in the project. The workshops intended to apply participatory service design (PSD) approaches to gain stakeholders' insights into the needs, existing best practices, resources and actions they deemed important in policy decisions in their particular contexts. The insights would then be used by the project partners for developing regional strategies and policy roadmaps with the stakeholders. This article asks: "How can PSD enable stakeholder workshops for policymaking in digital environments?"

The methods adopted in the service design process were reflective practice and reflexivity. The data collection methods included workshops, group discussions, note-taking and observations. The work was implemented in three design cycles, which are discussed in this article. The service design process drew on digital solutions and digital artefacts, such as the use of a shared whiteboard platform, Miro, to guide and implement the training experience for the researchers, and later to implement the stakeholder workshops in the relevant countries. The Miro platform is an online environment, which enables

participants to communicate and collaborate remotely and visually by using different tools, such as sticky notes and symbols.

The activities of the design team working on the development of practical methods and approaches to policymaking had to be executed in digital environments, from team meetings and group discussions to more complex activities, such as the development of online workshops. The designer-researchers from Finland and Italy were involved in one of the testbed experiments included in the fourth work package of the AMASS project.

Theoretical Concepts

The conceptual outline consists of the following key theoretical themes: PSD, the role of design in policymaking, and the role of designers and collaborative approaches in digital environments.

Participatory Service Design

Service design is a relatively new design discipline that overlaps with many well-known design fields, such as participatory design, human-centred design and co-design. Service design can be perceived as a multidisciplinary practice, which usually has a strong focus on processes, such as services based on abstract ideas. It involves various stakeholders (e.g., end users, service providers) and engages in co-design practices (Miettinen, 2016). Participatory design was originally developed to involve workers and citizens, who are the "targets of policy" (Kimbell & Bailey, 2017, p. 215). In a policy context, a PSD approach makes explicit the overlap between service design and participatory design as policy decision making deals with abstract ideas and the targets of policy, who are the citizens. PSD sets out to facilitate transformation (Irwin, 2013). It focuses on transition processes that are inherent in service design and policymaking by creating solutions, impacts and social change. Service design is strongly founded on the principle of value co-creation with stakeholders (Holmlid, 2009). It is a collaborative activity (Sanders & Stappers, 2008), within which power relations are carefully considered (Ehn, 2017) and the designer's role is facilitative (Howard & Melles, 2011). Hence, this article refers to PSD.

For PSD to generate the types of measures necessary for inclusive participatory democracy and social innovation, partners and civil society organisations must be involved in the planning, delivery, coordination and monitoring of policies (Eça et al., 2016). Collaboration on this level provides information and services for local citizens and communities regarding their engagement in the democratic process, which has been reported to be intertwined with social cohesion (European Commission, 2006). Service design approaches enable participation, both digital and face-to-face, thus addressing inclusion, community penetration and the barriers to arts and cultural engagement (Eça

et al., 2016). However, participation can only be achieved through equal partnerships, dispersion of power and the establishment of citizen control (Kangas, 2017).

Design for Policymaking

Design has been widely used in policymaking for approximately fifteen years (Kimbell, 2015). Weiss (1977, p. 533) defines the policymaking process as a "political process, with the basic aim of reconciling interests in order to negotiate a consensus, not of implementing logic and truth, [thus] the value issues in policymaking cannot be settled by referring to research findings". Kimbell and Bailey (2017, p. 215) define policymaking as "mediating between resources in response to a situation deemed to be a public policy issue, in relation to diverse publics with varying degrees of agency, legitimacy and motivation to address it". Kimbell and Bailey (2017) further explain that governments can use policy to direct or implement public services or laws. The role of design in policy is predominantly to enable sensemaking and dealing with complexities (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2016). Kimbell (2015, p. 7) explains that the purposes of design for policy are to engage in complexity and be citizen-centred, impactful and able to envisage new futures. Design thinking is especially useful in policymaking for defining problems and transcending hierarchies in organisational settings (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2016). Some governments have adopted open policymaking as an approach to involve experts, policy implementers, academics and citizens in policy processes (Kimbell, 2015, p. 4).

The challenges of design for policy have been outlined by several scholars (Kimbell & Bailey, 2017; Mintrom & Luetjens, 2016). Specific areas of policymaking, for example, cultural and creative policy, are ill-defined, or ample and broadly defined terms exist that cause confusion and a lack of consensus, as well as hampers the work of design for policy (Galloway & Dunlop, 2007). Adding to the challenge of defining terms that are closely related to the area of cultural policy, such as the arts, Dean (2003, as cited in Adajian, 2005, p. 231) boldly states that "the arts cannot be defined". The integration of design practices into policymaking has thus "received mixed assessments" (Kimbell & Bailey, 2017, p. 220), and policymaking challenges designers "to work at different scales and engage effectively with the politics, complexity and systemic nature of policy development", and a focus on the creative aspects of design may result in overlooking the underlying functions of government systems (p. 219). Additionally, the authors point out the danger of design as it can "neutralise dissent" by covering or hiding it (p. 216).

Belfiore and Bennett (2010, p. 121) suggest moving beyond the typical "toolkit approach" that is widely used in policymaking, and they also criticised policymakers for seeking a one-size-fits-all approach, thus contributing to the

linearity through which policymaking is often approached. Alternative approaches to the toolkit borrow from PSD methods, such as stakeholder workshops, user journeys, mapping and the use of personas and prototyping, to name a few (Kimbell & Bailey, 2017). According to the same authors, prototyping is about using creativity in digital or physical objects to concretise abstract ideas and generate a better understanding of how such ideas can be dealt with in practice (p. 217). However, creative, design and arts-based approaches have to be mindful of and knowledgeable about government systems and seek ways to engage with and perhaps harness citizen dissent and disobedience in policymaking processes.

Service Design in Digital Environments

Design is used to create innovative solutions to complex problems (Miettinen & Sarantou, 2019); hence, design is increasingly used at a strategic level by applying human-centred approaches (Burdick & Willis, 2011). Design seeks to turn current situations and challenges "into desired ones" by finding suitable, context-specific solutions (Dorst, 2008; Simon, 1969, p. 111). By adopting new perspectives, new challenges can be reframed. By commencing from a design problem, service designers may improvise new approaches when they draw on their past design experiences, intuition and knowledge (Sarantou & Miettinen, 2017). The skills and cognitive diversity of a team, in addition to its collective intelligence (Aggarwal et al., 2019), can maximise optimal outcomes in collaborative processes. This article focuses on PSD because it is based on value co-creation and participation, which are not by definition elements of digital interaction design (Holmlid, 2009).

One of the responsibilities of service designers is to ultimately aim for harnessing diversity and supporting the commons and individuals to achieve common goals through exploration, discussion and assessment (Salter et al., 2009). Participatory approaches can increase the sense of ownership within a design team or the commons, but the results that may be created in such digital spaces can have ethical implications of which designers should be aware (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017).

Service design approaches are especially important in digital spaces, as service design functions as "an interface between people and the spaces they inhabit" (Felix & Brown, 2011, p. 1). Services shape the level at which digital and physical spaces are experienced, for example, how pleasant or effective they are in terms of resource use (Felix & Brown, 2011). Digital spaces and team work in such environments present new challenges of which designers need to be aware, so critical engagement is required to identify suitable online approaches as group engagement becomes more challenging in digital spaces (Salter et al., 2009). Service and workshop design also shape the behaviour of participants (Vogt, 2009); therefore, service designers need to be mindful of

creating physical and digital environments where participants can feel safe to engage in work. For example, the intellectual property rights and ownership of digital artefacts (Stickdorn et al., 2018) that are created in such spaces have to be carefully considered.

Data Collection Methods

The applied reflexive research strategy involved practical service design and reflexive research practice, which required a focus on human-centred instead of problem-centred inquiry (Anderson et al., 2004), followed by analytical processes that could enable practitioners to facilitate change in processes and systems (Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 179). Reflexive researchers first explore several single components of the phenomenon under investigation using pluralistic theories and methods before attempting to understand their research holistically (Weber, 2003, p. vi). Attia and Edge (2017, p. 33) argue that reflexive researchers should develop procedures integral to the environments where they work through conceptualisation and an awareness of context and by distancing themselves from the action to advance their theories and ideas.

The data collection methods are summarised in Table 1. The application of methods and the types of data collected are clarified in the discussion on the three design research cycles. The researcher-designers collected the data during a variety of online workshops through note-taking in both online and analogue formats.

Table 1. Summary of data collection.

Method	**Details of methods used**
Online workshops and observations	A: April–May 2020, 4 online workshops, with a total duration of 5 hours and 20 minutes; July–October 2020, 8 workshops with a total duration of 9 hours and 40 minutes B: May–June 2020, 6 workshops with a total duration of 9 hours C: October 2020, 2 workshops, with a total duration of 6 hours
Note-taking	(a) Research notes in the form of personal and reflexive diary notes and collective observational notes by the designer-researchers, collected over 29 weeks in a shared document format in Google Docs (b) Over 835 data notes (in the form of sticky notes) collected in the Miro interface (c) Designers' note-taking on their reflections on the process and tool assessments
Group discussion	25 hours and 30 minutes of group discussions among the four designer-researchers during the 3 workshop phases, including a debriefing session with consortium members (in the form of an online seminar) as part of the assessment of the process

Additional data collection methods included group discussions within the design team via the Skype platform, as well as note-taking. The types of data collected were observational data and research notes taken during the mentioned group discussions. The data were primarily collected in digital and online interfaces, such as the Miro whiteboard, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Docs, Google Slides and Google Forms. The chosen method of data analysis was content analysis.

The workshops, for which the toolset and user guidelines were intended, were adapted from face-to-face delivery to a digital environment. The design processes commenced much earlier than anticipated to enable the designers to create suitable approaches for training the various project partners to implement regional stakeholder workshops in their countries. Soon after the training began, it became clear that the workshops that the project partners were supposed to offer face-to-face within their regions after the training, also had to be facilitated online. The Miro whiteboard platform was used for training the AMASS partners as well as execution of the stakeholder workshops in the partner's countries.

Ethical Considerations

The Ethics Committee of the University of Lapland provided ethical screening of the research. The ethical principles and guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK) were considered throughout the course of the research. Ethical issues were taken into consideration at every phase of the project: planning the workshops and interaction among designer-researchers who consented to the collective design research before the research and design process. Data in the form of reflexive notes were collected by each designer-researcher during the group discussions of the work team. Informed consent was granted by the project partners who participated in the assessment seminar when their stakeholder workshops were presented. Informed consent was provided by the participants in the stakeholder meetings hosted by the project partners in their countries, but these processes lie outside the scope of this research article.

Service designers face new ethical challenges and questions of accountability due to their functioning on digital platforms and in spaces that are enabled by digital technology (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017, p. 7). The power relationships that are present in co-design processes and underpin working in such digital spaces also have to be acknowledged by designers (Collins et al., 2017). In this project, the use of the Miro environment, which is not an open-access platform, has ethical implications as it may affect the communities' or the commons' level of access when using online workshops tools, such as those described in this article. Co-design processes on such digital platforms have additional ethical and intellectual property and ownership implications as data

and even creative outcomes are produced, whose authorship may or may not be shared. The reproduction terms and reuse of such materials need careful consideration. Some of the practical steps for dealing with ethical concerns coming forth from this design activity regarding the designers' accountability in terms of power and ethical issues were the implementation of prescribed informed consent procedures and obtaining written permissions to use the participants' visual outcomes in dissemination.

PSD Process: Three Design Cycles

Following a PSD approach means the designer-researchers' engagement in co-design and participatory design, which was overlapped by service design methods to jointly develop the training journey for the project partners. They hosted smaller pilot workshops in the online environment to gain familiarity with the methods and approaches. The pilot workshops were then followed by larger stakeholder workshops in their countries, which we referred to (for clarification of terms) as regional stakeholder workshops.

The methodology followed in the PSD process for co-designing the training initiative, the training guidelines and toolset for the stakeholder workshops consisted of three design cycles and three types of workshops (see Table 1). The three design cycles are illustrated in Figure 1.

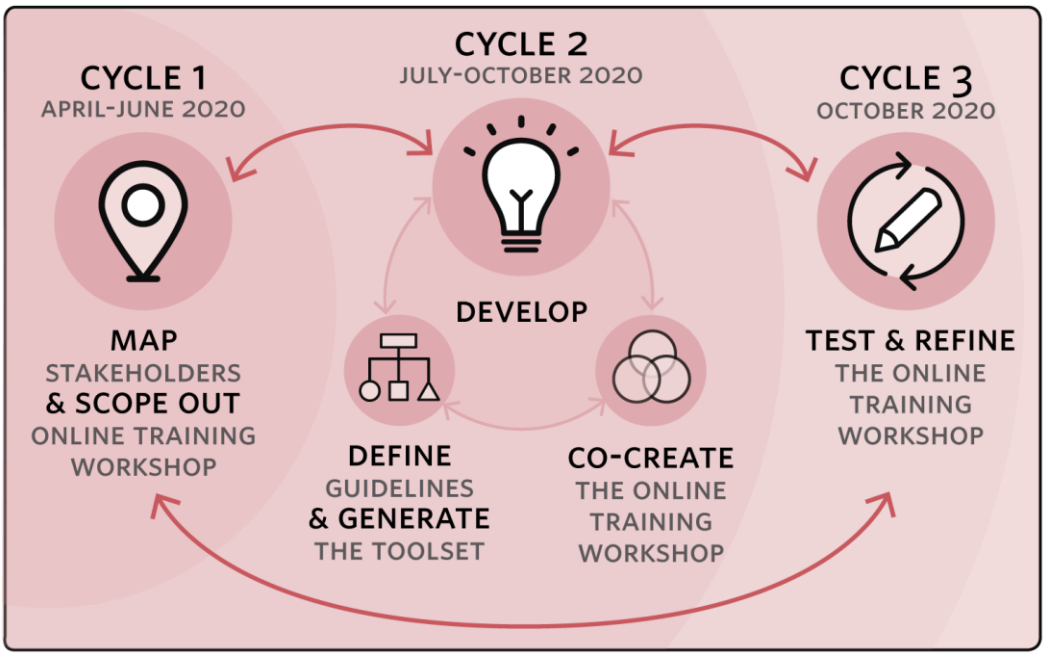


Figure 1. The service design cycles (created by author Carolina Gutierrez Novoa).

Cycle 1: Mapping and Scoping

This cycle had two aims: (a) mapping the regional stakeholders in the seven partner countries and (b) assessing the training and workshop facilitation needs of the AMASS consortium. In this cycle, the designer-researchers used the two workshop types A and B (see Table 1). Possible stakeholders that might participate in the regional stakeholder workshops and contribute information and data for the development of the regional policy roadmaps were identified by the project partners in their respective regions. This information was applied in the first collective activity of workshop B, stakeholder mapping, which was based on an online journey. The workshop included a board game in which visualisations and a user journey were used to motivate participation and retain the participants' interest. They could follow clear instructions and steps to arrive at an end destination, where they could express their wishes for the upcoming training as a reward for completing the journey.

The tools used and developed in type-B workshops in the Miro interface were as follows:

- a stakeholder map aimed at identifying and understanding potential stakeholders and their interrelationships;
- a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis related to the participants' concerns regarding the stakeholder workshops; and
- five 'why' questions to better understand the findings from the SWOT analysis.

The outcome of the mapping and scoping was the identification of key themes from the data notes, which could be used for guiding the designer-researchers in their co-creation of the training guidelines and toolset (Figure 2). This cycle consisted of type-A workshops, conducted in April and May 2020 and comprising 4 online workshops, with a total duration of over 5 hours, and type-B workshops, comprising 6 one-and-a-half-hour workshops in May and June 2020, with a total duration of 9 hours.

Cycle 2: Developing the Workshop Guidelines and Toolset for the Online Training Workshop

This cycle consisted of two sub-cycles.

- Sub-cycle 1. First, a theme map was created to enable the designer-researchers to co-design the workshop guidelines using the Miro interface. The use of Miro enabled them to track the development of the workshop toolset, which was generated through Microsoft Word, Google Docs and Microsoft PowerPoint, both online and offline. The workshop guidelines and tools were developed through various iterations, starting from the drafting of written (in Google Docs) and

visual guidelines in Miro. This was followed by the development of several Microsoft PowerPoint files. The workshop guidelines and tools were then combined and refined. Data were collected and analysed through the following:

- online group discussions (brainstorming sessions) to produce ideas and solve design problems and
- mapping and note-taking in the Miro whiteboard interface, an ongoing activity in which all designer-researchers participated to develop the workshop guidelines and toolset.

- Sub-cycle 2. The existing workshop guidelines and tools were used to co-create an online training journey in the Miro interface. This activity took the form of a board game in which the participants followed clear instructions and steps to arrive at an end destination. The reward for completing the online journey was the opportunity to participate in creating an interactive forest or ecosystem, bringing together the needs, best practices and actions for the drafting of a policy roadmap. The outcome of cycle 2 of the research design was the integration of the initial data collected (from the project partners during cycle 1) into the co-design processes of the workshop guidelines and toolset. The cycle consisted of 8 type-A workshops, hosted bi-weekly between July and October 2020, with a total duration of 9 hours. The outcomes were then ready to be tested and refined.

Cycle 3: Testing and Refining

After weeks of preparing the training, workshop guidelines and toolset, the testing phase commenced. Testing was important for 'walking through' the training interfaces and tools. The roles were divided among the four designer-researchers, with one facilitating and three participating. Throughout the training walkthroughs, the project partners engaged in critical reflection, group discussion and continuous questioning to identify and clarify possible misunderstandings and iterate the training steps. In total, 4 testing sessions were conducted over 6 hours of online work. The testing and refining cycle included the following:

- online group discussions and training walkthroughs to test, identify and solve interruptions and design problems in the online interfaces used for the workshop guidelines and tools and online workshop activities and
- personal diaries and note-taking.

This cycle's outcomes were the (a) a game design-inspired participant journey on the online Miro whiteboard, (b) workshop guidelines (entitled Towards a

Roadmap) and (c) a set of seven workshop tools and templates: timekeeping and planning tool, stakeholder identification tool, stakeholder selection tool, stakeholder invitation template, workshop introduction tool, best practice template, data collection template and template for the roadmap draft. The team produced reflexive notes and engaged in group discussions. This design research and training cycle (type-C workshops) comprised 2 training workshops hosted in October 2020, with a total duration of 6 hours. The project partners underwent a three-hour training during the first phase of the workshop. The Miro whiteboard was then adapted so that the project partners could use it for their stakeholder workshops after the training.

Outcomes of Cycle 3

Cycle 3 produced several online tools, as described previously. Figure 2 shows an example of (a) a game design-inspired participant journey on the online Miro whiteboard.

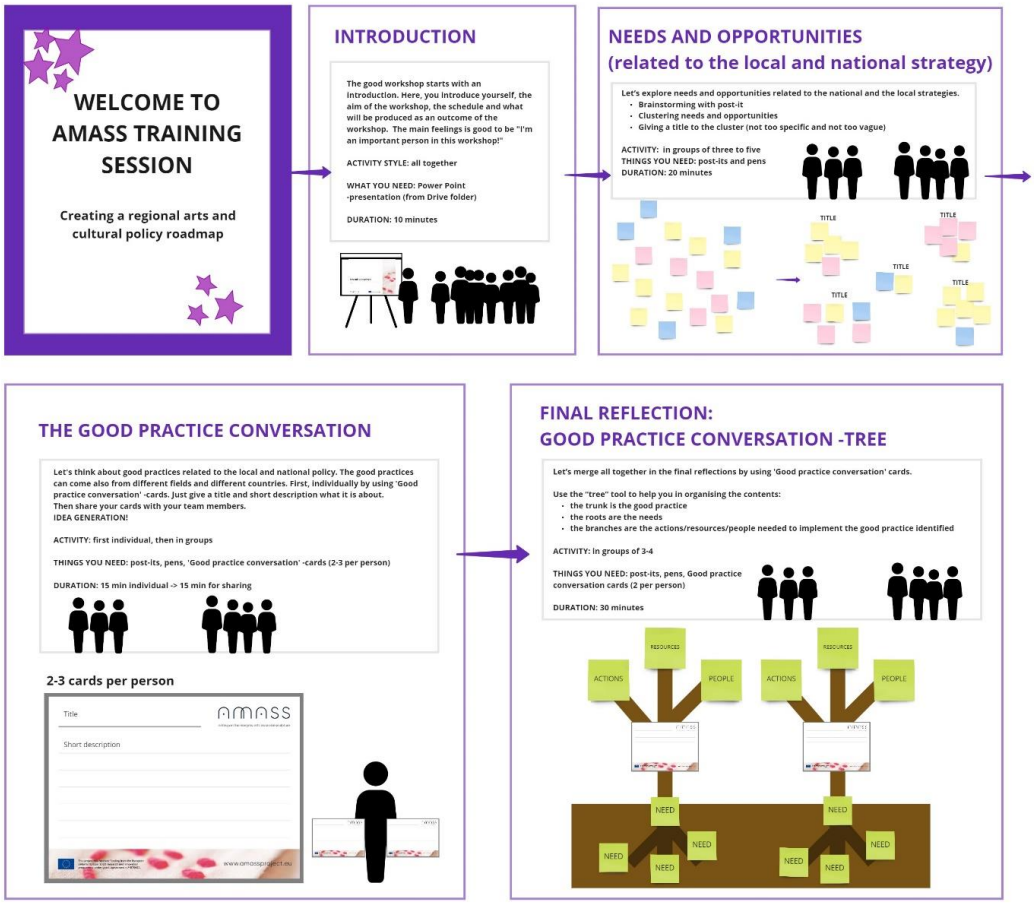


Figure 2. The participant journey during the online stakeholder workshop on the Miro whiteboard, which was an outcome of the three-phase design research process (created by author Mira Alhonsuo).

Assessment of Outcomes

In an internal seminar arranged by the AMASS consortium, the project partners' experiences, gained during the pilot stakeholder workshop, were disseminated and discussed. The assessment event included a 10-minute presentation by each partner, followed by a 5-minute discussion. Key themes from the presentations were identified and are presented next.

- All project partners had to rely on the online environment to conduct their regional pilot stakeholder and subsequent workshops due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The online environment and toolset that were co-designed by the designer-researchers to enable the training journey for the project partners were used by the latter to conduct their stakeholder workshops in their countries. What was planned to be a digital training environment for the project partners to develop facilitation skills for stakeholder workshops on policymaking processes, was repurposed by each project partner, in smaller and more significant ways, to facilitate their stakeholder workshops digitally.

- The partners reported how they reinterpreted, changed and applied their digital environments in unique ways to suit their needs and specific local contexts. For example, the partner in the Czech Republic adapted the digital workshop process to an online seminar-style event, hosting approximately 120 stakeholders. However, most project partners hosted stakeholder workshops in Miro, all having to overcome a number of smaller and larger practical online facilitation challenges, such as using additional platforms or mobile applications to accommodate the needs of their participants who were not necessarily well versed on the chosen platform. The appropriateness of the digital environment and the workshop tools had to be reconsidered in the specific context in which the stakeholder workshops were presented. Hence, the project partners' flexibility and can-do approaches enabled context-specific online participation. The PSD process discussed in this article presents an example of shifting from the one-size-fits-all toolkit approach commonly used in policymaking to one that enables agility and adaptability. The toolkit was thoroughly integrated into the training process for the project partners; hence, the toolkit and guidelines underpinned the participant experience instead of being mere add-ons for data collection.

- The project partners first took small steps to familiarise themselves with the stakeholder workshop facilitation in a digital environment and then moved on to a larger event. An example of the best practices reported by the project partners was that online workshops should be presented for a maximum of three hours, including breaks. As technological challenges constitute a reality for many participants, careful introductions to the use of the digital environments are also required for better user experiences of participants who are unfamiliar with them. Work in small groups is ideal, while personalisation, focused attention and dialogue generation for the participants may increase motivation for enduring participation over a three-hour period. The use of breakout rooms for focused discussions in small groups is recommended, while the roles of the facilitation team need to be clearly defined and realistically divided before the start of the workshop. The larger the group of participants, the more facilitators and technical expertise are required. The team roles to consider are time moderator, technical assistant, facilitator, reporter and visualiser, to name a few. Finally, the use of pre-recorded videos may enhance online experiences.

- Impact was created through stimulating connections and dialogue across a wide range of stakeholders through digital participation in policymaking. However, stakeholder workshops for policymaking require expertise in the subject area as participation in online environments can lack flow and cohesiveness if dialogue is not created parallel to the online process and note-taking. Some participants reported that the workflows became stuck, hampering idea sharing and discussion.

Opportunities and Challenges

The most significant finding in terms of the challenges faced by the designer-researchers is how decision makers can engage communities – regardless of whether they comprise marginalised peoples, artists, immigrants, Indigenous peoples and citizens – in policy processes. Additional challenges include the lack of definition of key terms in areas of cultural policymaking and the tensions among abstract policy processes that have to create transformational change for citizens' everyday needs and challenges (Galloway & Dunlop, 2007). Further tensions exist between rational, linear approaches to policymaking and alternative, more creative ways of engaging in decision making, problem definition and needs assessment. Finally, creativity and

design can mask dissent and citizen disobedience in terms of how especially marginalised communities, which are mostly excluded by policy processes, intend to enact decision making, self-determination and autonomy in their local contexts.

Nevertheless, the PSD processes of creating and implementing the stakeholder workshops reveal opportunities for experimentation and what Kimbell and Bailey (2017, p. 214) refer to as the "new spirit" of policymaking. This spirit is based on using more citizen-centred, design, creative, open and experimental approaches to policymaking. Kimbell's (2015) research has revealed challenges in how policymakers can harness small-scale insights to produce more concrete policy actions. This is also a challenge encountered by the stakeholder workshops as they generate such small-scale insights due to their time-consuming nature, having to rely on citizen participation in complex and abstract needs identification and problem resolution that present difficult topics for discussion.

Significant opportunities identified are as follows:

- *Stakeholder workshop as a method for policymaking*. Kimbell (2015) suggests that more research and experimental approaches are needed to gain a better grasp of how policymaking as a process can be improved. She promotes the use and enhancement of practical design methods, such as policy workshops, to achieve this goal. The AMASS project is in line with such goals set out in the literature. The link between the intended impact through policymaking and the methodological approach adapted in the work package involves working in collaboration with communities and regional organisations and stakeholders in the cultural policy domain, especially at the grassroots level, by adopting practical methods that can facilitate bottom-up approaches. A stakeholder workshop is one method that can bring together disparate stakeholders, for example, communities and decision makers, in an attempt to create dialogue and form bridges between them.
- *Visuality and digital design artefacts*. Visualisation and the design of appropriate and usable digital artefacts are important tools for stimulating the motivation level of participants who have to attend workshops in digital environments. Creativity and what Salter et al. (2009, p. 2090) refer to as "interactive and immersive visualisation" are key approaches to sustaining motivation for online participation. The

visual, colourful and playful components can create interest, while a good layout and basic design elements can be other ways to create visually appealing, clear and well-organised environments that inspire the participants. Design can bridge the abstraction and the tangibility of the digital design artefacts, the 'design products' that are the visualisations used on the Miro board, for example. Visual and other sensory perceptions and experiences are opportunities for triggering thoughts and stimulating participants to return for similar or further experiences and knowledge.

- *Value of experimentation.* The AMASS project has implemented an artistic testbed based on creative experiments. The spirit of experimentation has also influenced the designer-researchers approaches to playing with design for policy. Kimbell and Bailey (2017, p. 218) explain that the "growing emphasis on experimentation prefigures and carves out a space for prototyping in policy development as a particular mode of enacting organisational flexibility, provisionality and anticipation". The authors believe that a spirit of experimentation can tackle the lack of dialogue and other sticking points that policymaking faces, apart from marginalised communities' disengagement in policy processes due to perhaps top-down and positivist approaches. The spirit of experimentation has been extended into the ongoing work by the designer-researchers. Apart from the digital stakeholder workshop discussed in this article, two additional experiments have been implemented. One is based on a stakeholder workshop sprint model, while the other is based on the use of arts-based methods in stakeholder workshops. This presents another opportunity, which is discussed next.
- *Opportunities for arts-based approaches.* In digital environments, the challenge with sustained online participation and engagement can be tackled by using strong visual approaches and arts-based methods. Research in this area is ongoing in the AMASS project and will be reported elsewhere. However, from the first pilot study, the opportunities for using arts-based methods in policy endeavours, especially for generating participation, have been identified because they can, especially in combination with future study methods, enable "new spaces of anticipation and embracing future visions" (Kimbell & Bailey, 2017, p. 216). The visually stimulating online stakeholder workshop, presented in this article and designed as a vibrant online

experience, has paved the way for realising new design research on the use of arts-based methods for policymaking.

Conclusion

This article has addressed the overlaps among design processes, contexts, digital objects and their actors during a multidisciplinary project that involved research in a wide range of disciplines, from cultural policy to arts education, the arts and service design. This article has presented the work and design research process of a design team whose aim was to implement stakeholder workshops for policymaking. The opportunities and challenges of the online workshop experience have been explored through the evaluation seminar and group discussions. The article's limitation lies in not presenting further insights into the policy roadmap generation but focusing on the design and implementation of stakeholder workshops at the early stages of generating dialogue in policymaking processes. This article does not present solutions for drafting policy roadmaps or making policy recommendations as such, but it explores one example of how online stakeholder workshops can be approached and designed for the front end of policymaking. Such stakeholder workshops may generate small-scale insights, but they enable data collection (from participants) that can feed into the identification of needs and best practices that are valuable for generating policy recommendations.

References

Adajian, T. (2005). On the prototype theory of concepts and the definition of art. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *63*(3), 231–236.

Aggarwal, I., Woolley, A. W., Chabris, C. F., & Malone, T. W. (2019). The impact of cognitive style diversity on implicit learning in teams. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00112

Anderson, A. G., Knowles, Z., & Gilbourne, D. (2004). Reflective practice for sport psychologists: Concepts, models, practical implications, and thoughts on dissemination. The Sport Psychologist, 18(2), pp.188-203.

Attia, M., & Edge, J. (2017). Be(com)ing a reflexive researcher: A developmental approach to research methodology. *Open Review of Educational Research*, *4*(1), 33–45.

Belfiore, E., & Bennett, O. (2010). Beyond the "toolkit approach": Arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policy-making. *Journal for Cultural Research*, *14*(2), 121–142.

Burdick, A., & Willis, H. (2011). Digital learning, digital scholarship and design thinking. Design Studies, 32(6), 546-556.

Collins, K., Cook, M. R., & Choukier, J. (2017). Designing the spikes of injustice. In D. Sangiorgi & A. Prendiville (Eds.), *Designing for service: Key issues and new direction* (pp. 105–114). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Dorst, K. (2008). Design research: A revolution-waiting-to-happen. *Design Studies*, *29*(1), 4–11.

Eça, T., Saldanha, Â., & Barbero, A. (2016). 'Insurgence' – activism in art education research and praxis. In R. Shin (Ed.), *Convergence of contemporary art, visual culture, and global civic engagement* (pp. 210–223). IGI Global.

Ehn, P. (2017). Scandinavian design: On participation and skill. In D. Schuler & A. Namioka (Eds.), *Participatory design* (pp. 41–77). CRC Press.

European Commission (2006). The role of culture in preventing and reducing poverty and social exclusion. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. http://www.worldcat.org/title/role-of-culture-in-preventing-and-reducing-poverty-and-social-exclusion/oclc/150401314?referer=di&ht=edition

Felix, E. & Brown, M. (2011). The Case for a Learning Space Performance Rating System. *Journal of Learning Spaces*, *1*(1), 1-6.

Galloway, S., & Dunlop, S. (2007). A critique of definitions of the cultural and creative industries in public policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, *13*(1), 17–31.

Holmlid, S. (2009). Participative; co-operative; emancipatory: From participatory design to service design. *Dethinking service; rethinking design – The 2009 ServDes. Conference* (No. 059, pp. 105–118). Linköping University Electronic Press.

Howard, Z., & Melles, G. (2011). Beyond designing: Roles of the designer in complex design projects. In: Paris, C, Huang, W, Farrell, V, Farrell, G, & Colineau, N (Eds.) *Proceedings of the 23rd Australian Computer-Human Interaction Conference* (pp. 152–155). Association for Computing Machinery.

Irwin, R. (2013). Becoming a/r/tography. *Studies in Art Education*, *54*(3), 198–215.

Kangas, A. (2017). *Removing barriers – participative and collaborative cultural activities in KUULTO action research.* Center for Cultural Policy Research. *Cupore Webpublications*, *44*. https://www.cupore.fi/en/publications/cupore-s-publications/removing-barriers

Kimbell, L. (2015). *Applying design approaches to policy making: Discovering policy lab* [Discussion paper]. University of Brighton. https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/9111/2/Kimbell_PolicyLab_report.pdf

Kimbell, L., & Bailey, J. (2017). Prototyping and the new spirit of policy-making. *CoDesign*, *13*(3), 214–226.

Leitch, R., & Day, C. (2000). Action research and reflective practice: Towards a holistic view. *Educational Action Research*, *8*(1), 179–193.

Miettinen, S. (2016). Introduction. In S. Miettinen, *Introduction to industrial service design* (pp. 21-32). Routledge.

Miettinen, S. A., & Sarantou, M. A. (2019). *Managing complexity and creating innovation through design.* Routledge.

Mintrom, M., & Luetjens, J. (2016). Design thinking in policymaking processes: Opportunities and challenges. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, *75*(3), 391–402.

Salter, J. D., Campbell, C., Journeay, M., & Sheppard, S. R. (2009). The digital workshop: Exploring the use of interactive and immersive visualisation tools in participatory planning. *Journal of Environmental Management*, *90*(6), 2090–2101.

Sanders, E. B. N., & Stappers, P. J. (2008). Co-creation and the new landscapes of design. *Co-Design*, *4*(1), 5–18.

Sangiorgi, D., & Prendiville, A. (2017). Introduction. In D. Sangiorgi & A. Prendiville (Eds.), *Designing for service: Key issues and new direction* (pp. 1–10). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Sarantou, M., & Miettinen, S. (2017). The connective role of improvisation in dealing with uncertainty during invention and design processes. In Design management academy: International Research Conference: Research Perspectives on Creative Intersections (pp. 1171-1186). Design Management Academy.

Simon, H. A. (1969). *The Sciences of the Artificial*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Stickdorn, M., Hormess, M. E., Lawrence, A., & Schneider, J. (2018). *This is service design doing: Applying service design thinking in the real world*. O'Reilly Media, Inc.

Vogt, J. W. (2009). *Recharge your team: The grounded visioning approach*. Praeger Publishers.

Weber, R. (2003). Editor's comments: The reflexive researcher. *MIS Quarterly*, 27(4), v–xiv.

Weiss, C. H. (1977). Research for policy's sake: The enlightenment function of social research. *Policy Analysis*, *3*(4), 531–545.

MALTA REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Volume 15, Supplement Issue, pp. 137-154
Faculty of Education©, UM, 2021

'Art is our contemporary' - preparing art educators of socially disadvantaged children for meaningful museum education at the Ludwig Museum Budapest

Zsófia Somogyi-Rohonczy
Ludwig Museum Budapest and ELTE Doctoral School of Education

Andrea Kárpáti
Corvinus University Budapest,
Institute of Communication and Sociology

Abstract
Teaching about contemporary art is a problematic curricular area with a constantly growing knowledge base and methodological repertoire from teachers. This paper presents an effort to mentor art educators of disadvantaged educational institutions to appropriate socially focused contemporary arts with special relevance for their students. The programme is based on constructivist educational methodologies and critical arts pedagogy practices. We briefly introduce the venue: the Ludwig Museum of Budapest, placed spiritually and geographically at the intersection of Eastern and Western Europe, and discuss the contents, assessment methods and results of the mentoring programme.

Introduction

Exhibitions may reveal astonishing new discoveries, or works of art with international professional acclaim, but if they are unable to enchant their audience and make people reflect and be enriched by knowledge relevant for their lives, they cannot be considered successful. The museum visitor – or, to use a more authentic, contemporary phrase, the exhibition user – has recently become an important target group for more and more museums. On the eve of modern museology, in the first decades of the 20th century, it was the erudite and ready-to-learn elite only that were approached. It was a matter of common

understanding, that visitors shared the interest and also some of the professional knowledge of museologists, and therefore were able to comprehend and appreciate the exhibition based on results of research (Rule, 2017). These exhibitions barely contained text. Objects were labelled to be identifiable in catalogues. Guides were knowledgeable, mostly male museum staff members with a narrative style you can easily imagine.

The democratisation of the museum that happened gradually in the second half of the last century, required a profoundly different approach, embracing visitors with little or no previous knowledge. Among them, school groups appeared, with little or no motivation and interest. Around the eve of the 20th century, didactic installation pieces were introduced. Explanations appeared beside or around the showcased objects. In museums of natural history, animals and plants were placed in a setting modelling their natural habitat in dioramas. Scale models and mock-ups of ancient monuments were installed and publications intended for the public at large offered in museum shops sometimes turned into designer boutiques. Besides exhibition guides, and illustrated catalogues, publications for museum learning: task sheets, exercise booklets, collaborative, interactive discovery leaflets for groups or families appeared. First encounters of museum staff and visitors gradually shifted outside the museum building and started with science communication and exhibition marketing through the media. Mass communication efforts have substantially broadened the potentials of museum staff to deliver messages about exhibitions – and also forced scholars to act as educators. Explainers appeared beside guides, their name expressing their mission: to lead and mentor, not to guide (Kárpáti & Vásárhelyi, 2013).

Nowadays, museums are open and responsive cultural institutions that cater for the interested and motivated public. The next step in museum education should be to invite those who would not voluntarily come, namely socially disadvantaged children and youth, often living within a stone's throw from the museum walls. The 9th district of Budapest is home to cultural opposites: shabby blocks of flats for impoverished and marginalised citizens – among them, large groups of Hungarian Roma –, who were not flexible enough to adapt to the drastically changing economic circumstances of the Hungarian version of capitalism in the 1990s. In order to integrate their children, we need to win their teachers first. They do not only need motivation and encouragement to enter the Ludwig Museum, situated in the elegant part of District 9, at the Danube embankment. Teachers in their fifties – the majority of

the educational professionals in Budapest – have not learnt about modern art during their training in the 1970s and 1980s. Museum curators and educators have to furnish them with knowledge and methodology at the same time, and create a welcoming, collaborative atmosphere that inspires them to share the experience with their students. If they understand our slogan: "Art is our contemporary", they will be able to build bridges between high culture and everyday reality. The museum educators of the museum use in their everyday practice the varied toolkit with the methodology of the team working, dramatic scenes, and the multimodal approach.

Learning theories that have proven to be best suited to museum-based educational processes are constructivism and trialogical learning. According to the *constructivist theory,* the learner should be encouraged to activate a wide range of previously gained information and experiences to construct new meaning and integrate it with his or her knowledge base (Lankford, 2002). Knowledge construction should be guided and promoted, but not dictated by the teacher who is invited to assume the position of mentor. As a result, visitors will come up with narratives related to the exhibition theme, new insights about their naive scientific theories based on hands-on displays and lab experiments or changes of taste and development of a flexible set of expectations about contemporary art.

In the *trialogical learning* model, even the object of study is jointly selected, and the inquiry process is a democratic sharing of ideas and resources. A successful art or science project involving works exhibited, a video film contextualising an idea presented in a display, an object offered to the museum because of its relations with an installation may all be products of trialogical learning in museums. (For educational examples of the use of both theories in educational interventions in Multigrade schools catering for many disadvantaged children, cf. Kárpáti & Dorner, 2010).

Teachers with their school group in a museum often have to play the role of museum educator or explainer. ECSITE, the European network of science centres and museums established the Facilitation Group, (https://www.ecsite.eu/activities-and-services/thematic-groups/facilitation-group). Based on results of their studies, the group revealed the major features of a successful training programme for explainers that include many skills directly related to exhibition communication. These skills are useful for educators embarking on museum visits with their students as well:

- Development of self-perception and professionalization (as communicator, a museum professional, a science teacher etc.).
- Expanding theoretical knowledge (e. g., theories of learning through conversation).
- Acquisition of the dialogue model of communication with visitors and new formats of animation.
- Training for tackling controversial issues.
- Enhancement of professional negotiation skills (e.g.: conducting successful conversations to improve the relationship between explainers and management).

Teachers should also be mentored in navigating the exhibition venue. At a blockbuster exhibition, it is impossible to wander around because other visitors define one's own route and the time to be spent in front of an installation. These routes are usually linear as visitors are part of a crowd moving slowly and deliberately through the halls in the sequence indicated by the signs and guards. Such a seemingly endless tour is not appropriate for our target visitors: teenagers who are novices in a museum experience. Teachers must learn how to view the exhibition in a "hypertext" manner, walking from one piece to another, driven by the appeal and relevance of works. Students may approach an artwork because it catches their eye or they heard some information about it. Disregarding the "correct" sequence indicated in the map or short guide is highly characteristic for young audiences. Museum education should give them hints about a meaningful visiting sequence.

Need for a training for art educators of socially disadvantaged children for meaningful museum education in Hungary

In the Hungarian museum sphere, the *Art as our contemporary*, an accredited (recognised by state educational authorities) teacher training programme is unique, as it aims to introduce educational methodologies to be employed at a museum of art and create a learning community with a limited number of participants (maximum 18 teachers). 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 to develop teacher's knowledge and skills, and ensures a high-quality pedagogical standard at schools. In fact, this learning obligation means a measurable learning attainment target for the

teachers. Furthermore, our art-based pedagogical training is a rarity on the list of accredited training options.

Characteristics of the arts-based teacher training's characteristic:

E-learning and blended training are in demand in the times of the COVID19 pandemic. E-learning as a teacher education format may be designed to provide a customized learning environment and support independence in deciding the time, place, and speed of learning. Blended and e-learning have a specific methodology-curriculum design and the way of monitoring the development of knowledge. The museum educators in the Ludwig Museum have not had previous experiences with e-learning. Therefore, the staff of the Centre for Contemporary Art Education and Methodology organised a blended learning environment, using online platforms and face-to-face workshops at the same time. An argument against employing e-learning only was that teachers often claimed to feel isolated during the home-schooling period of the pandemic.

The design of the training's structure was influenced by different aspects such as the teachers' time management and their teaching hours as well as other factors indicated as a response to our pre-training survey. The curriculum was spread over four days, essentially on Friday afternoons, after school and Saturdays. The training programme was divided into an online learning session of three days and a final workshop at the museum. The learning units were built on each other and ensured continuous elaboration. The three-day, online training programme focused on the contemporary concept of the museum as a public service provider. It informed participants about the collection of the Ludwig Museum, through diverse methodological toolkits. While getting acquainted with contemporary art through various tasks, they have become a knowledge building community and used the artworks for creating a community.

The first task was to choose one artwork from the Collection and use it to introduce themselves. Many times, they chose the same artwork, and this similarity of taste created the opportunity to compare their interpretations. The second day was dedicated to modern and contemporary art with a brief presentation of the significant schools, styles, artists, and questions of the international art scene after the Second World War till our days. We also discussed the interpretation possibilities of guided tours. The programme of the second training day was built on the concept of the variation of the

presentations (one-directional communication) and art practice based on new knowledge and conversation with the participants (bidirectional communication). The third day was dedicated to museum education and consisted of a brief international overview of modern art and contemporary museum education practice as well as its unresolved issues. The trainers presented the methods with practical examples involving drama pedagogy, project method, debate-based interpretation, etc. The presentation and discussion about the educational programmes for children with mental and physical conditions that require special educational care gave rise to considerable interest, as many schools that cater for deprived communities have students who face similar challenges. The Ludwig Museum staff have a rare and significant experience in this unique field of art education. The fourth and last day was dedicated to museum practice to ensure personal encounters with the staff and professional discussions. Teachers received a guided tour at the Ludwig Museum. They explored the exhibition rooms and selected artworks to be used in their course paper for their own school community.

The artistic background of the training

The Collection of the Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art Budapest is based on the donation of the German collector couple Irene and Peter Ludwig. In 1989, the Hungarian Republic became the owner of 70 artworks from the Aachen Ludwig Foundation. The Permanent Collection is successfully rearranged year by year, based on the concept of the collecting mission that focuses on social and artistic issues of the Central European region, and is focused on the art world of the 60s and 70s. The interest of Irene and Peter Ludwig can also be revealed both in the Hungarian and the international collection (Cf. Ludwig Museum, 2021a) Therefore, some art styles are highly present, such as Pop Art (Andy Warhol: Single Elvis, 1964; Roy Lichtenstein: Vicky, 1964; Tom Wesselmann: Landscape #4, 1965; Claes Oldenburg: Lingerie counter, 1962; Joe Tilson: The Five Senses, 1968-69) and the iconic artworks of the photo and hyperrealism (Richard Estes: Rappaport Pharmacy, 1976; Chuck Close: Nat, 1972-73; Malcolm Morley: Race Track (South Africa), 1970). (Cf. Ludwig Museum, 2021b) https://www.ludwigmuseum.hu/en/ catalogues? s=&page=3). Following a decision to create a cultural bridge between East and West, the original characteristics and mission remains the same till the present day. Before the change of the political system in 1989, the Ludwig couple provided means of communication and attendance for the marginalized artists of the Soviet area in the West. This marginalized status could be discovered until the present day.

Ludwig's Collection provides parallels to the diverse cultural and artistic worlds of East and West. The comparison of the artworks from the 60s could give us unquestionable evidence about the connectedness of Eastern artists to the global art scene. Despite their limited possibilities to access cultural news, opportunities to exhibit and win a scholarship abroad, successfully connected to global aesthetic issues and artistic trends. Some examples about artistic convergences (similar formal and / or thematic aspects of works but different artists): *FS67-154 Black Adder* (1968) by Frank Stella and *Stripes No. 1* (1968) by Imre Bak or the previously mentioned photorealistic painting of Malcolm Morely compared to the *Cotton pickers in Kazakhstan* (1972) by László Lakner are all on the show of the exhibition entitled *Time Machine* (Ludwig Museum, 2021c).

Living and acting on the periphery is still a relevant question in our region. Therefore, this comparative approach manifests itself in the exhibition strategy of the Ludwig Museum even today. In harmony with the Central European focus, political question of the area is highly represented in the Ludwig Museum. The exhibition entitled *The Permanent Revolution. Ukrainian Art Today* (Ludwig Museum, 2018) gave an artistic insight into the situation of this country. The importance of the exhibition that won the You-2 Price, the People's Choice Award of the Global Fine Art Awards. This recognition proved the international interest in the art of the Central European region.

The long-term project of CAPP – Cooperative Art Partnership Programme and its final exhibition, *Common Affairs – Collaborative Art Projects in 2018*, (Ludwig Museum, 2018b), provided the possibility and the methodological framework for artists working together with various communities, including marginalized people or groups with specific problems such as pupils in Budapest and Pécs, young people living with mental illnesses, people with visual impairments, inhabitants of small villages, agricultural entrepreneurs, and Hungarian Roma living in a disadvantaged area. The project's artistic process is being used as a basis for the museum education research programme of the Ludwig Museum, realised in the framework of the AMASS Project.

Participants of the in-service training course

The main goal of the 30-hour accredited teacher training course at the Ludwig Museum was to introduce contemporary arts as a pedagogical and communication tool; and acquaint teachers with the museum as an informal pedagogical space. We consider contemporary arts a rich knowledge repository for everyone. Art appreciation programmes targeting contemporary works may best be realised through methodologies that are best realised in an informal learning environment of the museum. Teamwork, dance, drama pedagogy, diverse creative processes, and educational debate are examples from the toolkit we shared with the participants during our training. During the 4-day training series, we dedicated a session of four hours to explain our pedagogical practice and our museum education practice concerning disabled and marginalized people.

We realised two training courses with 35 participants. Course participant data quoted below represent the key aspect in the selection of the applicants. Teachers from the countryside and disadvantaged schools were given priority. Formation of participant groups of the two iterations of the training course happened at the same time, and we received 84 applications for 30 places. In the applications, female and secondary school teachers were overrepresented. We specified two criteria in the selection process: a training agreement with the supporting statement of the director of the school and a completed motivation form. Information collected by the motivation form helped us understand the teachers' background and interest and define their knowledge about contemporary art.

In the first iteration, we had two participants who work in a secondary grammar school for adults, one from a primary school with a unique educational programme, and one teacher from a foster home with mostly Romani children from the countryside. Two teachers came from foundation schools where the students with special needs can learn in smaller groups than in the state schools. We invited an artist and a drama therapist who works as a freelancer.

Research questions

Teaching about contemporary arts is a difficult task for overburdened art teachers who find it difficult to follow current art trends, because of their high teaching loads. Therefore, we have developed an *in-service course for teachers*,

entitled *'Art as our contemporary'* to introduce methodologies of teaching contemporary arts. We support the teachers to integrate arts-based methods into the teaching practice of the discipline "Visual Culture" and eventually in other disciplines as well. Our teaching aids include the necessary background knowledge to realise the programmes and specific intended learning outcomes. We intend to provide tools for assessing student development, so that the teachers could reveal the usability of the school-based interventions. Our research questions were as follows:

> *Can arts-based interventions*, mixing traditional methods of art education with innovative, informal methodologies of museum education b*e integrated in the art history-focused Hungarian curriculum of Visual Culture* (the discipline for art education) at schools?
>
> *Can teachers acquire an open and flexible attitude* towards contemporary arts that they are unfamiliar with during the 30-hour intensive course?
> *Can our educational interventions*, originally based on face-to-face encounters and direct experiences with art works *be transferred to the digital learning and teaching platforms*?
>
> *Can we form a knowledge building community* from a group of teachers with different backgrounds during a short training period of 30 lesson hours? Will they be able to show peer support and learn from each other?

The training process was documented in detail, through participant observation (with checklist), video films of training events (with participant consent secured) and through pre- and post-hoc questionnaires that reflected participant satisfaction as well as changes of attitudes. The online sessions were recorded and the continuous feedback from the participants also contributed to our rich research dataset. The documentation of the final projects (scenarios, photo and video documentation of the educational programmes and the artworks of the children, self-reflected diaries of the teachers), and the data of our satisfaction survey made possible reveal the efficiency of the training and aspects to improve.

The most spectacular development could be noticed in the case of teachers who never used art in their educational practice and had hardly any knowledge about contemporary art. A good indicator of the success of the programme were reports on the multiple uses of the museum educational toolkit. In the

next part of our paper, we will discuss examples of the arts-based projects that teachers designed and realised as a final work of the training course.

Question	Rating
Implementation of criteria for innovative art education projects	4,7
Innovative quality of the knowledge / attitudes / values transmitted	4,4
Appropriateness of teaching methods	4,77
Practical use of museum education toolkit received during training	4,88
Feasible requirements	4,83
Monitoring of the knowledge acquisition process	4,88
Satisfaction with the knowledge of the trainers	4,94
Quality of technical conditions	4,83
Quality of organization	4,94

Table 1: Data from the satisfaction survey

Several aspects of the programme involved **ethical issues**, what needed special prudence from the participants, the trainers, and the researchers. The learning community was carefully managed, and protection of the copyright of the final presentations and the educational projects was secured. The documentation requirements for the research programme were disclosed to the participants who gave written consent to the recording and use of the training sessions, the visual materials produced and their final projects in publications and doctoral dissertations. We used a secure online platform and ensured the safe storage of sensitive data of the participants.

Artistic outcomes of the training

As the final stage of the five-week-long mentoring and training period, participants were invited to design and implement an art education programme using the museum educational methods learned and the toolkits. On 9th April 2021, we finished the first iteration and presented the 18 participants final projects. Due to the pandemic and lockdown, the projects were implemented online or in the open-air, as a city tour. The participants could work with their regular students, and they tried to fit their programme into the school curriculum. According to the participants' feedback, the strength of the training was not just the knowledge that was transmitted. Our

educational results were manifest in the improved communication skills of the participants, who could share their experiences, widen their methodological repertoire and establish a learning community. The final presentations show the strong effects of the museum collection and the methods of the trainers. Changes were especially conspicuous in the case of the teachers who did not use contemporary art before the training. We now present some projects to illustrate this result.

In one of the projects that was realised with secondary school fashion design students, the selected artworks from the Ludwig Collection (István Nádler: *Violence*, 1968; Endre Tót: *Hats*, 1969; Karel Appel: *Femme*, 1967; Ilona Keserü: *Painting No. 1*, 1966; János Szirtes*: Twosome*, 1987; György Szőnyei*: Gift*, 1986-1990) seemed to be a rich inspiration.

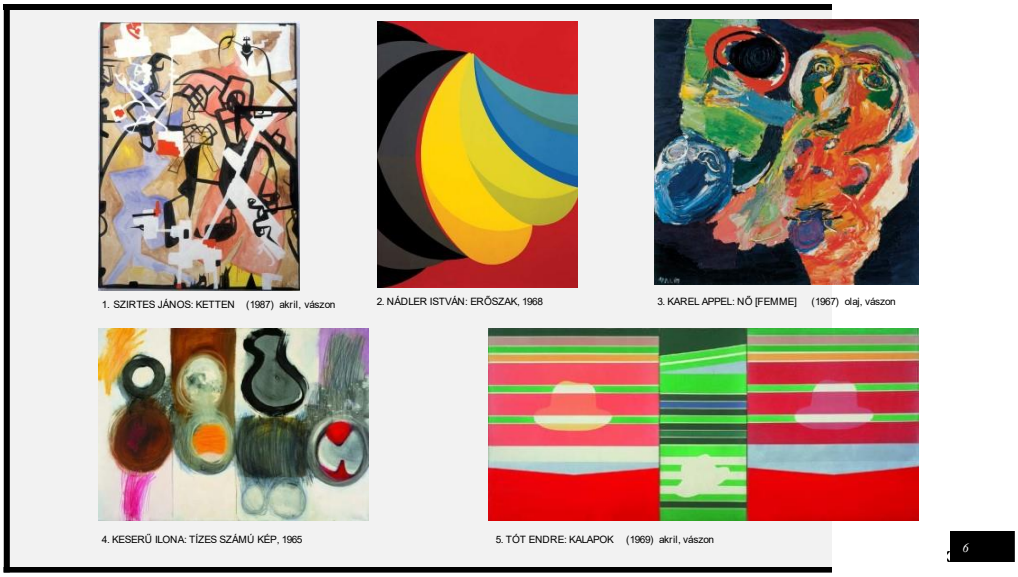


Figure 1: Slide from the teacher presentation with the selected artworks from the Ludwig Collection

The visual language elements that the teacher selected were the colour, forms, and textures of the artworks to ensure real motivation for the students and facilitate their creative process. Although art school students were experienced in viewing paintings, the teacher decided to start the lesson with a slow looking exercise to get students in the mood of art appreciation. Later, she asked them to assemble household items and everyday objects to reproduce the artworks they prefer. Then, they had to take a photo of their assemblage and use this photo as a fabric to design a garment.

Figure 2: Slide from the teacher presentation with work of the student

Online learning resulted in unexpected difficulties for the teachers. They were obliged to start a lesson of Visual Culture, a discipline based on creativity, early in the morning. Senior primary and secondary schools were online, and inspiring students was a challenge in the demotivating circumstances, even with an exciting and spectacular art form like photorealism. The project worked with the concepts of reality and illusion, and the aim was to depict the urban environment of the students. The lesson consisted of a preparatory discussion and the teacher's presentation about the international icons of photorealism (Richard Estes, Chuck Close) and contemporary Hungarian artists (Dezső Szabó, Levente Baranyai, Ábel Szabó). Their works were meant to be a multilevel inspiration, with diverse approaches to representing the characteristics of the city. The students could work on their project at home and start taking a photo series (photo diary) of their rural environment. They could use these photos as a photo sketchbook to create their portrait of the city in drawing. In the final stage of the creative process, the students could leave out the undesirable elements or replace with a required one. In this project, the photo-based artworks could be an inspiration to change perspective of the students in observing the city and help them define their well-known environment as a source of creative ideas.

Figure 3: Slide from the teacher presentation with work of the students

The acquaintance with contemporary art should start at an early age. The aim of the online art education project managed with seven-year-old primary school students was to increase their interest in contemporary art. The programme was expected to adopt the online art education programme in the activities of the school job orientation day. The main artwork of the programme was a sculpture, *The worker of tomorrow, deployment outfit* by István Csákány (2009). Based on Csákány's sculpture, the children were asked to create statues or installations using everyday objects, toys, and materials at their home to represent their dream job. The method of interpretation was again slow looking which ensured enough time for the children to notice the most relevant characteristics of the artwork. The methodology of slow looking asks the viewer to spend a determined time observing the different characteristics of the artwork and notice the feelings and emotions that the artwork created. During the discussion, they learnt about the function of a statue. The online platform limited the possibilities of observation, and in the museum, the effect of the artwork could have been more forceful. Nevertheless, the teacher could design a brilliant, multimodal programme activating the whole family of the student.

Figure 4: Student works are inspired by the sculpture of István Csákány

We selected teachers who are marginalized as professionals in different ways (living in the countryside, far from peer support and in-service training opportunities, working with children with special needs or learning difficulties). The teacher who works with children of Romani background, who live in a foster home, enriched the group's pedagogical experiences as her students were marginalised and challenged in many respects. The crucial artwork in her project was the series by Mara Oláh (alias Omara, cf. Secondary Archive, no date). a Romani autodidact painter, who could perpetuate the difficulties and restrictive practices used against her that are typical for other Romani people as well. Omara was a perfect choice to work with underprivileged youth because they could identify themselves with the artist of Romani origin. Omara's visual language draws inspiration equally from classical modern art (Picasso's Blue Period) and Romani visual culture. Omara had a natural talent to condense complex, high-intensity emotions and actions in a composition, and besides her effective figural representation, she underlines the thoughts and sentences of the actors. During a personality development training, young people could work up the atrocities they had encountered, articulate their emotional reactions in specific situations and revel restriction general experience of exclusion because of their Romani origins, and make use of their visual cultural heritage in a creative process. The art education programme aims to increase the openness to contemporary art, enhances conscientious visual self-representation, and introduce Omara as a real Romani icon to the youth living in a foster home.

Figure 5: Student work is inspired by the paintings by Omara

"Everybody could be a responsible artist!" Joseph Beuys, whose artwork, *Sealed Letter* (1967, cf. Dia Community, 2018) was chosen by two teacher participants as the inspiration of their final project. In the first programme, the teacher

reflected on Beuys' performances and his creative process, and in the e-learning phase, she tried to use a mix of offline and online methodology. In the preparatory period, she sent packages with the materials needed during the programme to the participants via post. During the online workshop, she introduced the complex theoretical and creative meaning of performances by Beuys to the children and their families. The programme's first aim was to ensure the feeling and experiences of creativity, the second to provide isolated and separated family members in quarantine the feeling of community and collaboration.

The educational programme related to diverse school disciplines: Visual Culture, Language and Communication, Biology and Environmental Studies, Literature, and Music. In the first part of the programme, students were shown a presentation by the teacher and listened to the music of John Cage (*Dream*, 1948). After this frontal activity, students had started the active work and opened the package. Primary school students and their families, altogether twelve participants were asked to draw the imaginary portrait of a creature which can grow out of a seed. After they finalized the drawings, the children had to plant the seeds; this action reflected Beuys's action called *7000 Oaks* (1969, cf. Dia Community, 2018). The participants' last task was to send seeds to a person they chose, and with this simple action, they became an artist practising mail art. The second art education project was inspired by the artistic activities of Beuys. The teacher, who designed this project, is a painter and drama educator, and therefore she has a complex and diversified methodological repertoire for the interpretation of art. The project intended to initiate a dialog about the goals, tools and possibilities of art in a group spanning several cohorts (participants were aged 13-25 years) and help participants to understand the idea of thermoplastic art and a way of perception focusing on bodily sensations.

The venue of the workshop was the studio of the teacher, where she pre-selected ten artworks with different media (drawings, paintings, and objects). In the first, introductory round, participants had to choose one artwork which could help them to present themselves, then they could vote for one artwork which they want to know more about and work with it during the programme. The selection of artworks on the voting-paper included one artwork by Beuys, and she decided to use it as a visual citation to underline the comprehensive character of modern art. During the programme, members of the group created their own associations about the chosen artwork and then wrote a narrative story to interpret it. In creative drama session, participants had recalled the

actors and elements of the story to life and after finishing the drama the teacher gave them time to share the experiences. As a closing activity, the participants were invited to create their own visual messages according to specific characteristics like size (20x20x20 centimetre), colour (to use maximum three colours), to have a tactile aspect, (to represent the 'secret' and Beuys' thermoplastic idea), and finally to make it in short time (20 minutes).

The remaining two art education project could represent an important characteristic feature of working with art: it could be used as a starting point, a possibility to find specific interpretation of individuals and the whole group.

Figure 6: Voting-papers used during the art educational programme

In the second iteration of the in-service training programme, teachers will be asked to end their final projects with assessment to identify the effects of arts-based interventions on children and their teachers. Three types of evaluation may be used to determine how likely it is that our exhibition visits and creative workshops have successfully communicated educational and artistic messages:

1. *Front-end evaluation* identifies what visitors already know about the subject matter of an artwork and brings to light naive theories, pseudo-scientific ideas, and misconceptions they may have about the topic. It also reveals questions and concerns regarding issues that are already part of public discourse. It is typically conducted early on in the exhibit development phase. Front-end evaluation consists of visitor and/or questionnaires.

2. *Formative evaluation* methods can be used to observe the ongoing educational process. An interesting alternative targets visitor experiences in the exhibition space. This study, executed by participant observers who notice how children and their teachers interact with certain exhibits, reveals the highlights and disregarded works of a show for a special visitor group, and suggests design ideas that may communicate the message of the exhibition more clearly. The evaluation of an exhibition while "in use" may result in a more accessible display, both physically and intellectually.

3. *Summative evaluation* is conducted once the educational programme is complete, to determine immediate impact and focuses and what the group and their teacher has learnt from their museum experience. A retention study, following the interventions by 2-4 weeks may show knowledge gained and retained and experienced powerful enough to be stored in long-term memory. Naturally, many aspects of the impact will only be revealed months or years later.

To provide authentic and meaningful educational programmes, all these methods should be employed. However, most of the effects will be manifest months or years later. Like the outcomes of projects supported by the ArtSocial Foundation (2020) that provide creative opportunities and arts-based social encounters for children experiencing social conflicts, our interventions may also reveal hidden talents, inspire creative actions, and motivate for a more meaningful life.

Ethics declaration

This study was approved by the Ethics Review Board of Corvinus University Budapest.

Acknowledgement

This presentation relates to AMASS - Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture project, 2020-2023, Reg. No. 870621, supported by the Socioeconomic and Cultural Transformations in the Context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution subprogramme of the EU HORIZON 2020-SC6 Framework Programme.

References

ArtSocial Foundation (2020). *(Y)our impact in 2019/2020*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/11NJAVDEPZtSIdbnuYXzhPSp4s2-9IfZS/view

Dia Community (2018). Joseph Beuys, 7000 Oaks. www.diaart.org/visit/visit-our-locations-sites/joseph-beuys-7000-oaks

Dorner, H. & Kárpáti A. (2010). Mentoring for innovation: key factors affecting participant satisfaction in the process of collaborative knowledge construction in teacher training. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, *14*(3), 63-77.

Guy, J. (Ed.). (2020). *Contemporary art goes to school*. Intellect Publishers.

Kárpáti, A. & Vásárhelyi, T. (2013). *Exhibition Communication*. Eötvös Loránd University, http://www.eltereader.hu/media/2014/05/Exhibiton_communication_READER.pdf

Lankford, E. L. (2002). *Aesthetic Experience in Constructivist Museums*. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 36(2), 140-153.

Ludwig Museum (2021a). Collection and resource. www.ludwigmuseum.hu/en/collection-and-resource

Ludwig Museum (2021b). Catalogues. www.ludwigmuseum.hu/en/catalogues?s=&page=3

Ludwig Museum (2021c). Time Machine – a new selection from the collection of the ludwig museum. https://www.ludwigmuseum.hu/en/exhibition/time-machine-new-selection-collection-ludwig-museum-0

Ludwig Museum (2018a). The Permanent Revolution. Ukrainian Art Today https://www.ludwigmuseum.hu/en/exhibition/permanent-revolution-ukrainian-art-today

Ludwig Museum (2018b). Common Affairs – Collaborative Art Projects in 2018. https://www.ludwigmuseum.hu/en/exhibition/common-affairs-collaborative-art-projects

Ruhle, J. K. (2017). *Leading voices – past, present, and future*. Arts Museum Teaching. https://artmuseumteaching.com/tag/contemporary-art/

Secondary Archive (no date). Mara Oláh (Omara). https://secondaryarchive.org/artists/mara-olah-omara/