



INSTITUTION FÖR DIDAKTIK  
OCH PEDAGOGISK PROFESSION

# THE PEDAGOGICAL POWER OF "MESSINESS"

Staying with the joy and entanglement of a more  
participatory art teaching practice

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Handledare:	Dawn Sanders
Examinator:	Mattias Börjesson
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## ABSTRACT

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When we teach we have also the possibility to practice a personal philosophy of life. My belief in equality and the democratic production of knowledge has steered me towards the view that pedagogy is an entanglement. In practicing an entangled pedagogy, participation is to me the natural choice. In times of rapid change, fear of difference, social injustice, technical advances and non-sustainable lifestyles it matters how we see issues of student autonomy, engagement, the production of knowledge, aesthetics and the role of the teacher.

I believe that we need to talk more about *how* to be teachers who enable participation. We need to talk about what participation is and how we can create a more engaged pedagogy for our students and ourselves.

By entangling ideas from postmodernist feminism of knowledge production, sociocultural theories of learning and phenomenological theories of embodied knowing this paper argues for a participatory art teaching practice whereby teachers and students alike have and take responsibility for progresses, quality and outcomes of the process. It argues for a participatory art teaching practice that dares to stay with the trouble of living in a world that is complicated and contradictory.

Participatory art is used as a model for thinking about what participatory art teaching can look like. The three concepts of Entanglement, Engagement and Sensibility help to identify what kinds conditions need to be in place for genuine participation in art teaching settings to occur.

## Thanks a bundle

I want to thank all the adults and young people I meet in my life in art and teaching for challenging and helping me think about respect, inclusion and becoming. Thank you Bente and Yvonne for all these 4+ years of friendship and support. To all the great people at HDK and Pedagogen who have inspired and encouraged me and to you Dawn, for great *handledning* during this final process, the stimulating discussions and your rich and entangled view of life and learning, thank you. Love and thanks to Fredrik, my soul-mate and favourite ball-plank, Timothy who is the best question-asker of them all and whose question "Why do they care?" got me really thinking and to Freja who helps me think more deeply about what it is to be a social being.

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## MY BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH AREA

***My view is that the practices of joyful, collective and individual pleasure are essential to the arts of living on a damaged planet.***

(Donna Haraway 2014)

### A PATH TOWARDS TEACHING ARTIST

My path towards a more participatory art teaching practice has emerged through my firm belief in the value of all people and the right of every person to feel and be included in the production of cultures and futures. As a child my family moved several times to live in different parts of the world and as a young woman I came to Sweden where have been living for the past 25 years with a family of my own and a fulfilling career as artist and art teacher. Perhaps it is this feeling of displacement that makes me extra aware of the importance of feeling included and seen and to participate in a meaningful way to society.

Gaining my formal art training in New Zealand and majoring in ceramic sculpture was the beginning of an artistic and feministic journey that carries on today. My feminist awakening happened when as a young, passionate art-school student I was shocked by (and protested against) the male dominance in the world of Western art, past and present. Since then I have understood that a feminist view can address more than gender inequalities by encompassing all minority groups and their struggles to become included in the productions of better futures for everyone.

The art school I attended never encouraged participation on any level - even the viewer was held at a distance. Instead I was trained to protect my autonomy and cultivate my role as independent artist through the production of high quality art objects. It is not strange that as practicing artist most of my time was spent alone in the studio producing work for exhibitions. My focus was seldom participatory. Even the local craft-art cooperative I was a member of for many years was formed from a need to share economic burdens more than desires to work in participatory settings.

I started to teach when making art became something I did to gain recognition as an artist rather than something I believed in. I felt that I needed to become a part of the creation of a positive future in a more (for me) meaningful and direct way and I saw art teaching as a piece of this complex puzzle. I went through teachers training and gained a teaching diploma and thereafter carried out art projects in schools as freelance artist as well as holding a part-time position as film and art teacher at Kulturskola (Swedish Public Music and Arts School) where I still work today.

As an artist I have always been restless. My artistic method has not been bound to a particular material or subject area but rather I have had a need to investigate whatever speaks to me in a particular time of my life and feed from the passion inspired by those questions. I am also always eager to change the way I see and use materials and methods in order to tell different stories about what it is to live. As a teacher I recognise in myself that same kind of restless hunger, as I constantly try to reflect on my teaching practice to expand the spaces where others can share their stories.

In many ways it is the practice of being engaged that has helped me most. I needed to find a safe place in constant state of flux that was my life. To find something that needed my complete focus, mind, body and soul, has given me peace and a feeling of connection to the world. Many times that *something* has been engaging in art-making. To be engaged with an aesthetic and philosophical question through the working of material, often clay, in my hands is to understand where I belong in the world. In moments of being with the making there is peace and a feeling of being in control. I feel the same thing when running. I started to jog about 20 years ago as a way to get out of the house and the studio but I soon discovered that the simple act of running could also help me to navigate between the known and the unknown in life. When I run I feel there is a fluidity, an easiness, where body and mind cease to exist as separate parts. In many ways this was what art-making also fed me with. In times of flow I would experience the complete union of mind/body/soul, there was only a fluid being that worked effortlessly with materials, tools and the studio space.

It is from years of art-making, art-teaching and running that I look at the act of participatory art teaching practice and what that might be. I see my role as art teacher as not only to encourage and enable individuals to develop their creativity. Of equal, if not greater importance, is my role in building up an environment where students feel the ability to act and engage with each other through different processes of making. Participation in art teaching then, is when teachers and students alike have and take responsibility for processes and the outcomes of these processes and my belief in this kind of art pedagogy comes from my background as artist and from my own knowledge and experience of art teaching practice.

## RESEARCH AIMS AND ENQUIRIES

### RESEARCH AIMS

The aim of this study is to closely examine practices of participatory art teaching using of key-concepts; *Entanglement*, *Engagement* and *Sensibility*. In this way the study aims to address how more participatory and democratic pedagogic practice can lead to a less hierarchical, more empathetic learning environment, greater student confidence and a more inclusive production of knowledge.

Through this study I aim to find the conditions for art teaching practice where the shared responsibility for learning is possible but I also hope to define when participation can be problematic. Quite simply how it can be possible to enjoy the pedagogic power of messiness.

### ENQUIRIES

My research enquiries are informed by two questions:

What are the possibilities and difficulties one can expect when teaching in art in a participatory setting?

When and to what degree does participation happen in a participatory art teaching setting?



## PARTICIPATORY ART TEACHING, A BACKGROUND

The term "participatory art teaching" is not an established term. Rather is it my own attempt to describe an art teaching practice that is more democratic and exploratory, where teachers and students are on journeys of discovery together towards unknown goals. Participation is defined in The Oxford dictionary simply as "the action of taking part in something" (Oxford Dictionaries online 2016). Neither participation nor participatory art teaching say anything about the extent of the participation involved, which is always important to keep in mind. More on this is discussed in following chapters.

Participatory art teaching is a conceptual merging of two philosophical standpoints; the belief in a democratic knowledge production and a belief in a more collective and empathetic form of creativity. This research paper draws from two traditions that are now briefly described.

Democratic knowledge production can perhaps find its Western roots as far back as Socrates who developed methods for knowledge production through collective discussions driven by open questions. Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) grounded sociocultural theories of education by stating that human development and learning happens in every interaction we have with collective knowledge that exists in society (Säljö in Forsell 2005:121). In recent decades postmodernist feminist theory has extended the democratic view of knowledge in concepts such as "situated knowledges". Donna Haraway coined this term to describe that all knowledge is local or "situated" and that the knower is always a participant in an already conceptualised world (Haraway 1991 in Lykke 2014:5). Extending from Haraway's "situated knowledges" comes the term "Situated learning" (Lave and Wenger 1991). Situated learning is a process in which learning is not passive absorption of information but "a social and participatory process where theory is entangled with everyday practice with others" (Hickey-Moody and Page 2015:13). The concept of democracy, of which we speak here, is not the contemporary representational democracy but rather, as proclaimed by influential educator John Dewey, it is "... primarily a mode of associated living, a conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey 1916:101).

The second philosophical standpoint that this research rests on is the understanding that learning in Art (as a subject) is not so much about individual creative expression but rather a gathering of stories and sensibilities from shared horizons, to borrow a term from phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (Egidius 1999:156). Instead of nurturing creativity as an individual concern, a more sensory, empathetic and collective sensibility is the goal. If we turn to the Swedish curriculum, however, the goals of the subject Art focus on the development of skills for image production and historical and contextual knowledge about art and visual images. One must look to the general goals of Swedish compulsory schooling to find statements concerning democratic values. Under "Rights and Responsibilities" (*Rätter och skyldigheter*) it is stated that democratic processes should be employed in all pedagogic areas and that the goal of a more democratic

teaching is to prepare students for active participation in society and abilities to take personal responsibility (Skolverket a). It appears that in order to find other goals for art teaching we must turn to literature and research from the past few decades that break away from an art teaching tradition that focuses on skills and inherited knowledge and instead move towards a more explorative and democratic views of aesthetic subject areas. One influential Swedish book that describes this shift is "School and Radical Aesthetics" (my translation of the Swedish title, Aulin-Gråhamn, Persson, Thavenius 2004). In this anthology arguments are laid forth for a less modest aesthetic and towards a social form of aesthetic knowledge that can challenge structures of learning in schools by developing how we think about cognition and the experiences of the body (ibid:10). Recent years have seen a large amount of research papers and literature regarding the role and practice of teaching artists<sup>1</sup> (Booth 2010:2), community artists, artist educators and the three-tiered discipline to which I presently belong; artist/researcher/teacher. These perspectives have offered greater depth and possibilities for the practice of a more open, explorative and participatory art teaching practice in schools. As one researcher vividly describes, teaching artists provide a way to "enter an empty space; not one filled with targets, visual aids and materials, but the void where ideas are not yet formed" (Hall 2010:104). My hope is that the research I present here follows in this tradition by proposing an alternative art teaching practice modelled on participatory art. In this research participatory art is problematised for its advantages and disadvantages within pedagogical settings.

Finally then, it is from my observations of art teaching in schools, embodied experiences of teaching art in Kulturskola, carrying out numerous art projects as free-lance artist and theoretical knowledge from years of study of art education that I approach this research paper.

It is also from this theoretical and practical background of art education that three key-concepts have emerged that form the back-bone of this study; *Entanglement*, *Engagement* and *Sensibility*.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Booth has defined a Teaching Artist: "A teaching artist is a practicing professional artist with the complementary skills, curiosities and sensibilities of an educator, who can effectively engage a wide range of people in learning experiences in, through, and about the arts, with a wide variety of learners."

## LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY AND CHOICE OF TERMINOLOGY

### LIMITATIONS

The question that immediately arises is of course; "What is meant by participation in education today?" I will answer this question only briefly, as my focus is not a broad discussion of the purposes and applications of participation in all levels of education as this is an interesting question but beyond the scope of this paper. In this study I have observed, at a distance, a process with children and I have closely observed my own practice in a participatory process with adults. This fact that the study examines different age-groups will in itself will have an impact on the results but my intention is to address conditions that influence a participatory process more than how different age-groups act and react within them.

### CHOOSING MESSINESS, SENSIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION

The term "messiness" I have borrowed from Lena Martinsson (Martinsson 2016) who has studied what she calls post-colonial "messiness" where many citizens experience conflicting norms acting upon them which are both confining and liberating.

*Entanglement* or *messiness* is to me about the acceptance of the complexity of all things, the democratic production of knowledge and the way power affects our abilities to become in differing ways. I understand the idea of becoming to be about the "persistent challenge" of subjectivity through issues of entitlement and power (Braidotti 2002:7).

Messiness, in our society, is bound up with negative connotations of not quite being in control. To be in control, as I have understood it, is normative in society today. This is the kind of normative thinking that this research on participatory art teaching wants to address. "Messiness" challenges therefore my own thinking as much as anyone else's.

From Haraway I borrow and build on her mantra of "staying with the trouble". In her new book, *Staying with the trouble; making kin in the chtulucene*, Haraway puts forth a new "timeplace for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in responsibility on a damaged earth" (Haraway 2016:2).

In this text I consciously avoid the word "creativity" and this is for several reasons. Within pedagogic discourses there is a risk that definitions of frequently used words become both arbitrary and contradictory. So is most certainly the case with "creativity" (and participation, but more on this later on). Creativity has in fact been in the centre of so many discourses in recent years that competing and insufficient definitions tend to lead to binary oppositions which divide understandings of creativity into either/or; elite or democratic; original or reproductive, spontaneous or instructed, universal or culturally specific; intuitive or conceptual; instinctive or definable and so on (Banaji & Burn 2007, in Riseley 2015).

Often we talk about all the good that creative pedagogical practice can achieve. But creativity is neither good nor bad, it is the way people use their creativity that makes it one or the other. In my earlier research I have argued for a *critical creativity* as a way towards a more holistic view of human creativity and a method whereby creativity is encouraged but not without a parallel discourse of what a democratic and inclusive production of cultures is and could be (Riseley 2015:3).

It is not uncommon that creativity can appear to be synonymous with the words entrepreneurialism. In discussions with my mentor Dawn Sanders we talked about creativity as being hijacked by a consumer capitalistic society that heralds entrepreneurialism as its highest arena for creativity (Sanders 2016). In the Swedish National agency for education website the first sentence on entrepreneurialism is "Entrepreneurialism in school is about stimulating students' creativity, curiosity and self-confidence as well as their will test and use their new ideas in practice" (Skolverket b). In the Oxford dictionary online the definition of creativity is: "The use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness: *'firms are keen to encourage creativity'*" (Oxford Dictionaries online 2016). The sentence used to explain creativity is I think rather revealing as it enforces a practical and pragmatic view of creativity as for the good of commerce and capital growth. The word creativity is drained of any interpersonal or empathetic content. In the search for a more entangled pedagogic practice it is difficult to use the word creativity for these reasons. I prefer to understand that creativity is a force that has a complexity beyond binary definitions or entrepreneurial ends.

Perhaps in an entangled pedagogics that I argue for here, it may be time to try other terms. Thomas Laurien, a good friend and recent Doctor of Design, suggested using the word sensibility. Sensibility, he explained, is where cognition and bodily experience are not separate but one and the same. In my dictionary sensibility has several meanings; "the ability to perceive or feel, the capacity for responding to emotion etc., the capacity for responding to aesthetic stimuli, discernment, awareness and emotional or moral feelings" and synonyms offered are "awareness, insight, intuition, taste, appreciation, delicacy" (Collins English Dictionary 2006). The definition and synonyms for creativity in the same dictionary is devoid of any words pertaining to the emotions or care of others in any way.

Throughout this paper I have chosen to use the term "art teaching" to describe my education area. Other terms used in English are Visual Arts, art pedagogy and art education.

## CHOICE OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

The two projects used in this research are carefully chosen for the potential I saw in them to problematise the nature of a more participatory art teaching practice. The following is a background behind the choices of the two projects CABBAGE and BUCKET.

### CHOOSING CABBAGE

The first participatory process, which I became aware of via a public lecture, is a process led by an artist and a schoolteacher in an Irish primary school. This analysis we could call looking from the *outside in*. The study is from my notes during and reflections after this lecture and from a film I took from parts of the lecture. It may seem surprising that I use a project I came to know about merely through a lecture but there was something about the quality of this project that caught my attention. In fact my reaction to it was like a physical jolt, a rush of joy and excitement that I could not ignore. When I sat one day and explained to my 21-year-old son how a class of five year-old children had made a 22 minutes long art video and sat in complete silence as they watched it his reaction was, "Why do they care?" This was of course a hugely relevant question that I needed to find the answer to! What was it about THAT project that was so special?

### CHOOSING BUCKET

The second participatory process is from my own art teaching experience, a creative process lead by myself and two other arts-teachers (another visual art teacher and a music teacher). This analysis is what one could call looking from the *inside out*. This study is through my own reflections directly in conjunction with the process as well as a closer study of the film taken during the participatory performance together with the staff of the Kulturskola and the beginning of the process with the staff.

Initially my intention was to use one of the many projects I have carried out in schools. In one of the most popular, art toilets were planned, designed and carried out by children and young people under my guidance. However, when I sat down to collect together photos, blog-entries, pupils statements from these projects I felt strangely detached from what had once been such an intensive part of my life. I did not remember clearly my reactions to the processes and the 50 or more individual projects became muddled in my memory. I needed a more immediate and engaged example from my real-time life. As with running it is impossible to feel and be the run when not running, so too with being in the teaching and learning space/action when that time has passed. Despite having carried out many participatory art projects in the past it became clear to me the importance of being, reflecting and feeling in the actual moment. This difference between genuine reflection and contrived past memories became clear to me as I started to describe (in text) the working process at Kulturskolan. As I wrote I wondered if this was not the real-time life example that I was looking for. Writing and reflecting about my reactions to my own plans of participation were both revealing and puzzling and I needed to know more about what this might mean.

## METHODS AND STRUCTURE

This section begins with a presentation of the methods this study uses and ends with an explanation of the structure of the text.

### RESEARCH METHODS

My research methods have been on two levels.

Firstly *practice as research* has been employed to lift the place of the researchers' reflexivity as an integral part of the study. Secondly *ethnography* and *auto-ethnography* are the methods used to examine the two teaching situations CABBAGE and BUCKET. The following is a description of these methods.

#### PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

This research paper is structured according to the post-modern position that knowledge is socially and collectively constructed (Richardson 1997:26, Hickey-Moody and Page 2015:11). From this ontological and epistemological position follows an understanding that language is not a mirror of ideas, knowledge, practices and structures but rather a point of diffraction and that this diffraction helps us to see from a particular viewpoint (Barad 2016, Richardson 1997:26). Language is seen as constructive and active (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009) and in this way the narratives we choose animate and give meaning to our area of study (Richardson 1997:26). It is from this understanding of language and the way it shapes how we understand the world that I have come to see "writing as a method of inquiry" in the words of Laurel Richardson (2000 in Lykke 2010:163). Writing and thinking/analysing happen simultaneously and therefore writing processes are strongly entangled with issues of epistemology, methodology and ethics (Lykke 2010:164). In this way I hope to add to a line of feminist scholars who have "disrupted traditional academic genres and styles of writing" (ibid:164). Additionally, writing in this way aligns well with the enquiries in this paper; the democratic production of knowledge in art teaching. bell hooks explains the melding of theory and practice in this way:

*When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other.*

(hooks 1994:61)

It is this kind of openness and life-informing that Deleuze and Guattari longed for in the description of their "ideal for a book would be to lay everything out /.../ on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994 in Hickey-Moody 2015:181). Inclusiveness is important, as one never knows where new knowledge can be formed.

I approach the work of research and writing in a spirit of joy and messiness and the writing of this text as an intra-action. I am made through the text and the text is made through me. I become as the text becomes. My life makes the text. I will explain what I see as my life and in this way lay forth the position from which I present this paper. Body and mind, artist and teacher, present and past, implicitly and explicitly are merge in an entangled becoming.

Writing as research is about seeing language and as constructive and active and it shapes how we understand the world (Lykke 2014, Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). The idea of the collective story is the basis of my understanding of a more democratic production of knowledge. Haraway sums up these thoughts about writing as practice in her questions about seeing. She poses the important questions; "How to see? Where to see from? What limits to vision? What to see for? Whom to see with?" (Haraway 1988:587). It is these questions that have also been with me in the writing of this text.

#### ETHNOGRAPHY AND AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

In this study I closely observe empirical material as used in an ethnographical methodology. Ethnomethodology as this form of research is called grew out of the phenomenological idea that subjective "lived experiences" and not passive sensory experiences are the basis for every human observation. This kind of subjectivity entails that all knowledge comes from interpretations, values and prior understandings (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009:166). Ethnomethodology is therefore a method that focuses on the study of how individuals "life-worlds" and common sense knowledge grow out of "micro-processes in the form of social interactions" (my translation from Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009:169). The central ideas within ethnomethodology are firstly that a bearer of meaning (a word, an action, a behaviour, an event etc.) are context-dependent and deeply complex and secondly that reflexivity on the part of the researcher influences the study (ibid:170). In these ways ethnomethodology breaks away from traditional positivistic methods whereby the researcher should always aim to remain neutral in relation to the object of study. In ethnomethodology, this is neither attainable nor desirable.

I adhere to the ethnomethodological understanding of the non-neutral position of the researcher and therefore I adhere to the auto-ethnographical concept of *practice as research*. Auto-ethnography, then, is both ethnographical and autobiographical and aims to understand more about a culture by how it is reflected in autobiographical experiences (Heewon Chang 2008:2). As historian Rebecca Solnit states, the truth is not always gained by the claim to an authoritative and emotionless relationship to facts but truth can also be found through an investigation into one's own desires, hopes and needs (Solnit 2006:58).

## STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

In designing the form for this text I have included narratives from my life and include short narratives from my art-teacher-self, my artist-self and my running-self. These narratives are entangled in the text as breathing pauses or possibilities for reflection and thus are not followed by explanatory passages. Richardson describes a narrative as "displaying the goals and intentions of human actors" (Richardson 1997:28) and my intention is to make my position tangible as well as adopt a method more inclusive and democratic.



## THEORY AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This section will give a short background to the concepts of participation and participatory art.

Participation is discussed within a historical context with a focus on the possibilities and problems that organisations and teaching institutions that wish to engage in a more participatory practice can face.

Participatory art has been a starting-point for modelling a setting for participatory art teaching. This model is based partly on my own art practice but mostly on my perception, experiences and reading of the art practices of others.

### PARTICIPATION

One of the buzzwords within education today, in any case in Sweden where I live, is participation. From curriculums for the youngest learners in schools to the universities, everyone declares the value and the powers of participation. Participation, however is a global challenge and wherever there are questions of participation there are issues of power relations and struggles for equality.

To begin with we can turn to the United Nations Children's Fund "*Convention on the rights of the child*", where it is clearly stated that the child is an independent subject with rights to voice opinions concerning all aspects of their daily lives (UNICEF 1989). An important indicator to how well a country lives up to this standard is the degree to which children are entitled to their freedom of expression and Article 13 in the convention explains that the freedom of expression;

*...shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.*

(CRIN 2016)

The right for children to the freedom of expression in any language, spoken written or in any artistic form is a clear message to all nations. The extent that nations live up to this varies greatly and this fact inspired Sherry R Arnstein to devise her "*Ladder of Participation*" (Table 1) At the bottom rung is "manipulation" and the top is when citizens can participate fully which she calls "citizen control" (Arnstein 1969:217). She describes "citizen control" as a levelling out of power so that the "have-nots" or those who are excluded from decision-making and economic privilege are "deliberately included in the future" (ibid:218). She explains that the bottom two rungs, Manipulation and Therapy are the levels of non-participation and the objective in this kind of

"participation" is to enable powerholders to "educate or "cure" the participants." (ibid:220) Here, Arnstein makes it clear that calling people "participants" does not always mean that they are asked to participate. Rungs 3, 4 and 5 which she names informing, consulting and placation fall under what she calls tokenism or "window-dressing participation". This is when the have-nots are invited to listen or given a voice, commonly through attending meetings or filling our questionnaires. What citizens achieve, she states, is that they have "participated in participation" (ibid:225). The top rungs Partnership, Delegated power and Citizen Control are all levels of citizen control with increasing amounts of decision-making power. An interesting aspect of power distribution, Arnstein claims, is that when citizens start to receive more power is it often not because they are given it but because they have demanded it. This is nothing new, she says, since it is common for those with power to want to hold on to it. Power has to be "wrestled by the powerless rather than proffered by the powerful" (Arnstein 1969:10). The level of citizen power that adults feel in a society is closely related to how the same society sees and enables child/youth participation (Hart 1992:5). In 1992, Roger Hart used Arnstein's ladder to devise a ladder of youth participation. In the following figure I have compared Hart's ladder to Arnstein's original ladder.

**TABLE 1 LADDER OF CITIZEN (ARNSTEIN) AND YOUTH (HART) PARTICIPATION**

	<b>Arnstein<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Hart<sup>b</sup></b>
8	Citizen Control	Youth initiated and directed
7	Delegated power	Youth initiated, shared decisions with adults
6	Partnership	Adult initiated, shared decisions with youth
5	Placation	Consulted and informed
4	Consultation	Assigned and informed
3	Informing	Tokenism
2	Therapy	Decoration
1	Manipulation	Manipulation

<sup>a</sup> Ladder of citizen participation by Sherry R Arnstein 1969

<sup>b</sup> Ladder of youth participation by R Hart 1992

Both Arnstein and Hart have written about the limitations of their ladders. Arnstein writes that the juxtaposition of the powerless citizens against the powerful is an oversimplification and that in each group there is a range of views, interests and subgroups. She also states that the ladder does not include the "roadblocks" for participation (Arnstein 1969:10).

In 2005 Hart presented his own criticism of the model of the ladder when he had noticed that the model was used to evaluate an organisation's success (Hart 2008:21) which I have noticed is the case in my own work at Kulturskola, this tendency to rate one's own pedagogic practice against the rungs of the ladder. This was never the way

Hart meant the ladder to be used and he realised that it was time to address the models' limitations. The symbol of a ladder has been problematic, he says, due to its linear form and the assumption that the higher the rung the better for the children which is not always the case. He claims that a child may not always want to initiate their own project but he stresses that they must be made to feel that they have the option to do so. Perhaps even more importantly a child must feel confident and able to take initiative when they feel they want to. Hart's opinion is that higher levels of participation are not always the goal but they should be available to all children.

The model of a scaffold has been suggested as a better metaphor as it moves away from the adult-child perspective and becomes a more inclusive structure between all participants of varying abilities who "help each other in their different climbing goals" (Hart 2008:21). Hart stresses that the ladder should not be "some kind of scale of competence not performance." (ibid:24). He insists that children should be made to feel that they have "competence and confidence to engage with others" instead of always seeing performance as a measure of success or ability. Important to remember, he says, is that it is neither appropriate nor desirable for children to always take the role as leader or always take the role as follower. Just like adults there will be struggles of leadership and democratic participation and although this is important to have in mind when planning child participation Hart states that the ladder did not address this issue. (ibid:25)

What perhaps is becoming clearer through these descriptions is the contradiction or conflict between control and freedom that is a part of any participatory project. Both freedom and control are issues of power. Depending on the context power can be conceptualized as a resource to be (re)distributed, as domination or as empowerment (Stanford Encyclopaedia on Philosophy 2016). Hanna Arendt argues that empowerment is dependent upon association in a social setting. An individual is empowered or as we perhaps say, "in power", only when the group to which that person belongs has a common goal. In this way empowerment is having "power with" instead of "power over" others as power becomes something that holds a group together and is a part of achieving a common goal (Arendt 1958 in Allen 2003:53).

Sotkasiira, Haikkola and Horelli (2010) argue that the recent focus on participation becomes entangled in what they call "educational or controlling goals" where young people are seen as a risk for society and participation is a way to control this risk rather than a means to increase youth agency. An example given by the authors is the Finnish government's youth participation policy "which dealt with the prevention of social exclusion, rather than systematically supporting youth participation" (Sotkasiira, Haikkola and Horelli 2010:176). The authors add to Hart's and Arnstein's discussions about the difference between participation as placating and socialising activity or as a way for participants to influence or create real change. They maintain that the word "influencing" is when a transformation has happened in participatory processes and in the way decisions are made (ibid:176). In this way they address the normative idea that

the goal of participations is to achieve some form of societal change but that all participatory projects do not allow participants to influence that transformation. This is a paradox worth reflecting on and is perhaps the greatest challenge and dilemma for everyone with the goal to enable participation.

Finally, it is not possible to talk about participation without mentioning John Dewey and his words, about meanings of democratic processes in education. It is interesting that his thoughts on democracy are just as relevant today as they were when they were written exactly 100 years ago.

*A democracy is more than a form of government: it is primarily a mode of associated living, a conjoint communicated experience.*

(Dewey in Smith 2001)

He describes the widening field of individuals with similar interests who, in order to make meaning and to be guided in making meaning for themselves, must refer their own actions to the actions of others (Dewey 2002:127). Echoing Arendt's thoughts about empowerment, Dewey stated that it is when an individual can share in the groups' sensibility that he/she is able to join in the goals the group has for success (ibid:49).

To summarise then, participation increases when a participator feels that they have the ability and the opportunity to influence decision-making processes. Participation is increased when participants enjoy a sense of empowerment that comes from "power with" others towards a common goal. Participation does not have to mean that an individual must always participate but rather that the right conditions are in place for participation to happen, if and when the time is right. The moment when participants influence a process can be seen as an indication that transformation has taken place not only in the individual but also in the distribution of power within a group.

## PARTICIPATORY ART

Participatory art has a long history and through literature on the subject I have found there to be some complex rationales and critiques surrounding the practice of participatory art (also called for example; relational aesthetics, social justice art, social practice, community art). However participatory art is not the same as participatory art teaching and this is a difference I would like to begin to discuss in this chapter. In my analysis I will problematise this further, in particular in the analysis of the project BUCKET.

Participatory art, or art within a "social discourse", questions that art must have an audience. Within a more participatory setting there exists a new possibility for everyone to be a producer (Bishop in Thompson, 2012:35). Claire Bishop explains the motivation of artists to turn to social participation as art form is a reaction against capitalism, "the

spectacle of modern life", or other social or political forces that produce populations without agency (ibid:35). I understand agency as being the ability to act or to make meaning independently of influences from society or the will of others (Sturken & Cartwright 2009: 431). Agency grows instead from settings that are supportive and that welcome difference. Artists who work in public setting have a will to bring about transition in society by addressing deeper problems and allowing for "alternative voices and interpretations to be heard" (Dēmos vzw & CAL-XL 2015:3). Participatory art is described as art that is not completed by the artist but where some form of participation from the public is needed to complete the work. Therefore artists often work in the "unpredictable public sphere" (Thompson 2012:21). Artists see their very artistic practice as vehicles for "wider processes" and in this way raise awareness of power imbalances and non-inclusive production of knowledge and culture (Dēmos vzw & CAL-XL 2015:6).

Bishop claims that participatory art is not a new aesthetic form, like cubism or futurism, but rather we should see it as an opportunity for social and artistic engagement for people living everyday lives. Social or participatory art practices engage with people through art as form in itself, just as any art material has form, painting, clay, film and so on, so do people who come together (Bishop in Thompson, 2012:38). Or put another way: "The public has a form and any form can be art" (Paul Ramiréz Jonas in Thompson 2012).

Interestingly those who instead maintain that art and artists should be free and autonomous do so from the same reaction against the standardisation and commodification of capitalism. This "artistic discourse" is in many ways the antithesis of "social discourse" even though they come from the same reactive source (Bishop in Thompson, 2012:40). Bishop explains how tensions between the two have to do with beliefs the two groups hold about quality and equality, participation and spectatorship, art and real life, aesthetics and social ethics. Social discourses are seen to challenge art conventions and question the dominant views in society concerning autonomy, public engagement and/or participation and the role of the audience in the arts (Dēmos vzw & CAL-XL 2015: 6). Some of these beliefs are similar to those named in Allan Kaprow's *Essays on the blurring of art and life*; "belief in objects that can be possessed; belief in eternity; belief in control and skill; belief in creativity; belief in publicity and fame; belief in marketability" (Kaprow 1993:xxviii). Participatory artists "trouble" much of these conventions partly by working in different arenas.

A paradox of participatory art though is that artists work in social discourses as feel that they cannot morally turn their backs on the problems of society but at the same time "use" the public in their art often as unpaid participants. This "commodification of human bodies" (Bishop in Thompson, 2012:41: 39) is somewhat of a democratic paradox. Bishop argues however that democracy in society and democracy in art (meaning here participatory art forms) do not follow the same models because art has an "ability to generate other, more paradoxical criteria" (ibid:41). Art can for example

make us aware of our values and in this way it is accepted that artists have power over the "fantasies of their public" (Kaprow 1993:53).

To summarise then, participatory art is a reaction to a capitalist consumerist society that is seen to reduce the possibilities for people to act and shape their own futures. Artists who engage with the public in unpredictable settings and processes do so in order to raise questions of ownership and to find alternative voices on wider social issues. Participatory art aims in this way to become more relevant for participants in the way it addresses their own life issues. The paradox of participation is the commodity of participant's bodies to complete the artist's vision and the power imbalance that this entails.

## THREE KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts Entanglement, Engagement and Sensibility will now be discussed and looked at through different philosophical and pedagogical discourses.

### ENTANGLEMENT

*Unless one likes complexity one cannot live in the twenty-first century.*

(Rosi Braidotti 2002:1)

Charles Darwin was early to use the term entanglement as a metaphor for the complexity of natural selection. In the final chapter of *The Origin of Species* he wrote:

*It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent upon each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting upon us.*

(Darwin 1859:498)

I included this piece of writing as it describes so well Darwin's sense of wonder at the interconnectedness of all things. He uses not only his deep scientific knowledge but he entices us in and convinces us of his theories through his expressive style of writing. In this way his writing plays a "key role in his personal meaning-making, reasoning processes, and extended attempts to persuade others of his claims" (Prain 2014: 328). He was early to understand the power of a more poetic language, thus entangling what scientific writing could be in order to deliver the message of entanglement in nature. In response to the opening quote by Braidotti, it is perhaps this kind of excitement and wonder in the entangled nature of knowledge that can be empowering for teachers and learners in the twenty-first century. Contemporary thinkers add to the understanding that we must reject universal laws because "There is more to, and of, reality than any discipline can deal with" (Lotz-Sisitka, Wals, Kronlid, and McGarry 2015:74). Entanglement encompasses not only our understanding of a specific subject-area but also how we see the norms and traditions of representation and language of different knowledge areas.

Many teachers, myself included, understand that pedagogy is an entanglement (hooks 1994, Hickey-Moody in Hickey-Moody and Page 2015:13) and therefore teaching art, in its material/matter/body focus becomes a deeply entangled practice. To see teaching in this way is to understand that "through bodies and with matter, we are always making,

performing and learning" (Hickey-Moody and Page, 2015:12). Learning then is not a practice by individuals but knowledge arises through intra-actions of all matter, human and non-human (Haraway 2003, Hickey-Moody and Page, 2015:11). Haraway explains how each being or body brings to every intra-action their own set of "prehensions" or memories of sensation (Haraway 2003:11).

Similarly, phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, uses the expression "horizons of potentiality" to place the importance of earlier experiences of things when trying to understand human behaviour. He believes that human action is explained through the way individuals understand and experience themselves and their environment (Egidius 1999:156). Our particular horizon of what a thing/phenomena is, or can possibly be, is based on past experiences and/or beliefs of that thing/phenomena. To learn together with others is then to share many horizons and in that way increase the field of vision for everyone. This is also the message that Merleau-Ponty wanted to get across; that our sense of the world is built up by intersected meetings of our own experiences crossing paths with others experiences. Subjectivity (individual experiences) and intersubjectivity (subjects relating to each other) become inseparable and unite when individuals attach past experiences to those of the present and/or attach other people's experiences to their own. Merleau-Ponty described this intersecting and engaging with others like to the way gears work. (Merleau-Ponty 1982) I see this as an interesting metaphor as it speaks of the vital, life-giving action of taking in and giving of experiences.

Donna Haraway calls for a new age where there are "non-hierarchical planes" where "multiple and entangled storying create lives that are more liveable, more about and for everyone". She wants not to remove what has been or what is known but rather a new age where both the past, new interpretations of the past and futures can exist at once (Haraway 2014).

Any form of transformation is not completely painless. Fredric Gunve, artist/teacher and an influential mentor during my Masters education, problematises transformation from the perspective of an artist negotiating the role as participatory art-teacher:

*A transformation from one state to another, from artist and art making into something else, into something new and titleless is always painful. It's hard to change, because change takes you from one state to another, and during the change, inside transformation, there is a temporary nothing/everything-ness going on. Transformation changes not only what, but also where and opens for the question; What am I where? This uncertainty of both place and being opens for more people to take part of an ongoing developing, and dynamic art-education. To act for and within change is an ethical practice of including instead of excluding.*

(Gunve 2016:12)



What I understand Gunve to be saying is that we must pay attention to the fear of not knowing, as this feeling is a key to understanding way power is entangled in the production of knowledge. Foucault for example believes that the production of knowledge is about power and that questions of power and privilege control what can be said and who can say it (Foucault 1972/69:182). Knowing and privilege are always hard to let go of. bell hooks, in a discussion with a fellow professor and philosopher Ron Scapp raise the (mis)conception that tradition is the same as status quo where nothing changes whereas it could just as well be a celebration of a tradition of embracing new (in this case) pedagogical ideas (hooks 1994:142). Entanglement is about daring to see things in other perspectives or "thinking beyond inherited categories and capacities" as Haraway puts it (Haraway 2016:7).

To end this chapter, allow me to offer an example from my own life that perhaps can embody this idea of how privilege produces power. It is a very small event but I think says something very basic about how we all at times take advantage and refuge in the privilege of the majority. One evening my family and I visited the fair-ground Tivoli in Copenhagen. It was a winter eve, one month from Christmas, and the magic of the thousands of tiny lights is heightened by the fact that the park's small winding pathways were dimly lit. My family, husband and two our two adult offspring (why is there no good word for adult children?), wander out of a restaurant and down a dark pathway. I stop to take a photo of a small glass lamp-shade and then I notice that there is a tile on the paved pathway with the same lamp-shade as motive. I stop again to take a photo. I walk straight forward in the direction that we were moving and then arrive at a crossing and look around thinking that my family would be there. They were nowhere in sight. The fact that everyone in the crowd seemed to be wearing black and the murkiness of the lighting made it impossible to spot them. I stood still and thanks to owning cell-phones we soon find one another. But I noticed that the rest of the family believed that it was my own fault for getting separated from them. I felt irritated about this as I attempted to explain how becoming lost is perhaps not always the fault of the minority that is left behind but rather the fault of the majority that walk away. They had after all arrived at a crossing and collectively failed to make sure that the minority knew where they had gone. Perhaps, I suggested, it is a matter of group privilege; a majority group often feels as though they have the privilege of opinion simply because they are the majority. They are collectively "right".

To summarise, a more entangled art teaching practice is to place a sense of wonder at the interconnectedness of all things as its very epicentre. Entanglement is present in the transformation of all participants- teachers and students - away from a hierarchical scheme built on the presumed privilege of knowing towards a more democratic setting where knowledge production is born in the intersection between different experiences and horizons. Entanglement is the understanding that subjectivity (individual experiences) and intersubjectivity (subjects relating to each other) cannot be separated but are entangled though a merging of pasts, presents and futures

## run/afterwords

It is the messiness of the thinking and running self that helps me and needs to be my companion while writing this text- about messiness, about entanglement. I am a mess. In many ways I have felt like a mess. An entangled mess of theory and practice, thought and movement, of country and practice I fail to land anywhere with ease. I feel empowered by what I read; that it's ok to be a mess. Staying with that is meaningful and important.

As I look ahead of me along the forest path I try to notice, to really see how I see, while the body moves, up, down, up, down one step after the next, when I focus on the closest branches they bob up and down, tiny movements, seemingly softened. How do the eyes do that? And when I look further in the distance there is only a steady sight. No ups and no downs. Steady and even.

## an interlude

One day I arrived to a school where I had recently carried out several school art-toilets and was just about to start up a new project in another class. A teacher from one of the first classes came up to me and said; "You have to come and have a look in here." I followed her in to the cloakroom that adjoined the two new art-toilets as well as the classroom. What I saw was quite moving; all along the walls above the pupils' coat hangers was a long brightly-coloured landscape-drawing in pastels, paint, coloured pencils, anything they could get their hands on. I discussed this with their teacher and she agreed that the pupils had suddenly seen their own environment, through the art-toilet project and with a newfound agency had asked if they could come up with an art idea for this area which they suddenly had seen both for what it was; a dull, functional room to what it could become; a room of imagination and colour.



**FIGURE 1: THE CLOAKROOM**

## ENGAGEMENT

*Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter.*

(Deleuze 1998:73)

There was a something that had made the pupils from this class see their cloakroom as something else and their own agency to do something about it opened up a door to change through action. This something that allows and stimulates action is a part of the concept of engagement. By having a "positive vision of the subject as an affective, positive and dynamic structure" it is possible to see the subject as having agency, given the right conditions (Braidotti 2002:7). The conditions needed for engagement are in part gained through practice of close observation. According to Dewey close observation is an active process and an explorative inquiry for the sake of discovering something new, something unknown (Dewey 2007:193). This means that observation is active, searching and deliberate whereas recognition is passive, already mastered and automatic. Observation involves the new and the old, the familiar and the unexpected and he likens it to the suspense we experience during the telling of a good story where the unfolding emerges in front of our eyes (ibid:193).

Let us return for a moment to my "becoming lost" story at Tivoli. Something I have come to realise about myself is that when I am in new places I must make sense of the place in a visual way; I observe. This particular trait or skill is either problematic or an asset depending on what perspective you have. I often feel overwhelmed at new places, and fair-grounds are places of extreme sensory arousal so when others try to talk to me about things other than what is happening around me I tend to lose focus and often "become lost" even in conversation. My problem is that I cannot NOT engage with my surroundings. I see this as normal and have a hard time understanding that others do not feel this way. In teaching I try to see things from the perspective of the learner who is struggling to make sense of the world. For me this is engaged pedagogy.

To be engaged in the quest for new knowledge is about asking questions; "Wonder sustains attention and curiosity provokes questioning" (O'Donnell in Hickey-Moody and Page, 2015:26). Dewey agrees that engagement is not a question of training isolated skills or carrying out individual and unrelated exercises as this kind of training has little "radiating power, or transferable value" (Dewey 2007:191). Learners' own queries and sense of wonder should instead lead the teacher AND learner to relevant methods that can further his or her journey.

Engaged pedagogy, according to bell hooks, is about using our own pain and struggle that comes from living in an unjust world as our point of departure (hooks 1994:74). Equally important though is not to focus only on one's own pain but the ability to feel

empathy and understand the realities and perspectives of others. Hanna Arendt encourages using imagination to step inside the minds and lives of others who think and live differently to us: "To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting" (Arendt 1958:133 in Blaagard and van der Tuin 2014:188). Dewey believes that all individuals have a sympathetic motive for making acquaintances with other individuals (Dewey 2007:189). We understand another person's actions because we are able to refer to our own actions in a similar situation. Dewey called this skill social awareness and without this we cannot become engaged in any social and pedagogic interaction (Dewey 1985:69). If we believe that matter<sup>2</sup> (human and non-human) produce each other in a mutual process of becoming or intra-action (Barad 2007 in Riseley 2015) then we must also ask questions concerning the role that matter plays in the individual's ability to act. How does matter affect abilities to take in, take notice, take care and take action?

Others, beside Barad, have reflected upon the agency of matter. In *An Argument for Material Agency*, Malafouris (2008:20) argues that if there is human agency then there must also be material agency and he presents his idea with the example of how a potter makes pots on "his"<sup>3</sup> wheel. His reasoning is that when the potter throws a pot he is not only consciously deciding over the material (clay and wheel) but the specific conditions offered by materials are deciding over the potter. Perhaps it is his potter metaphor that was so close to my own lived experience that attracted me to this text but I was also drawn to his idea that agency and intentionality are not properties of a things/humans but rather they are properties of material engagement. As I have explained I am very much aware of the role that the body plays in my ability to take action and without running and a life of making I believe that I would have a more detached relationship to both myself and the world. Interestingly he argues that in order to think about agency we also need to think about what happens right before an action. He asks; "When the potter moves his arm reaching towards the clay, what is left after subtracting the fact that his arm is moved?" (Malafouris 2008:20:26) He refers to a study on the brain which indicates that the brain decides and plans to do something before there is any conscious will to act (readiness-potential) (Libet 1985 in Malafouris 2008:20). This means that our conscious choice to do something is not the underlying reason we act rather it is there before we act; "The potter's brain prepares to shape the clay before the appearance of a conscious urge or intention to do so." (ibid:27) This means that there are two stages to an action; the intentional state (prior intention) that is only in the mind and the external movement (intention-in-action) in the world (ibid:28). Malafouris insists that there must be some form of what he calls a Background that gives the aspect of matter and time important places in agency. He claims that the thought about the action is not agency but rather that agency can only be a product of an activity. Intentionality or will to act is not so much about subject's mental state but are dependent on the Background

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<sup>2</sup> I have used matter and material as synonymous

<sup>3</sup> Malafouris has used the male pronoun throughout his article

or a combination of material, interactions and what emerges in those meetings (ibid:31). Agency then is always in a state of flux; it is temporal and emergent and constantly negotiated. It is a product of activity not a fixed and abstract attribute of the human condition (ibid:35).

To summarise, engagement is not possible without the subject's own ability to act. This agency is increased when given the right conditions. The conditions needed for engagement are in part gained through the practice of close observation that Dewey has described as an active searching and explorative inquiry for the sake of discovering something new, something unknown. Through the intra-action of human and non-human material the subject can become engaged agents who have an increased ability to understand others. Finally, to understand agency is to understand that it is not a fixed state but rather a constant state of flux that directly relates to the nature of the intra-actions available to the subject.

## run/afterwords

I am every run I have even run. My body contains my running; my bones and muscles, blood and ligaments are my running. The knowledge I have of my body is closely connected to my experiences of being a runner. The thoughts that I think, or allow myself to think have changed because of running. My running-self dares more than the non-running-self. The running-self dares to have thoughts that the non-running-self would never dare to have. Running widens the scope of who I believe that I am and what I believe I am able to achieve.

## SENSIBILITY

*I go for a lot of walks and I sing. That's when you find an angle on things, where it makes sense for that particular moment. It's more that feeling.*

(Björk in Hopper 2015)

In the beginning of this paper I introduced the word sensibility as an alternative to the well-worn word creativity. Every definition I have found of sensibility has been closer to my own understanding of what art teaching (or in fact *arts* teaching) is about than those of creativity. Take the definition in The Oxford English dictionary for example; "The quality of being able to appreciate and respond to complex emotional or aesthetic influences; sensitivity" (Oxford Dictionary online 2016). Sensibility seems to say more about our ability to feel and respond to stimuli and the needs of others than about talent or individual skill or the making something new out of something old which are common definitions or understandings about what creativity is. Sensibility is instead about being in touch with the world through an inner-life, life-world sensations and our human ability to feel empathy. Sensation is the backbone of sensibility; we take in the world through our senses, our bodily experiences register things and events and our actions are returned to the world. How we act in the world is directly related to our capacity to feel. Elisabeth Grosz describes the cycle in this way; "Sensation is that which is transmitted from the force of an event to the nervous system of a living being and from the actions of this being back onto the world itself" (Grosz 2008:71).

For me, running is a way to experience more fully the merging of inner-life and life-world, which is the body, mind and senses. A body moving through constantly changing space is to be in close integration with that space, all of its sights, smells, tactility and sounds is, within and without, that space. In the interconnectedness and openness experienced grows an ability to engage and a will to care.

For centuries, intellectuals have used walking in a similar way. Most famously Baudelaire, the 19th century French poet developed the concept of the flaneur (stroller or streetwalker) where the act of walking and gazing was a way to take in new city landscapes growing up around him. Davinia Quinlivan however contrasts Baudelaire with contemporary feminist theorists such as Giuliana Bruno who turn instead to the female gaze in order to rethink what it is to embody a space and to engage through the senses. Quinlivan describes how Bruno, in a spirit of true messiness, connects the "sensation of wonder" to the "experience of *wander*" (Gunkel, Nigianni & Söderbänk 2012:104). Virginia Woolf liked to go for walks and said that walking gives us the ability to "shed the self our friends know us by" and partly become a part of the people we meet; "Into each of these lives one could penetrate a little way, far enough to give one the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind, but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others" (cited in Solnit 2006).



To run or to walk then can be a way to break down binaries of body and mind, self and others, human and nature. Being *in* a run or a walk can be a way to experience that boundaries are not clear at all. Losing boundaries is part of the process of learning and producing new knowledge. According to Barad the world is made up of phenomena and the more we see, measure and understand the nature of the relationships between things (or their intra-actions) the more we can understand what there is, what exists and what can be known. I understand Barad to mean that what is possible for us to know is not a matter of what is thrown at us but the result of the intra-action and what "comes to matter" through it (Barad 2007, Barad 2016).

When objects become things that matter for us it is because they have been given another meaning and "energetic vitality" beyond their usages or origins as objects (Bennett 2010:4). Objects become something else for us through our bodily experiences of them.

Sensibility, when seen as the ability to respond emotionally to the world involves embodied experience through the senses. By embodied I refer to the understanding that mind, body and spirit are one and that it is through this entity that we engage with the world. Vision is often but not always an essential part of artistic practice. An even more inclusive view would be to understand that even this idea of the importance of vision is normative and speaks of a "hierarchy of vision" (Gunkel, Nigianni & Söderbänk 2012:104). To be more inclusive would be to state that every human sense is essential to a more democratic and participatory art practice. Luce Irigaray includes thoughts on air and breathing as the most fundamental part of being human and that air *is* space and breathing *is* the sharing of that space (ibid 2012:104). In this way the intersubjectivity of breathing becomes inclusive and democratic in its very foundation. It is this idea of intersubjectivity of collective action that brings into focus the basic human right to be seen as equal.

To summarise, sensibility is suggested as a replacement for creativity in alternative focus it places on abilities to feel and respond to stimuli and the needs of others. In this way I have argued that sensibility is a way to nurture our human ability to feel empathy. Sensibility comes through our ability to take in the world through our senses, register these things and events and transform these senses to action. The more we take in the world through our intra-actions the more we can see, measure and understand what is and what can be known. How we see is of importance here and it is when objects matter for us they take on a new kind of energy or vitality.

## run/afterwords

When I ran today the sun was low in the sky and at times its rays hit my face with its full winter strength. Then something very odd happened. I suddenly felt I lost contact with my feet- it was as if being blinded by the light closed off the connection I felt to the lower part of my body. I had to run on with the knowledge that my legs and feet knew how to run without feeling as if I was in control of them. It was a very strange feeling. I was on a flat road and there was no danger of tripping on anything. Yet somehow I felt uneasy, momentarily thrown out of balance.

## EMPIRICAL STUDIES

### ETHNOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS: CABBAGE

In August of 2016 I attended a conference in Edinburgh, the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Teaching Artist Conference, with the theme "Best, next and radical practice in participatory arts". During the conference many organisers and institutions presented their take on participatory practice. But it was not until I joined a small group to listen to a presentation from Ireland called "Virtually there" that I really felt engaged. Virtually there is an artist in residency project where artists and school classes and their teachers, using digital interfaces, share their parallel artistic practices. Artists Anna Hendersen and a year 1 teacher, Judith White, had been working together for 4 years. This class of 5-6 year olds was now halfway through their first year of the residency<sup>4</sup>. From what I could gather Anna had virtual "art day" with the class on a regular basis and what they called "real day" when Anna visited the class in person every 6th-8th session. I have called this project "CABBAGE" for reasons that will soon become clear.

Anna and Judith talked to us via the same interface they had used throughout the project. One difference was that in the school they used an interactive white-board so that Anna, Judith and the pupils could interactively draw and share their ideas in the board.

Anna started by showing us around her studio via her film-camera and we started to understand her deeply investigative studio practice.

*Anna "Look at this! These are cherry tomatoes that are three years old. I love these soft blurred images and this is one of the things that we are stepping into next, isn't that fascinating, those out of focus images are every bit as important..."*

Suddenly I realised that I was drawn in to her world of sense and sensibility. Despite the digital distance I could almost smell the tomatoes, feel their moisture. Her own fascination and "investing in the small things" was contagious and at the same time calming. After the studio tour Anna and Judith told us about how they worked together in the project, how important dialog was for the process as well as documentation of everything that happens in the classroom.

*Anna "Dialog is extremely important - in the beginning to evaluate, reflect upon what area we want to work on"*

*Anna "We spend so much time talking - it's a major part of our process, It's as big as anything else. When we talk all sorts of things happen"*

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<sup>4</sup> It should perhaps be mentioned that this Irish school is monocultural. The children are white and uniformed, the teachers white and women. The implications of this narrow cross-section is not uninteresting but for the sake of not straying too far afield in my analysis I will leave this question of homogenous learning environments for another time.

Anna and Judith stressed the importance of trust,

Anna *"We are shaping this as we go along. It's not about me in the studio testing something beforehand to see if it works..., it's just as much an investigation for the children as it is for me. It's not about success or failure, it's about investigation and risk-taking for both me in the studio and for the kids."*

Anna *"We rely on each other as professionals, our differences."*

Judith *"Trust that what we were doing on "art day" is skill based-there is so much wealth... it's strong enough without having to tick all the boxes (of the syllabus)."*

Judith also tells us that they come up with ideas by, *"connecting concepts, words from the syllabus to Anna's artistic work."*

Judith talked about the children's abilities to focus on problem-solving and using their imaginations.

Judith *" They worked incredibly well together..., they are creative, they use their imaginations and they use their language, they are making choices. There is not one person dominating they are talking together...there is so much involved, so many thinking skills... they knew exactly what they wanted and they took the lead..., their imagination and their freedom."*

Anna and Judith talked about the importance of working through problems together and with the children,

Judith *"We don't give up (meaning her and Anna). We work through problems - step back - make it work for the children. We help them to get through the challenges of working with abstract concepts."*

Whenever a problem came up that needed solving they talked about how they consulted or asked the class or in Judith's words, *"we opened it up to the children."*

Anna expressed the importance of the project being a collective process equally explorative for both her and the children,

Anna *"It is wonderfully luxurious, a place for me as an artist to explore my own work in a collaborative sense. We are all excited by it."*

They described some of the processes they had worked with. Layering was one such concept and they began by talking about what the children knew or thought about when they heard the word "layers". Mind-maps were drawn and prior knowledge documented on the interactive screen (Figure 2);

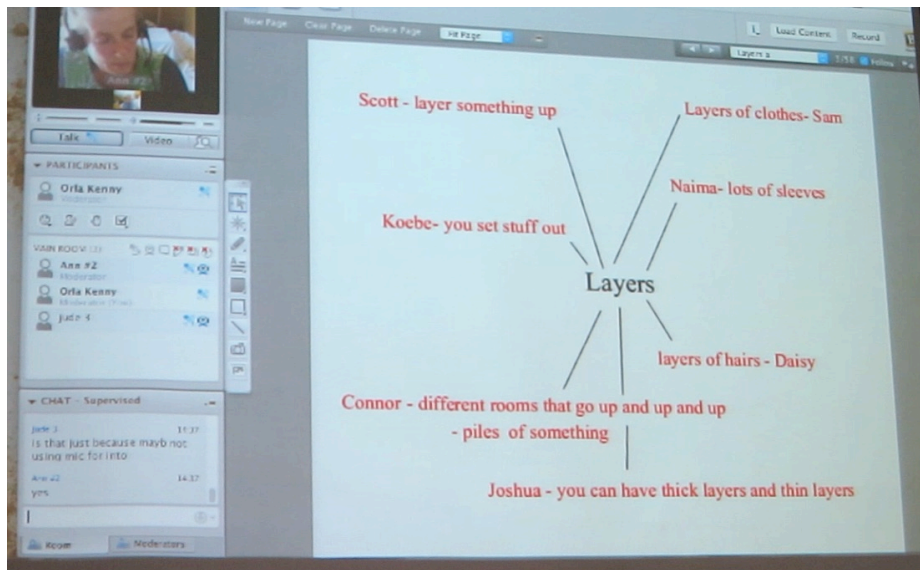


FIGURE 2: ANNA AND THE INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARD

Later on a red cabbage was introduced to investigate the concept of "layering" in artistic investigations. First Anna introduced the "simple idea of seeing with your hands". A cabbage was passed around the ring of children who, every child with eyes closed, "looked" at the cabbage with their hands. Then the cabbage was cut into two and its contour was carefully drawn onto a paper. In one exercise the children should remove one leaf at a time from the cabbage, after each leaf was removed they drew around the contour until the entire cabbage was converted to a drawing on paper. Different investigations and exercises were devised and carried out both inside and outside the classroom. A few months into the project a new area of investigation came in to play, that of "dismantling". There were of course already aspects of dismantling in the layering investigation with the removal of the cabbage leaves for example but the idea of dismantling was now the focus of attention.

Anna and Judith discussed introducing the idea of art video to the class they discussed the concept of film broadly,

*Anna "How is a video different? How is drawing in space different from drawing in three-dimensions? What else do you have to consider when making a film that is different from a photograph? What is making things move? What about the audio aspect?"*

The time arrived to decide what kind of art video the class wanted to make. They decided that they wanted the art video to be a filmed documentation of a the dismantling of a red cabbage, leaf by leaf, each child taking turns to remove one leaf. It was important that the camera was focused on only that action. The class-room was set up for filming. An area on the floor was cleared and a rope was laid out in a square to indicate where the cabbage-dismantling would take place and where the camera should focus. The camera filmed from above the heads of the children who approached the rope-square one at a time to remove "their" leaf. The performance began and each child had removed a leaf until the cabbage was completely dismantled. (Figures 3 & 4).



FIGURE 3: PHOTO FROM THE “CABBAGE” ART VIDEO DURING THE TALK BY JUDITH AND ANNA



FIGURE 4: PHOTO FROM THE “CABBAGE” ART VIDEO DURING THE TALK BY JUDITH AND ANNA

Afterwards Anna and Judith talked about how they were surprised themselves how difficult it was for the small hands to dismantle the cabbage and how they had struggled with great focus and determination,

Judith *"they persevered, they didn't give up."*

An important aspect of the performance that the video did not show was that the removed leaves were not simply discarded but placed carefully in on a row of tables in the order they were removed. Anna talked about the reason for this,

Anna "...a conscious placement of the displaced layers..., the carefulness and mindfulness of what we were doing."

When the performance was over and filming was completed the class decided that it should be a silent film. All sound was removed. They then wanted to watch the 22-minute long silent film in a small "theatre" they built in the corner of the classroom with the help of a few ropes and lengths of fabric. Judith told us that the whole class sat all bunched up together in the tiny theatre and for 22 minutes were completely still and focuses as they watched the entire art film they had made themselves.

It was at this moment that Anna said to us as we sat there in the conference room in Edinburgh; *"Now we want to show you the film so find yourselves somewhere comfortable to sit. On the floor if you want. Its 22 minutes long, we'll talk about it afterwards."* The film where 24 five year-old children struggle with small soft fingers to carefully remove the red cabbage leaf for leaf, one child at a time was the most engaging event of the entire conference!

After listening to Anna and Judith and watching the children's art video I was left with a sense of wonder and a lot of questions; where did the children gain the amount of patience and focus needed to dismantle the cabbage? And what was the reason for their complete immersion when they saw their own film for the first time? Or in the words of my 20-year old son, "Why did they care?" A very good question! (Riseley 2016).

This question I aim to unravel in the chapter Analysis and Discussion.

## AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS: BUCKET

I am part of a group of three arts-school colleagues who have been assigned the task of leading the process towards a theatre/music production for school children by the entire Kulturskola staff. The aims/goals of the production is to start up an ongoing process in participation, to unite the whole staff and make Kulturskola visible through a creative process and product of high artistic quality, sustainability and inclusivity.

The form we came up with was that the whole staff was to work in groups and create one short scene each using the following guide-lines; each group is responsible for a scenic performance of maximum three minutes where at least one white bucket (but up to 100) must be included, some form of concept with light, at least 1 person (but the opportunity to "borrow" the whole staff) and some form of audience interaction.

Upon presenting this to our bosses they responded that this way of working was exactly the kind of further education and focus on participation that they had been directed to carry out with their staff. This was encouraging especially since we knew that our next challenge was to present the staff with this new way of working in a way that would capture their imaginations and give them courage to step out of their comfort zones. In preparation for the presentation we addressed the question of how to create a framework where our colleagues feel safe enough to work in an open-ended process?

The way we initiate the process needed to create a sense of security but also an openness to try new things the bravery to fail. It was important that the focus at this stage of the process is play and experimentation. We realised that the way we presented BUCKET should also be playful and participatory and started to talk about presenting BUCKET as a participatory performance.

We met in the largest room in the school, the room where we have our big meetings. It is a long narrow room with windows all along one side. We took off our shoes, as usual and started to play with the pile of buckets we had brought with us. At first we started to throw them around, into each other's buckets, flipping them in the air, yelling into them, putting them on different body-parts. Then we started to build towers, Brancusi-style as high as we could. We tried to build a pyramid but the measurements were wrong and it didn't work. Then we started to build a wall. It felt simple but stable and symbolic in some way. We put a spotlight behind it and stepped back to look at the shadows cast on the buckets and the wall. Of course we felt like pushing it down just to see how that felt and looked! We would walk through it together! We wanted to see what that would look like for a viewer on the other side so we set up a mobile on film-mode and stood behind the wall. On the count of three we walked through the wall. It was dramatic and effective! We had our beginning! Now we needed to find a way to engage the audience (the staff). Without talking we would signal each person to pick up a bucket and sit with us on the floor in a ring with the bucket upturned between our knees. Emil would signal that we should follow his lead and start a session of rhythms and noise-making with the buckets. When that was over we all would stand and start to walk around the room for



some "me-and-my-bucket" time, as Emil called it. I would remove a small bell I had hidden up my sleeve and ring it whereby we hoped to signal that everyone should stop, freeze for a few seconds and then start when the bell rang again. We would do this three times. After the last time we would make our way towards another lamp that was placed on the floor at one end of the room and start to build a new structure from our buckets around the lamp. When everyone had placed his/her bucket in the joint structure we would start to clap signalling that the performance was over.

On the day of the actual performance/introduction with the staff we set up the room with chairs all around the three walls of the room and a wall of buckets on the white wall opposite the windows. We dressed ourselves on black, stuck green spots on our faces to signal that we were "in character" and turned on the film-camera. We then walked out to silently collect everyone from the corridors where they stood having their coffee.

As the participatory performance commenced I became immediately aware of the gap between how I thought things were going to happen and what actually transpired. As we went out to collect the staff I noticed that some tried to talk to us while others became immediately quiet and just nodded and followed our command to move to the meeting room. I had not expected them to try to talk to me and felt almost as though I should answer as I imagined breaking our character would make them more comfortable with what was happening.

As the staff started to pour in to the room I became aware of how hard it is to visualise 60 bodies in a space and how they will automatically behave in that space. My next reaction was, "oh goodness they are sitting down!" I had expected/envisioned that everyone would line up along the window-side of the room facing the wall, which was strange since we had placed out the chairs around the room! I tried for a few seconds to gather everyone in the "right" place. Of course no-one understood that my intention was to show them the place to stand for the best possible experience of the coming performance of which they had no knowledge. I realised quickly the futility of this exercise and I aborted my attempt.

As Karin, Emil and I took our places behind the wall of buckets someone made a loud shhh and suddenly there was silence in the room. Emil whispered 1-2-3 and we walked through the wall. There were surprised noises and nervous laughs from the staff as the buckets bounced and fell noisily to the floor and rolled around for a few seconds, filling the space within the circle of chairs. We stood facing the audience. I looked everyone in front of me in the eyes and they looked back at me. At that moment it was very important for me to make contact. To really see everyone Emil and Karin (I noticed later from viewing the film) looked straight ahead. When the buckets were still, Emil picked one up and gave it to one of the staff. He signalled that everyone should take one, which they did. Then, to our surprise, they returned to their seats. We spent some time coercing them to leave their seats and join us in a large ring on the floor. When I looked

at the film later on I saw that one teacher "V" picked up three buckets to take back to her colleagues who remained sitting on their chairs. The "I play-you play" bucket- band section was carried out by all in a concentrated and obedient manner and after a while also with a sense of fun (Figure 5).



**FIGURE 5: "I-PLAY-YOU-PLAY"**

The next section "me-and-my-bucket" was careful at first but after the third round there was a feeling of greater experimentation. I saw on the film afterwards that most tried out different ways of holding or tapping on their buckets while only one or two tried different approaches like shoving them along the floor or waving them on their fists in the air (Figure 6).



**FIGURE 6: "ME-AND-MY-BUCKET"**

The final section where we had expected that that everyone would join us in building a structure around the light something else has taken place. When we looked around after the final applause, however, we saw that there were several high towers in other parts of the room. The "structure" around the light, I noticed later, was more a formless pile (Figure 7).



**FIGURE 7: PARTICIPANTS BUILDING TOWERS**

After the performance and everyone was seated questions were asked about the logistics of the whole idea; "How can a few buckets and some light represent all of the Kulturskola subjects?" "What if each scene is only a few seconds- potentially it's all over in a few minutes!?" "What if everyone comes up with the same idea?" Many wondered how the 6 scenes would build a meaningful and comprehensive whole that young children could "understand".

My reaction was to address these fears in two ways; my initial reaction was to say that in my experience of open processes like these there are no problems that cannot be addressed later on, if and when they came up. The other approach (spontaneously used in reaction to the fears that these questions represented) was to say; "Yes, all of these things may happen - perhaps everyone will wriggle around on the floor and no-one will play a single instrument! It could happen right!? What then??" To this there was quite a lot of laughter and one teacher said, "I don't understand the problem. I don't see that you need to have any instruments at all to be able to express culture. Everything is music, or art. It's not about presenting each individual instrument it's about expressing something artistically."

The following week it was time for the groups to take over and start to design their own Bucket scene. My overall impression was that the groups that had been assigned a smaller room with tables and chairs appeared to come up with a lot of ideas but that the ideas were disjointed and unrelated to one another. The groups that had worked in larger rooms without tables and chairs had worked quickly towards one main idea and had in some cases even had time to enact the scene and film their ideas on their cell-phones. This was only the very beginning of a process that has continued during the writing of this paper. The analysis of BUCKET is therefore limited to the participatory performance carried out by Emil, Karin and myself.

## run/afterwords

looking down, focusing on the path, the slippery stones and roots beneath the yellow, rain-spotted leaves, thoughts fly through my head as I tried to capture them before they flew away as fast as they came. Then I looked up and the last autumn leaves fluttered by my moving body. I reached out to grab one but they escaped my fingers and fell into anonymity on the already leaf-filled forest floor. Layering occurs in every form, all the time.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The following chapter starts with three analyses; the first of the method of Practice as Research that I have used, the second of CABBAGE and the third of BUCKET.

The two empirical cases, CABBAGE and BUCKET, are carefully chosen for their potential to problematise the nature of a more participatory art teaching practice. They are also very different and therefore are treated differently in this analysis. I begin by an analysis of CABBAGE using the key-concepts of *Entanglement*, *Engagement* and *Sensibility* in order to identify and exemplify how and when they happen in a practical learning situation.

BUCKET is analysed instead by viewing it through concepts of participation to find evidence of the possibilities and problems that participatory practice can entail. The analysis of BUCKET also includes comparisons to participatory art and the problems entailed in that kind of entanglement. This section I have called "BUCKET - as Participation and/or Participatory art".

The chapter concludes with a summary of the analysis in relation to the two research queries.

### ANALYSIS OF WRITING AS RESEARCH

The following section deals with how my thoughts about the layout of this text have changed over the time it has taken to write it.

I chose these research methods, auto-ethnography and ethnomethodology, as I believe the democratic power of these methods to make visible and important individual experiences because individual perspectives are a part of changing the way we do things. However, I became aware of the God-trick, a name Haraway gave to beliefs in an objective and rational positioning of the researcher as common in much knowledge production (Haraway 1988:587). Even though this kind of objectivity is largely unthinkable in the social and human sciences it is easy to slip into the use of grand narratives to get one's message across. When I analysed my thoughts they sounded a bit like this; "How can my reflections be meaningful for the world when there are so many astounding thinkers who express themselves more eloquently and with better arguments than I ever can?" and "I have to be completely sure about this topic otherwise I will do more harm than good". I had to back myself out of this mode and over and over again convince myself that my perspective matters and that being open to what happens is the whole point of a research paper. I had to relearn my own worth as researcher and it was at times both hard and painful. How could I increase my individual presence in

the text without leaving the academic structure or becoming too emotionally attached to the topic?

Often too I was overcome with a desire to simplify instead of entangle my thoughts. It was important to stay with the messiness of the thoughts but at the same time to make a piece of writing that was understandable and of good narrative form.

When I started writing about participatory art practices I wrote that I was not sure about the words "creativity" and "participation" and wanted to find alternatives for them through this text. I have avoided using "creativity" as it fails to express my own position regarding what art teaching should be about. In the Thomas Laurien's doctoral thesis, one of his final reflections concerns the question of "the relation between artistic work and our discursive and conventional verbal language" (Laurien 2016:285). He suggests the more widespread usage of concepts like sensation, affect and wonder. I have felt very inspired by these newer, fresher and more open and inclusive terms. Being aware of and challenging my own habitual usage of language has enabled me to be much more critical about my own normative thinking about what art teaching should be or can be.

In a similar way I have been thinking about the word participation throughout the writing of this text. I was not completely happy with it but had not found an alternative. During the course of researching I came across the expression "Situated learning". Situated learning is a process in which learning is not passive absorption of information but "a social and participatory process where theory is entangled with everyday practice with others" (Hickey-Moody and Page, 2015:13). Perhaps "situated art teaching" is an alternative? It is in any case worth investigating on a later date.

Language will always be entangled in how we perceive the world and at the end of this project of writing I realise that even the word "teaching" is problematic when discussing a more democratic learning situation. In a participatory art practice, the goal is that all participants, teachers and students, learn *and* teach.

In the following analyses, events in CABBAGE that embody the concepts of Entanglement, Engagement and Sensibility will be lifted and discussed. The final analysis will connect events in BUCKET to the concepts of participation and participatory art.

## ENTANGLEMENT IN CABBAGE

Entanglement, when seen as democratic knowledge production that arises when different experiences and horizons intersect, is evident in the way Anna engages artistically in a parallel process of discovery together with the children. Entanglement is evident in the way hierarchies are demolished and rather than seeing the children as "apprentices" she looks to them as equals in the work of investigation and discovery. She

does not come with safe concepts but sees their parallel processes as feeding into each other in a democratic production of knowledge. Anna stated for example, *"It's not about me in the studio testing something beforehand to see if it works....it's just as much an investigation for the children as it is for me. It's not about success or failure it's about investigation and risk-taking for both me in the studio and for the kids."*

Anna talks about how dialogue is a large part of the process and the openness to whatever might happen along the way. She said for example, *"We spend so much time talking, it's a major part of our process, it's as big as anything else. When we talk all sorts of things happen"*

Also Judith talks about the trust she feels for the way the art project will inform other subject areas and parts of the school syllabus: *"I trust that what we were doing on "art day" is skill based-there is so much wealth..., its strong enough without having to tick all the boxes (of the syllabus)"* and later she added, *"connecting concepts, words from the syllabus to Anna's artistic work."*

Judith and Anna saw that language and practical skills are constructive and active in shaping knowledge. This view is evident for example in the way the concept of layering was investigated and understood through spoken and written language. The complicated concepts they discussed prior to making the art video and the use of embodied investigations are all evidence of the way knowledge is seen as entangled.

Other indications of the intra-action present in the project can be found in the language that Anna and Judith chose to describe the way they consulted the children when there were problems to solve. They would say, *"we opened it up to the children."*

This seems to be an indication that they are aware of the way language forms us by its active capacity to enable or prevent us from becoming active agents.

## ENGAGEMENT IN CABBAGE

The level of engagement evident in the children and in Judith and Anna is high. Firstly the engagement Anna and Judith express can be seen in the way they speak and the careful and thoughtful documentation of the processes. Anna and Judith's own engagement in the art project seems to grow from a mutual trust and respect for the others competence and knowledge area.

Engagement is also evident in the way they show a mutually investment in the project and is exemplified in the way Judith explained, *"We don't give up. We work through problems - step back - make it work for the children. We help them to get through the challenges of working with abstract concepts."* In these statements is the acceptance that to "trouble" ones pedagogy is to accept that it will at times be a struggle and that failure

is an important part of the process and an essential part of learning. The joy of learning together is a large part of Anna's engagement in the project,

Anna *"It is wonderfully luxurious, a place for me as an artist to explore my own work in a collaborative sense. We are all excited by it."*

This study puts forward that agency is essential for engagement and in CABBAGE there is an underlying feeling of determination evident in the adults, Anna and Judith, as much as the children. Anna and Judith's engagement seems to be mirrored in children's own determination, to struggle with their cabbage leaf, to work through problems by talking and working physically together.

Close observation though the concepts of layering and then dismantling are used to engage and develop an entangled knowledging that is shaped together with the children, one investigation leading naturally to the next. As Anna said; *"We are shaping this as we go along."*

Anna and Judith have enabled engaged learning, their own and the children's, through in an intra-action of human and non-human matter (drawing materials, language, discussion, cabbage, film camera, white-board and so on) and in this way the learner becomes an agent in a constant state of flux together with matter.

## SENSIBILITY IN CABBAGE

The way Anna and Judith formed many exercises increased the children's sensibility, which we now have understood to mean the ability to feel and respond to stimuli and the needs of others. Through close observation, the dismantling and contour drawings, "seeing" with their hands and talking about taking care of the peeled off leaves of the cabbage they were intra-acting with things, human and non-human. They were becoming in and through each other and through material. Comments like this one from Judith seem to suggest that there has been a transformation that has taken place,

*...they knew exactly what they wanted and they took the lead..., their imagination and their freedom.*

Sensibility is about taking in the world through our senses, registering these things and events and transforming these senses to actions. In the art video the children made there is clear evidence that they have experienced and embodied this ability. They have used their senses to gather knowledge of the cabbage, they have embodied knowledge of complex concepts (layering, dismantling, moving image, narrative) and finally have put all this embodied knowledge into action in the making of an art video.

Other indications of this sensibility, I believe, can also be seen in the way the video was filmed. It was not important that individuals were seen in the video (the angle of the camera did not show clearly the faces of the children) but rather it was the group struggling together towards a joint goal that was important. In this way they were



learning about sensibility and the importance of caring for each other and their actions. The children wanted to build a cosy space, which from the outside had the simple function of being a makeshift movie theatre. But perhaps it was for them it was more than that; it is also possible to see the building of this structure as an expression of their deep sense of collective achievement. They were joint owners of the video and their collective responsibility for the making of it is expressed in every stage of the process but perhaps most physically in this final act. In the way they built the special space they showed that they were aware of the importance of a democratic viewing of the result and that the aesthetic form for viewing the video was as part a part of the project as any other part.

Anna was conscious of how actions shape our abilities to feel empathy when she talked about the way they took care of the discarded leaves, "*...a conscious placement of the displaced layers..., the carefulness and mindfulness of what we were doing.*". By talking about the discarded leaves with the children she brings into the action of making art a sense of responsibility. It increased the children's sensibility for things and, in extension, for the world. The placement of these leaves on a row of tables embodied a philosophy of care. Care of the discarded leaves became an aesthetic consideration that was just as important to the art-work as the physical making of the film.

## BUCKET - AS PARTICIPATION AND/OR PARTICIPATORY ART

In order to engage the staff and to describe our process idea (towards making a collective arts production) Emil, Karin and I chose to carry out a participatory art performance using our bodies instead of words. The following analysis focuses on the possibilities and challenges that modelling participatory art practices in pedagogical situations can entail.

Participatory art teaching can take many ideas and forms of action from participatory art but it is the "democracy paradox" of participatory art which is worth analysing further. In art it is seen as acceptable to commodify human bodies, as this is the unwritten contract, as it were, between artists and audiences. Bishop explains that artists "rely on the participant's creative exploitation of the situation" (Bishop in Thompson, 2012:41) and participants accept that the artist give them the rules of play. The rules between artist and audience then also follow that participants accept that they become part of an art work that cannot be sold but at the same time there exists a tension of "ownership" between the artist who has conceived the artwork and the participants who have helped in its realisation. These aspects of participatory art are perhaps problematic as pedagogical form as the opportunities for learners to engage in their own projects becomes limited.

This became clear to me when, during our performance for BUCKET. I had begun the performance in an inclusive way as the following seems to indicate:

*"I looked everyone in front of me in the eyes and they looked back at me. At that moment it was very important for me to make contact. To really see everyone."*

Yet, in my role as conceiver of the participatory performance I realised time and again that I had to adjust my own expectations of what the participants were going to do to meet with what they actually did.

*"The final section where we had expected that everyone would join us in building a structure around the light."*

My inner conception of the BUCKET participation was tested and I realised how rigid I was in the moment when it really mattered; *the moment of participation*. I realised that I was more concerned with my own idea of what participants should get out of the performance - which had to do with the visual experience and not the individual engagement or own interpretation of the event. My overriding aesthetic bias is the visual and I became aware of my blindness to other participatory engagements such as sound, touch and interactions with others. In my own visual bias and my personal need to succeed I seemed to have narrowed participation to doing my THING and not making way for others to do their own THING. Actually when the participants did their own thing it was in many ways far more successful than when we tried to make them do it our way which in this case was that they would build an alternative and imaginative structure around the light, which in our conception would replace the initial rigid wall. This is what happened however:

*When we looked around after the final applause, however, we saw that there were several high towers in other parts of the room. The "structure" around the light, I noticed later, was more of a formless pile.*

From Arendt we can understand that when agency happens the participants have gained a sense of empowerment that comes from "power with" others towards a common goal.

Somewhere along the way my planning and visualizing of a participatory action gets in the way of my seeing what participants actually do with the material. That is the whole point and yet I seem to have a fear of letting go when it mattered the most. Teaching or leading participatory projects is hard to plan, to speak of or to visualise without it becoming someTHING. Which is exactly what I want to avoid; focusing on things and results.

Being responsible for the performance came first and my own ability to be creative IN THAT MOMENT was greatly reduced. One very clear example of this is how my role as bell-ringer during the "me-and-my-bucket" moments limited the creative decision-making process in a very obvious way. I had a bucket in one hand and a small bell in the other and yet the very basic idea of uniting the two, ringing the bell inside the bucket for example, never occurred to me.

The three of us sat the day afterwards and talked about how our performance had gone I told them that I had seen on the film; V picking up 3 buckets and returning to her colleagues who remained seated on their chairs. We discussed a possible reason for this was simply a practical solution to this problem of collecting a bucket from the floor. Other possible reasons however could be that they were enacting resistance, not simply being lazy. There were 5 people in the room that could see this as an outright provocation (the three of us who were responsible for the performance and our two bosses) and they were not unaware of this. So did we do something wrong expecting them to participate fully? Or is resistance a part of this process? Is it our job now to get them to see that their very small provocation is exactly what they need to use in their own performance? After all as teachers we are faced every day with pupils who resist in different ways. To follow can be very threatening for others even though it is a common teaching method. In a way this resistance is an example of participants' freedom to exercise their own autonomy that is part of the contract between artist and participant. An artist working with the "unpredictable public sphere" must accept that participants complete the work in their own ways. (Thompson 2012:21). This is one of the aspects of participatory art teaching that a teacher must both accept and embrace as a part and parcel of sharing the responsibility for the process. When I asked my employer, Johanna (the principal of the Kulturskola I work at) for one sentence she thought defined participation she quickly replied; "A possibility to take responsibility" (Ohls Stoltz 2016). The quickness of her response is an indication of her interest in the area and perhaps her desire for the future developments of Kulturskola. Her own view is that a teacher that "does not steer" a process can achieve other results than one that holds fast to more traditional teaching methods. She indicated, however, that there was a certain "clash" between a teacher's pedagogical ideas and what actually happens in the interaction with learners. Her suggestion about why there is this gap between theory and reality has to do with what kind of "ideal of education" a teacher has.

The strong music tradition of Kulturskolan (initially it was only a school for music-musical instruments and song lessons) and in many cases a more traditional teaching method perhaps exemplified by the principle of "I-play-you-play" are the most commonly used. More open, less hierarchical learning methods are less common. This is perhaps an indication of differing views of the production of knowledge. As we have learned from Foucault, the production of knowledge is about power and questions of power and privilege control. As we all have experienced, and as Arnstein addressed in her ladder metaphor for levels of participation in society, privilege is always hard to let go of. Higher levels of participation demand that participants can influence decision-making. Participating in participation is a low level of participation.

The issue concerning how to engage people that do not necessarily want to be there is perhaps a more difficult question. But in any participatory process there must be adequate information for participants' ability to participate fully as well as some form of agreement about the purpose of working in a participatory fashion. To achieve greater

participation is about equal opportunities to influence the development of the process and information and dialogue are vital parts of this equation.

Indicative of the way participation can be challenging in terms of breaking with traditional forms of teaching can perhaps be observed in the difference between the "I-play-you-play" session and the "me-and-my-bucket" sessions in our participatory performance. Getting everyone to sit in a ring for "I-play-you-play" took longer than we expected but when everyone was seated there was complete compliance. They played exactly as they were shown by Emil. Later we remarked on how quickly they understood how to "behave". The "me-and-my-bucket" session however we noticed a lower level of engagement in the room. Initially, as with the "me-and-my-bucket" session, they quickly understood unspoken rules (bell signalled stop or start). The flow of ideas or perhaps the will to "let go and play" and to engage with their bucket however seemed to be more of a challenge.

Letting go of our ideals as teachers is also hard. While researching through theories of participation I discovered my own role in this power imbalance that I was not initially aware of, or perhaps did not want to see. In the beginning of this writing process I wrote;

*...because of the rapidly changing nature of modern life along with a fear of difference, social injustice, technical advances and so on that I believed of the need to talk more about enabling participation and how we can create a more engaged pedagogy for our students and ourselves.*

Through my reading about participation I now realise this kind of statement to be normative. By speaking in terms of what others need in order to live better lives is normative. Perhaps V was engaging in resistance to my normative thinking that this was somehow "good" for her?

To work in a participatory setting is to entangle the roles of teacher and learner. This new way of working with a participatory process for the school production, which Karin Emil and I had initiated, can I think be seen as a learning setting for the staff. An analysis of the questions that followed our participatory performance, "*How can a few buckets and some light represent all of the Kulturskola subjects?*", "*What if each scene is only a few seconds- potentially it's all over in a few minutes!?*", "*What if everyone comes up with the same idea*" seem to indicate that the idea that a non-hierarchical participatory process is hard to establish. The question posed by my colleagues seem to indicate that there is an underlying expectation that *someone* is responsible. I am reminded of my employer Johanna's words about "taking responsibility" and perhaps this is our greatest challenge as teachers. It appears that in learning situations, that we are more prone to *give* others responsibility than to *take* it ourselves. To be a teacher is to have the control, to answer questions not to ask them. Responsibility, it becomes clear, is not only entangled in how we act but also in the way that we think about our different roles and the way we use language to establish positions. Achieving greater participation is about equal

opportunities as well as agencies to influence the development of the process and language is a large part of this shift.

## CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

To conclude this section, I will relate and reflect upon the analysis with regards to the two research queries;

What are the possibilities and difficulties one can expect when teaching in art in a participatory setting?

When and to what degree does participation happen in a participatory art teaching setting?

Participation comes with a set of possibilities and challenges that can be said to belong to any process where democratic ideals are put into practice. Judith and Anna had worked for many years together and had come to the understanding that inclusive discussions and reflection at every stage of the process are as much a part of the process as the actual work in the classroom. They expressed respect and trust in each other's knowledge base and were both open for the power that entangled knowledge could enhance the children's learning in many subject areas, not only art. They showed an understanding of how language is closely connected to agency of the subject. In these ways Judith and Anna enabled what we can perhaps call higher levels of participation. In CABBAGE there was evidence of participants taking responsibility for the quality and content of the process. This responsibility seems to come from individual and collective engagement in the project through human and non-human intra-actions and toward a common goal. Sensibility seems to be a product of bodies and materials that are entangled and engaged in the task and vision of a common goal.

Even in our project BUCKET the time spent planning the participatory performance far outweighed the actual act. Even then there were misunderstandings/alternative understandings of what was expected of them as participants. As a leader of participatory processes it is important not to "give up" as Judith said, but to see these moments as part of the process. Furthermore, the hegemony of a hierarchal teaching tradition is not so easily broken and it is important to respond to questions about quality, content and meaning as being part of a democratic process towards new places of learning. Letting go of my own inner concepts of BUCKET revealed how easy it is to fall into the role of the teacher who is "in control" of a situation. Stepping back so that others take responsibility is a dance that is not without its challenges.

This study of two participatory processes indicates that participation happens in participatory art teaching settings when teachers have first set foundations that allow and enable participants/students to act, engage and take responsibility for each other and for the collective process. This foundation seems to be a combination of constant

reflection and (ideally) over longer periods of time, through an entangled view of knowledge and through intra-action with each other and with material and by awareness of the way language shapes agency and defines positions.

When participation increases in learning situations a transformation seems to have occurred in the learner. It is precisely this transformation that makes teaching in this way so rewarding

Through the writing of this text I have come to a deeper understanding of how I think and act in my role as artist and teacher. By being open to what happens and reflexive in my approach (as much as is possible) I have been able to uncover my own normative thoughts about what participation is.

Participatory art teaching entangles knowledge and power structures and in the analyses of these different processes it is possible to see the role of language as enabling or hindering learning and agency. It becomes clear through these studies that participation demands greater self-awareness of the language we chose in our roles as teachers.

## FINAL DISCUSSION

The two examples of participatory art teaching I have presented are different in many ways but it is their differences that have made it possible for me to entangle the concept of participation further.

In the beginning of this paper was expressed a view that it is possible to exercising one's own philosophy of life in the way we teach. This research is a theoretical ground for this statement. A more participatory art practice can, at its very best, enable students to develop abilities to think independently about difficult life problems, social and political issues (Carlsson & Sanders 2008:333).

To engage in teaching is to constantly reflect on one's own teaching practice. In a democratic teaching practice, such as the one presented in this research paper, it is even more important to ask ourselves questions about why we teach, and how we teach and reflect upon issues of power and control, inclusivity and the production of knowledge. Lena Aulin-Gråhamn encourages every teacher to ask themselves questions like:

*Why do I want to spend my life working with art and children? What are my reasons for doing what I do? How much of my reasons for wanting to teach in this way are about wanting to be the sun in the children's lives, how much is about my belief that what is good for me is good for you? What do I want to do? What do I want to develop? What do I want to learn?*

(Aulin-Gråhamn, Persson & Thavenius 2004:60)

Reflexivity then is one of the most important skills a teacher can have. To teach is to learn. Teaching is about being a part of the becoming of our students but it is just as much about our own becoming as artists, teachers and learners. In the words of Braidotti:

*...the point is not to know who we are, but what at last we want to become, how to represent mutations, changes and transformations rather than Being in its classical modes*

(Braidotti 2002:2)

When we engage with others and to feel that we can influence a process we all need to feel safe to be ourselves. Given the right conditions participants gain both the confidence and the will to act without waiting for direction or invitation from others. To realise that we are unique and that we are appreciated for our differences and how that can contribute to processes of collective learning are potentially the most important effects of an engaged and participatory pedagogy.

However the moment when students' participation takes that step into greater autonomy is not something that we as teachers can decide over. We cannot say: "Today I will allow total student participation". Instead it is a matter of patience and timing. The time is ripe and a transformation takes place. One student or the whole class is ready. And why does this happen? From my own experience and this study of the art practices of others I have come to see that moments of student-lead participation occur if the student has first experienced the right conditions for engagement and gained the confidence to act. It is thus the work and the vision of a teacher who has created this environment over time who can one day TAKE A STEP BACK. Daring to let go is one of the biggest challenges for a teacher working in participatory practices. Perhaps it is time to think more about participation as the distribution of power and less about our own needs to control and educate that come from our own fears about the future and what we think others need to be able to face that future.

Trinh T Minh-ha eloquently describes how it is not only what we say but who we are, our individual voice, pace and tone that are a part of a democratic production of knowledge. She is also a true wordsmith so I include several lines from the first pages of her book "*Woman, Native, Other*" for the entanglement, engagement and sensibility I see and feel in her writing;

*The story never stops beginning or ending.  
It appears headless and bottomless for it is built on differences.  
Its (in)finity subverts every notion of completeness and its frame remains a non-totalizable one.  
The differences it brings about are differences not only in structure,  
in the play of structures and of surfaces, but also in timbre and in silence.  
We - you and me, she and he, we and they - we differ in the content of the words,  
in the construction and the weaving of sentences but most of all,  
I feel, in the choice and mixture of utterances,  
the ethos, the tones, the paces, the cuts, the pauses.*

(Minh-Ha 1989)

In this quote is also the understanding that moments of transformation, which I have just mentioned, are not merely a matter of conceptual insight but moments when the knowledge is embodied in the learner. When this happens there seems to have been an authentic transformation that stays with the learner, as it seems to be more a matter of *becoming* the knowledge than simply *having* it. Or in the words of Alecia Youngblood Jackson: "Freedom is not primarily a capacity of mind but of body- it is attained only through the struggle of bodies to become more than they are" (Youngblood Jackson 2013). Freedom, democracy and power are never fixed states but are negotiated by us all, every day. Perhaps it is time to talk about the participatory scaffold (Hart 2008) where we "help each other in their different climbing goals" and where we gauge performance on abilities to engage with others rather than our abilities to reach individual goals.



This research paper adds to earlier studies that argue for a messier pedagogy full of engagement, sensibility and joy. It is our common belief that through writing, practicing and thinking in this way we can negotiate towards a more democratic, engaged society. Participatory art teaching is a term I add to this entangled and collective knowledge as a possibility for extending art teaching through engaging in the concept and practice of participatory art. Sensibility is also put forth in this research as an alternative to creativity. By actively engaging in the meanings, norms and structures behind language can we be a part of forming a more relevant language that better reflects the kind of pedagogy we want to be a part of practicing and developing.

It is interesting that the word "radical" has appeared twice in this paper. CABBAGE was a project I learned about from a teaching artists conference in Edinburgh, 2016 with the theme, "Best, next and radical practice in participatory arts". This conference is 12 years after the release of the book, "School and the radical Aesthetic", that was mentioned in the beginning of this paper. Considering this and the more traditional wording in the Swedish school syllabus describing the content of art as a subject it seems apparent that despite the large amount of research in this area we still have a long way to go before a more participatory and radical art teaching is the norm.

I end with some words from artist/teacher/mentor Fredric Gunve that reflect my own sentiments;

*Through acknowledging and embracing the ever present bastardification that takes place when something meets something (living and non-living, human and non-human) an ethical and inclusive institution is made possible.*

(Gunve 2016:7)

## FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has taken a look at how participatory art teaching could be seen to challenge art teaching conventions and dominant interpretations such as student autonomy, engagement, the production of knowledge, aesthetics and the role of the teacher. During the course of writing, however, I have found it more and more difficult to contain and limit my area of study as art teaching- ART and TEACHING - are two enormous areas of human endeavour and can be approached philosophically, psychologically, sociologically, historically and so on. This is indeed an entangled area and I realise that there are many more rooms to examine in this enormous house. The manner I have approached this paper and never knowing exactly what I am trying to build has sent me into some murky rooms. Finding the right kind of light to shine into these rooms in future research would add to an understanding of how teachers can engage in more participatory teaching processes.

In this research the focus has been on the *conditions* needed for a more participatory art teaching to be possible. In a future study it would be valuable to identify the *learning outcomes* a participatory art teaching can help to achieve.

Some possible research queries for the future;

How can and does the way we talk about a subject or a teaching practice, the language we use, impact on understandings and abilities to act and engage in a more participatory practice?

How do adults differ from children in the way they respond to participatory art teaching practices and how do they describe the transformations experienced through learning in this way?

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