Participatory Art for Social Change?
A study of the quest for genuine participation
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1. Abstract

A number of theories suggest that participatory arts based approaches have the potential to contribute to development and social change. However, the nature of participation and participative approaches is multi-layered and complex, and critics have voiced concern for depicting participatory art initiatives in an oversimplified, uncriticised positivistic manner. The danger of such assumptions lay in the risk of manipulation, where non-genuine participation could contribute to the reinforcement of oppressive power structures and the dominating hegemony.

This study explores the intersection of art, participation and development, and further aims to discuss the process of identifying the emancipatory possibilities and limitations of participatory art for development and social change. Using a combination of a constructivist case study approach and critical discourse analysis, two participatory art organisations are analysed with the intention to define each organisations’ understanding of the nature of participatory art, and further how this is reflected in the implementation of their work.

The findings suggest that both organisations, to a certain degree, communicate an understanding of participation that reflect previous theories on genuine participation\(^1\). Additionally, the findings suggest that this understanding is reflected in the practical work of the organisations.

\(^1\) Genuine here indicating participation with emancipatory effects, see page 14 for further explanation
Dedicated to Erek.

For late night discussions, for convincing me that I can when I feel like I most certainly can not.
For never complaining when asked for yet another proof-read, and for providing the endless amount
of wine and cheese toasties needed for this degree project to be completed.

For unconditional support in all my endeavours.

A thousand times, thank you.
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2. Introduction

This study presents a discussion on the intersection of participation and art; its nature and complexity, its possible outcomes, and the potential of participatory arts to be used as a communication for development tool promoting development and social change. While participatory arts based approaches to development initiatives are gaining attention within the development sector (Matarasso 1997; Zurba & Berkes 2014; Keat 2019), within the field of communication for development the topic is far less common. Therefore, this study aims to invite more discussion and a higher level of visibility for arts based approaches within the field of communication for development.

This study fundamentally stems from two major discussions: firstly, the topic of culture and cultural impact on development work and, secondly, the intersection of participation, art, and development. As such, the concept and definition of participation and participatory development is vital to this study. A brief summary of how participation has been defined and how it has been adapted by the development field narrows the scope of this project and ultimately presents the main topic of this study: the area of participatory art. Understanding the nature of participatory art - how it operates, how it can be implemented, and the possible effects it can have when adapted in the context of development and social change - is the quest that has formed the research and analysis part of this degree project.

With the intention of forming an understanding of how participatory art can be implemented, and the possible outcomes depending on how these initiatives are being designed and performed, this study takes a closer look on two different organisations working exclusively with participatory art: Fearless Collective and Entelechy Arts. Entelechy Arts (https://entelechyarts.org) is a participatory arts company based in Lewisham, south east London. Entelechy Arts use participatory art practices to “listen to people whose voices are not heard” (Entelechy Arts 2020). The organisation mainly works with elderly, isolated people, people with dementia and people with various learning disabilities. The projects represent a variety of participatory art forms, and the artists that work with the organisation specialise in a range of art forms including dance, theatre, spoken word, music, singing and sculpture.
Fearless Collective (https://fearlesscollective.org) is a South Asia based public and participatory arts organisation that was founded in 2012 as a response to the protests surrounding the 2012 Delhi gang rape and murder case of 23-year old woman Jyoti Singh. Working with women and misrepresented communities world wide, they design and produce public art interventions in the shape of public murals.

The two organisations are analysed through a constructivist case study approach based in data gathered from each organisations’ official website. Critical discourse analysis was used to examine certain pages of each website, with the intention to identify how they communicate participation. This would then allow for an understanding of how they view participation. Further, an analysis of two projects (one from each organisation) was applied to illustrate how participatory approaches are being implemented in the practical work of the organisations, and if this reflects the findings from the website analysis. Additionally, the findings are examined in relation to broader theories of participation and participatory art.

The key research question for this degree project is:

- How do organisations communicate their views about participatory art for development?

Sub questions:

- How are the organisations defining participatory art?
- What types of projects are the organisations implementing in order to facilitate participatory art for social change?
3. Literature Review

Following is a brief presentation of previous research in the field of development, culture, art and participation.

3.1 Culture, art and development

The task of defining development, and more so, how development works and how it can be implemented towards a desired outcome, is essentially, an impossible enterprise. However, certain areas seem to dominate the discourse of development—economics, perhaps, being at the forefront. Economics is an area that is given a great span of attention whenever development issues are being discussed. This is not an issue in itself; without the perspective of economics it is impossible to fully understand the nature of inequality and structural oppression, and additionally, the ability to conceptualise strategies and methods to overthrow such systems. However, treating the economic aspect as the one and only criteria relevant in theorising development, lends and contributes to the creation of a discourse which is incomplete—it is unable to offer a holistic conception of development as a whole (Clammer 2014). In the words of John Clammer, “… we can certainly argue that if development is not holistic, then it is not really development at all” (Clammer 2014:6).

Conceptualising development as primarily an economic issue, where economic factors shape the required outcomes of development work and initiatives, tend to exclude other approaches that might be just as impactful as economics. Further, this tendency promotes a capitalist or neo-liberal model where the goals of human life is centered around the maximisation of personal material resources (Clammer 2014:3). The discussion presented in this degree project stems from a critical viewpoint arguing that one area that has been largely excluded in the development field is that of culture (Clammer 2014; Sen 2002; Appadurai 2001; Glaveanu 2017:22). Previous research and literature on the subject suggests that the exclusion of a cultural aspect may, in fact, be one of the reasons behind development initiatives and projects failing to attain social change (Clammer 2014; Keat 2019; Sen 2002). This indicates a clear gap in the research field, pointing towards the relevance of the research represented in this degree project.

The area of culture is, of course, very versatile; it can refer to language, traditions, literature, theatre and many more areas. However, the focus of the discussion that follows will focus on cultural
expressions in the form of art, and more specifically participatory art. Just like culture in general, the area of art has historically been, and still is, a universal and integral part of all societies (Clammer 2014). Further, art is and has always been an area where reality is being discovered, reflected upon and contested, and a space where a significant amount of critical reflection on society and reality has been able to flourish. It also represents a space where ideas about the future (and, additionally, ideas about the past) are embedded and nurtured, which in turn holds the power for the poor to contest and question the conditions of their own present poverty (Appadurai 2002:59). Therefore, arts “… absent then from development studies discourse is to leave out a profound element in human experience, history and social organisation” (Clammer 2014:8).

3.2 Development Participation

The concept of participation has, particularly in later years, gained voice and has become more and more an essential element in development programs (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:3). Historically however, participation has been tied to a broader, more fundamental vision, in which citizens engage in articulating social and structural change, and as such, is not a concept sprung from development cooperation (Tufte 2017:60).

The idea of participatory development gained popularity in the 1980’s, as a response and a possible solution to the failings and inadequacies of the then more common top-down development approaches (Cookes & Soria-Donlan 2019:34). However despite this, initiatives that were initially intended to adapt a participatory approach, were often dominated by a lingering top-down controlled process of people’s participation within development initiatives (Tufte 2017:61). Simultaneously, new social movements emerged (largely in Western Europe and Latin America), which in contrast viewed participation as something that should rather be a bottom-up process. This process would then be something designed to potentially be instrumental towards larger social movements that could challenge power structures in a country, as opposed to the previously mentioned, top-down approach, which lacked a critical view of power relations (Tufte 2017:61). During the 1970’s and 1980’s, a stronger focus on community development grew, and with this, new discourses and practices of participation emerged. This resulted in the dominant discourse of

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2 Introduction to and definition of “participatory art” is found in chapter 3.3 “Participatory Art”
participation as a means to make community-based projects more efficient, rather than highlighting its potential to contest structural inequality and contribute to social transformation (Tufte 2017:62). With the emerging critique of Western development paradigms during the 1990’s, more attention was drawn to power relations in the field of participation development, and it took on a rights-based approach. According to Tufte, this is the dominant discourse on participation today (Tufte 2017:62).

However, participation is a complex and multifaceted subject, and critics have pointed out that by putting too much faith in participatory approaches and assuming automatic and equal empowerment (Manyozo 2012), or in believing that participation automatically will erase authorship, can have potentially harmful effects (Finkelpearl 2014; Keat 2019). When projects with a participatory approach are formed outside of the context where they are intended to be implemented, and participants are added at a later stage, entering a context with pre-designed motives and outcomes, the initiative is not likely to show the emancipatory effects that participatory approaches are meant to achieve. Perhaps, this in itself may pose a risk towards reinforcing the dominant hegemony, and thereby inertly working against any development and or social change (Keat 2019). In the coming analysis of this study, the view presented by Manyozo, Finkelpearl and Keat in this section will be implemented in order to facilitate a critical reading of the two organisations.

3.3 Participatory Art

The following section will offer a brief introduction to participatory art, how it can be defined, and its origins. The body of literature offering theories, definitions and explanations on the subject is rather large, and since the main focus of this degree project is not aimed at the historical aspect of participatory art, this section should be viewed as a basic introduction to the area, a basis for the foundation in the coming analysis and discussion sections.

There is no universal definition of what art is and exactly how it can be identified. However, I want to clarify how the concept of art will be defined within the context and purpose of this study. We are often used to think of art as objects that has been created by an artist; paintings, sculptures, ceramics or photographs, to name a few examples. And while it is true that a lot of art exists in the shape of an object, it should not be limited to only this. Francois Matarasso suggests that art can be thought
of as “… an act with specific intentions. The act is creative because it brings into being (creates) something that did not previously exist, but art is in the act, not the thing” (Matarasso 2019:36). Art is here defined as a creation resulting from the artistic act; an act that is performed with the intention to create art. Further, the artistic act is here defined as an intention to create and communicate meaning. In the words of Matarasso:

“Art is the creation of meaning through stories, images, sounds, performances and other methods that enable people to communicate to others their experience of and feelings about being alive” (Matarasso 2019:38)

Since the analysis of this study has a narrow focus on participatory art as a process, rather than what such processes produce, the definition presented above is how art is being defined within the realms of this study.

The field of art practices that involves collaborations with “non-artists” has been labeled by many different names: socially engaged art, community-based art, interventionist art, collaborative art, and participatory art are just a few (Bishop 2012:1). Along with a growing centrality of participation in mainstream development practice, participation also started gaining attention in the sector of the arts (Cookes & Soria-Donlan 2019:33). François Matarasso defines participatory art as “… the creation of art by professional artists and non-professional artists” (Matarasso 2019:48) and that it is “a specific and historically-recent practice that connects professional and non-professional artists in an act of co-creation. That is a vast, diverse field spanning the sophistication of contemporary art to the politics of social action, but it is defined by the shared creative act” (Matarasso 2019:19). However, participatory art projects (as much as they may vary and differ) should represent two core components that are vital:

1. **Participatory art involves the creation of art.** This may seem obvious, but what differs participatory art projects from other community-oriented development projects is the element of creativity and the involvement of a creative process.

2. **Everyone involved in the artistic act is an artist.** This definition represents one of the major characteristics of participatory art. It challenges the common notion of art as being *produced* by the artist and *consumed* by the viewer, and the belief that art is a matter of *being* rather than *doing*, which originally stemmed from the Enlightenment era (Matarasso 2019:49).
For the purpose of this study and in the coming analysis, participatory art will be referred to through Matarassos’ definition. It was deemed fitting since the study has a focus on exploring the effects of participatory art, and since participatory art shares the aspect of challenging the common notion of the active artist and passive consumer.

4. Theoretical Framework

The following section is a brief introduction to previous theorisation on the subjects of art, participation, and development, and to some of the concepts that are relevant to the analysis of this study. The magnitude of texts that touch upon the subject of participatory art is perplexing. With the limitations imposed upon this study in particular, the selection process had to be rather restrictive. Through thorough research within relevant literature, some dominating and common themes are identified, and the theories chosen to form a framework for analysis, are deemed representative for the field and for the purpose of this study.

Even though participatory approaches today are highly valued in development work, and are present in many project cycles of organisations (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:3), there is no common definition of what exactly constitutes the nature of participation, nor how it should be implemented in projects and initiatives. Despite this lack of continuity, there are two approaches which are usually represented in participation oriented projects, namely:

1. A social movement perspective
2. A project-based or institutional perspective

The social movement perspective has a clear focus on the mobilisation of people towards eliminating social and economic oppression, overthrowing unjust hierarchies, and uneven economic distributions. According to this perspective, participation does not necessarily have to lead to a specific pre-established “goal”. Rather, the mere act of participation can be in itself empowering for participants, and serve as a means of creating access to power (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009; Keat 2019:74).
The *project-based or institutional perspective* is rather represented by the “inclusion of inputs by relevant groups in the design and implementation of a development project” (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:4). From this perspective, participation is used to achieve a set of pre-established goals of a project. This perspective can be described as seeing participation as a means of implementing projects more effectively (Keat 2019:75).

When a participatory approach is implemented in an intervention, a multitude of outcomes can occur. According to Tufte & Mefalopulos, these outcomes identify at least three different levels where participation has an impact:

1. Individual psycho-social level: when participation can lead to increased feelings of ownership of a problem or situation, and a commitment to find solutions to said problem
2. Life skills level: when participation can lead to the improvement of competencies and capacities that are required to engage with the development problem
3. Institutional level: when participation leads to actual influence on institutions that can affect an individual or community. This can for instance be action that leads to change of laws or policies. (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009: pp. 4-5)

Previous research has been arguing a cornucopia of benefits for participation in the arts on an individual, as well as societal level. For instance, the 1997 publication *Use or Ornament - The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts* by François Matarasso, who is often seen as one of the more influential voices of the field, points to a wide number of positive outcomes from participation in the arts. By analysing 60 different participatory art projects taking place in different locations globally, the report was able to identify six different areas in which such projects have claimed to have a positive societal outcome, namely; personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination, local image and identity, imagination and vision, and health and well-being (Matarasso 1997: pp. 7-9).

More critical voices warn that “participation” and “empowerment” can be seen as buzzwords circulating in the development sector, and that there is a risk that the optimistic tone they sing might have a performative effect, painting a wrongful picture of a reality where everybody’s voice is listened to and accepted (Cornwall & Brock 2005:1044). Ultimately, there is a big risk in trusting these concepts to the point where they might hide the fact that places where decisions are actually
made are “... even more removed from the world in which poor people live their everyday lives” (Cornwall & Brock 2005:1045).

The critique of participatory projects painting a wrongful, over-simplified and overly optimistic picture with an empty, performative effect rather than enabling emancipatory outcomes, was also raised by Sherry Arnstein in 1969. Through her theories on citizen participation, Arnstein argues that citizen participation has the potential to result in the redistribution of power that enables citizen power within (politically and economically) excluded groups, but depending on how such initiatives are carried out, they might also have little to no emancipatory effect (Arnstein 1969:216).

To illustrate this theory, and to explain how different levels of participation result in different outcomes for the group involved, an image of a ladder is used. The suggestion is that the ladder can be used to measure whether said participatory initiative has the potential to result in a genuine redistribution of power (and eventually social change). To draw an example, the lowest rung of the ladder is called “manipulation”, and represents an illusory form of “participation” where stakeholders are given the illusion that they are partaking in decision making by for example being included in advisory committees, where power holders tend to educate and advise the stakeholders, rather than the opposite. Stakeholders are then not given the opportunity to define the problem or desired outcomes, and neither are they included in the implementation of the project. The participation is merely an illusion. In contrast, the highest rung of the ladder, representing genuine citizen participation that actually does have the ability to result in redistribution of power, is

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3 Referred to as A Ladder of Participation
simply called “citizen control”. This level of participation is represented by a guarantee that participants (or stakeholders) “… can govern a program or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which “outsiders” may change them” (Arnstein 1969:223). Arnstein’s definition of “genuine participation”, meaning participation of the sort that leads to empowerment and emancipation for participants, will be used and adapted further in this study. Whenever participation is referred to as “genuine”, it therefore intends a type of participation with empowering effects.

The idea of participatory approaches being used in order to redistribute power in favour of marginalised groups additionally forms the theme of one of the most fundamental questions regarding participatory art (and participatory approaches in general) (Finkelpearl 2014:6), but here it is usually referred to as refusing authorship. Adding a participatory approach to the act of producing art naturally challenges the notion of authorship; instead of the traditional division between the active artist (producing art) and the passive consumer (consuming art), authorship is shared by the artist and participants, resulting in art which is produced collectively (Matarasso 2019:49). However, branding a project as a participatory arts project does not naturally result in shared authorship. Dave Beech warns that participants in this kind of projects “… typically is not cast as an agent of critique or subversion but rather as one who is invited to accept the parameters of the art project” (Beech 2008). He continues by suggesting a dichotomy between participants and collaborators, claiming that in contrast to participants, “collaborators, however, are distinct from participants insofar as they share authorial rights over the artwork that permit them, among other things, to make fundamental decisions about the key structural features of the work. That is, collaborators have rights that are withheld from participants” (Beech 2008).

Further, it should never be assumed that a participatory arts project has the intention of empowering participants for the sake of empowerment or emancipation. Claire Bishop raises the problematic aspect of what she calls the “social inclusion agenda” (Bishop 2012:13). This represents a view of citizens belonging to either an included majority or an excluded minority, where citizens belonging to the latter group represents a demographic of high unemployment, and therefore, are not contributing to self-sufficient consumerism or an independence from welfare (Bishop 2012:13). Participation in the arts is, in this paradigm, viewed as a tool to reach the end goal of the neoliberal

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4 Bishop’s example is based in a rhetoric deployed by New Labour in the UK, 1997-2010
idea of employable, self-sufficient citizens whom can cope with a deregulated and privatised world. The social inclusion agenda is thus less about empowering individuals for their own sake and for the disruption of oppressive power relations in society, but rather to aim at fostering citizens whom can contribute to a neoliberal, privatised society. In the words of Claire Bishop, one of the greatest risks with this line of thought is that it “creates submissive citizens who respect authority and accept the ‘risk’ and responsibility of looking after themselves in the face of diminished public services” (Bishop 2012:14).

5. Methodology

The following analysis was done using a constructivist case study approach in combination with a critical discourse analysis. The official websites of the two organisations were chosen as case studies, and further two pages from each respective website was chosen to provide data for the discourse analysis, with the intention of exploring how the concept of participation is communicated in descriptions of their work and intended impact. This was done to allow an understanding of how each organisation conceptualise participation on a theoretical level, and if this is reflective of theories on participation. Further, one participatory art project from each respective organisation was analysed. This was done with the intention to offer a more in-depth analysis of how the organisations implement the concept of participation into their projects, allowing for an intrinsic understanding of how they represent and construct participation.

In the process of researching the field of participatory art organisations and choosing organisations that would be appropriate for the purpose of this study, a few criteria were taken into consideration. The organisations chosen for analysis had to

1) Consist of a group that I would refer to as “initiators” (this referring to founders and managers of the organisation, such as artists, project managers and other initiators).

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5 “Genuine” here referred to as participation leading to citizen control or social change, see Theoretical Framework
2) Exclusively work with participative art of some sort, and brand itself as an independent participatory arts organisation or group. The art form itself was of little importance, but the work done within the organisation had to be both participatory and involving the creation of art.

3) The organisation promotes a clear social change agenda.

These three criteria were established to determine whether suggested organisations could be classified as being situated within the field of participatory art for development and social change.

The organisations that were chosen for the purpose of this study, and the analysis of said organisations, should not be seen as representative for the entire field of participatory art organisations. They are analysed as actors within the field, and should be viewed as examples of how participatory art can be used within the frames of development and social change, and provide tools within communication for development. They were chosen because they fulfil the list of criteria that was established, suggesting characteristics that they share, while simultaneously they differ from each other on numerous points.

The organisations operate in different geographical locations; Entelechy Arts is based in London and their projects are performed exclusively around England, while Fearless Collective was founded in India and are conducting their projects internationally. The two organisations both demonstrate a clear social change agenda, but they are focused on different target groups; Fearless Collective identify themselves as a feminist organisation and their work is largely focused on the marginalisation and oppression of women, indigenous groups and transgender communities (Fearless Collective 2020). Entelechy Arts has a slightly different focus, highlighting groups that are marginalised because of disability, underlying health conditions or the ageing process (Entelechy Arts 2020). The similarities, but mostly the differences between the two organisations, were deemed appropriate for a diverse data set, and an analysis that could cover different aspects of the subject.

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6 Independent here referring to not being part of a NGO or other larger development organisation

7 The art form itself was of no importance, but the work done within the organisation had to be both participatory and involving the creation of art

8 Founded in India but, according to Fearless Collective themselves, they are South Asia based

9 Projects have thus far been conducted in India, Pakistan, South Africa, Lebanon, Canada, USA, Brazil, Indonesia and Tunisia
5.1 Constructivist Case Study

A case study approach is a qualitative method used when the researcher wants to study a phenomenon in depth (Blatter 2008:3). For this analysis, a constructivist approach to case study research was applied, since this specific methodological branch is often used to study a specific case in relation to theoretical discourses. Further, a constructivist approach to case study methods does not assume any single reality, but rather represents a view of empirical reality and theoretical concepts as mutually constitutive (Blatter 2008:5). In this study, the two organisational websites represent two cases chosen for analysis.

5.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

The data was analysed using a critical discourse analysis approach, in the tradition of Norman Fairclough. The analysis is exclusively based in data gathered from each organisations’ external communication, more specifically information found on each organisations’ official website. The data that was analysed consists of both descriptions of each organisations’ work, descriptions of project design and implementation, and of the organisation’s intents and methodologies. The pages of the websites have been analysed through their textual components. Focus has been on analysing how each organisation are referring to participants, but also how they are expressing their values and methodology in relation to participation and participants.

WE MOVE FROM FEAR TO LOVE THROUGH THE CO-CREATION OF BEAUTY IN PUBLIC SPACE.

 Started by artist Shila Shokrani in 2012, we utilize public art interventions with underrepresented communities across the world.

IMMERSIVE WORKSHOPS USING VIRTUAL REALITY TO PROMOTE HEALING

RADICAL PARTICIPATION, RECLAMATION AND DIALOG IN PUBLIC SPACE

CREATING PUBLIC MEMENTOS TO COMMUNICATE AND COMMUNITY IN THEIR SPACES

AFFIRMATIVE MESSAGING TO EVOLVE THE SAFE AND SACRED WORLD WE WANT TO INHABIT

AN OPEN SOURCE MOVEMENT OF ARTISTS RESPONDING TO MOMENTS OF FEAR AND NATIONAL TRAUMA WITH BEAUTY.

THE FEARLESS COLLECTIVE IS A MOVEMENT OF PARTICIPATIVE STORYTELLING AND ART THAT REPLACES FEAR WITH TRUST, CREATIVITY AND COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION IN PUBLIC SPACE.
The unit of analysis was limited to information found on the pages “About Us” and “Fearless Methodology”. Researching the website led to the conclusion that using information from each and every page would result in a data set too large to analyse considering the space limitations of this study, hence the information had to be narrowed down. The selection process consisted of a careful read through of the website in its entity, and the pages “About Us” (https://fearlesscollective.org/about-us/) and “Fearless Methodology” (https://fearlesscollective.org/fearless-methodology/) were deemed appropriate because they consist the most thorough descriptions of the organisation itself and the work that they do. “About Us” pages of websites are in many cases appropriate to use as units of analysis since they oftentimes demonstrate a thorough attempt at self-representation and description of the organisations' purpose and what it stands for (Nielsen & Kaley 2019).

The website of Entelechy Arts consists of five pages: “About Us”, “Projects”, “News”, “Blog”, and “Remembering”. The start page offers the reader more information on different themes connected to the work of the organisation, along with a brief explanation of their mission.
A similar selection process was conducted, leading to the conclusion that the pages “About Us” and “History” proved appropriate to serve as units of analysis. Both organisational websites include an “About Us” page, but since the website of Entelechy Arts does not contain a “Methodology” page similar to that of Fearless Collective (neither does Fearless Collective have a “History” page), the
“History” page of the Entelechy Arts website was deemed most suitable since it contains detailed information about the organisation and the work that it is doing.

In the following analysis, discourse is being defined as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:2). The social constructionist approach that is one of the key premises of discourse analysis, is based in a critique of taken-for-granted knowledge and a rejection of an essential reality (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:5). What we understand as true and essential is a product of how reality is constructed and how knowledge is being produced through social processes. Through communication processes, we are contributing to maintain or deconstruct this depiction of reality. Constructionism further includes the idea that different social understandings of the world lead to different social actions (Burr 1995:5; Gergen 1985:268-269, in Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:5).

A discourse analysis permits an understanding that goes beyond what is evident and purely descriptive in the material, and therefore it is an appropriate tool when aiming to establish how the concept of participation is constructed within each organisation, and how this can be understood in relation to previous theories in the field.

5.3 Fairclough’s three-dimensional model

For the discourse analysis, Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional model was used to interpret the data from the organisational websites. The model demonstrates Fairclough’s suggestion that every instance of language use is a communicative event consisting of three dimensions:
1. It is a text
2. It is a discursive practice
3. It is a social practice
Discourse analysis using this model should therefore cover all three dimensions, by focusing on
1) The linguistic characteristics of the text, for instance metaphors, wording, and grammar.

2) The discursive practice of the text, which involves the production and consumption of texts. Here, the analysis should focus how the linguistic characteristics that were identified during the first step are impacting the interpretation of the text. What type of discourses are being constructed via the linguistic characteristics of the text, when it is being read and interpreted?

3) The social practice of the text, which constitutes systems of knowledge and meaning. Here, the discourses identified are put into a wider perspective, with the intention to establish if they correspond with other theories on social practice (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

The following analysis of the selected website pages was performed using this model. The textual components of the pages were firstly analysed as texts to distinguish linguistic characteristics. Secondly, these characteristics were analysed as discursive practices, and thirdly, the findings from the textual analysis were compared to the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 4.

5.4 Project analysis

The analysis of website pages is followed by an analysis of one project from each respective organisation. This was done in order to broaden the data, and additionally to 1) investigate whether the implementation of projects reflects the construction of participation that was established through discourse analysis of selected website pages and 2) compare the implementation of participatory methods to previously presented and discussed theories regarding the strengths and limitations of participation in development initiatives. Therefore, a constructivist case study approach was deemed appropriate for the scope of this degree project.

5.5 Reflections and limitations

Methodological choices are prone to producing limitations. However, decisions regarding what data to include in an analysis and what data to leave out of an analysis have to be made, and a critical reflection on how these choices may have impacted the result is equally crucial and must be considered.
The initial intention was to gather data through in-depth interviews with representatives from the organisations. Unfortunately, for several reasons, performing interviews was not a possibility, and this idea had to be abandoned. The results gained from the analysis are hence solely based on external communication, and therefore they can only speak of this aspect of the organisation. They cannot imply anything regarding each organisations’ internal structure or management. However, by focusing exclusively on material that is made publicly accessible, the results can say something about how the organisations choose to brand themselves in the role of a participative art organisation, and in relation to this, how they choose to communicate participation. Applying a critical discourse analysis approach will further allow for analysis of what the material is communication beyond what is written, but how the texts can be interpreted and, in turn, if they thereby contribute to a certain kind of discourse.

It should also be mentioned that a text never can be completely and objectively understood, because all readings of texts are socially situated and, to some extent, influenced by the perspective of the reader (Lockyer 2012:3). To minimise the risk of a biased analysis, I have intended to read and analyse the texts in relation to the referred theories and methodologies on the subject, in combination with a constant reflection of my own position and perspective.

I also want to add that the findings in this study are based in how the organisations are communicating their understanding of participation and participatory art as a tool for social change, and should therefore not be viewed as a complete analysis of the impacts or efficiency of their work. What they do suggest, however, is what type of understanding of participative art that forms the basis of each organisations’ work and mission, and further how this can possibly affect the outcomes of their work.

6. Analysis

The analysis is presented in two parts: 6.1 presents a discourse analysis of each respective page from the organisational websites, and 6.2 presents an analysis of one project from each respective organisation. The analysis is then followed by a summary of findings. For the sake of clarity, people involved in the art projects that do not represent the organisation, will be referred to as “participants”, and representatives of the organisations will be referred to as “initiators”.

23
6.1 Discourse analysis

6.1.1 Fearless Collective - “About Us”

On the “About Us” page\textsuperscript{10} of Fearless Collective’s official website, the reader is first met with the quote “We create space to move from fear to love using participative art” (Fearless Collective 2020). It then goes on to mapping out a three step strategy, described as follows:

1. Philosophy: Fearless explores choosing love over fear, compassion over defence and abundance over scarcity through collective catharsis, expression and imagination.
2. Practice: Fearless facilitates people-led, locally embedded storytelling to engage in global conversations on social justice.
3. Community: Fearless aspires to grow as a movement of artists and activists creating spaces within their communities for creation, participation and imagination (Fearless Collective 2020, retrieved from https://fearlesscollective.org/about-us/)

In this text, the linguistic choices are contributing to a sense of collective identity. The phrases “collective catharsis”, “people-led”, and “movement of artists and activists” are especially indicative of this. There is very little differentiation between participants and initiators, instead the descriptions are contributing to the creation of a collective image. In the sentence “Fearless facilitates people-led, locally embedded storytelling to engage in global conversations on social justice”, there is a differentiation between initiators and participants, and here the role of the organisation is being described as a facilitating, yet passive, role. “People-led” suggests that while the organisation functions as facilitators, it is the participants who are the active leaders of the projects. The sentence “Fearless aspires to grow as a movement of artists and activists creating spaces within their communities for creation, participation and imagination” also suggests a collective identity where participants are creating these spaces, again suggesting emphasis of active participants.

\textsuperscript{10} For a screenshot of the “About Us” page, see Appendix Figure I
Further, the page gives a brief historic overview. It can be read that:

“Fearless is a South Asia based public arts project that creates space to move from fear to love using participative public art. In 2012, Bangalore-based visual artist Shilo Shiv Suleman started Fearless in response to the powerful protests that shook the country in response to the “Nirbhaya” tragedy in Delhi, India. Since then, Fearless has worked in over 10 countries, co-creating 38 murals, reclaiming spaces, carving out public depictions of women and their significance in societies around the world - from the small indigenous village of Olivencia colonised by the portuguese in Brazil, to the first known public testament to queer masculinities in Beirut, Lebanon, to the sprawling community of Lyari rift with gang violence in Karachi, Pakistan. Fearless’ work is to show up in spaces of fear, isolation, and trauma and support communities as they reclaim these public spaces with the images and affirmations they choose”
(Fearless Collective 2020, retrieved from https://fearlesscollective.org/about-us/)

This text indicates discursive practices that are similar to those of the previous text. Descriptions of their work and mission are all written from a “we” perspective; they are describing themselves as a movement and constellation of artists, activists, community members and volunteers, and the murals are said to be “co-created”. The art is described as “participatory art”, but the individuals that they are working with are never described as “participants”. This is depicting an image of participants as having an active role in the projects.

By claiming that their work is to “show up in spaces of fear, isolation, and trauma and support communities as they reclaim public spaces with the images and affirmations they choose”, Fearless Collective highlights their role as mainly a supportive one; the intention is for communities to reclaim public spaces, accordingly to their own aspirations and wishes. The italics of the word they indicate that it is of importance that the communities make these decisions themselves.

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11 The gang rape and murder case of 23-year old woman Jyoti Singh
Another quote on the page states that:

“We are a constellation of community members & volunteers from around the world; a beautiful flood of people telling their own stories on the streets. Rooted in South Asia, and fuelled by a dedicated core team of young feminists, artists and activists, Fearless’ core is comprised of four women working beyond boundaries and boarders to seed a movement that replaces fear with love and beauty through participative art”

(Fearless Collective 2020, retrieved from https://fearlesscollective.org/about-us/)

The phrasing “a beautiful flood of people telling their own stories on the streets” is another indicator pointing towards a standpoint in which the agency of the communities is of high importance and priority.

The textual analysis of the page suggests that the way Fearless Collective is describing their work is reflective of the social movement perspective, where the act of participation is viewed as a goal in itself and a possible pathway towards empowerment and emancipation, rather than participation being used as a tool to reach other, pre-established goals of the project (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009; Keat 2019). Further, the role of participants are communicated as an active one, where there is a lot of emphasis on their authorial rights and possibilities to shape the projects. In this manner, participants are viewed more like collaborators (Beech 2008).

6.1.2 Fearless Collective - “Fearless Methodology”

The “Fearless Methodology” page of Fearless Collectives’ organisational website explains a six step methodology that guides their work. Every step is explained and exemplified on the page, however this analysis will only cover the textual components that are relevant to the purpose of this study.12

12 Screenshots of the page can be found in Appendix Figure II
The methodology is described to have been developed by founder Shilo Shiv Suleman, inspired by interactive workshops facilitated with different communities over the period 2012-2015.

“The methodology draws from personal history, traditional storytelling techniques and universal myths and archetypes. Working through an immersive process of self-representation and collective imagination, it opens a pathway for us to reclaim public space and affirm the safe and sacred futures we would like to create” (Fearless Collective 2020, retrieved from https://fearlesscollective.org/fearless-methodology/)

The six steps are described as followed:

1. Space
   “In the Fearless work, we make space with intimate attention. Along with our community partners, we identify spaces that are significant to them and we recognise that we make (and take) space in three different ways. The emotional space inside us, the social spaces we conduct our workshops in, and finally the public spaces we occupy for protest and pleasure”

2. Story
   “Our feelings are made to seem like they don’t deserve attention because they are too soft, too invisible, too transient to hold true until they become too dense, to heavy, soaked in water and released as floods. In the Fearless method, we are made of these stories, not atoms. All the stories we tell are grounded in lived experiences of the communities we engage with”

3. Symbol
   “In the Fearless methodology we see how symbols represent our healing, emergent power and paths to the future. We look for signs. And these are found during our workshops, collectively and collaboratively with the communities we’re working with”
4. Ritual

“In Fearless workshops, we use rituals as our primary storytelling tool. Our rituals are handcrafted, and work through processes of catharsis (let it all out) and transmutation (offer it up)”

5. Gather

“The fifth step of our process is to gather. We gather together photos of the community we engage with, we gather the voices and stories we heard in our ritual, we gather colours from the street, native plants that we press into the walls as motifs, we gather opinions of strangers passing (even the mean street critique)”

6. Affirm

“In the seven years since our inception, we’ve painted numerous affirmations on streets around the world, some in words and some in symbols; some unsaid or unwritten, and some secretly tucked into the hair of a person that we’re painting - but always an affirmation moving from fear to love. Our banners and tongues aren’t laden with slogans: “Stop War, “Save the Tigers”, “Stop violence against women”. Our words are invocations that build the imagined city we want to inhabit” (Fearless Collective 2020, retrieved from https://fearlesscollective.org/fearless-methodology/)

Through textual analysis, it can be said that the texts describing the working methodology share several textual similarities with descriptions from the “About Us” page. Every step is largely described using words such as “we”, “us”, and “our”; a few sentences are referring to “community partners”, “the communities we engage with”, and “collectively and collaboratively with the communities we’re working with”. The work is again described as something that is being created collectively, and little distinction is made between initiators and participants.

While the described methodology forms the staples of how every project is brought out, the steps are described more as themes than as rules that has to be followed in a certain manner. The phrases “we identify spaces”, “we look for signs”, and “our banners and tongues are’t laden with slogans” communicates a process that is being created as it is happening.
The texts suggest an aspiration of shared authority between everyone involved in the project, the initiators as well as the participants. There is an emphasis on communicating agency with the participants, for example in the phrasings “all the stories we tell are grounded in lived experiences of the communities we engage with” and “we identify spaces that are significant to them”.

These findings suggest a discursive practice that challenges uneven power hierarchies that might arise within the frames of a participatory project, and that might lead to participatory approaches not having any emancipating or empowering effects. The textual analysis suggest that participants have the agency to define the parameters of the project, instead of being invited to a pre-established situation where authorial rights are not being shared. Comparing these findings to the theories of Arnstein, Finkelpearl and Beech\(^{13}\), they are reflective of factors that bear the potential to result in emancipatory effects.

6.1.3 Entelechy Arts - “About Us”

The “About Us” page\(^{14}\) of Entelechy Art’s website is designed so that the reader first gets to see an image gallery with photos from a selection of their projects. Listed right underneath is following text:

“Entelechy Arts is a participatory arts company based in the London Borough of Lewisham, south east London. We collaborate with people from marginalised and excluded communities to place arts practice at the heart of a process striving to achieve more equal, connected and engaged communities. Entelechy Arts works alongside people who have often been invisible and un-regarded members of their communities, either because of disability, underlying health conditions or the ageing process. We believe that arts practice has a central role to play in re-imagining civic connections between historically marginalised individuals and groups. Participation in the arts enables people to feel present, alive and engaged with their world and with the world of others. Art creates new

\(^{13}\) See chapter 4, “Theoretical Framework”

\(^{14}\) Screenshots of the page can be found in Appendix Figure III
“Within the process of making art, Entelechy Arts creates spaces where people come to meet, to celebrate, to experience each other and the world. Art making can inspire individual and collective imagination. The established and emerging artists we work with specialise in a range of art forms and practices including dance, theatre, spoken word, music, circus, textiles, singing and sculpture”

The organisation is describing their work as “collaborating with people from marginalised and excluded communities”, and working “alongside people who have often been invisible and unregarded members of their communities”. Sentences such as “re-imagining civic connections between historically marginalised individuals and groups”, and “participation in the arts enables people to feel present, alive and engaged with their world and the world of others” are written in a manner that is describing the participant group in third person, and hence is suggesting a differentiation between initiators and participants. The work is being described as a collaboration, with the intention to “achieve more equal, connected and engaged communities”, but simultaneously, the sentences “within the process of making art, Entelechy Arts creates spaces where people come to meet, to celebrate, to experience each other and the world” and “the established and emerging artists we work with” suggest an approach where projects are pre-established by the organisation, and participants are invited into this space.

This is suggestive of a few factors. Firstly, the text is written in a manner that places the organisation in an active role, both when it comes to the description of their intentions and the description of their work. Participants are mentioned several times, but their role is communicated as more passive than the role of the organisation. This resonates with an approach where participants are invited to accept the parameters of a project, rather than collaboratively sharing authorial rights with initiators (Beech 2008). Further, the description of their work and objectives are indicating desired outcomes on primarily a life skills level, where participation can lead to the improvement of competencies and capacities that are required to engage with the development problem (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009).
6.1.4 Entelechy Arts - “History”

Entelechy Arts does not have a page of their website that, equally to Fearless Collective, describe their working methodology (neither can this be found anywhere else on their website). The “History” page contains following information:

“Entelechy Arts was founded in 1989 at the request of the Lewisham and North Southwark Health Authority, to support the resettlement of people with learning disabilities form the old ‘mental handicap’ asylums to communities in South East London. A key aim of this transition was to enable individuals to become respected and contributing members of their communities. Artists were engaged to support this process, forming the heart of Entelechy Art’s approach.”

(Entelechy Arts 2020, retrieved from: https://entelechyarts.org/about/history/)

Although it can’t be said for sure what exactly is meant by the phrasing “contributing members of their communities”, this sentence communicates resonance with Claire Bishop’s discussion of the social inclusion agenda, in which participatory arts in certain contexts tend to operate with the intention to create self-sufficient citizens that are independent of any welfare and that can cope with a deregulated, privatised world (Bishop 2012). The main drive behind participation when adapted by the social inclusion agenda, differs profoundly from the emancipatory function that is common social change oriented theories on participatory art.

Even if it may be unjust to deem the contemporary work of an organisation based on the ideological standpoints it was based off years ago (a lot can change during the years), Entelechy Arts are themselves claiming that the initial ambition to “enable individuals to become respected and contributing members of their communities” is what has been forming the heart of Entelechy Arts. Therefore it is pretty safe to claim that this ambition is reflected in their work.

“Our early work responded to the findings that many founder members were unable to use conventional forms of communication such as talking and many were traumatised by years of institutional abuse. Projects used music, participatory theatre and dance as a means of communication and exchange. Nearly three
decades later and the practice is still growing. We continue to devise and innovate ways of listening to people whose voices are not heard; we continue to forge meaningful artistic relationships between strangers”
(Entelechy Arts 2020, retrieved from https://entelechyarts.org/about/history/)

Similar to the “About Us” page, this section is suggesting that Entelechy Arts are the active providers of the process; they are the ones creating the spaces where participants can come to connect with each other, but there is little to no indicators of participants being part of the process creating this space. They are simply invited to it. It also indicates participation in the arts as a communication tool for participants that are hindered from conventional forms of communication.

6.2 Projects

6.2.1 "I am a creation of Allah"

The project “I am a creation of Allah” took place in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, in 2015, with the main objective to highlight the realities of the Khwaja-sira community. In collaboration with the organisation Wajood, a group of participants was organised to partake in the project, and through affirmative workshops, the group established goals in regards to what they as part of the Khwaja-sira community want to receive. Through the workshop, the group communicated that one area where they would like to see a change is that of employment; they expressed a desire to normalise employment opportunities for the transgender communities, to take them off the streets and into workplaces and schools. They also articulated a desire to achieve a higher level of respect in the Pakistani society. The mural that was painted as a result of the workshop, shows an image of Bubbli Mallik, CEO of Wajood and participant in the project, riding a motorcycle while exhaling roses, and

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15 Transgender person
16 Wajood is a Pakistan based organisation working with transgender issues
17 Increasing employment opportunities for members of the transgender community in Pakistan is also one of Wajood's focus areas
surrounded by the words “Hum Hain Takhleeq-e-Kuda, meaning “I am a creation of Allah” (Fearless Collective 2015).

According to Fearless, the mural is one of few artistic representations of the community, in general but moreover that is created by members of the community themselves. The image is supposed to serve as a reclamation of existence, and is painted in an area that is considered “very masculine” by the community, with the intention of reclaiming a space that is not traditionally accessible to the Khwaja-sira community (Fearless Collective 2015).

The presentation of the “I am a creation of Allah” project, as it is being described on Fearless Collective’s website, is representative of how they choose to present themselves and their work, and how they involve participants in their projects. All projects that are being presented on their website are described in a similar manner. The focus area of the project (in this case, the situation and reality for the transgender community in Pakistan) is being presented like a story, interwoven with
descriptions of how the mural came to be, and how the workshops leading up to the painting of the mural were conducted.

The description of this project shows that the methodology being used puts great emphasis on including the participant group from the early stages of the project. The workshops are being organised by representatives of Fearless, but the focus areas and the stories that serve as inspiration for the mural design is composed by representatives of the community. By including members of the concerned community in the early stages of the project, and then continuously aiming towards a telling of their stories where they conclude what they want to communicate, how it will be communicated and where the end product (the mural) will be painted, Fearless Collective shows awareness of the problematic division between active artist and passive participant, and an effort to (as much as possible) disrupt this binary. This part of their project design (that is equally applied to every project that is being described on their website) suggests an understanding of the group as collaborators rather than participants of an already pre-existing project with associated pre-established outcomes.

The project design and implementation again reflects the social movement perspective (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:3), since emphasis is not so much on a specific, pre-established goal, but rather there is a strong focus on participants / collaborators creating their own narratives and using both art and participation as an empowerment tool in itself. This aspect of project design and implementation also mirrors a construction of collaborators as opposed to participants, where the main difference lies in collaborators having shared authorial rights over the artwork which allows for a shared decision making process about the key structural features of the work (Breech 2008).

In the case of the “I am a creation of Allah” project, several factors suggest an intention of shared authorship. There is no pre-established goal apparent, but the group of participants are being treated rather like collaborators. Through interactive workshops, the group defines what their reality as members of the transgender community in Pakistan looks like, what obstacles they face as individuals and as a community, and what changes they would like the future to hold for their community. The group is also described as the main creators of the mural; they are the designers,

\[\text{Referring to how the process is communicated by Fearless Collective themselves and hence can only point to their perception of participation; we can not be sure that this view is shared with the participant group}\]
they decide what should be pictured in the mural and hence, how their community and situation should be represented, and finally they are taking part in painting the mural. They also decide where they would like the mural to be painted, which in the case of this project also has significant meaning in that it represents reclaiming space where members of the Khwaja-sira community usually don’t feel welcomed or accepted (Fearless Collective 2015).

6.2.2 “BED”

Analysing one of the Entelechy Arts projects is a bit more complicated than in the case of Fearless Collective. Fearless uses the same methodology in all of their project, and the projects are implemented in similar ways. This is not the case with Entelechy Arts. They do not have a common methodology that is applied to every project, and their projects differ a lot more from each other when compared to those of Fearless Collective. Therefore, it has to be noted that the analysis of the

One performance of the “BED” project, performed 2016 in London (Chesher 2016)

Entelechy Arts project represents only that project; its results should not be read as representative of each individual project.
“BED” is a street theatre performance devised by Entelechy Arts and members of the Entelechy Arts Theatre Group, and it was first performed in London in 2016, but has since then been touring across the United Kingdom. According to the description found on their website, the project was initiated by the theatre group members who wanted to make a statement about the invisibility they experienced in public places. It is designed to address loneliness and social isolation, which are currently big issues faced by the older population in the UK (Entelechy Arts 2020).

“They knew of many people experiencing loneliness and isolation. There are many stories that go unheard, many lives that are unrecognised. They wanted to redress the balance. They made BED” (Entelechy Arts 2020)

“BED” takes place in public areas, such as busy shopping streets and malls, and it contains of a metal bed in which an elderly person lies in their night clothes. The performance starts whenever a by-passer stops to talk to the person in the bed, to find out what is going on. The idea is then for this interaction to lead to conversation. The person in the bed starts talking about their life, and uses props such as photographs. This is supposed to create a dynamic where the people who have stopped can share stories about their lives, too. The characters for “BED” were created through conversations with older participants of Entelechy Arts projects, where participants shared their experiences of loneliness and isolation.

“There are two beds in the BED performance. In one, the older woman engages and interacts with passers by who are drawn into fragments of her story by helping her manage the day to day paraphernalia of her life: passing her objects tucked into the bed pockets, helping with hard to open bottles of water. Through these small invited acts of kindness, her stories are told. In the second bed there is no direct interaction between performer and passers by. The performer listens to comments and questions from people around the BED and spontaneously weaves these into a narrative of her character’s history, which is delivered in a whispered stream of consciousness” (Entelechy Arts 2020)
The BED project reflects several of Entelechy Art’s self-proclaimed focus areas. By placing members of one of the marginalised communities that make up their participants in a context that they have expressed represents exclusion for them, the project promotes radical visibility through an art intervention. The project is designed and performed exclusively by participants, which allows them full agency and power in decision making. It also represents the quest for “re-imagining civic connections”, and resonates well with the understanding of art as a vessel to create new contexts to increase participation and engagement, that is mentioned as one of Entelechy Art’s fundamental quests.

Another interesting aspect of this project is how it challenges the notion of participation. The group that would be categorised as participants, as in participants in Entelechy Arts initiatives, now become exclusive artists. The one performer in each performance is fully representing and creating the intervention; indicating that not only did the group have full agency in initiating and designing the project, but they also have agency over its implementation. No representatives from the Entelechy Arts staff is present, neither are any other visual signs indicating that the performance is part of a participatory arts organisation and that the actors themselves are participants in this context. Rather, there is a shift in power dynamics, and the people that chose to stop and interact with the performer, takes on the role of the participant. In the context of this project, the issue of
how to obtain collective authorship in participatory art projects, and thereby overthrow the inherent power dynamics that naturally appears in participatory approaches, is largely challenged.

It should however be mentioned that this is one example of their work, and unlike the working methodology of Fearless Collective, the projects of Entelechy Arts tend to differ more from each other. Fearless Collective exclusively work through workshops and mural painting, but in the case of Entelechy Arts, they adapt a wide range of artistic expressions such as theatre, dance, painting and singing. Since Entelechy Arts is working with a wide range of people, including people with different disabilities, it can be assumed that the projects have to be adapted and designed to fit the needs of the participant group.

7. Findings

The analysis shows that both Fearless Collective and Entelechy Arts communicate a discourse of participation where participants take an active part in projects, to various degrees. In the case of Fearless Collective, the analysis of website pages proposes an understanding of participants rather as collaborators with shared authorial rights over the process (Beech 2008). The analysis pointed out examples of how descriptions of Fearless Collective (in who they are, what they do, what their aim is and how they do their work) are almost exclusively formulated through a “we” perspective. Descriptions of their working methodology also shows great emphasis on the participants not only being part of, but rather defining every step of the project. The analysis indicates an understanding of and approach to participation that corresponds well with what theories have claimed can be understood as genuine participation. For instance, it corresponds well with the rungs of Arnstein’s ladder\(^\text{19}\) that represents partnership and delegated power, which are both in the citizen power category.

Further, the case study shows that the depiction of participants are reflected well in descriptions of the “I am a creation of Allah” project. The project description indicates that participants are involved in the planning stage as much as in the implementation stage of the projects. In fact, according to the result of the analysis, participants have more agency in decision making throughout

\(^{19}\) See page 13
the projects than representatives of Fearless Collective (or, the artist/s). Through the workshop part of the project, participants identify and express the marginalisation that their community is experiencing, the change they would like to see in the future, and how this should be represented in the mural. They then participate in painting the mural, and in deciding where it should be painted. Representatives of Fearless Collective are being portrayed more as facilitators; they are organising workshops, providing all the material needed, and they are using their skills as artists and painters to guide the group through the painting process. The findings suggest that Fearless Collective are aware of the problem regarding undivided authorship that may be present in participatory art projects, and that may result in an empty ritual of participation (Arnstein 1969:216). By viewing participants rather as collaborators, they are indicating a rejection of their own authorship, which according to previously presented theories is crucial for participation to be genuine (Arnstein 1969; Finkelpearl 2014; Keat 2019).

Entelechy Arts are communicating an understanding of participation in the arts as a tool to enable individuals to engage with their communities, and by this becoming respected and contributing members of these communities. It is unclear what is meant by being a “contributing” member of a community; this could imply contributing to the art making process, but it also reflects aspects of the social inclusion agenda, where projects are designed with the intention to produce self-sufficient citizens, but with little or no intention of an emancipatory effect. This indicates the possibility of a lower emancipatory effect. The work is generally being described from a co-creative perspective, where participants are fully engaged. There is no description of how projects are being designed, and what role participants have in this process, but the findings suggest an image of Entelechy Arts as providers and creators of a space where participants come “to meet, to celebrate, to experience each other and the world”. They also depict themselves as being the ones who “forge meaningful artistic relationships between strangers”. The creation of space is apparent in the descriptions of Fearless Collective as well, but here, participants are involved in creating that space as well. In the case of Entelechy Arts, the space is being provided for the participants. This is suggesting a lower level of shared authorial rights, where participants are more likely to be invited to a pre-established project with little to no agency to shape the project and its outcomes (Beech 2008).

In the case study of the “BED” project, the findings show results that are somewhat challenging the results found in the analysis of the website. While the website suggests the role of participants to be rather passive - they are invited to a creative space and encouraged to take part in the art making
process, but they are not co-creators of the space or the outcomes - the “BED” projects is representing participation on every level. The aim behind the project is coming from participants, it is the participants who are the driving force behind designing the project, and finally it is only participants who create the “end product”, in this case performing a street theatre performance. In the performing part of the project, participants of Entelechy Arts step into the role of the artist and the general public engaging in the performance are taking on the role of participants. Hence, the power relations between artist and participants are being overthrown. This shows that in the example of “BED”, the analysis of their website where certain aspects points to an image of participants as passive, is not necessarily reflected in their projects.

The findings in this study show that both Fearless Collective and Entelechy Arts are indicating an understanding, representation and implementation of participation that reflect factors that previous research has deemed to potentially lead to development and social change. Fearless Collective differs somewhat from Entelechy Arts, in that they indicate inclusion of participants on every step of their work process. In the case of Entelechy Arts, participants are being described as being included into a space that is already created. However, this is not the case in the “BED” project, where participants are described as having full control over the project; its intention, its design, and its implementation.

Fearless Collective communicate an understanding of participation that is reflective of what Tufte & Mefalopulos would refer to as an individual psycho-social level, where participation can lead to increased feelings of ownership of a problem, while Entelechy Arts are predominately communicating factors of a life skills level approach, where participation ultimately can lead to the improvement of competencies that are required to engage with the development problem (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009). None of the organisations are communicating strong resonance with the institutional level, where participation leads to influencing institutions that can effect an individual or community. This could be criticised for instance from the perspective of participatory approaches having a performative effect with little to no real life effect (Cornwall & Brock 2005), or it could even be deemed as being manipulative, where participation is merely an illusion (Arnstein 1969). However, I want to argue that while it is important to analyse participatory art for social initiatives from this perspective, it is of equal value to consider the possibility that change on both individual and life skills level might lead to empowerment that, in turn, eventually can lead to social change even on an institutional level. It might just be that such change takes more time and effort.
Further, it is crucial to not assume that these findings indicate that their work will have the emancipatory effects that is reflected in their descriptions of desired effects. The unit of data that was used for the analysis in this study can only point towards how the organisations are communicating their understanding of participatory art practices, and additionally whether this is reflected in the examples of each respective project that was analysed. Further, the data represents a rather small sample; additional data units (such as interviews or observations) would have enriched the study and possibly would have led to more detailed results. However, I want to argue that what the results can indicate is the likeliness that these organisations are aware of the complexity that is inherent in participatory approaches, and that their work suggest methodologies that address these complexities. This awareness is, I would argue, a crucial aspect that has to be prominent in participatory art projects with a development and social change agenda.

Kate Newman and Kate Carroll claim that

“We argue that for an approach to be understood as participatory, it is important to go beyond the methods and tools used and think about the frameworks, philosophy and behaviours that underpin the practice. Thus, participatory arts cannot just be about including people in arts-based practice, but also need to be cognisant of how multiple knowledges are enabled to surface and how meaning is made. Central to this is an awareness of the underlying power dynamics in a given context”

(Newman & Carroll 2019:91)

This quote illustrates the findings and closing argument in this study quite well. The analysis findings can not guarantee that the analysed organisations are using an approach to participation that will have emancipatory effects; it would be rather arrogant to claim such a thing. However, what they can indicate is that both organisations indicate awareness of underlying power dynamics, which is essential for genuine participation to occur.
8. Discussion and Conclusion

Participatory art is a field of many layers. It encompasses art, creativity, participation, development, aesthetics, and social change, and probably much more than that. Its nature and impact has been praised and criticised, and through the process of writing this degree project, it became clear to me that it is an area far more complex than I ever imagined. I have only begun to form an understanding of it, and it leaves me wondering if I (or anyone else for that matter) will ever be able to fully understand its many layers.

This study has provided one example of how the potential of using participative art as a communication tool for development and social change can be measured. However, the analysis results can only speak of how the analysed organisations are communicating their understanding of the phenomena of participatory art, and my interpretation is that this is suggestive of what factors are shaping the design of their work, and additionally the outcomes of projects. By analysing the data through a critical discourse analysis, I have aimed to identify the underlying understanding of participatory art and its nature within the two organisations, beyond the mere descriptions that are found on their websites. The results can however not claim that the understanding of participatory art approaches represented by each respective organisation definitely will be reflective of their practical work and the results of this, but I want to argue that for approaches like these to have emancipatory effects and eventually holding the potential to lead to social change, it is crucial that initiatives are being designed and carried out in a way that is reflective of the complexities of participatory approaches. An informed and critical understanding that participatory art for social change will not automatically have the desired effects simply because the approach is being used, needs to form the ideological foundation of participatory art for social change approaches. For example, one way in which this can be done is by demonstrating an attitude that challenges unequal power hierarchies within such projects, and a clear attempt to overthrow these. Claire Bishop claims that “it is telling that the better examples of participatory art in recent years have constituted a critique of participatory art, rather than upholding an unproblematised equation between artistic and political inclusion” (Bishop 2012:283), which is highly illustrative of this argument. I want to further illustrate this argument with the following quote:
Art is a power, not a good. Participatory art can empower people but good results are not guaranteed. Like all art, it can also be hollow, manipulative, pretentious, trivial and dull. The extent to which participation is desirable depends entirely on what it is we participate in, on what terms and to what end. Art can be used to control, dominate and exploit, as the representation of women in the canon of European art often shows. Knowing the spectrum of participatory art, I know too that at its best it can be empowering and transformative. Its normalisation creates new opportunities for human flourishing and social justice, but to make the most of that potential we must understand its nature, its processes and its pitfalls” (Matarasso 2019:29).

It is exactly this that is needed through further research within the field; forming of an understanding of the nature, processes and pitfalls of participatory art. Practitioners within the field need to constantly re-evaluate their work, and question its intentions and outcomes. This study has shown one example of how such intent can be tested.

That being said, the results of this study should be viewed simply as an example. Since participatory art is such a complex field, there are several different areas within the field that requires further research. This study has not been able to cover for instance the view of participants in participatory art projects, nor has it covered personal views from initiators and representatives of organisations. This angle would have most certainly led to different conclusions and results, that would have been able to reflect more carefully on the possible outcomes of participatory art approaches. I want to argue that there is possibly great potential in exploring and adapting aspects of creativity, such as participatory art, into communication for development initiatives. It might very well offer new and rather unexplored means of communicating oppression and structural inequalities, and further communicating ideas and visions on how to work towards social change. However, since the topic of participatory art is still rather unexplored within the field of communication for development, further research is crucial. With this study, I want to invite and encourage further research and discussion on the potential that lies within the realms of participatory art as a communication for development tool.
Additionally, I want to argue the importance of refraining from presenting participation in the arts as a solid, package deal antidote to issues of structural oppression. I think it is rather safe to say that participatory art projects can not on their own overthrow systems of oppression and result in giant leaps towards social change and equality, but they should rather be viewed as a tool that, in combination with other initiatives and different action, has the potential to contribute to said social change. This is partially why I believe that participatory art approaches represent a considerable amount of unexplored potential in the area of communication for development. There is already a broad tradition of communicating tools that are related to participatory art prevalent in many communication for development areas (such as community theatre, to name one example), but I want to argue that the spectrum of communication tools that involve creativity should be wider and further investigated.
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10. Appendix

Figure I - Fearless Collective: “About Us” (Retrieved from https://fearlesscollective.org/about-us/)
Fearless is a South Asia based public arts project that creates space to move from fear to love using participative public art. In 2012, Bangalore-based visual artist Shilo Shiv Suleman started Fearless in response to the powerful protests that shook the country in response to the “Nirbhaya” tragedy in Delhi, India.

Since then, Fearless has worked in over 10 countries, co-creating 38 murals, re-claiming spaces, carving out public depictions of women and their significance in societies around the world - from the small indigenous village of Olivenza colonized by the Portuguese in Brazil, to the first known public testament to queer masculinities in Beirut, Lebanon, to the sprawling community of Lyari rift with gang violence in Karachi, Pakistan. Fearless’ work is to show up in spaces of fear, isolation, and trauma and support communities as they reclaim these public spaces with the images and affirmations they choose.

Shilo Shiv Suleman
Founder+ Creative Director

TEHANI ARIYARATNE
Chief Operations Officer

GAYATRI GANU
Communications and Outreach

We are a constellation of community members & volunteers from around the world: a beautiful flood of people telling their own stories on the streets – rooted in South Asia, and fueled by a dedicated core team of young feminists, artists, and activists. Fearless’ core is comprised of four women working beyond boundaries and borders to seed a movement that replaces fear with love and beauty through participative art.
FEARLESS METHODOLOGY

The Fearless Methodology is a 6 step process developed by artist Shilo Shiv Suleman over the period of 2012-2015. Born from interactive workshops she facilitated with different communities – from the Koliwada fisherwomen in Bombay to the transgender community in Rawalpindi – the methodology brought together symbol, ritual and storytelling in a powerful and intimate act of feminist solidarity and care.

It was a time of wide-eyed learning and potent affirmation.

The methodology draws from personal history, traditional storytelling techniques and universal myths and archetypes. Working through an immersive process of self-representation and collective imagination, it opens a pathway for us to reclaim public space and affirm the safe and sacred futures we would like to create.

Space

We create, reclaim and occupy space. Inside us and outside us. The ancients knew it well – spaces (like bodies) tell stories. They hold the histories of minerals and movements.

In the Fearless work, we make space with intimate attention. Along with our community partners, we identify spaces that are significant to them and we recognise that we make (and take) space in three different ways. The emotional space inside of us, the social spaces we conduct our workshops in, and finally the public spaces we occupy for protest and pleasure.

We turn to the old ways-

We witness space.

We offer light and colour and incense into forgotten corners.

We fill space with our bodies, stories and paintbrushes.

In this picture, we painted ground, not wall with an indigenous community - the Tupinambá in Bahia, Brazil. The land is an indigenous burial ground that was taken over by Portuguese coloniser Pedro Álvares Cabral in a brutal massacre 450 years ago. A church was built on top of the land. As we painted Tupinambá symbols back into existence, we reclaimed history.

In this picture, we painted ground, not wall with an indigenous community - the Tupinambá in Bahia, Brazil. The land is an indigenous burial ground that was taken over and colonised by Cabral in a brutal massacre 450 years ago. A church was built on top of the land. As we painted Tupinambá symbols back into existence, we reclaimed history.
Story

We live in a data driven times where so many of our histories are written as a codex of ‘practical’ information. But our bodies are soaking in invisible emotional histories too.

Histories that were never asked:

How are you feeling?

Where does it hurt?

Our feelings are made to seem like they don’t deserve attention because they are too soft, too invisible, too transient to hold true until they become too dense, too heavy, soaked in water and released as floods.

In the Fearless method, we are made of these stories, not atoms. All the stories we tell are grounded in lived experiences of the communities we engage with.

Every time we tell our (own) stories, we give ourselves the chance to change our narrative, to rethink the characters and villains, and to (re)write our own endings. We represent no one but ourselves and yet, as we tell (each other) our stories, we begin to speak to each other’s stories. Storytelling makes us visible to each other, not just reportage but alchemy.

(all the stories I tell are my own)

Here, a group of transgender women in Bogor, Indonesia tell their own stories as they brush their hair. The stories they held inside them chose an identity other than the body into which they were born. We listen to these stories (with attention undivided)

Symbol

A locket dangling around your neck. Grains of rice offered to a formless god. An open palm, the colour red, a flower that only grows in dirt. Dawn, dusk, fire, full moon, open cascading hair.

In a visual and ever enticing universe, symbols surround us and are the way we connect our internal world to the external world.

In the fearless methodology we see how symbols represent our healing, emergent power and paths to the future. We look for signs. And these are found during our workshops, collectively and collaboratively with the communities we’re working with.

Here, in our work in Beirut we explored the idea of packing and unpacking as a symbolic reference to leaving and making homes. As each of us unpacked a trunk full of each other’s things, we found, what often makes us feel at home is someone saying the words “a thousand times welcome,” a familiar song, a family jewel, oranges that are tiny and tangible, mother tongues and your grandmother’s pomegranate trees.
Ritual

Rituals set intention into motion. Rituals are the way we remember to use the body as grace and a tool of reverence. From the combing of our hair, to the offering of flowers into space. Rituals are performative acts that allow us to go deep into an emotional space and speak from (personal) truth.

No matter what our belief systems, there is something about placing our forehead to the ground that allows us to enter into our own depths. Our most tender emotions, even our rage, deserve to wear ceremonial attire. black. red. white. long. veiled. bare. When our shadow selves come dressed in grace, sipping sacred water-every emotion that enters us has the capacity to shapeshift into praise.

In Fearless workshops, we use rituals as our primary storytelling tool. Our rituals are handcrafted, and work through processes of catharsis (let it all out) and transmutation (offer it up).

In this ritual of Rage in Tunis, each participant made a fire, and answered into it:

What is the source of your rage?

As the fires turned softer they answered: What makes it go tender?

One by one each woman glimmered fire as they spoke, pulsed only with darkness.

Gather

The fearless method trusts that everything we need is already available, that everything is happening as it should be-all you need to do is gather (together).

The fifth step of our process is to gather. We gather together photos of the community we engage with, we gather the voices and stories we heard in our ritual, we gather colours from the street, native plants that we press into the walls as motifs, we gather opinions of strangers passing (even the mean street critic). We gather our bodies together, fearlessly, sometimes in places we have little or no access to, places we've never been.

Held by the community in Chyasal, Nepal- we gathered together in red and gold, precious, childlike-young and old.

In this painted jewel in Chyasal, Nepal: we gathered together in red and gold, precious, childlike-young and old. We painted into the wall. We are treasure (together).
Affirm

In the seven years since our inception, we’ve painted numerous affirmations on streets around the world, some in words and some in symbols; some unsaid or unwritten, and some secretly tucked into the hair of a person that we’re painting—but always an affirmation of moving from fear to love. Our banners and tongues aren’t laden with slogans: “Stop War”; “Save the Tigers”; “Stop violence against women.” Our words are invocations that build the imagined city we want to inhabit.

A black body wearing nothing in protest in Johannesburg says “I wear my body without shame.”

Figure III - Entelechy Arts: “About Entelechy Arts” (Retrieved from https://entelechyarts.org/about/)
Entelechy Arts is a participatory arts company based in the London Borough of Lewisham, south east London.

We collaborate with people from marginalised and excluded communities to place arts practice at the heart of a process striving to achieve more equal, connected and engaged communities.

Entelechy Arts often works alongside people who have often been invisible and un-regarded members of their communities, either because of disability, underlying health conditions or the ageing process.

We believe that arts practice has a central role to play in re-imagining civic connections between historically marginalised individuals and groups. Participation in the arts enables people to feel present, alive and engaged with their world and with the worlds of others. Art creates new contexts and purpose to increase participation and engagement across generations, across cultures and across abilities.

Within the process of making art, Entelechy Arts creates spaces where people come to meet, to celebrate, to experience each other and the world. Art making can inspire individual and collective imagination.

The established and emerging artists we work with specialise in a range of art forms and practices including dance, theatre, spoken word, music, circus, textiles, singing and sculpture.

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Click here to see our interactive timeline

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About Entelechy Arts

Entelechy Arts works together with people from marginalised and excluded communities and artists to make possibilities real...

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Join In

There are many ways you can join in with our work... Contact us if you would like to join in.

READ MORE

Our Impact

We measure our impact by what people say about us. See what our participants and peers are saying about our work...

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History

Entelechy Arts was founded in 1989 at the request of the Lewisham and North Southwark Health Authority, to support the resettlement of people with learning disabilities from the old ‘mental handicap’ asylums to communities in South East London.

A key aim of this transition was to enable individuals to become respected and contributing members of their communities. Artists were engaged to support this process, forming the heart of Entelechy Arts’ approach.

Our early work responded to the findings that many founder members were unable to use conventional forms of communication such as talking and many were traumatised by years of institutional abuse. Projects used music, participatory theatre and dance as a means of communication and exchange.

Nearly three decades later and the practice is still growing. We continue to devise and innovate ways of listening to people whose voices are not heard; we continue to forge meaningful artistic relationships between strangers.

In 2000 we pioneered a cross-generational practice to explore preoccupations shared by young and old in the inner city. Older institutional survivors contributed to this work, which became a key component of Home Office Community Cohesion Projects.

In 2006 our elders’ performance company ‘Seven Ages’ was formed. Seven Ages, reflecting the diversity of its home communities, uses theatre, dance, writing and video to explore themes of identity, diversity, memory, risk and change.

Between 2007 and 2009, we were responsible for the artistic direction of London’s Capital Age Festival, which culminated in the pan-London ‘Big Chair Dance’. This event brought together over 250 older performers from 12 London boroughs, taking centre stage in one of Europe’s largest performing arts centres, Southbank Centre.

In 2010 we were one of 12 UK arts companies taking part in a UK / Brazilian Government cultural exchange, ‘Points of Contact’. Creative relationships are now being forged between older Entelechy artists and elders in Brazil. In 2015/16 we contributed to the development of an ongoing exchange of creative work with older people between arts organisations in the UK and Japan.

In 2014/15 we worked with 39 artists with 12 artist residencies. 28 performances reached 4,000 plus people, with 14,000 plus reached through 2 exhibitions. Attendance on learning programmes was above 4,000 sessions. Participation was primarily from people in Lewisham (72%), and Southwark (10%). A further 8% came from other London boroughs and 10% from other parts of the country. Our work was also supported by 39 volunteers.
Our Impact

We measure our impact by what people say about us. See what our participants and peers are saying about our work...

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Contact

Want to know more about our workshops and events? Do you have a relative or friend or client that would like to join in? Please get in touch.

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Artistic Director’s Blog

Artistic Director David Slater has a wonderful blog full of his reflections, experiences and working processes at Entelechy Arts.

READ MORE

Support us

You can make a huge difference by donating to Entelechy Arts.

More support makes more joy available to more people.

“I thought I’d finished with life but this is waking me up again. It makes you feel you’re not dead. You’re not worthless. You can do something and still be a part the world”

Entelechy Arts participant.

Click here to donate