Practice of Invitation
Art and meaningful participation

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Introduction

"I understand humans primarily as beings of birth. It means they come from relatedness and enter the world as unique, inimitable newcomers. They remain dependent for a lifetime – on air, water, earth, everything they generate, and on their fellow humans. Nonetheless they are free – in relatedness. Therefore to act responsibly means to nourish what nourishes me, from gratitude towards the interest and dedication that sustains my life. I therefore contribute from myself to the wellbeing of others."[1]
Ina Praetorius

Rather recently I started to understand that 'invitation' in art is not just about bringing people into a gallery, but can also be seen as an opportunity, as *the way to make* art. Invitation moved from the very end of my creative process to the very forefront. Nowadays the invitation already begins when the first concept is forming; hence the work becomes a process that derives meaning by including others in its realization. Despite this, I am still the artist. I am still the outsider by choice. I need my autonomy. However, this creative freedom is intimately related to others, to otherness. By extending the invitation much beyond the glossy show, others come in and invite me as well: to share the dynamics of a place, to share the empathy with individuals. The open invitation brings you and me into direct relation, in where we remain individuals but are not (completely) separate anymore. We are creating a 'we' that acknowledges differences. In this regard invitation leads us into an expanded concept of 'being'[2] defined by Jan-Luc Nancy. According to the philosopher, 'being' inherently implies 'being with', since single subjects only really come into full existence through linking with others.

The practice of invitation is part of the shared, abundant living Ina Praetorius describes above that recognizes we belong to something bigger. In a time when many feel disconnected from the world and themselves and when technology, consumerism and ideologies keep us more and more apart from each other, meaningful opportunities for spending physical time together outside of work cater to an existential necessity. Rather than the secluded escape in studio and gallery, the practice of invitation engages with rearrangements in everyday situations. It is exemplary how an artist like San Keller congregates train commuters at Grand Central Station and takes them collectively on what he calls the 'Long Way Home' one participant at a time.[3] People step out of their routine, meet and spend a more or less sleepless night together, experiencing themselves as related beings within the mundane routine of going home. Invitation is the beginning of a journey together that goes beyond limitations of commodity and one's singularity. Creativity researcher Lewis Hyde explains: "If art is conceived as a gift exchange and given away, shared, spent, it retains or increases its liveliness like a human life. It becomes the means of meaningful, significant use of surplus."[4] This full and shared engagement, this 'giving ourselves away' is more important than ever before, because engagement inevitably confronts us with the critical question: Is this individual, this work, this world I am engaging with, worthy of the life that I have to give?

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[1] Praetorius, Ina. November 2006. Handeln aus der Fülle: Welt gestalten im ausgehenden Patriarchat (Acting from Abundance: Shaping the world in the outgoing patriarchy). Archivi Riuniti delle Donne Ticino. Translation from German by Markuz Wernli Saitô.
[2] Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2000. Being Singular Plural. Stanford University Press. Page 13.
[3] Keller, San Stefan, 2005. Collaboration in Art. Zurich/Kyoto. Telephone interview and translation by Markuz Wernli Saitô.
[4] Hyde, Lewis. 1983. The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property. New York Vintage Books. Page 95.

San Keller can be seen in this participatory practice as a kind of "tour guide to empathy"[5]. Rather than primarily producing original works of art, he takes the public out into the world to revisit what is already there. The shared engagement with this world harbors momentum that – at least temporarily and on a small scale – creates shifts in our imagination. Art that invites this fullness, this abundance is not limited to exchanges of mind and heart – to mere interactions – it entails sharing with all senses and the body. Participation is understood here in its holistic dimension. Erich Fromm already envisioned this form of shared creativity a long time ago in what he calls 'collective art': "it permits man to feel one with others in a meaningful, rich, productive way. It is not an individual 'leisure time' occupation, added to life, it is an integral part of life."[6] Participatory practice is not as generous and selfless as one might think: it comes down to the individual's inability to really grasp the world on one's own and make sense of it thereof.

Inviting participation has broad implications for the inviting artist who has to be comfortable with a certain ambiguity that comes from such multifaceted territory. Therefore it is a good idea to gain more clarity on what meaningful participation actually is – or can be. The first chapter of this paper (Chapter I – Participation, but on whose behalf?) puts participatory practice in the greater social context and looks at how and why cultural practitioners arrive at participation in their work. The second chapter examines the different levels of participation and what qualities characterize meaningful engagement (Chapter II – The nature of participation). These two introductory chapters are informed by contextual analysis of secondary sources from anthropology, art criticism and sociology. The main part of this paper (chapters three to seven) presents a total of six case studies of participatory art activities from Japan, Korea and Vietnam that all work in and with the everyday context. This practical part results from an invitation to a guided conversation with the initiators and inviters who share their firsthand knowledge (Chapter III – Inviters of participation: Six case studies). These fairly different examples of involving practice will provide a good base for comparison to look at where the crucial connections for participation occur (Chapter IV – Making connections). This interview-based analysis from primary source material is complemented with practical pointers on how to initiate participation and to consider where its limitations are (Chapter V – Strategies for inviting participation). The final part of this paper looks at the conditions and framework that make participatory effort possible and more – or less – enduring (Chapter VI – Participation that sustains and is being sustained).

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[5] Krznaric, Roman. 2004. Empathy and Contemporary Art. Orford (self-published essay).
[6] Fromm, Erich. 1956. The Sane Society. London: Routledge. Page 348.

I – Participation, but on whose behalf?

The recent receptiveness for participation in the visual arts – participation not only as a means, but also as a subject matter – can't just be seen as a way to interact with the world. It must be understood as a resistance to the kind of totalitarian participation that is spreading in today's capitalism. It is a fact that private life increasingly becomes a site for production, not just for consumption. The online user in the home office is a welcomed information contributor, lured by the promise of lucrative business with one's subjectivity.[7] The problem with totalitarian participation is that it evokes in the participant the feeling of being in a certain control over the experience. But in fact we have no idea on whose behalf we are contributing. This seducing type of disengaged participation prevents us from keeping a critical distance. Therefore engaged, responsible participation begins by questioning *what it is* that we are taking part in. Forward-looking philosopher Theodore Zeldin encourages us to take this responsibility right down to the personal level by looking at the quality of our relationships to others and to the world: "The time has come to define the world that we want. We want to get beyond appearances. We are finding ourselves turning towards the personal, and saying, how is it that we wish to organize our relations."[8]

Most art practitioners appear to invite participation as a way to relate to and communicate with different sub-groups of the general population. For them, participation often comes in the form of a service offering. Acclaimed art historian Miwon Kwon gives active participation a lot of credit because it enables a type of public sphere "where individuals can step outside of self-interest and equally join in a relational debate"[9]. 'Public' here is understood as a space of shared concern and empathy. These kind of uncontested social outlets, opportunities where we find affirmation and can make a difference in our world, are more important than ever.

Art practitioners need to be aware that participation in its originally political sense refers to shared decision-making and direct access to procedures on subordinated structures[10]. Strictly applied to the arts it suggests that the borders between production (the executing artist) and reception (the beholder) become permeable. This is illustrated to varying degrees in the following case studies. Some art theorists argue that such a radically participatory approach compromises – at least partially – the very autonomy of art in society.[11] But the reality in the following case studies shows that autonomy is not something absolute and can be a shared asset, to varying degrees and in different phases of participatory art practice. If participants feel that their presence is about attendance and not their own competence, they may not be involved.

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[7] Schimkat, Anna. 2005. Partizipation und Kunst im öffentlichen Raum als Weg, aber wohin (participation and art in the public space as a way, but leading where?) Hamburg. Sic et Non online magazine.

[8] Zeldin, Theodore, 2003. Conversation About Work. Talk recorded on July 1st, 2003 within the 'Camera at Work' series of Tate Modern in London (transcript by Markuz Wernli Saitô)

[9] Kwon, Miwon. 2002. One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity. Boston: The MIT Press. Page 132.

[10] Schimkat, Anna. 2005. Partizipation und Kunst im öffentlichen Raum als Weg, aber wohin (Participation and art in the public space as a way, but leading where?). Hamburg: Sic et Non (translated from German by Markuz Wernli Saitô).

[11] Lingner, Michael. 1994. Die Krise der Ausstellung im System der Kunst. Hamburg. Kunstforum Bd. 125. Page 1.

II – The nature of participation

In participatory art the work is not complete or cannot be established without the direct input of its participants. It is an engagement where the process of contribution adds value; where the sum of the contributions adds up to something bigger than its constituent parts. If this engaged contribution is reciprocated, participants are put in relation to others and their environment. A sphere of consolidated interest is created in this common effort. It is this enlivened form of 'public' that Miwon Kwon previously touched upon. The different participants bring in their own cultural context, making participation an activator for current life realities. Artist and educator Ted Purves indicates that in a direct response to our disjointed society much of participatory art activity involves the "bodily triangle of person – place – object."[12] It means to create opportunities for spending physical time together within a system of meaningful exchanges.

Participation is about establishing lived connections that offer constructive perspectives through a tangible process, where creative control is negotiated and is (or can be) shared. Here *connection* is the agent that initiates and activates this process (see chapter IV – Making connections) whilst *tangible* stands for the physical intersection of being together in time, place, and mind. This brings us back to the Erich Fromm's idea of shared 'collective art' that necessitates the unmediated presence of body and place[13]. Much more ambiguous is the *control issue* – the command over the creative decision-making process. This relates to the specific motives behind the specific art practice and needs separate attention.

We all engage, create, or consume cultural experiences. The important criterion for evaluating the quality of participation lies in the degree of personal control that the participant can exercise over their experience. In order to compare the different participatory art activities we need to pay particular attention to *who* is, at *what level,* and at *what stage* in control in the process of contribution. When involving participants the artist needs to have clarity on power hierarchies and intentions that are in place in order to avert exploitation of the contributors. Miwon Kwon brings it to the point: "There is an important distinction of community-based art that actively involves communities in the long-term production and the reception of the work, and pretentious practices that take advantage of communities to promote the interests of either the institution or the artist"[14]. If control is fully shared among the artist and participants, the project is more process- and participant-oriented and tends to be less *art-specific*. This can be considered as '*participation that activates*'. If the control is moderated principally by the artist (or initiator), the activity rather *involves* participants and is outcome-oriented, often retaining its art-specific character throughout the process. Because the decision-making factor is restricted, this predominant approach can be categorized as '*participation that involves*'. Lets compare these two participatory approaches.

Participation that activates:
The more participatory a project is, the more access to control and influence is shifted to its participants. Rather than focusing on what participants can do for the project, the project considers what it can do for them. It requires the conscious decision of how the artist is willing to share authorship and therefore recognizes the art-specific quality of the project less in its outcome, but more so

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[12] Purves, Ted. 2005. What We Want Is Free. Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art.
New York. SUNY Press, State University of New York City. Page 149.
[13] 2. Fromm. Page 348.
[14] 2. Kwon.

in the process. If the art project evolves around participation and is participant-led, it grants access to resources and to something that can be transformed. If most or all of the access to the resources is transferred from the initiator to the participants (or recipients), Ted Purves talks about 'democracy projects' that are "characterized by their creator's decision to formally redistribute their own privilege of exhibition, performance, or funding to others, acting as a sort of placeholder for a more pluralistic expression in their stead."[15] *Participation that activates* looks foremost at the participant's potential to grow and expand. Since the product is secondary and the artistic outcome might be subtle, it is the operational efforts that become the art. Often the separation of roles between artist and participant blur or vanish in this participatory approach.

Participation that involves:
If the artist's final purpose is the show in the gallery or the video screening, then *making art* is the absolute objective and participation with others is a means to get there. People are "invited and convened to co-produce the work, and then sent away"[16] as legendary art writer Susan Sonntag puts it. The more authority the artist claims, the more responsible she is. Particular foresight is demanded of the activity's ideological and ethical implications for its participants. One reason for the widespread use of this participation approach that restricts access to decision-making lies in the fact that artists love to make stuff and seek to articulate their personal vision with materials and media. Often as a result of the good intention to include secondary audiences and to carry the project beyond the primary experience, artists can find themselves in tricky terrain. This is because unless the making and act of representation is opened up to collective scrutiny, it is in danger of being a kind of appropriation where the artist takes ownership (has the power) over the materialist manifestation of a social process. It prompts problematic issues by separating the viewer from the viewed.[17] When looking at the following case studies we should consider how art representation can be achieved through the participants with whom the work derives meaning. Art practice that invites participation in a responsible way – be it in the activating or involving approach – needs to consider power structures critically.

Arts market researcher Alan Brown distinguishes "five modes of arts participation"[18] by looking at the level of creative control given to the participant. Mode <1> grants full control, mode <5> the least. The case studies in the following chapter will refer to the level of control with the corresponding numbers:

<1> Inventive Arts Participation – engaging the mind, body and spirit in an act of artistic creation that is unique and idiosyncratic, regardless of skill level. This is a demanding practice that requires good people skills. It is usually participant-led, enabling people to shape their self-expression, thereby validating the individual's perception and cultural diversity. Within the two participatory approaches participation mode <1> is situated within *participation that activates*.

The following participation modes <2> to <5> are all located within the category of *participation that involves* because they gradually limit the distribution of control for the participants:

[15] 2. Purves. Page 102.
[16] Sonntag, Susan. 1967. The Aesthetics of Silence. Aspen Magazine, no. 5-6 (The Minimalism Issue). Aspen. Item 3 (essays), chapter I.
[17] Lacy, Suzanne. 2002. Looking at Engagement. White Paper IV for AWAKE: Art, Buddhism and the Dimensions of Consciousness. Green Gulch, Muir Beach, CA.
[18] Brown, Alan. 2005. The Five Modes of Arts Participation. The Artful Manager Journal
http://www.artsjournal.com/artfulmanager/main/005967.php

<2> Interpretive Arts Participation – is a creative act of self-expression that brings alive and adds value to pre-existing concepts of the artist(s), either individually or collaboratively. The participant is contributing, collaborating, cooperating to a work or process that is still open to be established.

<3> Curatorial Arts Participation – is the creative act of purposefully selecting, organizing and collecting art to the satisfaction of one's own artistic sensibility. The participant is selecting a pre-existing work that can be (re)arranged.

<4> Observational Arts Participation – encompasses arts experiences that you select or consent to, motivated by some expectation of value. The participant is interacting within a given frame that is responsive to input.

<5> Ambient Arts Participation – involves experiencing art, consciously or unconsciously, that you did not select. The participant is consuming an already completed product.

III – Inviters of participation: Six case studies

Aside from the *nature of participation* and the question of who has control over the experience introduced in the previous chapter there are two more dimensions that can assist in comparing participatory activity: the *relevance to local context* (how does the activity responds to its respective culture and local demands?), and the artistic motivation (how is art used either as a means for investigation or public address?).

RELEVANCE TO LOCAL CONTEXT – A participatory activity is never a standalone operative unit but always embedded in a local context in order to have meaning and relevance to its place and people. Philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy states that communities cannot arise from the domain of work[19] because he sees new groupings happening in situations of interruption and suspension. We will therefore see that participatory art is not so much about improving the world but about inviting discovery, that rather affirms the individuals involved and creates links that didn't exist before. As cultural practitioner Titus Spree mentions, a key requirement for local relevance is to bring up issues and points of reference that resonate in people: "The basic requirement is the interest of the people around you in order to make things happen. There are people here who want to know what's going on in the world and reflection on that goes beyond the singular activity. The next step is, to link people in real terms and create opportunities via personal contacts that mutually broaden one's horizon."[20]

ARTISTIC MOTIVATION – Participatory art is indeed in the eye of the beholder, or better, in the hands and hearts of the participants. At its best, art in participatory activities can be found where the shared, lived vision lifts people up, or at least carries some form of delight into participant's lives. This so-called 'distance-traveling'[21] refers to the creative, life-expanding developments and shifts that take place in the experience of the individual or the collective mind. Essentially at the root of most participatory activities is an underlying research objective: usually the initiator(s) intention to gain a deeper understanding of fundamental questions through the common effort.

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[19] Nancy, Jean-Luc. 1991. The Inoperative Community. University of Minnesota Press. Page 31.
[20] 2. Spree.
[21] 2005. Participatory Arts Summary Policy Paper. The Arts Council of Ireland.

Keeping participants vested in a venture requires us to identify what they bring to the experience (call it art or not). It is the participants that offer ideas and bring issues to bear that give the work meaning. This is a demanding process and requires us (the initiator) to fully engage the audience and be accountable to them, while they (the audience) –having become thoughtfully and constructively engaged – become accountable to us and to engaging art. Participatory projects tend to be of a beneficial and positive character that leaves much less room for the pessimism seen inside other realms of art. The promise for something positive to happen invites people in as described by cultural practitioner Titus Spree "[…] the key factor is that individuals are willing to take part. If you come up with a so called participatory project and nobody is really interested in participating it questions the meaningfulness of the incentive."[22]

It will be interesting to look at how responsible practitioners are working with and around the challenges and ambiguities mentioned above.

Kissa Hanare: The home-based café provides food for body and thought that can activate the self-initiative in its guests.

TITLE:
Kissa Hanare
(Kyoto, Japan: 2006 ongoing).

ACTIVITY:
Referral-based, citizen activation initiative in a home-based café.

PARTICIPATION MODE:
<1> Inventive Arts Participation (initiator-led with potential to develop into participant-led)

DESCRIPTION:
Kissa Hanare is an ongoing, long-term initiative launched by three young women who open their living room every Monday evening to a growing network of friends and acquaintances. Not only do they provide a delicious Japanese style dinner but also a social forum. The locally grown, organic food is a subtle invitation to a more conscious and active way of living. Food is not the only entry point to a convivial atmosphere that allows people to address socially relevant issues through hosting discussions and workshops, Kissa Hanare attempts to offer a social outlet outside of work and professional institutions that can inspire self-initiative amongst its patrons.

Café Kissa Hanare is inspired by a similar initiative named Open University that started in Brooklyn.

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[22] Spree, Titus. April 2007. Meaningful Participation in Art. Naha/Kyoto. Skype interview and translation from German by Markuz Wernli Saitô.

NATURE OF PARTICIPATION: Sakiko Sugawa is coordinator of the outreach education program at Kyoto Seika University of Art and one of the three co-founders of Kissa Hanare. She explains how this forum is slowly but steadily growing based on personal, word-of-mouth introduction and a casual, drop-in attendance: "At the beginning it was just customers coming to Hanare and eating food. After running this place for a year, that has started to change a bit. There is one regular guest, who has been coming to Hanare for a short while, probably few months, but understands what we want to do, better than many people [...] We thought, he is the best person to navigate a conversation that includes current political issues or more socio economic issues we want to bring up."[23] Hanare opens every Monday night and since everybody learns about it through word of mouth the configuration of people is always changing. This allows for encounters that contribute to a healthy dynamic amongst the visitors. The casual way to involve individuals into a network (a kind of standby invitation) requires a long-term perspective to grow: "Last year was the time to get the idea out, to have people recognize Hanare as a place to go to. [...] For this kind of project, the continuity that allows ourselves to grow and evolve little by little is the most important thing..."[24] The very open-ended, undirected form of participation provides guests of Kissa Hanare a maximum of influence on the content and agenda of this forum.

RELEVANCE TO LOCAL CONTEXT: Since structures for continued and vocational education in Japan are marginal and still evolving, Kissa Hanare provides an alternative model for citizen's involvement. Sakiko Sugawa illustrates how the café is a lived example of how to make a subtle but constant difference in the lives of each guest: "[...] food is a form of politics that you can practice right away on an everyday basis. What you eat is where you want to spend your money. We support the local farmers and local merchants by our conscious purchase. Some visitors know that we are using local products but some might not. Nevertheless all our guests are supporting the local farmers through us."[25] Hanare provides an approachable forum for social expansion and personal empowerment. Sakiko Sugawa stresses the importance of reaffirming a sense of belonging to the community: "[...] We want to be a place for people who can bring their immediate life and the bigger picture together. My personal experience in New York City has taught me that to be a part of something bigger is fun and fulfilling. It's an endorsing feeling that your action matters and knowing whatever you do has an influence. When the American government started the Iraq war there were these massive protests all over the world [...] and you feel like you have power. That kind of participatory sense is missing in Japanese culture."[26] Hanare brings political issues to the dinner table that are normally not directly addressed in the public sphere: "Because I wanted to reach out to the people who are not normally interested in an issue like [the amendment of article nine in the Japanese constitution] I sort of played with the words [in the invitation] a bit... People are just not used to talk about these things in front of others. We are generally told to keep these issues to ourselves or within our immediate surroundings. We want to make the act of engaging in political discussions more normal."[27] Kissa Hanare creates an inter-personal space where its guests decide individually their individual degree of engagement and affiliation: "Hanare is a public place but at the same time it provides a private, intimate atmosphere where all those creative minded people who need support, can come and are safe to talk about anything. This is very important especially in Japan, because once

[23] Sugawa, Sakiko. April 2007. Meaningful Participation in Art. Kyoto. Interview by Markuz Wernli Saitô.
[24] 2. Sugawa.
[25] 3. Sugawa.
[26] 4. Sugawa.
[27] 5. Sugawa.

you start working then it is very possible that you get lonely and lose the ability to stay initiative and realize your own project. We want to be a place that supports, encourages them and strengthens their backbone. Hopefully when our guests leave this café they have the energy to say, 'okay, I can do this outside [of here] in my world, too!' In that sense we are creating and nurturing a creative group of individuals, including us, who want to realize lots of challenging projects in our real lives."[28] Participation at Kissa Hanare is characterized as a referral-based, extensive weaving of a supportive network that keeps the individual in relation to a living vision of positive transformation.

ARTISTIC MOTIVATION: Certainly art is not the main objective in this initiative but it can be seen as a way to appeal to a public. It is not only a creative forum for individual empowerment but also an experiment for alternative social arrangements. Sugawa points to a sort of artful emanation that comes with the one-of-a-kind position in its context: "[People] have this feeling that they are part of something interesting. Something that is not usual, not conventional. [...] In our immediate community Hanare is pretty unique. There is a sense that knowing Hanare is being a part of underground culture, which makes people feel good at themselves, I suppose."[29] In addition Hanare pays attention to details with stylish arrangement of food and interior for a good reason: "If I am uncool then people don't pay any attention and don't respect the project. But we have a good cause and solid objectives so why not playing with our image? It doesn't harm my project by creating an image and embodying something cool.[30] Sakiko Sugawa also utilizes art as a vehicle to transport goodwill, win acceptance, and create unprecedented opportunities: "If I say 'this is activism, I have this agenda in my mind and I want to convince you in a way that we think', people will simply reject it. But having the same agenda presented as art, and processed as an art project people will be like 'okay, if this is art I will at least check it out...' Art has magic."[31]

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TITLE: **The Dream Collector** (Ho Chi Minh (Saigon), Vietnam: Summer 2006).
ACTIVITY: Collective, person-to-person initiated installation project.
PARTICIPATION MODE: <2> Interpretive Arts Participation (artist-led).

DESCRPTION: In the summer of 2006 the artists Ayumi Matsuzaka and Alba Navas Salmerón were invited for a two-month residency organized by curator Motoko Uda from the independent art initiative albb (a little bla, bla) in Ho Chi Minh. The participation-based project invited local individuals into its process that allocated a lot of room for the personal exchange between the artists and each individual participant. The artists purchased 150 meters of white cloth and searched for residents of Ho Chi Minh to use the fabric as a bed sheet. 41 people became active participants and the fabric was cut to specifically fit the size of each person's sleeping place. One week later, the artists met each participant at their respective home to listen and learn more about their dreams while sleeping in the new sheets. They discussed their nightly experiences together by using pen, paper, imagery, and any symbols that emerged. Afterwards the participants returned the bed sheet and until that point, they had not been told what was to happen with the sheet. Subsequently the artists embroidered each bed sheet using the particular images and stories that came up in the communication between them and the dreamer. The bed sheet, once used, became a personal

[28] 6. Sugawa.
[29] 7. Sugawa.
[30] 8. Sugawa
[31] 9. Sugawa.

artifact containing physical traces of that dreamer. The essence from these meetings between artists and participants took on shape and form on the embroidered sheets that were shown in the final exhibition. In the very end the original bed sheet was returned to the dreamer.

The Dream Collector: Collaborative installation that emphasizes the building relationships between artist and locals.

NATURE OF PARTICIPATION: Motoko Uda is artist-curator, writer and cofounder of albb (a little bla, bla) art initiative in Ho Chi Minh. She invited Ayumi and Alba, the artists of The Dream Collector (TDC) project who arrived with a well-defined strategy to engage and to work with participants one-on-one in a very personal, and unmediated way. She explains how local people, strangers in fact, were approached and invited straight into the project: "Ayumi and Alba [the artists] basically went out to talk to people on the street, in the cafe, or whatever public place, telling them 'we want to be friends with you and we have a gift for you here, in the form of a bed sheet'."[32] There is a double-strategy in this approach of 'grabbing' common people into art making, where the bonding (the acknowledgment of each other and the offer of a gift) is linked to a request. In the initial phases the curator was not involved and the exchanges took place entirely on a distinct deliberate and personal level: "There was absolutely no sense of 'obligation' when the artists approached the locals for the first time on the street. After they agreed to participate, this kind of commitment (to be responsible towards Ayumi and Alba) emerged. […] The artists told me that in other countries, there were always some participants dropping out in the course of the project, but nobody here in Ho Chi Minh..."[33]

Despite the fact that the overall objective and frame of the collective effort was beyond the participants' control, it is remarkable how the relationships of the participating individuals evolved from encounter to friendship, and from recipient to protagonist during the course of the project. Because the assignment (sleeping on the provided sheet and hopefully remembering one's dreams) was fairly simple, most of the emphasis remained on the interactions between artists and dreamers as Motoko Uda indicates: "They just needed to sleep on the sheet and tell the artists about the dreams they had while sleeping on it.... That leaves not much room to be creative. But during their communication (in part due to the language barrier), some of the participants started playing the piano to express

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[32] Uda, Motoko. April 2007. Meaningful Participation in Art. Ho Chi Minh/Kyoto. Skype/IM interview by Markuz Wernli Saitô.
[33] 2. Uda.

their dreams. Stories like that came up."[34] During The Dream Collector project the artists met with each participant three times, to get to know them, to visit their home and sleeping place, and to listen to their dreams on their bed. Characteristic of this participation is the dedicated, personal effort that goes into it: the care for the relationships established which in turn invites the participants into a concentrated, creative effort and invites a shared explorative sojourn.

RELEVANCE TO LOCAL CONTEXT: Motoko Uda as curator builds bridges between her art activates and the community and has a piece of advice in store for initiators of participatory work regarding their accountability for participants, especially within the context of an emerging country that has a colonial history: "I think it is important for artists to always question themselves why and for whom they are doing the project, especially if it is a participation-based project. When it comes to art, it is not about who gives what and who takes what, it is not that simple like that. But I think it is important for artists to know where they stand in society and stay aware of whom they are dealing with. When participation is required in the project, artists cannot be as selfish and egoistic like in their 'solo' projects. Not everyone wants to see artists masturbating in person!"[35] It is important to keep in mind how art is understood and perceived in its local context. This kind of public art is – not only in Vietnam – quite a foreign concept for most of the average population. Motoko Uda illustrates how wide the distance between art and local citizens can be: "People think that they have to dress up in order to go to an art space (not that there are really any professional spaces anyway...) just to look at 'paintings on the wall'...[36] This is one reason why the participants were initially not informed about the artistic nature of the project: "[…] the artists and I didn't want to intimidate the locals. People here tend to react strongly to a big word such as 'art'. [Also] if we declared that we are doing an 'art project', we would actually break the law here. We need a special permission to do any kind of cultural event in public."[37] An important aspect of the collaboration was to make people feel 'worthy' and a part of a process with tangible and intangible creative outcomes. Another important side of the TDC project was the respectful involvement of the local art scene that fostered cross-cultural challenges and valuable impulses into a relatively secluded environment: "As a curator I invited young local artists to be Ayumi and Alba's project assistants. 'Collaboration' can be a bit tricky here. The average artists' level of thinking (critical thinking) can't match with that from artists trained overseas. So when foreign artists 'collaborate and co-create a project from scratch' with local artists, it will be a bit difficult to maintain the quality of the work. 'Assistant' here goes beyond the usual definition of the term. By assisting and working with Ayumi and Alba, the young artists learned how artists think, how artists act according to their thoughts, and how to transform raw materials (in TDC's case, a sheet of fabric) into material of art, etc. As a matter of fact, some of these 'assistants' started planning their own public art project after working on TDC. This is remarkable because there is the problem of 'self-censorship' in Vietnam..."[38] Putting the art of listening into the center of its process, this model can be responsive to people's lives and realities where the artist is receiver.

ARTISTIC MOTIVATION: Despite the clear intention of this project to produce an artistic outcome invited by the vision of the artist and followed by the participation of locals, the real artistic accomplishment lies in the interactions it produced. Motoko Uda indicates how necessary the openness and flexibility in

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[34] 3. Uda.
[35] 4. Uda.
[36] 5. Uda.
[37] 6. Uda.
[38] 7. Uda.

this kind of participation is: "[…] when the success of the project depends on its participants, as a curator I cannot control everything. The artists and I had to sort of enjoy what comes out of it. There was some spontaneous outcome."[39] It is notable how art was brought in the form of delightful exchanges right into the everyday lives of the participants: "They all learned that they were a part of 'something called art' and I do hope that it broadened their point of view on art at some level."[40] Personally, the artist Ayumi Matsuzaka is interested in the rather poetically inspired, life-expanding, untried possibilities of her relationships to the participants: "It is my wish that every participant and I an experimental relationship together."[41] The deeper and wider implications of the artist's instigation lies in the fundamental workings and mechanisms of social structures: "I am especially interested in the constituting elements of particular networks and try to make them visible through experimental art projects. How can one person connect to the other person? Why do we need the community to live? These questions touch on the basic relationship on the individual level."[42]

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Saruta-hiko: A MP3 audio recording leads lay performers along shopping street and encouraging some to assist backstage.

TITLE:
One Way Street to Saruta-hiko
(Tokyo, Japan: Autumn 2006).
ACTIVITY:
Public, audience-driven, walk-through performance.

PARTICIPATION MODE:
<2> Interpretive and
<4> Observational Arts Participation (artist-led)

DESCRIPTION: In November 2006 the Port B theater troupe brought an unusual play to the Jizo-dori shopping street in Tokyo. It was not performed at any fixed time and shoppers took the starring role. The organizers were fortunate enough that the local newspapers all carried a feature story on Saruta-hiko, which made for welcomed publicity and good attendance. Each participant received a portable MP3 player and was sent off to follow the directions on the recording. The destination was a small shrine dedicated to Saruta-hiko, a Shinto deity and guardian of travelers. The lay performers were led to eleven locations along the dense 500 meters of pedestrianized shopping mile, included various stores, a doll gallery and the local history museum. The recording on the MP3 player contained

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[39] 8. Uda.
[40] 9. Uda.
[41] Matsuzaka, Ayumi. May 2007. Meaningful Participation in Art. Berlin/Kyoto. Email interview by Markuz Wernli Saitô.
[42] 2. Matsuzaka.

partially explanatory and partially philosophical comments spoken by the shop owners and artists of Port B. The 'performers' were also asked to do a number of tasks, such as sitting down in front of the Taiyaki pancake store or watching the way locals shop. In two instances participants were invited to a face-to-face conversation about meeting new people and encounters in their lives with a member of the troupe who acted in the role of a counselor. Arriving at the destination, the guest performers were given a snapshot of themselves in action that had been photographed in secret.

NATURE OF PARTICIPATION: The participants were given the opportunity (after paying admission) to experience the role of the protagonist that oscillates between a predetermined narrative and the everyday public place. The founder of Port B theater troupe and main organizer of this participatory play is Akira Takayama, who explains his intentions: "It is usually considered that the theater play is performed on stage and in the theater. However, we can also think of it another way. The essence of the drama is how the specific audience perceives the play. It is actually the audience who creates the drama. By letting the audience participating as actors I wanted to bring out their own creativity."[43] The solo 'performers' take center-stage in a given frame and under direction of the MP3 recording that designates the roles of protagonist and observer. Crucial therefore are the two instances of conversation with Port B's 'counselors' as touching points for exchange. Akira Takayama mentions that he plans to arrange participants into groups for his next production to increase the social dynamics: "Putting together five people or so will probably foster various relationships of performers and audience within the group. The role of each person in the group would frequently change, depending on the place and situation."[44] It is interesting to note that after engaging with One Way Street to Saruta-hiko (about 30 minutes) some of the participants were motivated to change roles within the production: "This performance required substantial preparation behind the scenes and we had cases where some participated first as actors, and then as staff members in an upcoming show. This occurred in a good number of participants. It was a delight to have that happen to us."[45] Participation in the Saruta-hiko performance offered the potential to transform one's role from guest performer to that of collaborator.

RELEVANCE TO LOCAL CONTEXT: Contemporary theatre and drama is on the fringes of the cultural spectrum in Japan. By bringing a participatory performance onto the shopping street, Port B makes a piece of modern performance come to life outside of mainstream comedy and traditional arts where the production and consumption are normally strictly separated as Akira Takayama indicates: "The Saruta-hiko production helped me better acknowledge the audience not as a group but as individuals, each with a distinct face. I became able to trust in the creativity of each audience member, more than before. That's why I got assured that it is definitely more interesting to destroy the dual confrontation where the artist produces the drama and the audience consumes the play."[46] The production required the involvement of the rather conservative Jizo-dori shopping district, which harbored some resistance: "At first there were some shops that didn't really collaborate. However, we took this challenge as a part of the creative process and went back to the shops every day and tried to connect and gradually the relationships changed. […] Some connections even helped us to come by problems with other shops of the shopping street."[47] After the Saruta-hiko production Takayama is rethinking the overall integration of urban contemporary

[43] Takayama, Akira. April 2007. Meaningful Participation in Art. Tokyo/Kyoto. Email interview and translation from Japanese by Markuz Wernli Saitô and Yuka Saitô.
[44] 2. Takayama.
[45] 3. Takayama.
[46] 4. Takayama.
[47] 5. Takayama.

theater: "I am wondering and reconsidering what kind of role the theater can play in town. What I would like to establish is the theater as a place of action for 'encounters' ... 'the workings and making' ... 'dispatching a message'.[48]

ARTISTIC MOTIVATION: The artistic form was predefined by Port B, but it was the participants who brought the production into reality. Takayama highlights the importance of this uncontrollable creative effort: " […] I was astonished and impressed. The participants not only played their role splendidly but also invited coincidence and happenings and they made their own meaningfully rich performance. […] Maybe we can say, the border between producer/consumer itself disappears. People who participate in that performance are both creators and critics."[49] It appears that the performers found the space to create their own role within the artist-led production. This element of the uncontrollable doesn't need to detract from the artistic excellence that Takayama's strives for in his participatory practice: "there are some things I personally always care for. I am a theater performer so I am always interested in the allure and excitement of the performance itself as well as its dramaturgy. I realize all my productions primarily in order to continue the investigation of these two objectives and not for the people or the local area. The most important thing for me is that the performance stands for itself and is interesting as a theater play or drama. I am really strict about these criteria and realize my participatory projects as meticulous and intense as an on-stage theater play. This intensity and care for details is what's most fun for me."[50] Saruta-hiko follows a vision to share the excellence and creative potential of shared performance with lay performers and make theater a lived intersection of life contexts.

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TITLE: **Wanakio** (Naha, Okinawa, Japan: 2001, ongoing).
ACTIVITY: Community program and artist exchange for revitalizing Okinawa's contemporary urban culture.
PARTICIPATION MODE: <1> Inventive, <2> Interpretational and <3> Curatorial Arts Participation (partially citizen-led, partially artist-led)

DESCRIPTION: Wanakio is an initiative launched in 2001 by Titus Spree, associated Professor for Art and Regional Design at the University of the Ryukyus, and Jun Miyagi, director of the Maejima Art Center. It facilitates workshops, artist residencies and collective installations that deal with contemporary transformations of local culture and urban environment in Okinawa.

Artists, curators, architects, town planners, inhabitants and local authorities collaborate on constructive interventions rooted in place and everyday routine. Starting from a careful reading of the urban and social environment, art and design projects are shaped in direct response to one-on-one interactive process from within the local population. Up to now Wanakio hosted three major project series (usually one per year) that incorporated up to 20 artists. A concrete example is the 2005 workshop series Trans-Academy that let local children experience and participate in their immediate environment in an open-minded, creative, and sensual way. In the initial discovery and exploration phase local and guest artists took the children out on walks around the market area in Naha to do activities like take relief rubbings and play games. In the interactive phase the children received assignments that sought communication with market people through the creation and trading of objects. Also, two artists re-functioned a large

[48] 6. Takayama.
[49] 7. Takayama.
[50] 8. Takayama.

vacant space within the market into a creative playground space, providing an art school for children for the duration of one month.

NATURE OF PARTICIPATION: Titus Spree, the Wanakio co-initiator, explains how the local community was included in the conception and planning with an openness that remains relevant today: "We established a kind of open planning session where everybody was invited to give one's input and opinion. In this inclusive discussion the first principle decisions were being made. In the following phases and especially when the project was being concretized, responsibilities were assigned and some things needed to be decided on individual basis. We attempted to keep the process very accessible and approachable at each stage. We never excluded any participants from this permeable communication so it was difficult at times to convey and sustain the fundamental idea."[51] Locals are invited to directly participate in the place under the guidance of in- and outside artists. "[...] in order to work closely in relation to the location we worked with the least possible conceptual or theoretical overhead. In establishing these projects it was important to us to remain very responsive. We intended to let the project find its shape as much as possible from the input of the location and tried to remain true to its source and atmosphere by embracing not only the urban context in special terms but also the human component in particular."[52]

Wanakio: Community-based art exchange program that is turning the local market into a creative workshop experience.

RELEVANCE TO LOCAL CONTEXT: Titus Spree mentions that there is a relative lack of creative networks in Okinawa which makes the Wanakio project relevant: "In our context the main trajectory is to keep building a network that links overseas and involves individuals from abroad here in Okinawa. We are striving to establish a global component here. There is a fertile gap between the local and the trans-local."[53] Often local communities seem to tackle social and urban issues in a terrain of isolation and retreat. It is a challenge where art can help contextualize current life realities on a wider scale and address a widespread sense of powerlessness. Spree shares his observations from realizing alternative architecture projects in direct local context: "Many people [...] are perceiving and responding extremely local which can cause many problems. They are not aware of the fact that the immediate local problems they are confronted with are in fact problems that take place everywhere else in Japan in similar ways. Often locals don't know how

[51] 3. Spree
[52] 4. Spree.
[53] 5. Spree.

to resist and what could be done because they feel like fishes in an aquarium at the mercy of higher powers. […] it is this missing competency of putting local problems and conflicts in perspective and to acknowledge that the reasons for these conflicts are on a higher level and that they can only be tackled when relating with like-minded people on that higher level."[54]

ARTISTIC MOTIVATION: Wanakio is a response-driven creative program that raises consciousness, which helps to pull local art making out of its repose: "The question is, how are our contemporary influences converted and processed. For example how does the cultural, the creative world, respond to the ongoing situation. […] We experience these enormous simultaneous disparities that are unhealthy. On one hand the life realities resemble Tokyo, in that we have convenience stores, malls, TV and high speed internet. On the other hand all this influx isn't been tackled and processed properly in the art world that lags way behind in the pre-computer age."[55] Wanakio works with artists willing to respond to the people and the context instead of insisting on a preconceived notion. It is the ability to absorb immediate circumstances and work within them in responsiveness. Despite the fact that the artist in Okinawa must also have a sort of artistic determination and be comfortable with the ambivalence of reactivity and creative autonomy: "[…] an artist who works in such complex situations needs to be good at concluding and articulating things. It is this challenging duality between openness and determination since social and urban situations often entail the risk to fritter and lose focus. Too much openness and reactivity can bring loss in clarity. So it is important to be able to sum and tie things up as well."[56] Art here serves to investigate the deeper and overarching issues of spatial and social arrangements.

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TITLE: **Magma – We're Not Counting Sheep**
(Ho Chi Minh (Saigon), Vietnam: Spring 2007).
ACTIVITY: Participatory public performance and installation.
PARTICIPATION MODE: <2> Interpretive Arts Participation (artist-led)

DESCRIPTION: This site-specific installation and performance work consisted of an opulent, red room viewable only through the street-level window of the Quynh gallery. The unwitting spectacle took place in late April 2007 and ran for twelve nights over a long holiday weekend. Each night a small group of different sleepers who all contributed to the preparation of the project took turns to perform in this installation. The performers (dressed in red nightgowns) simply slept overnight in the fully red, velvet-furnished chamber that had a window to the street and made the installation partially public, partially private. It attracted thousands of people who drove up on their two-wheelers, contributing to social congregations in front of the gallery, often well into the early hours of the morning, with people asking questions about the work or sharing their interpretations.

NATURE OF PARTICIPATION: Sue Hajdu the artist and orchestrator talks about the collaboration of this public performance: "[…] it was the first project I had people other than me performing. If you want to consider these people the artists you could say that, or to some extend the protagonists. I actually called them The Sleepers. They were not collaborators in the conception."[57] Magma was an elaborate production with contributions from an interior architect, student

[54] 6. Spree.
[55] 7. Spree.
[56] 8. Spree.
[57] Hajdu, Sue. April 2007. Meaningful Participation in Art. Ho Chi Minh/Kyoto. Skype interview by Markuz Wernli Saitô.

volunteers, photographer, sound artist etc. Often individuals involved in the realization phase became the sleeping protagonists in the public red bedroom. Sue Hajdu took special precautions to prepare the Sleepers mentally and emotionally for their unusual performance: "Basically my role was to explain to them what this entails, what this requires. Setting down the rules that apply. Explaining the risks to them."[58] The nightly installation was directed towards the street audience that in turn became participants of the performance if they self-reflected on their roles and realized that they are actually in the spotlight: "On the opening there was this audience who would normally come to consume art. They were a kind of inverted outwards and put into some kind of subconscious performative role themselves."[59] In this respect the artist was also interested in the myth that emerged around the Magma project since many would send text messages by mobile phone to each other and spread the word about this mysterious event, it made city talk. Sue is interested in pursuing this ripple effect further: "I am exploring […] how to engage with the whole city as an audience through creating myths and rumors with viral kind of communication."[60]

Magma: Participatory installation that involved and mesmerized contributors, performing 'sleepers' and the audience.

RELEVANCE TO LOCAL CONTEXT: The Magma project was associated with albb (a little bla, bla) art initiative (compare with The Dream Collector above) that Sue Hajdu and Motoko Uda co-founded in direct response to the local art scene: "In a place like Vietnam which is still quiet isolated, where there are no opportunities for artists to interface with the outside world we thought that this is really a wasted opportunity, and that we could formulate exchanges like that for outside and inside to interface."[61] Again we see that the cultural world lags behind and doesn't keep up with rampant economical and social developments in society. Specific infusions of art that come from outside but still relate to the local circumstances can ease the creative impasse: "Artists here have very, very little idea of what the alternatives are. In some ways a kind of imaginative obstacle or something comes up. This also relates to proactiveness, which is not a strong feature here in the art scene. […] You have to admit, change is brought from the outside.

[…] It's pretty rare for people to get new ideas internally. It's very rare for somebody to sit by themselves on a rock for a month in isolation and think up something new. We usually think up something new by looking around us and bouncing off what others are doing. And it's the way you combine those things or

[58] 2. Hajdu.
[59] 3. Hajdu.
[60] 4. Hajdu.
[61] 5. Hajdu

what you bring into it on your own."[62] Participation-based public art is something very new in Ho Chi Minh as we saw in The Dream Collector project above. In order to bring this public art directly into people's lives the gallery was turned inside out to say: "People did not have to go into a gallery. They did not have to enter into an unfamiliar zone. Here there is a kind of resistance to go into a gallery because it is so beautiful for […] average people who have no connection to art, that can be a very unfamiliar and threatening environment." So Magma caters to the Vietnamese inclination for the spectacle with the installation's voyeuristic strategy that comes with a twist: "The very intriguing thing about Magma was that nothing is happening. […] It is like a painting with depth. The performers are doing the most mundane, boring thing to look at which is sleeping. But visually somehow you get sucked in to watching this."[63] Sue also mentions her ideological responsibilities as an artist who had to lead and moderate people's responses: "Advertising has an extremely short history here [in Vietnam]. This is not a society where you can talk in the post-modern way about image saturation. So I got to be concerned there because I think as a cultural practitioner who is also interested in culture ideology, breaking into ideology etc, you have a certain responsibility I think as an artist. I thought it is very important for me to make that intervention and try to open up something in their mind that something that is visual, that is unusual, that looks good can belong to non-corporate culture, otherwise you get this kind of total catalyst, almost colonial domination of minds"[64] The extremely outward display of Magma brings up the question of its relevance for the public and the purpose of art. "On a very […] mundane level, if you bring some kind of delight into somebody's life through art that's probably better than not bringing any delight. I actually personally believe that art has no function really beyond its nature as a symbolic act. I think art is at its most useful when it is useless. […] There needs to be some group [of people] that addresses the not tangible issues, like mind, spirit, imagination, dreaming." Magma uses a fairly confrontational and catalytic model – art to stumble upon – to address its audience.

ARTISTIC MOTIVATION: Artistic autonomy is at the core of Sue Hajdu's practice since she usually builds up the concept by herself or with other artists. Regarding collaboration with non-artists she states: "I think it depends on where you want to be with your practice, what kind of practice you want. Do you want a non-artist building up the idea with you or making it their own, or contributing or whatever?" In the role as a curator, Sue Hajdu seeks to collaborate with non-artists. The key word is cross-fertility, where minds from different industries are able to establish creative connections: "I am very interested in collaborating with project partners that have nothing to do with art. These kinds of unlikely situations and unlikely combinations I do really enjoy […] because of the kind of mental spaces they can open up in the minds of all the participants. […] In how communities and artists interact there is this whole kind of potential for mental explosions and some new terrain. Some new territory can open up in my mind through this interaction."[65] Magma functions on various levels of consciousness and with cultural references that are not accessible to everybody and is likely to 'lose' certain segments of the audience: "I was very aware that there were different levels of engagement here from what are people familiar with to various levels of abstraction and that was fine in my case. Of course I am most happy if people do get most of the levels. But I am personally not going to reduce my art so that every person in society can understand it because the whole process should be about bringing people up and not stuff down. It should be about raising of consciousness."

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[62] 6. Hajdu.
[63] 7. Hajdu.
[64] 8. Hajdu.
[65] 9. Hajdu

TITLE: **Sell Your Morning Walk**
(Seoul, Korea: Autumn 2005 / Oklahoma, USA: Winter 2006).
ACTIVITY: Do-it-yourself walking tour performance.
PARTICIPATION MODE: <2> Interpretive Arts Participation (artist-led).

Sell Your Morning Walk: The urban do-it-yourself tour invites participants to put their own route up for online auction.

DESCRIPTION: In autumn 2005 Art Center Nabi in Seoul organized the Urban Vibe (The Art of Playing City) program and placed advertisments in art magazines that pointed to the 'Sell Your Morning Walk' website of artist Taeyoon Choi. Here urban dwellers could not only sign up for Taeyoon's free walking tour, but also create and promote (put up for auction) their personal city walk. After the local participants signed up online they were invited to follow the artist who was carrying a megaphone. By holding a blue flag that read 'Morning Walk' he identified himself as tour guide. In the sense of highly 'portable media', the artist used the megaphone to make his observations and comments instantaneously public and engage with the surroundings beyond the walking group during this two-hour performance. In addition a do-it-yourself tour kit (consisting of online templates for your own personal tour proposal including map, points of interest etc.) encouraged a wider audience to contribute and sell their own city routes via the web site. Here people could bid on their favorite tour in order to obtain the comprehensive details required to do the desired walk themselves.

NATURE OF PARTICIPATION: Taeyoon Choi ties his participants into a context of communication and location (locative media) that allows for different levels of experience: "When participation works it's like a nice journey. People get to know each other, keep in contact and share a wonderful time. 'Sell your Morning Walk' was the best experience in this respect. It's a simple project of me guiding a group of people through a walk. I gathered people through online announcements and did the walk in Seoul and Oklahoma. […] The megaphone is an effective media tool to get people's attention."[66] The walking participants have a good deal of influence on the tour through the conversation that is going on – with or without the megaphone: "Participants are heavily involved in the making of the walk, but the seller decides where to go and what to do. There is no fixed

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[66] Choi, Taeyoon. April 2007. Meaningful Participation in Art. Seoul/Kyoto. Email interview by Markuz Wernli Saitô.

outcome from the walk, it's the experience of the whole day."[67] Noteworthy is the use of web-based technology – at least on a conceptual level – to increase the level of engagement beyond the primary experience: "People can upload information about their walk and price it so people can bid on it. And when you win the bid you get detailed information about the walk. The website was never completely finished [...] and only few participated.[68]" By joining in the stroll, participants almost unknowingly become the protagonists who relate to the world in an implicit and explicit way: "Performance projects are at their best when there is interaction with participants. Oklahoma was interesting because it's an automobile city and nobody else was walking around. My semi-tourist group was a such an exotic site for the drivers."[69] The participation in Taeyoon's urban stroll is an invitation to playful exchange of exposing, teasing and trading.

RELEVANCE TO LOCAL CONTEXT: The attempt to sell one's own walk (or at least to put it up for auction) is a good motivation to make something usually unarticulated, presentable and convincing for others as Taeyoon Choi explains: "A local person, the 'seller', gives information about certain details during the walk. It is very casual and mediocre stuff. About the convenience store that has the best sushi, about the graffiti writing on the wall, about some favorite restaurants, etc."[70] In its first edition in Seoul the walking performance got a very fun, almost comical, convivial notion that inspired fellow artists, journalists and creative individuals to come up with their own tour and publish it on the internet. One year later in Oklahoma the same concept took on a much more political meaning not without implications for the artist's role: "Oklahoma was a supremely interesting, exotic experience. Nobody walks in Oklahoma city. It's a highway city and the only people who walk are homeless. The city is vacant for most of the time (at least during my stay in early December). The group of us walking around downtown, was such a spectacular sight. Cars stopped to watch us walk. The content was different as well. Since I am not a local to Oklahoma, I was more the sort of the walk's moderator and also interviewing local participants."[71]

ARTISTIC MOTIVATION: The title of this participatory performance piece is quite provocative and points to the way technical and commercial setups are streamlining and monitoring our perception of space, movement and local identity. In a way Choi's project is about regaining control over and reviving common spaces: "[Sell Your Morning Walk] is inspired by Ben Russel's Headmap Manifesto. There is this line in the manifesto: 'imagine you can sell your morning walk'[72]. It's a creative research project about possibilities in locative media and new social networks."[73]

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[67] 2. Choi.
[68] 3. Choi.
[69] 4. Choi.
[70] 5. Choi.
[71] 6. Choi.
[72] Russell, Ben. 1999. Headmap Manifesto. Page 53.
[73] 7. Choi.

IV – Making connections

The case studies presented above clearly attest to the fact that we all are intrinsically connected to one another. In a time when life often lacks a true sense of affection it is easy to forget that without the continuous reconnection to ourselves, to others and the world, our effectiveness is sharply limited. The initiators of the case studies, like so many artists, step out of the traditional spectrum of art practices and explore in the participatory effort ways to connect, agitate, elucidate, and possibly to commit.

Within a provided ethical framework the participants are invited to embark in a kind of adventurous venture – no matter how modest or personal – where a combination of curiosity, delight and excitement possibly captures people's imaginations. Participatory art is therefore able to establish a middle ground of deliberate bonding where personal preposition and concern can safely yield into the background for something new to evolve.

The critical issue with many loose networks these days is that they manifest around special interests and don't really nourish the relationships of those involved. It is in the bonding, in the befriending outside of one's own context, which can make openings for the unexpected, the unlikely situations, the leap of experience "to happen"[74] indicated previously by Jean-Luc Nancy in Chapter II.

Participation builds on connections. Before an artist (or any other initiator for that matter) has the capacity for connection – the ability to draw others into activities of comfort and/or challenge – there needs to be a thorough understanding of one's own desires, ambitions and intentions. The motivations for making connections are of a personal nature and can range from altruistic, affirmative, manipulative, to narcissistic. These are all drivers that are in themselves neither good nor bad as long as the inviter of participation meets basic ethical standards and claims responsibility towards the participants. Involvement makes us vulnerable for exploitation and explains the suspicion and preoccupation so common in the general public.

The responsibility of the participatory artist also extends to respecting the need of individuals for disconnection and disengagement. To get a better understanding of what it is that brings people together it is elementary to keep in mind that the origin of connection is often in disconnection. Before one can connect there must be open ties to do so. Cold reservation or hesitation in the audience can be seen as a vague form of relatedness with the potential to move into 'warmer territory'.

The participatory activities introduced in the previous chapter build on human relatedness where there are three threads of basic behavioral responses: namely *empathy*, *curiosity* and the *desire to meet*. If a participatory activity is able to resonate on more than one thread of response, it is more likely to appeal on a deeper level and draw in a wider range of participants. For example The Dream Collector project was certainly able to appeal in multiple ways to the audience as Motoko Uda explains: "Some of the participants were simply very curious about what was going on. Some liked either [the artists] Ayumi or Alba (if not both) and wanted to become friends with them…"[75]

EMPATHY is the response of understanding and identifying with somebody. It is the expression of getting involved with a person (or group) and of seeking ties that lead past the encounter. Motoko Uda mentions where empathy came in: "In

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[74] 2. Nancy, Jean-Luc. The Inoperative Community. Page 13.
[75] 10. Uda.

general people here [in Vietnam] are friendly to foreigners… so Ayumi and Alba built personal relationships on a very small scale. It was this inter-personal communication to begin with. […] I don't mean to sound 'too Asian', but goodwill brings goodwill."[76] Connecting to a place begins with directly relating to people and Titus Spree confirms that remote relations don't work, especially when working together on critical issues alongside newcomers: "Essential is to go and lead the artist into the community. Introduce them to individuals and give them first inputs and points of reference. The direct relation to the place is important. I usually take the artists on a city walk where we take as much time as possible for conversing with the people. The first step is to show the artists the local particularities and characteristics, like hidden backyards, and give them a tangible input that is linked to place and population. […] That is where the initiative should start and end. The question always is what do you sense from the place? A theoretical or remote relation doesn't have much meaning."[77]

CURIOSITY is the response of wanting to know. To be part of something that is out of the ordinary. When asked about his role as inviter of participation Taeyoon Choi indicates that he acts as director, choreographer and sometimes comedian in order to bring in participation: "It is in my character as the rather funny, little bit strange guy..."[78] Stephan Köhler is a very versatile, socially oriented artist with extensive experiences in building up participatory and educational projects in Japan. He explains why the element of surprise can bring connection: "Many people want to try something new, embark in some sort of safe, little adventure. There is often boredom in their everyday lives…"[79] On the individual level participation can also imply distance. This is not to be confused with disinterest. Distance can be a sign of utter curiosity as outlined by Susan Sonntag's Aesthetics of Silence. "Psychological distance is often involved with the most intense state of feeling: impersonality (coolness) with which something is treated measures the insatiable interest that thing has for us."[80] Working with participation is working with opposites. It entails walking the fine line between enticement and provocation. There is a creative tension between distance and proximity that shows the breadth participation should offer. To enter a situation with a mind of 'I don't know' favors process over outcome. According to socially engaged Zen master Bernhard Glassmann, "only 'I don't know' means choosing to pay attention; confusion is dispelled, just seeing, just hearing."[81] Suzan Lacy draws comparisons between Buddhist practice and artistic process: "Resisting conventional ways of knowing gives way to deep curiosity for what arises."[82]

DESIRE TO MEET is the response to spending time together in the same place. Kissa Hanare is an example where eating becomes the common denominator for sharing a physical experience with an ever-changing group of people. Sakiko Sugawa comments: "Food is the best way to make people happy and to create a convivial atmosphere. Because if what we are doing is not fun then it is meaningless. No one gets angry when they eat good food."[83] Many people are waiting for a social impulse to step into something new as indicated by Akira Takayama: […] There are certainly people around who like strolling in town but don't want to be alone and like to take part in a participation-style performance."[84]

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[76] 11. Uda.
[77] 9. Spree.
[78] 8. Choi.
[79] Köhler, Stephan. April 2007. Meaningful Participation in Art. Berlin/Kyoto. Telephone interview and translation from German by Markuz Wernli Saitô.
[80] 2. Sonntag.
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[83] 10. Sugawa.
[84] 9. Takayama.

V – Strategies for inviting participation

It is much easier to call on the curiosity and empathy of people and attract their attention than to establish true connections with the potential to grow into commitment or even relationships. There needs to be a substance to draw from and a plan that ties the participants into a purposeful experience with potentials for the individual and the group.

A solid strategy for the participatory activity takes into account that there are limitations to participation and collaboration. Not everybody is going to take part at the same level and with the same intensity, which calls on the need for a certain flexibility to accommodate this. Strategy must also consider the reciprocity in the exchanges that take place by looking at what participants or contributors are investing in and what they are getting out of the participatory efforts.

Another, often overlooked, aspect is the *inclusion factor* that makes the group during collaboration into a more or less closed entity – or at least less approachable, especially during intensive participatory efforts. The consideration for what happens inside and outside the group is helpful here. As seen in the previous chapter, achieving engagement might first require disengagement, where existing participants can step outside the group and keep in touch with the surroundings.

While looking closer at how participation is being established in the previous case studies, let's keep in mind that strategies not only derive from the activity's initial objectives and resources. Strategies might be adjusted responsively over the different phases of the activity.

Introduce and be introduced.
Kissa Hanare strives to make its guests feel at home and to provide a fun experience for all involved. Since the initiative has a long-term perspective it depends mostly on the direct referral of its guests, or in Sakiko Sugawa's words the 'pyramid selling method': "The customers, who are friends of mine, not my direct friends, came to Hanare and because they liked the place, they brought their other friends with whom we have become friends. So there is a whole dynamic but its all through word of mouth. The blog supports that as well."[85] Making previous participants into messengers usually works best for long-term and open-purpose initiatives. For the word-of-mouth to be effective and fast enough within a short-term activity the subject matter must be of specific urgency like the rumor-generating spectacle of the Magma installation as seen in the case study above.

Venture out, encounter, visit, revisit.
The Dream Collector utilizes a highly pro-active, outgoing type of address that evolves from empathy to relationship. Ayumi Matsuzaka's approach can lead the encounter into participation, into friendship: "I went to local cafés, lunch tables at outside restaurants and introduced myself as Ayumi in my poor Vietnamese language. Most of the locals had no problem talking to me as I am a smiling and short woman… After some small talk, I gave them a Vietnamese explanation letter explaining the project (since most do not speak English). Of course I was open for any kind of response, and if they liked to participate or not."[86] It is a strategy that allows for true personal interest, empathic conversations, through its continuity that is tied into the everyday context. For the artist Ayumi

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[85] 11. Sugawa.
[86] 2. Matsuzaka.

Matsuzaka, participation begins and ends with the individual: "Normally I do not use any kind of e-mail or mass-communication medium since I like to start with individual relations."[87]

This brave approach of addressing and enrolling encounters is unique among all six case studies. Ayumi Matsuzaka uses her refreshing strategy not only for concentrated short-term but also for long running research projects. In 2001 every week Ayumi visited more than eighty apartments, ten families and a kindergarten in Weimar, Germany to collect used tea bags towards an accumulative installation. Through this effort she was able to sustain ongoing conversations over the 12-month period of the project.

Seek the experiment within an everyday system.
There are plans to grow Kissa Hanare into a much more ambitious initiative that would open more dimensions of participation: "We have this idea of creating a new kind of Japanese shopping arcade […] as a possibility where we really do an experiment in changing the course of how people spend their money. Many say it is illusionary and impossible to change this current system and labor practice. The way we usually spend money appears to be written in stone. I want to see if this is really unchangeable and impossible."[88]

Establishing alternative methods of exchange within a given system can also be found in Taeyoo Choi's Sell Your Morning Walk where personal reflections from within individuals and the group are made extremely public by means of the megaphone.

Within the Wanakio initiative the city's central vegetable market's commercial flow of goods is frequently injected with creative interventions of playful instigations and on-location exhibitions.

Create unlikely arrangements.
Very popular among participatory art practice are situations that join aspects of life that do not normally intersect. This not only brings audiences together that do not usually mingle but can also fuse creative potential that did not exist before, (earlier referred to as cross-fertilization). Sakiko Sugawa has ideas to realize some kind of 'hybrid events' within the alternative shopping arcade initiative that do just this: "Instead of making just mainstream, mediocre activities like [for example] the city government does, we could hold maybe two completely opposite type of workshops in one place. […] On one hand we could do a contemporary art class e.g. with Tadasu Takamine a provocative Japanese artist who has done controversial projects. On the other hand we could offer a playful children's workshop that nobody can be upset about, or maybe a workshop for senior citizens... Broad public and mainstream doesn't mean you should exercise self censorship, but instead you realize rather completely different events at the same time that cater to very different groups in the population."[89] Sue Hajdu is also very interested to further expand her joined-up practice where different industries share objectives within the same project. By that Sue does not propose to 'blur life and art'[90] – to use the citation of *Happening* artist and painter Allen Kaprow that is often talked about – but simply to expand the possibilities of art: "What I am interested in is for example to present Magma in a night club. I am interested in presenting art in contexts where you don't expect art to happen. […]

[87] 3. Matsuzaka.
[88] 12. Sugawa.
[89] 13. Sugawa.

[90] Kaprow, Allan. 1993. Essays in the Blurring of Art and Life. p. 204. Berkeley: University of California Press.

It's about doing art projects in public space that are most definitely not announced as art and that perhaps you don't even realize that what you are looking at is art, but just something uncanny happens."[91]

Team-up, offer more entry points for participants.
Working in a team of artists as seen in The Dream Collector means to have two different personalities that can address different individuals. As Ayumi Matsuzaka explains: "Alba had her own participants and I had mine. Even when we visited their houses together […], only one of us would talk to the participant since our ways of communication were often different."[92] A range of people offers more (sur)faces that can be approached. Nikki Pugh, an artist based in Birmingham also has experience with group-based public participation projects: "Having a range of people on your team (male/female, foreigner/local, old/young, leader/ambassador, actor/documenter) increases the number of potential ways in for participants."[93] Apart from the Sell Your Morning Walk project its seems characteristic for participatory activities to evolve around a core team of two or more individuals.

Disengage in order to engage.
Activities that are situation-based and try to involve people that are passing by must provide room for diversions where some of the participants disengage from the ongoing involvement in order to engage new comers. Based on a recent participatory event Nikki Pugh explains how it is important for insiders to step out of the group at times: "When needed, [some of the organizers and participants] were able to just step outside the main action and spend a few minutes with new arrivals explaining what was happening and going through the mechanics of how to participate. And then just working alongside or in partnership with people until they felt comfortable."[94] Ted Purves points to the aspect of this group immersion that leads to a psychological split where all the good parts are seen inside of the group and all the bad parts outside of it: "You lose any possibility of a critical approach because it to be critical means to see both parts, having some distance from them. In collective practices, some kind of osmosis is always necessary; an in-and-out movement is the only way to avoid the 'immersion' you mentioned."[95]

For Kissa Hanare a busy Monday evening with many guests might be 'successful' but this also means that the organizers are too busy to actually really talk to people. The *disengagement factor* can be seen as a part of Kissa Hanare's framework since it is closed six days a week. Most other activities in the case studies rely less on the ongoing, drop-in type of affiliation, but on the designated enrollment prior to the implementation of the activity.

Elicit the response you want.
Taeyoon Choi knows that if one invites participation, one needs to guide the interaction, and ask for the desired response. "My assumption is that relaxed and easy-going projects are more likely to get feedback. Some of my projects are based on intense research and planning, but it might not result in good interaction, because I was so much focused on the process […] and not enough time was spent on bringing the piece into the real world."[96] Taeyoon mentions a performance piece where he was walking around armed with multiple cameras like a super-tourist trying to have people taking pictures of him. However the

[91] 10. Hajdu.
[92] 4. Matsuzaka.
[93] Pugh, Nikki. 2007. Email correspondence on participatory practice. Birmingham/Kyoto.
[94] 2. Pugh.
[95] 3. Purves
[96] 9. Choi.

action failed to produce the participation he had hoped for: "The audience was not given specific information on how to react to it. I wanted people to take pictures of me. Only one person did. If I do the project again, I might find smarter ways to bring out interaction."[97]

In the walk-through performance of Saruta-hiko we can see that the conversation session between participants and members of the theater troupe had clear topics and allowed for a kind of instant evaluation with each individual involved.

By assigning participants to remember and share their dreams in conversational bedside sessions, The Dream Collector project makes elicit response a smart and integrated part of its concept.

Chose the appropriate disclosure.
Smart and sensitive announcement determines with what frame of mind participants go into an activity or not. Because the word 'art' can trigger very disparate responses, which range from 'oh, this is magic' all the to 'nope, this is threatening'. For that reason the participants of The Dream Collector didn't know that they were part of an art project as Motoko Uda the curator explains: "[We didn't mention art] in the beginning, for two reasons: First, the artists and I didn't want to intimidate the locals. People here tend to react strongly to a big word such as "art". Secondly, if we declared that we are doing and 'art project', we would actually break the law here [in Vietnam]. We need a special permission to do any kind of cultural event in public."[98] Since preconceived expectations can spoil the ideological impact, Sue Hajdu uses a certain degree of secrecy before launching a project like Magma in order to sustain the work's integrity: "I was very circumspect about not talking too much about that. I had to slightly skew for journal articles here and things like that project. You can't do a performance like [...] Magma where the artists in the gallery are sleeping at the opening and tell people in advance. That would kill it."[99]

On the other end of the spectrum there is Kissa Hanare where art can become a vehicle to open minds to new or controversial socio-political issues as indicated by Sakiko Sugawa: "If I say 'this is activism, I have this agenda in my mind and I want to convince you in a way that we think,' people will simply reject it. But having the same agenda presented as art, and processed as an art project people will be more like 'okay, if this is art I will at least check it out' art has magic."[100]

Embrace non-participation.
Participatory projects are obviously not complete without participation. However, a concept that fails to attract participants does not need to be a failure altogether. Motoko Uda knows of concepts that can still work: "As long as the 'documentation' of the project itself (tracing the struggle of not being able to find participants) can somehow fill the gap... then the project can still stand on its own. But if the documentation is not important and secured then the project fails."[101] Failure of participation must not be considered a disaster since the unprecedented side effects during the process can bring valuable learning, as mentioned by Taeyoon Choi regarding his super-tourist project mentioned above: "I regret calling it a failed project, because I succeeded in other ways than I expected."[102]

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[97] 10. Choi.
[98] 12. Uda.
[99] 11. Hajdu.
[100] 14. Sugawa.
[101] 12. Uda.
[102] 9. Choi.

The possibility of 'No-show' is also part of Kissa Hanare's concept, where the company of three core members ensures that it never gets too lonely as Sakiko Sugawa shares: "We had a few slow nights at the very beginning. But that's still great because three of us are doing this project together so if nobody comes we just eat and drink ourselves! We still can have a fun night where we can talk about our things and it becomes like a regular dinner party."[103]

Keep participants enrolled from one project to another.
This is not only about mailing lists. Continued enrollment doesn't end with tracking participants of previous activities as theater man Akira Takayama knows very well: "The audience that participated in the performance becomes the potential staff who supports the next performance. This kind of relationship and dynamics to proceed in a conscious and cyclic process makes a theater play not just a piece of art but makes it a movement that keeps growing."[104] Takayama makes loyal participants into allies that he can consult right from the planning phase of the next project. Taeyoon Choi often utilizes in his projects continued enrollment through media technology: "Web based platforms, where people can leave messages and photos. This provides the chance for ongoing participation."[105] In order words, it is a good idea to have an exit strategy, which is part of a creative continuum or frameset which initiates potential participants early on for the activity to come.

VI – Participation that sustains and is being sustained

The previous chapter showed that in most participatory strategies the end of an activity is usually the beginning of the next (Keep participants enrolled from one project to another). The case studies demonstrate that accountable participatory art consists not just of a single gesture, but of subsequent activities that are linked, either through an ongoing, overarching initiative (for example Kissa Hanare, Wanakio), or as part of dedicated artistic practice (as seen in Akira Takayama, Taeyoon Choi). Another contextual form of sustained (self)enrollment can be observed in Motoko Uda's and Sue Hajdu's art initiative albb (a little bla, bla). Here personal art practice and long-term endeavor are fused into a curatorial effort that interfaces art with the local context.

Participatory practice therefore is therefore concerned with setting-up and determining the appropriate framework where the experiences, learning and outcomes of the individual activities continue to exist and stay in circulation – be it on the personal or interpersonal level. Let's look at what concrete measures aid sustained participatory practice:

Manageable efforts – long or short-term.
The reality is that participatory practice is often part of the alternative art scene because it does not easily fit into an established genre, making it difficult to find sponsors and support. Therefore, especially for self-initiated, independent initiatives there needs to be a particular pragmatism about one's ambitions and resources. Kissa Hanare is a kind of low-intensity operation with long-range perspectives preventing it from eating up its own substance, which, foremost, is its human resource. The sacrifice for the upkeep of the 'activator café' remains manageable and small enough for the three initiators who each have full-time jobs elsewhere. Sakiko Sugawa has a sustainable recipe: "Kissa Hanare takes

[103] 15. Sugawa.
[104] 10. Takayama.
[105] 10. Choi.

place where I live, so the rent for the project is covered. We are also charging customers Yen 500 [about USD 4.00] for the food, which is still really cheap, that means we are not losing any money which is very, very important. […] Don't lose money, don't use up your holidays. Otherwise it gets stressful. We are doing Hanare on Monday nights so that we still have time to enjoy our weekend. I think it is important to use the resources that you have, instead of expanding the project too big in the beginning. Of course you can expand gradually, step by step. But in the beginning keep your efforts manageable."[106]

Kissa Hanare can be seen as an incubator, where its guests experience a real existing model for becoming more of a protagonist in their own lives, and where one can get things moving with a modest, continuous effort. The café's mobile, plug-in structure makes it easy to emulate and multiply as Sugawa explains: "I want to see that a place like Hanare would be born outside of Hanare. Some people hopefully will be interested in what we are doing and get an idea that running a place like this is not as difficult as they think. It is cool that people are participating in our activities but I want to see people doing their own project outside of Kissa Hanare. It is our goal to inspire people to do their own activities."[107]

Managing and stretching the efforts involved is also very important for bigger initiatives like Wanakio. Titus Spree is considering consolidation of his program and explains what it takes to keep this participatory exchange alive: "Reaching out beyond the local periphery demands capable human resources, for example people who speak English and are able to help and collaborate with the foreign guests. Here lie the main challenges. How does one go about this? Well, it is important to utilize the given infrastructure to the best possible degree and it's also a question of education. Confidence in one's own energies can go a long way." Similar to Kissa Hanare, we see in Wanakio a form of self-initiative with the smart, frugal approach that can endure even in volatile and uncertain conditions: "I imagine a kind of residency program where we have artists staying here for two or three months that facilitates a more thorough engagement with the place. Hopefully that would also lead to more cooperations with local artists. I strive to have future activities spread throughout the course of a year – instead of one big tour de force. I believe this would work better for us. […] With all the structures shifting, there is not much room currently for getting these things organized. So now I am thinking of getting started on my own for the time being. I believe that it is manageable when I really start to grapple things. There are plenty of outside artists interested in coming to Okinawa and even willing to bring their own funding. The problems are rather here in Okinawa to properly organize and coordinate such a residence and exchange program."[108] Once more, participatory practice comes down to self-initiative. Rather than waiting for the overall conditions to 'improve' self-motivated cultural practitioners proactively create their own structures.

The Dream Collector project took place within a two-month residency of two artists that was made possible by albb (a little bla, bla) art initiative and curator Motoko Uda. She built bridges with the community and created the financial conditions that enabled the two artists to fully concentrate on their work: "One of the biggest jobs as a curator, is securing money for the project like the artist's airline tickets, day-to-day fees, material expenses, it keeps piling up. Somebody has to do the fund raising, that is not the most pleasant way of participating... I wish I could have slept on the sheet and just told my dreams to the artists."[109]

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[106] 16. Sugawa.
[107] 17. Sugawa.
[108] 10. Spree.
[109] 13. Uda.

Working across industries.
Links to local partners across industries can be an important resource, not so much for funding but more for its creative potential. Sue Hajdu reveals her future plans: "[…] I am very interested in collaborating with project partners that have nothing to do with art. Like for example this project we are planning with this Swiss coffee company. So we are bringing a global commercial player together with a group of artists, together with a community. The artists are a sort of in between, less than a triangle. I enjoy these situations because of the kind of mental spaces they can open up in the minds of all the participants. Obviously the artists sometimes can be very anti-commercial, anti-company by saying these people do not think the same like ourselves. But in fact there is a lot of creativity in commerce, company can be extremely creative in their thinking. Corporate minds can be opened up, by interacting with artists. In how communities and artists interact there is this whole kind of potential for mental explosions and some new terrain."[110] Collaborations with non-artists are not always easy and can require a lot of perseverance and negotiation, especially when working with pre-existing and sometimes resisting counterparts, like in Akira Takayama's experience with the Jizo-dori shopping arcade: "At first there were some shops that didn't really collaborate. However we took this challenge as a part of the creative process and went back to the shops every day and tried to connect and gradually the relationships changed. With some of the store or gallery owners we built relationships by having dinner or drinks together at times. Some relationships even helped us to come by problems with other shops of the shopping arcade."[111]

Evaluating and providing a legacy.
Participatory practice as seen in the Wanakio program can get relatively fluid and complex, especially when many individuals and parties are involved. Titus Spree brings up the important issue of documentation and archiving know-how that is easily overlooked: "Up to now we missed to work on a decent documentation, which is important to build up future projects. We used to just migrate from the previous to the next project without proper closure of the accumulated material." Titus Spree thinks aloud about ways to document the highly intuitive and responsive processes: "[…] often we found ourselves in this flux where decisions are made very intuitively, or reactively and therefore a proper documentation makes an important tool to reflect and reconsider."[112] Since participatory art-making builds on collaborations and relationships among individuals, it is valuable to include a phase of debriefing and evaluation in the project cycle. Worth mentioning in this context are the thorough interview templates[113] by Helen Jermyn (published by the Arts Council England) that provide comprehensive evaluation forms for early and final evaluations for participants as well as artists. The interview-style templates touch on project initiation, planning, working approach, working with participants, nature of participation, pride in achievement, exist strategy and sustainability (Please refer to appendix of this paper containing interview templates for participants and artists).

Sustain a clear vision, be it shared or not.
Most participatory projects discussed in this paper offer just a partial invitation that excludes participants from the inception of the activity or allow only for

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[110] 12. Hajdu.
[111] 11. Takayama.
[112] 11. Spree.
[113] Jermyn Helen. 2004. The art of inclusion. Research report 35. London. Arts Council England. Pages 143-166. Available online (accessed May 2007): http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/phpyAtV3b.pdf

limited input in the concept in order to pursue an uncompromised, creative vision. Some artists work the other way around and are open and receptive in the conception phase and conclude their projects in solitary, self-determined articulation. There is nothing wrong with that as long as it respects participants' rights and pertains to ethical standards. Fully participation-led activities with shared control across the entire process tend to use art as a step to get there but it is usually not the main objective, for example as in Kissa Hanare. Art educator Stephan Koehler who currently manages an artist residency in Benin (Africa) knows from first-hand experience that makeshift concepts in participatory art do not work but require a clearly stated voice and intention: "Don't act like a 'saint' who wants to change the world instead become clear on what kind of learning process for yourself is to be accomplished. It is important to clearly and sometimes rigorously articulate one's own position."[114]

Visions often derive from the outsider's position.
Engagement comes from the need to build exchanges. Affection can originate from a critical disposition as Titus Spree points out: "Being an outsider I must have a reason to get engaged. I personally can't imagine that it makes much sense to launch a project at a place that is in total balance and harmony. Usually I enter into a place that is part of a bigger conflict that I want to get involved with where my role and my contribution have meaning. A conflict is one motivation to participate because it calls for an impetus. The upside of being an outsider is that I don't take realities as a given, and through (more or less) accidental ignorance certain things are put in motion. Since I sometimes don't understand the full context and gawkily run things over, processes that got stuck or should have been activated can break open, happy accidents so to say."[115]

Sustainability starts with one's own life.
Participatory art practice doesn't stop before or after gallery and studio hours. At its fullest it is a way of life, an abundant practice of art. The dedicated artist is able to establish a personal framework where all creative efforts become a coordinated part of lived vision. Sue Hajdu tells us how her well-rounded practice is comprised of curatorial work, art management/consulting, as well as art-related teaching and writing: "Basically what this meant is a huge explosion in my practice that now sort of covered three areas: my own visual arts practice, curating and writing as well as arts management in general. They are all at the heart of what I do and I would be quiet reluctant to give any one of them up. […] Suddenly really 18 hours of my day is consisting of art-related activities."

Participation as seen in the case studies above is not just understood as invitation where privileges and resources are (more or less) made available. It manifests a consciousness of – and a dedication to being – an interdependent part in the larger context that bestows these privileges and resources in the first place.

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[114] 2. Köhler.
[115] 11. Spree.

VII – Conclusion

Participatory practice in visual art gains importance because it is a way to directly engage with the world where consumerism, technology and ideologies increasingly come between people. Meaningful participation is a way to engage with one's surroundings and aids in redeveloping a lost sense of belonging to a relevant context.

In an age of loose networks that center around special interests meaningful participation in art strongly necessitates the shared, physical presence of person, place and object in order to establish a creative sphere and the potential of building unmediated real relationships. Through interruption and suspension participatory art creates much needed, uncontested social spheres that are not to be found elsewhere.

With the advance of information technology and the enticement to make business with one's subjectivity, labor more and more invades private life in late capitalism. This so-called totalitarian participation blurs the borders of consumption and production where we do not know anymore on whose behalf we take part in. This disengaged participation is suspect to many, so people and artists begin to define the world that they want first-hand by reorganizing their relations and engagements.

The nature of participation is worthy of particular scrutiny and depends on the participant's personal control over the experience and outcome. The more activating and participant-led the activity is, the more it shares authorship and decision-making. The emphasis is on the process. The more artist-led and involving the activity is, the less it grants access to creative control and resources. This practice of involvement is the dominant mode in participatory art: the participants tend to be followers and the artist needs to carefully consider the value provided to them. Participants who deliberately contribute want something in return.

Aside from the access to creative decision-making, the activity's relevance to its local context and the artistic motivation behind the activity are characteristic for participatory practice. The more autonomy the artist claims, the more accountable she is in the ethical sense to avert a pretentious and exploitative practice.

Meaningful participation looks at the initial points of connection and what it is that potential participants respond to. By looking at the desires behind connection an activity can appeal to one or several strains of basic human responses such as empathy, curiosity and the desire to meet. The presented case studies use carefully selected strategies in relation to scope, duration and resources of the project. Worth mentioning is the up-close-and-personal strategy of repeatedly visiting the participants in the course of a creative venture and eliciting commitment through bonding. It is not a surprise that most inviters of participation work in a team for better consensus and to increase the number of potential entry points into the activity.

On the conceptual level we see that participatory practice invites the experimentation with inter-human relationships, social arrangements, and exchange mechanisms in order to invite unlikely situations that are mind-opening. In the effort to attract and enroll participants the practitioner should not forget that non-participation and disengagement create essential loops to break group immersion and become approachable for prospective participants.

Art and cultural practitioners agree that a clear vision and voice are the prerequisite to invite participation that is trustworthy and accountable. Artists that invite participation foremost need to question themselves why and for whom they are doing the project. Inviters of meaningful participation know where they stand in society and stay aware of with whom it is that they are dealing with.

Participatory art practice is a sustained effort since it is a part of its overall context and the relational debate. Therefore it is embedded in a framework of a long-term initiative and/or a well-rounded artist practice.

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APPENDIX

Evaluation of participatory activities

Template for artist interviews

The template below outlines key themes and questions; it is an interview guide, not a questionnaire. The themes/questions were formally addressed over at least two interviews. There was also variation in detail depending on what issues arose and who was being interviewed. The early interviews focused more heavily on project initiation and planning while the final interview focused more on issues around practice in relation to a particular project, outcomes, evaluation, sustainability, lessons learned etc

1 Planning

Factors considered in planning: What considered (finances, availability of artists, recruitment of artists/participants, partners, timing). How were participants recruited? Were participants involved in planning the project or consulted before the project? How important is this?

Considerations working with group: Were there any considerations working with group that you might not consider with others? eg practical considerations, food, transportation, structure of day/workshops, variety/concentration, pace of progress, subject matter etc

Aims and objectives: Does the project have aims and objectives? Is it important to have them? Why? How were aims and objectives set (with participants, 'partners')? To what extent do you reflect back on aims and objectives during the project? Have they changed over the course of the work? Did you discuss aims and objectives with participants (including social objectives like 'increase confidence')? Why/why not?

Partnerships: Aside from participants, who have you considered to be 'partners' in the project? What is their role? How are these partnerships working – what's been good/not so good about them? How could they have been more effective?

2 Working approach
Can you tell me about your approach to working with groups? Are there any values or principles that underpin your work (formal/informal)? What sort of qualities does an artist working in this area need?
What sort of environment/atmosphere do you try to create?

How would you describe your role? To what extent are you directing what happens and to what extent is the work participant-led?

3 Working with participants
Can you tell me how you described the project to participants in the early stages – to what

extent are they prepared for what's going to happen? How have you gone about getting individuals interested in the early stages? What sort of reception did you get?

Some of the good practice literature talks about identifying needs of participants and responding to that. I wondered how you feel about that in relation to your project?

To what extent is each session structured/planned and to what extent open?
What about the overall program of work? To what extent do you need to cater for individual needs?

4 Nature of participation
How many sessions? How many weeks? How many participants (max/min/core)? Content of sessions and nature of work?   Any thoughts about: level of intensity; challenge/risk taking or safe/comfortable; relevance/draw on own experiences/background?

5 Pride in achievement
Does 'quality' or 'excellence' have any bearing on your work? In what way
(process, materials, standard of practice)? What do terms mean? Does quality of final product matter or is it about process? Any relationship between pride in quality of achievement and outcome?

6 Exit strategy and sustainability
When planning this project did you consider an 'exit strategy' at all (eg what
happens next, future progression for those who might be interested)? Are there any issues about sustainability you'd like to mention?

Do you think the project will have a long-term legacy on yourselves or the
Organization, e.g. profile raising, practice, incorporation of lessons learned? In what way/s?

7 Evaluation
What sort of outcomes are you hoping to achieve? Has any evaluation been
planned? Are you yourselves intending to evaluate the project? How do you
intend to do this? (Who involved? How involved? At what stage?)

Participant questionnaire

How did it go?
(Double-check person hasn't filled in baseline. Explain purpose of survey. Ask all questions marked *)

Project:
What did you think of the project?
*1. Can you tell me how you came to be doing the project? No prompt. Tick most appropriate box.
[_] Heard about project and wanted to take part (heard about project where?_____)
[_] Was accompanying a friend/taken along to project by a friend
[_] Member of (organized) group the project was visiting
[_] Other (please describe)_____

*2. Have you been involved in a project like this before?
[_] Yes [_] No [_] Don't know

3. I'd now like you to think back to when you first got involved in the project. I'm going to read out a list of words that might describe how you felt and I'd like you tell me which apply to you.
[_] Suspicious [_] Disinterested [_] Excited [_] Negative [_] Relaxed [_] Scared.
[_] Hostile [_] Confident [_] Positive [_] Proud [_] Satisfied [_] A bit nervous
[_] Cool [_] Inspired [_] Interested [_] Optimistic [_] Other_____

4. I'd now like you to think about how you're feeling now at/close to the end of the project. I'm going to read out the same list of words and I'd like you tell me which words apply to you now.
[_] Suspicious [_] Disinterested [_] Excited [_] Negative [_] Relaxed [_] Scared.
[_] Useless [_] Confident [_] Positive [_] Proud [_] Satisfied [_] A bit nervous
[_] Cool [_] Inspired [_] Interested [_] Optimistic [_] Other_____

* 5. How much have you enjoyed doing the project?
[_] Very much [_] Some [_] No feelings [_] either way [_] Not much [_] Not at all

* 6. Would you like to be involved in more projects like this one?
[_] Yes [_] No [_] Not sure

* 7. I'd now like to find out whether you think you had a say over what happened in the project. I'm going to read out a list of statements, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each choosing your answer from this card.
During the project...

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
(a) ... I had freedom to use and develop my own ideas	[_]	[_]	[_]
(b) ... the artists didn't seem interested in what I thought	[_]	[_]	[_]
(c) ... I didn't have much of a say over what happened	[_]	[_]	[_]
(d) ... I sometimes felt challenged (in a good way) to try new things or think in a different way	[_]	[_]	[_]
(e) ... I got help and support when I needed it	[_]	[_]	[_]

8. Is there anything more you'd like to say about the way the sessions were run?
(Prompt: any things that they particularly liked or didn't like? would they do anything differently?)

You and the arts
*9. Can you tell me how much experience you had of [art form] before this project?
(As attender or participant)
[_] Lots [_] A fair amount   [_] A little   [_] None
Comments....

*10. How much did you have to do with the arts in general before the project?
[_] Lots [_] A fair amount   [_] A little [_] Nothing
Comments....

*11. Do you feel your views about the arts have changed as a result of being involved in the project?
[_] Yes, a lot [_] Yes, a little [_] No (Go to Q13)

*12. How are your views different from the ones you had before?
What did you gain from the project?

*13a. Do you think you made any new friends through the project? If yes, how many
[_] None (Q14) [_] 1-2 [_] 3-5 [_] 6-10 [_] 11-20 [_] 20+

13b. Is it likely you'll stay friends with any of them once the project finishes?
[_] Very likely [_] Fairly likely   [_] I'd like to but not sure/maybe [_] Not very likely

*14. Has being involved in the project changed the way you think about yourself and what you can do? (Prompt: any effect on confidence or self-esteem?)

*15. Do you think you developed any new skills through the project?
[_] Lots [_] Some [_] None [_] Don't know

*16. I'm going to read you out some statements and I'd like you to tell me if you agree of disagree with each. Only ask if they feel they got better at items if answer is agree.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
*(a) Was creative and used my imagination	[_]	[_]	[_]
(b) Gained experience in PCs/new technology	[_]	[_]	[_]
*(c) Completed tasks/saw things through to end	[_]	[_]	[_]
*(d) Thought problems through and came up with some answers/solutions	[_]	[_]	[_]
*(e) Worked with others as part of a team	[_]	[_]	[_]
*(f) Listened to what others had to say			
*(g) Put across my thoughts, opinions and ideas	[_]	[_]	[_]
(h)Worked with numbers	[_]	[_]	[_]

*17a. Do you feel proud of what you personally achieved on the project?
[_] Yes [_] Not really (Go to Q19) [_] Don't know (Go to Q18)

*17b. Can you tell me a bit more about that? (How do you feel? What are you proud of?)

18. Do you feel proud of what the group as a whole achieved?
[_] Yes   [_] Not really   [_] Don't know

*19a. Now thinking about your involvement in the project can you tell me how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
[_] Agree   [_] Neither   [_] Disagree

Being involved in this project...

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
*(a) ... has helped me appreciate [art form] more	[_]	[_]	[_]

*(b) ... has helped me feel good about myself   [_]   [_]   [_]
*(c) ... has helped me express myself   [_]   [_]   [_]
*(d) ... has broadened my horizons/outlook   [_]   [_]   [_]
*(e) ... has improved my quality of life more   [_]   [_]   [_]
generally

*19b. And again, would you agree or disagree?
During the project I...

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
(h) ... enjoyed talking with someone new from a different generation or different ethnic culture from me	[_]	[_]	[_]
(i) ... learned more about people from different generations or ethnic cultures	[_]	[_]	[_]
*(j) ... generally felt better/healthier (either physically or mentally)	[_]	[_]	[_]
*(k) ... felt I had more energy/motivation	[_]	[_]	[_]
(l) ... got to know people who live in my area	[_]	[_]	[_]
(m) ... felt more positive about where I live	[_]	[_]	[_]
(n) ... felt more strongly that I belonged to a community	[_]	[_]	[_]

20a. Are you planning on doing any of the following things in the next 12 months?
(If yes, ask if they would 'like to' do it, are definitely planning do to it or have already taken steps i.e. joined a course/training scheme)

Like to	Plan to	Have done	
[_]	[_]	[_]	Continue some kind of involvement in [art form]
[_]	[_]	[_]	Find a job/new job
[_]	[_]	[_]	Join training scheme
[_]	[_]	[_]	Take a course
[_]	[_]	[_]	Organize a community, voluntary or arts project

20b. Did doing the project play any part in that decision?

21. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your time on the project?