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Towards social inclusion through a community art project

Community animation film in collaboration with people with developmental disabilities

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences
Master of Health Care and Master of Culture and Arts
Master’s thesis
25 November 2023
Abstract

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Title: Towards social inclusion through a community art project – Community animation film in collaboration with people with developmental disabilities
Number of Pages: 92 pages + 3 appendices
Date: 25 November 2023

Degree: Master of Health Care and Master of Culture and Arts
Degree Programme: Creativity and Arts in Social and Health fields
Instructor: Sanna Kivijärvi

The aim of this master's thesis is to explore the factors that may influence on the realization of social inclusion and participation of participants with developmental disabilities through making a short stop-motion animation film. In addition, the aim of the thesis is to identify connections from the film "the meaning of life" to the participants experience of inclusion, participation, and the meaning of life. The conceptual framework of the thesis is built on the notions of inclusion, participation, community, community art, multidisciplinary cooperation, and applied art. In addition, the literature review for this study includes examines developmental disability research and brings out two different perspectives of developmental disability – the medical and social approaches.

The thesis is placed in the participatory action research paradigm. In the context of this thesis arts-based practice is the process of making an animated short film. The thesis was carried out in collaboration with Rinnekodit. The data was constructed by using systematic observation model for creative group activities and writing research diaries. The data was analysed using an inductive content analysis method and it was possible to identify four key findings that might affect the realization of social inclusion and participation during a community art project. Using film analysis and qualitative content analysis it was able to identify elements from the movie The Meaning of Life that can be connected to the experience of social inclusion, participation, and a meaningful life of the participants.

The experience of inclusion is individual and cannot be defined from the outside. The experience of social inclusion can be promoted through participation. The findings suggest to direct attention to four different factors: the different dimensions of support; emotional work; consideration of temporal factors and spatial structures; and the division of professional roles in multi-professional cooperation. In disability research, the examination of ethical perspectives, the inclusion of disabled persons in research, and the thorough construction of the framework of disability research and the choice of method emerge as important elements.

Keywords: applied use of art, community art, developmental disability, disability research, participatory research, social inclusion.
Statement regarding the division of responsibilities in the thesis

The responsibilities of this thesis are equally divided to both authors. The research plan and research permit for this thesis were written and applied for in cooperation by both authors. Kaisa Lahti's responsibility has been to act as contact person on the side of Rinnekodit and take care of the practical arrangements related to the workshops and arrangement according to participation of the participants. Sera Martikainen has been responsible for the production matters related to the animated film. Both authors have participated in the construction of research data as agreed. The research data has been analysed in collaboration. The written part of the thesis is written in equal cooperation. The content and visual design of the thesis have been planned and implemented in collaboration.
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1 Introduction

The human rights of people with developmental disabilities have improved over the years, but people with disabilities are still marginalized in Finnish society. According to Rönkkö, Peltomäki, Granö, and Kontu (2022, p. 114) it seems that in Finland laws and practices for improving participation and active citizenship appear to be equal but in practice require certain abilities and skills to access the mechanisms that can have influence on society. Therefore, the mechanisms may not be equally accessible for everyone in practice. Rönkkö et al. (2022) also point out that participating in research is one example of this. Being able to make research can be a way to promote change and have a voice in a society (Rönkkö et al. 2022). The aim of this master’s thesis is to explore the factors that may influence on the realization of social inclusion and participation of participants with developmental disabilities through making a short stop-motion animation film. At the same time, the structure and implementation of the participatory project is analysed by reflecting the personal experiences and insights of the authors as facilitators of the project.

This study in centred around the concept of social inclusion, a very complex phenomenon and theoretical notion, that has been described and defined differently across various fields and research paradigms. For example, according to Isola et al. (2017), inclusion consists of several different elements: involvement, relatedness, belongingness, togetherness, coherence, inclusion, participation, representation, and it is also the organization and management of all the above (Isola, Kaartinen, Leemann, Lääperi, Schneider, Valtari & Keto-Toki 2017, p. 3). In this research project we are interested in how people with developmental disabilities themselves experience the concept of inclusion in their everyday lives. We aim at examining in what ways it might be possible to involve the perspective of people with developmental disabilities into the framework of inclusion through community art process.
Accordingly, the discussion about participatory research, its abilities, and disabilities to reach certain standards of science, academia and ethics is an ongoing process. It seems to be a constantly negotiable field as each participatory project, research or practice has its own circumstances. Even inside one research project there might be a need to negotiate and reflect the actions and terms as the process evolves. (Seale, Nind, Tilley & Chapman 2015, p. 495.) On a more abstract level, the concepts of participatory and inclusion require communication between different realities as every individual operates from the perspective of their own reality. Thus, at the core of this research project were structured meetings where a short animation film was made by and with the participants. The film and research process aimed to capture fragments of the lived experiences of the participants related to the themes of inclusion and exclusion. The thesis aims to create a space where glimpses of the experiences of the participants could become visible, heard, or recognized. This required non-verbal forms of constructing data.

Previous research shows that participatory research could benefit from examining the grounds “that have been previously considered impossible or unthinkable” (Seale et al., 2015, p. 489). Imagining and examining different possibilities by asking “what if” questions could be a relevant approach when finding out the limitations, challenges but also strengths and possibilities of participatory research. Pertaining research also suggests that it might not be useful to have an idealistic approach to participatory research and not to close eyes to the problems, undefined boundaries, and complex issues that may come with participatory attempts. Complexity and messiness can be a fruitful forum for participation or help define the terms of participation for people themselves. (E.g., Seale et al., 2015, p. 495; Rönkkö et al., 2022, pp. 125–126.) Relying on these starting points, that is why a participatory, art-based activity, in this case an animation film, was considered, to be a medium for examining complex issues on a concrete everyday life level. How could it be possible to let participants tell, show, or imagine something that we do not even realize to ask or look for?
This thesis aims to make the messy and complex areas of the project visible and suggest a shift of hierarchy along with a contribution to methodological and methods-related contribution to the field of participatory research. By doing so its aim is to create discussion about the societal space traditionally given to a marginalized group (Sotkasiira et al., 2021), namely, people with developmental disabilities in Finland. The thesis also aims to clarify the process of this participatory project and the roles of the authors to the authors themselves in a participatory process. By focusing on personal experiences, feelings, and contemplations, it aims to articulate connections between personal experiences and social structures related to the topic. Personal experiences are relevant in, yet separate from, societal dimensions and discussions because they can bring to light the grassroots level actions and choices which build the structures of the society from down to up. (Mills 1959, pp. 8–11.)

2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of the thesis is built on the notions of inclusion, participation, community, community art and applied art. In addition, the literature review for this study included examines developmental disability research and brings out two different perspectives of developmental disability – the medical and social approaches. The framework explains and ties together concepts from the social and health, and cultural sectors which form the conceptual framework of this study. This chapter examines the concept of social inclusion and presents the concept of community from the perspective of social pedagogy. In addition, the chapter discusses the concept of social support in human life.

2.1 Perspectives on social inclusion

Social inclusion is a very broad concept and can be approached theoretically from a variety of different perspectives. According to Leemann et al. (2015), the concept of social inclusion has most commonly been used as the opposite of
exclusion, and the concept has its roots in social science theories. (Leemann et al., 2015, p.1.) Social inclusion consists of many dimensions. According to Isola et al. (2017) social inclusion can be described as belongingness, togetherness, involvement and relatedness. It may also involve elements of participation, representation, democracy and coherence. Social inclusion is the dialogue, organization, and management of all the dimensions. (Isola et al., 2017, p. 3.)

According to Leemann et al. (2015), the current socio-political concept of social inclusion arose because of the socio-political debate in France in the 1970s and 1980s. In Finland, similar debates on social policy began in the early 1980s, and through the European Union, the concept of social inclusion was introduced in the Finnish social policy programs. Social inclusion can be seen as a value and a way to prevent poverty and people's marginalization and promote a fair and equal society. Currently, the promotion of social inclusion is in a significant role in international and national politics, welfare, and development programs. In and through the concept of social inclusion, it is central to bring people who are isolated from society into a part of social activities with the help of various support measures and processes. The public authority should, through political actions, secure the realization of the social inclusion of its citizens. According to Leemann et al. (2015), it is important for human well-being to participate in political, social, economic, and cultural activities. (Leemann et.al., 2015, pp. 2–3.)

Leemann et al. (2015) highlight the experiential dimension of social inclusion, which is especially evident in Finnish scholarship. The experience of inclusion is usually described as an emotional, personal, individual phenomenon that takes place in social interaction. The most important is the feeling that the individual has the experience that they can influence the course of their own life and the feeling that they belong to a community and to society. The experience of social inclusion cannot be determined from the outside, but experiencing the feeling of social inclusion can be promoted. (Leemann et al., 2015, p 5.)

Leemann et al. (2015) describes that participation is one solution to promote the feeling of social inclusion. They emphasize that it is important to distinguish
between the concepts of social inclusion and participation. They underline that participation can be a process and a means of promoting social inclusion and its emotional experience. The emotional experience of social inclusion and exclusion varies at the individual level. Therefore, it is possible for a person to feel more socially included with less participation than a person who participates more actively. (Leemann et al., 2015, p. 5.)

In addition to the experiential dimension, social inclusion is also considered to be an action. Leemann et al. (2015) divide participation into four separate actions:

1. Information/knowledge inclusion (tieto-osallisuus in Finnish). Meaning the right to information/knowledge and its production.

2. Planning/design inclusion (suunnitteluosallisuus in Finnish). Meaning the right to organize one's own living environment.

3. Decision-making inclusion (päätösosallisuus in Finnish). Meaning the right to influence one's own life and decision-making related to one's life.

4. Action/performance inclusion (toimintaosallisuus in Finnish). Meaning the right to realize their own performance in their own living environment together with others. (Leemann et al., 2015, p. 6.)

According to the socio-pedagogical view, the concept of inclusion refers to the eligible relationship between a person and the community. The relationship consists of three dimensions: belonging to something, participation, and the feeling of belonging, thus participation is realized as a dialogue of these three dimensions. According to the socio-pedagogical view, participation is realized when a person is part of and acts in their community and feels that they belong to community. (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, p. 138.)

The basis of inclusion is in meaningful social relationships, through which the feeling of belonging to the community can develop. According to the social-pedagogical theory, participation refers to the dimension of action in human
relationships. Participation is a significant part in terms of the realization of inclusion because it is considered to offer opportunities to create meaningful interactive relationships. In addition, in terms of the realization of inclusion, it is essential that community members can influence community affairs, be heard, and participate in development activities in their community. For participation to be meaningful and to produce an experience of inclusion, the community's activities must be based on sharing power in a way that members have a real opportunity and right to influence their community. (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, p. 138.)

In participation aimed at influencing the community, the mutual interaction and cooperation of the community is considered important. The interaction should enable equal participation for each participant and the feeling of being a meaningful part of their community. At the same time, the understanding can be strengthened that other participants are also needed in the activity, and everyone has an important role in terms of achieving common goals. Participation in various processes, from planning, implementation, and evaluation, is considered to be meaningful. Participating in processes may increase the experience of inclusion, which is not just a momentary feeling, but arises during the process as agency and from the sense of belonging. According to the social-pedagogical perspective, participation and belonging are necessary for the realization of inclusion. (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, p. 139.)

Clifford Simplican et al. (2014) presents a model of social inclusion that consists of two main areas: interpersonal relationships and community participation. Both areas are divided into categories that explain structural and functional factors in social inclusion. The social inclusion model aims to explain the components of interpersonal relationships and community participation and both areas interact and support each other. The model distinguishes between the processes that can produce social inclusion and the subjective experience that can result from inclusion. (Clifford Simplican et al., 2014, p. 22.)
Interpersonal relationships are divided into three areas. The first sub-area is a named category which includes, for example, family, employees, friends, and spouses. The second area is sub-called structure, this covers, for example, how length of friendships, and how and where relationships are maintained. In addition, the model guides to examine the quality of human relationships, whether they are, for example, formal, emotional, or reciprocal. The third dimension is named function, referring to the different forms of social support that are in this model: emotional, instrumental, and informational. (Clifford Simplican et al., 2014, p. 23.)

Community participation is also divided into three dimensions. The first dimension is named category. This means various community activities such as working life, leisure activities, education, accessibility of services, spiritual and cultural activities. The second dimension is named structure, meaning the conditions and spaces in which the activity takes place. Does the activity take place, for example, in segregated, semi-segregated, and integrated settings. The third dimension is level of involvement, which is divided into three areas: presence, encounter, and participation. Individuals have different levels of participation in communities. (Clifford Simplican et al., 2014, pp. 24–25.)

Fernandes, Cantrill, Lal Shrestha, Belda Raj, Allchin, Kamal, Butcher and Grills (2018) carried out a study in rural India and Nepal that aimed to investigate the experiences of inclusion of persons with psychosocial disabilities. The aim of the study was to identify factors that promote and hinder participation. (Fernandes, Cantrill, Lal Shrestha, Belda Raj, Allchin, Kamal, Butcher, and Grills, 2018, p. 5.) The research is interesting from the point of view of this thesis, because this thesis also aims to identify promoting and limiting factors on social inclusion in art project. In their Participatory research Fenandes et al. (2018) used the photovoice method and a semi-structured interview as a data collection method (Fenandes et al., 2018, p.5). Using thematic analysis, Fenandes et al. (2018) identified three main categories: support, meaningful engagement, stigma, and community awareness. In these main categories Fenandes et al. (2018) identified factors promoting and hindering inclusion. For example, in the category named support,
factors promoting inclusion were identified as social relationships, emotional and practical support for mental health challenges, religion, nature and the access to health care treatment. Factors preventing participation in the support category were the impact of mental health challenges on family members, financial challenges, barriers to access to health care treatment. (Fenandes et al., 2018, p.9.) In the meaningful engagement category, participation in meaningful activities such as studying, housekeeping and participation in community activities, as well as different roles such as parenting, were identified as factors promoting inclusion. Limited opportunities to participate in family and community activities were identified as factors preventing inclusion in the meaningful engagement category. (Fenandes et al., 2018, pp. 9, 12–13.) Stigma and community awareness and attitudes were identified as factors promoting inclusion, for example community acceptance, awareness and increasing information in the community. Factors preventing participation were identified as, for example, stigma caused by the disease, self-stigma, and discrimination. (Fenandes et al., 2018, pp.9, 14–15.)

In summary, as Leemann et al. (2015) and Nivala et al. (2019) describe, social inclusion is very diverse and takes place in social relationships and in different situations in one’s life. They emphasize the individual's own agency and role in their own activities. Also, Clifford Simplican et al. (2014) model of social inclusion, the importance of interpersonal relationships and community participation emerge when exam the social inclusion of a person with a developmental disability. Fenandes et al. (2018) study showed that the factors promoting the experience of inclusion are social relationships, different forms of support, accessible health services, the opportunity to act in meaningful roles within the family and in communities. Clifford Simplican et al. (2014) and Fenandes et al. (2018) also emphasize the importance of the accessibility of various social services, education, health services, working life, spirituality, and leisure activities from the perspective of social inclusion. Clifford Simplican et al. (2014) also highlights the importance of the spatial dimension, does the service or activity operate in an accessible space, or is the space segregating. Nivala et al. (2019) and Leemann et al. (2015) point out that the experience of social inclusion can
be promoted through participation, but the experience of inclusion is always an individual action. (Leemann et al. 2015; Nivala et al. 2019; Clifford Simplican et al. 2014; Fenandes et al. 2018.) In this thesis, the theory of social inclusion and participation play an important role. Social inclusion is not just something that exists, it requires different actions to happen. The aim of the thesis is to create the space where the experience of inclusion is possible to happen and can be recognised.

2.2 Perceptions on community and social support

The common life between people takes place in different communities. According to the established definition, a community is an association of people with a common unifying factor and a sense of belonging. From a socio-pedagogical point of view, the definition of community has a qualitative dimension. A community cannot be defined as any group of people, but it must be associated with a special kind of reciprocal relationship between people, as distinguished from a group or crowd. The concept of community in social pedagogy differs from the traditional definition of community. Instead, social pedagogy aims to take a broader look at how people are encountered and what kind of phenomena occur in these encounters and where the feeling of belonging between community members arises. (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, pp. 129–130.)

According to the social-pedagogical approach, communities are based on perceived sense of community (koettu yhteisyys, in Finnish) support a people’s social and personal growth. Perceived sense of community can form from action or symbolically. Functional communality (toiminnallinen yhteisyys, in Finnish) is created in interaction and long-term cooperation, which involves common goals, which is committed to, where feelings of success and failure are experienced together, and it involves common rules. Symbolic communality (symbolinen yhteisyys, in Finnish) is based on, for example, meanings related to cultural heritage or shared values. (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, pp. 130–131.)
Social support takes place at many different levels, such as individual, group, community, and societal level. According to Bruhn (2019), social support can be immaterial or material support for example, psychological, physical, or financial support. Bruhn (2019) describes socially supportive behaviour as an indication that people have a reciprocal relationship in which the needs of the other person are considered. (Bruhn, 2009, p. 50.)

The phenomenon of social support is culturally bound. Bruhn (2019) underlines that people are naturally social and need other people throughout their lives. Social support helps people to maintain sociability and prevents isolation and despair. Social relationships promote social integration into groups, neighbourhoods, communities, and society. Social relationships change throughout lives, and this also affects the dynamics of social support. (Bruhn, 2009, pp. 50–51.)

According to Bruhn (2009), the term social support has sometimes been defined through social relationships, the quality of social relationships, and the number of friendships. In addition, the concept has been defined based on the functionality of social relationships; particularly how much there is concrete help related to relationships. In addition, it has been defined how the structure of a group or community facilitates or hinders encouraging human relationships. In general, the definition of social support refers to the functional content of the given support and how it is used. (Bruhn, 2009, p. 52.)

In their research, Schalock, Luckasson and Tassé (2019) describe the support system for people with developmental disabilities. They divide the support system into four different categories: choice and personal autonomy, inclusive environments, generic supports, and specialized supports. According to Schalock et al. (2019), the development, education, well-being, functional ability, and interests of a person with developmental disabilities can be promoted with the help of the support system. Choice and personal autonomy refer to the right to self-determination of a person with a disability along with an opportunity to make decisions and choices, and to be a legal and equal citizen in society. According
to Schalock et al. (2019), choice and personal autonomy can be promoted with, for example, supported decision-making. By inclusive environments, Schalock et al. (2019) means dimensions that offer unhindered access to information, social relationships, support growth and a person’s psychological needs in relation to autonomy, competence, and relatedness. As examples, Schalock et al. (2019) describes forms of supported housing, education, and employment. Generic support means forms of support that are available to everyone, for example social support, technology, aids, and human dignity. Specialized support means forms of support offered by professionals, such as physiotherapy and medical support. (Schalock, Luckasson and Tassé, 2019, p. 226.)

In summary, according to Nivala et al. (2019) people live in social relationships and Bruhn (2009) adds that humans are inherently social and need other people around them and from time to time their support. From social view pedagogy Nivala et al. (2019) highlights, communality has a qualitative dimension that shows in encounters between people and their meanings. According to Bruhn (2009), social support can promote people in social relationships and prevents marginalization. Schalock et al. (2019) describes support systems for people with developmental disabilities. As one important element, Schalock et al. (2019) raises the right to self-determination of people with developmental disabilities and the right to determine their own lives and make choices. Also, Leemann et al. (2015) highlight the important role of the individual's right to decide on their own life from the realization of social inclusion. Schalock et al. (2019), the right to self-determination and the right to decide on one's own life of people with developmental disabilities can be supported, for example, by supported decision-making. (Nivala et al. 2019; Bruhn 2009; Schalock et al., 2019; Leemann et al. 2015.)

2.3 Creative and arts-related activities in groups and communities

According to Huhtinen-Hildén, (2019) the use of applied art means enabling community art activities and creative activities by different means for people. In addition, it can be, for example, expanding an art performance to include the
audience. The goal of using applied art is not to improve artistic skills, set artistic goals, or in therapeutic outcomes. In addition to the applied use of art, there are also other terms in use such as community art, art-oriented and functional methods, empowering art activities, socio-cultural methods, and artistic interventions. Huhtinen-Hildén (2019) emphasizes that instead of defining the terms, it would be more important to exam how different professionals could use art methods in social work. In the applied use of art, the most important elements are participation and the experiences created during the process, as well as the participant's touch with their own creativity. (Huhtinen-Hildén 2019, pp.49–50.)

According to Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola (2019), creative group activities can increase inclusion and well-being. Inclusion can strengthen during creative group activities when the participant is able to use existing resources or finds new ones. In addition, social inclusion increases when the participant feels that they belongs to something, is heard, and feels that they belong together with others. Also, Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola (2019) describe that social inclusion increases when a person feels that his/her life is meaningful, and they can control his/her emotions. (Huhtinen-Hildén & Isola, 2019, p. 3.)

In their research Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola (2019) identified five stages for creative group work, which can occur overlapping, simultaneously, or repeatedly. The first stage is tuning in. The goal of tuning in is to focus on group activities, interaction, and lead to creative work process. It is important that a safe and conversational atmosphere is created for the participants, because when dealing with a new issue, the participant can experience excitement and confusion. The professional creates a suitable atmosphere with, for example, verbally, using gestures and expressions and by using different materials. (Huhtinen-Hildén & Isola, 2019, p. 1.)

Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola (2019) name distancing as the second stage. Distancing in creative group activities means conditions where the participant can safely distance themself and detach themself from their everyday life and look at own situation from a safe distance. Distance allows us to see experiences in a
new way, and art can provide tools to process these experiences. (Huhtinen-Hildén & Isola, 2019, p. 1.)

The third step is verbalization. Art activities are first carried out non-verbally, reflecting and thinking about things from different perspectives. Little by little, one's own feelings and experiences can be expressed verbally. The fourth step is sharing. When the participant understands their feelings and meanings, it is easier to share them. Creative group activities enable the sharing of experiences, feelings, and own thoughts verbally and non-verbally. Creative activities and goals done together connect people to each other. Cooperation, for example, playing and singing together, strengthens the experience of togetherness. The fifth step is getting accepted. In a safe space, participants begin to share their experiences, which provides an opportunity to show mutual acceptance. In various encounter situations, one can creatively receive and share compassion and understanding towards another. Sharing experiences is one way for participants to be seen and heard. When the participant feels that they have been accepted, it increases self-belief. (Huhtinen-Hildén & Isola, 2019, pp. 1–3.)

Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola (2019) emphasize that special professionalism is required so that the interaction of a creative group can take place in a safe environment. The song discusses what creative activity is from a socio-pedagogical point of view and opens the concept of collective art. Professional skills in pedagogic and emotional work are emphasized especially when profound processing of emotions and experiences takes place in the group. During creative group activities, negative feelings can also arise. Creativity and art experiences can evoke, for example, difficult experiences, psychological burden, and vulnerability in the participant. The group facilitator is required to understand group dynamics and professional skills, as well as the ability to face and handle sensitively the feelings and thoughts brought by the participant. Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola (2019) state that further research and development work is required to discovered and develop the professional skills required to guide group activities. (Huhtinen-Hildén & Isola, 2019, p. 4.)
One central approach of social pedagogy is action and creativity. The principle of action is connected to community because the key elements in the activity are working together and examining the shared experiences gained through the process. Cooperation is enabled, for example, by the spaces and situations created for interaction and encounter. From the perspective of social pedagogy, it is important in cooperation that the process proceeds in accordance with common goals in a way that the expertise and participation is utilized in cooperation. (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, p. 209.)

From the perspective of social pedagogy, creative methods mean activities during which it is possible for the participant to break away from rational thinking. During creative activity, feelings, senses, physicality and experientiality are essential. The concept of cultural democratization refers to the reach and accessibility of art and culture. In the cultural democratization, we move from the dimension of experiencing art into the areas of a person's own creative participation, agency, and activity. The starting point is to recognize the individual's own creativity and agency. The goal is to break away from the idea that culture is based solely on institutional forms of art and culture. The gaze is focused on the person themself as a creator and operator. (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, pp. 213–15.)

In culture democratization one of the main principles is participating activities together. The goal is not to practice skills, the goals are more focusing on participation and agency. From the perspective of social pedagogy, the creation process, and the experiences during the process should be meaningful. Experiences of success with groups suffering from low self-esteem and experiences of inadequacy are considered particularly important. In addition, becoming visible, for example by organizing an exhibition, parties, or performances, can also be considered empowering. Social-pedagogical practice involves methodological criticism. Methodological criticism includes methodological criticism means that the chosen method must serve the objectives of the project or activity. Also, method should serve the needs and goals of the participants. The method must be a tool for working, which is applied
according to the situation in a way that it supports the goals of the work, and the method meets the wishes and needs of the participants. (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, pp. 215–216.)

According to Jussilainen (2019), community art is a process guided by an art professional, where work takes place in different environments with people who do not have an art education. One of the central principles of community art is that anyone can participate in making art, regardless of a person’s age, socio-economic status, ability to function, gender or ethnic background. In community art processes, art is brought out of art institutions and the activity takes place, for example, in cooperation with the social, health and education sectors. (Jussilainen 2019.)

Jussilainen (2019) defines the key features of community art as follows:

- inclusiveness
- participant oriented practice
- doing together
- strengthening active agency
- the activity focuses on process and experience
- can aim for a presentation, exhibition, or other form of publication includes different ways of participating (Jussilainen 2019).

Koskinen (2019) describes that sharing is one important element in collaborative community art process. Different expectations and goals can often be set for art activities, that can include, for example, the therapeutic, rehabilitative, or social elements of the activity. It is difficult for an artist to meet these expectations independently. According to Koskinen (2019), it is important to connect with other professionals who know the community. In the best situation, a multi-professional cooperation can arise, where the artist can work within the limits of their own profession and competence. Koskinen (2019) describes the most important relationship of sharing as the relationship of trust between the community participating in art activities and the artist. A relationship can be created slowly,
timidly, and awkwardly, but when it is born, it enables a space where the participant, the artist and the whole community can find something about themselves in a new way. Trust enables artistic activity. (Koskinen 2019.)

Like Huhtinen-Hildén and Ilola (2019), Sutela (2017) highlights the importance of education and pedagogical skills in facilitating art activities for special groups. Studies have shown shortcomings in the education of professionals. As a solution, Sutela (2017) suggests increasing the provision of special pedagogy in art education and art education programs. In addition, Sutela (2017) also emphasizes the role of employers as enablers of continuing education. (Sutela, 2017, p. 77.)

Jensen (2018) studied multidisciplinary relationships between social and healthcare professionals, art professionals, and service users in the United Kingdom and Denmark. The study used the theory of institutional logic, which was used to examine the interaction relationships of professionals. According to Jensen (2018), to develop collaboration models, it is important to understand the relationships between different professionals. By identifying the institutional structures and perspectives of different professionals, the potential challenges of co-projects in the art field and the social and health sector can be identified. (Jensen, 2018, pp. 220–221.) According to the research, the institution and professionals have a great importance for the integration of artistic work in the social and health field. According to Jensen (2018), the artistic perspective of work and multidisciplinary interventions can offer new solutions to problems that the social and health sector cannot solve alone. (Jensen, 2018, p. 228.) In this thesis, the aim is to identify the different areas of responsibility of the cooperation and interaction formed by professionals in the social and health sector and in the cultural sector.
In their article, Laukkanen, Jaakonaho, Fast and Koivisto (2022) delved into arts-based and artistic research in health and social field context. They found out that researchers working in boundary zones of different fields should be open and flexible to adapt to different approaches of making research, for example medical and non-medical, in the same contexts. They claim that sensitivity and awareness with ethics, different working cultures and institutional procedures are essential qualities in arts-based and artistic research in social and health field. According to Laukkanen et al. (2022) negotiating and assessing ethical questions in boundary areas of different fields can lead to more distinct articulation and understanding of for example, power structures that cross different areas of society. It is important to articulate and be aware of the ethical questions, even though the researchers might not have answers to them. (Laukkanen et al. 2022, pp. 351–352.)

In summary, Huhtinen-Hildén et al. (2019), creative group activities can promote an individual's sense of social inclusion and well-being. According to Nivala et al. (2019) in social pedagogy the focus of creative activity is working together, the creative process and shared experiences. Nivala et al. (2019), cultural democracy refers to the accessibility of art and culture, as well as the individual's own creativity and participation in creative activities. Jussilainen (2019) describes community art as a process guided by an art professional. According to Jussilainen (2019), one of the main principles of community art is that anyone can participate in the process of producing art regardless of their background. Jussilainen (2019) describes that community art can take place in environments outside the traditional art institute in cooperation with, for example, the social and health sector. Koskinen (2019), on the other hand, describes defining mutual goals for the project and communication and sharing between professionals as important aspect in multidisciplinary collaboration. Koskinen (2019) emphasizes that a successful collaboration is ideal when the artist can work within their own professional boundaries and competence. Huhtinen-Hildén et al. (2019) and Sutela (2017) also emphasize the importance of pedagogical skills in the
facilitating process of creative group activities. According to Jensen (2018), by identifying the institutional structures and views of the social and health sector and the cultural sector, it is possible to promote and create functional cooperation models for the cultural welfare sector. Laukkanen et al. (2022) in multidisciplinary projects should consider ethical foundations, professional boundaries, and be aware of different working methods and institutional structures. (Huhtinen-Hildén et al., 2019; Nivala et al., 2019; Jussilainen, 2019; Koskinen, 2019; Sutela, 2017; Jensen, 2018; Laukkanen et al., 2022.)

Community art in this research refers to a community process that takes place during a guided creative group activity. The result of the communal creation process is an animated film. Creative group activities include community and individual work phases. The activity is guided but aims at enabling independent and supported work. Creative group activities take place in the context of the social and health sector without rehabilitative, therapeutic, or other goals related to the social and health sector. In this thesis, community refers to a small group of people with developmental disabilities who are in the services of RinneKodit which is a social enterprise and part of the non-profit foundation of Diakonissalaitos.

2.4 Medical and social perspectives on developmental disability

Disability is always intertwined with culture, social and historical situations. The phenomenon of disability arises and forms in a certain context, time, place, economic and social system (Vehmas, 2005, p. 109). According to Goodley (2014), ableism is a phenomenon and scheme that favours psychologically, socially, economically, and culturally and bodily normative values. The system promotes and ideally, so called normal, health and personality, creating socially greater space and freedom for normative citizens. Ableism perpetuates institutional prejudices against disability, promoting scientific, therapeutic, and medical perspective and structures. (Goodley, 2014, pp. 21–22.)
The conceptual framework presents two perspectives on disability: the social model and the medical model. The medical model has been included in the reference framework because it is important to knowledge how strongly Finnish society relies on medicine perspective for example in disability services. The law 2 § of the Special Care for People with Developmental Disabilities specifies that to receive special care services, medical, psychological, and social examinations and aptitude tests are required (Finlex 2023). In other words, in Finnish society, a lot of importance is given to medicine, when planning and implementing services for disabled people. As Goodley (2014) describes, ableism is maintained in different structures of society in different ways (Goodley, 2014, pp. 22).

The medical approach seeks to define developmental disability through medical means. According to the ICD-10 classification, a person whose development is hindered or disrupted due to an injury or illness acquired at birth or during development is called a person with a developmental disability. Developmental disability is a symptom of a dysfunction of the cerebral cortex. According to the strict medical approach, the mental development of a person with a developmental disability has either stopped or is incomplete. The cognitive, linguistic, motor, and social abilities affecting the intelligence level have weakened. Disorders of mental development can be seen, for example, in the way that it is more challenging for a person with a developmental disability to learn new things and to apply learned things in new situations. The disorder of mental development also affects the ability to control one's own life.

Conception, pregnancy, and early childhood have a lot of influence on the development of developmental disabilities (Arvio, 2022, p. 49). The underlying causes of developmental disabilities can be divided into four main categories: genetic causes (genetic diseases and syndromes), acquired causes (influential events during development), multifactorial causes (heredity and environmental factors), unknown causes (Arvio, 2022 p. 51). A developmental disability diagnosis is usually given before school age, but before the age of 17 at the latest.
Developmental disabilities are the largest group of disabilities. According to research, about 1% of the Western population has developmental disabilities. In addition, about 3% have various neurological, developmental, and learning challenges. According to epidemiological studies conducted in Finland over the past decades, about 0.6% of the Finnish population have mild developmental disabilities, 0.2% have moderate developmental disabilities, and 0.1% of the Finnish population have severe and profound developmental disabilities. Since the 1960s, the proportion of people with developmental disabilities in the Finnish population has remained the same. The age distribution of people with developmental disabilities is young compared to the entire Finnish population. In the past 40 years, the life expectancy of people with developmental disabilities has increased significantly. (Arvio, 2022, pp. 14–15.)

Studies suggest that people with developmental disabilities are more vulnerable for mental health issues. Reasons have been considered, for example, the person's exposure to negative life experiences, repeated failures, being bullied, and deficiencies in social and language skills. In addition, neurological diseases related to abnormal functioning of the brain may predispose to various mental health disorders. According to research, mental health disorders occur in about 30–50% and the prevalence is at least two or three times higher compared to people who do not have developmental disability. (Aaltonen, 2022, pp. 167–168.)

The roots of social disability research lie in the 1960s and 1970s when political activation of disabled persons started. People with disabilities experienced injustice towards the dominance of doctors and other non-disabled professionals. People with disabilities began to demand the right to determine their own lives, independence, and autonomy. Disability had been treated mainly using medical approach, ignoring the social factors that made life difficult for disabled people. (Vehmas, 2005, p. 109.)

One significant political movement for the disabled people has been “The Independent Living Movement”, born in the 1960s in the United States. The movement was influenced by other anti-racism movements of its era. The
glorification of beauty and youth and the fears of people becoming disabled were seen as the background of disability-related prejudices. Challenges faced by disabled persons were reduced by removing architectural and environmental barriers and influencing people’s attitudes. According to thinking based on the minority group model, the reason for disability-related limitations is not biological characteristics, but it is in the environment where the needs of disabled people differ from the majority population and have not been considered. Social structures are based on values, expectations, and assumptions according to what kind of mental and physical qualities people should have, to be able to participate in society. (Vehmas, 2005, pp. 109–110.)

According to the social model, disability is about discrimination and moral injustice, and it arose at the end of the 18th century with industrialization. The physical and efficiency requirements imposed on industrial workers left disabled people outside the labour market. As a result of being excluded from the labour market, disabled people were considered as social problem. The solution to this problem was to confine disabled people into institutions and rely on medical models for their care. (Vehmas, 2005, pp. 120–121.)

The World Health Organization's first International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) classification was published in 1980. The classification was updated in 2001. The ICF classification has been criticized for its excessive emphasis on medicine. Diagnosis-centricity is seen as objectifying, forgetting the personality and identity of the disabled person. (Vehmas, 2005, pp. 113–114.) Medicalization refers to a process in which human behaviour has been tried to be explained more and more medically. One form of medicalization is geneticism, which aims to explain human differences primarily with hereditary factors. Medicalization, which began in the 19th century, is still seen as the basis of institutional arrangements for disabled people. (Vehmas, 2005, pp. 58–59.) The social approach does not necessarily deny the medically defined physical injury of disability, instead the focus is on social factors that make life difficult for disabled people and prevent them from participating in community life (Vehmas, 2005, p. 115).
There are differences in disability terminology around the world. In Finland, the word "kehitysvamma" is commonly used to mean intellectually disabled in social and health and disability fields. In the British, the term "learning disability" is often used, which is understood as "oppimisvaikeus" in Finland. In the rest of Europe, the popular term is "intellectual disability" and in North American publications the term "developmental disability" is used. (Arvio 2022 p. 13.) In this thesis, the word "developmental disability" will be used because, from the authors' point of view, the word best describes the Finnish term "kehitysvamma", "kehitys" -> "development", "vamma" -> "disability".

The English word (intellectual disability), it can be translated as (kehitysvamma), but it also refers to the word "älykkyys". Developmental disability is much broader than a dimension limited only to intelligence. In addition to intelligence, it involves a mental and physical dimension. A person may have, for example, typical facial features based on diagnose, but still have individual appearance features according to their inheritance, their own personality and way of being. These are the reasons why we choose to use the term "developmental disability", because the term reaches a broader description of disability.

In summary, as previously mentioned, developmental disability is a multidimensional subject and cannot be seen only from a one perspective. The starting point of our research is not to emphasize the medical approach of developmental disability, but to look at it holistically without forgetting the special needs of the people participating in the research. Although we do not use a medical approach, it is still relevant to understand disability from a both perspectives because like Vehmas (2005) describes disability is always bound to the social situation, culture, and history. In developmental disability research, it is important to knowledge the history of disability, human rights and how disability research has developed. The risk of ableism always exists because, according to Goodley (2014), ableism manifests itself in the structures of society and maintains discriminatory attitudes and systems. In today's modern Finnish society Finnish disability service system relies on the medical perspective of developmental disability. (Vehmas, 2005; Goodley, 2014; Finlex 2023.)
2.5 Disability research

Social disability research is multidisciplinary, and it can be done, for example, in humanities, behavioural science, and social science research. The starting point is to understand disability as a political, social, and cultural phenomenon. The most significant theme in social disability research is discrimination. (Vehmas, 2005, pp. 116, 119.) According to the social perception of disability, the idea that disability itself causes a person to have limited reality and opportunities is one-sided and incorrect. (Vehmas, 2005, p. 121.) In a review article about the artistic activities of people with disabilities, Sutela (2017) refers to international studies according to which artistic cooperation has positive effects on the psychological, physical, and social well-being of disabled persons. In addition, studies show that artistic activities have positive effects on self-esteem, self-image, on friendships and interaction skills. In their literature review, Sutela (2017) describes that with the help of communal art activities, participants can find a way to realize their own creativity in a group and this can increase the feeling of belonging. In addition, inclusive art activities can offer disabled people the opportunity to participate in social activities. (Sutela, 2017, pp. 71–21.)

According to Sutela (2017), some disability researchers have criticized the fact that artistic activity is seen often as a form of therapy and not primarily as an opportunity to realize creativity or be part of a wider art field. The visibility of disabled persons as part of the art field and as art producers enables disabled persons’ own voice to be heard in discussions concerning them. Art provides tools to bring out socially significant issues from the perspective of disabled people. (Sutela, 2017, pp. 72–73, 76.) Disability research also receives criticism. Goodley, Lawthom, Liddiard and Runswick-Cole (2019) present in their article Provocations for Critical Disability Studies, new critical perspectives on disability studies for disability researchers. Goodley et al. (2019) present five different critical perspectives, provocations, for contemporary critical disability research, the aim is not to produce new knowledge but to awaken researchers to think
about critical disability research from new perspectives. (Goodley Lawthom, Liddiard and Runswick-Cole, 2019, p. 975.)

As a first provocation, Goodley et al (2019) present: what is the purpose of theory? They express their concern that critical disability research should be an interdisciplinary field, creating new theories, but not forgetting the old theoretical roots of the field. New theories should serve the purpose without forgetting the ontological and epistemological origins of the field, as well as previous studies that focused on the political, cultural, and social nature of disability. (Goodley Lawthom, Liddiard and Runswick-Cole, 2019, pp. 976-977.)

As a second provocation, Goodley et al (2019) present: how inclusive is critical disability studies? According to Goodley et al. (2019) critical disability research is dominated by geographic regionalism, creating challenges for new theories that cannot be applied outside the region. However, the researchers also see the importance of regional and culture-based disability research and emphasize the researchers' openness, honesty in regionalism and how it has affected the research. (Goodley Lawthom, Liddiard and Runswick-Cole, 2019, pp. 978–979.)

As a third provocative perspective, Goodley et al (2019) present: is disability the object or subject of studies? Researchers raise their concern that disabled people are seen as subjects of research in several disciplines and not, for example, as producers of new knowledge in the research field. One of the guiding philosophies of disability research has been that disabled people themselves are actively involved in producing new knowledge, theories and bringing their own perspective to research in the field. Goodley et al. al (2019) questions: why people with disabilities are the subject of research, what is the ultimate purpose of research, who has the right to use disability as the subject of research and why? (Goodley Lawthom, Liddiard and Runswick-Cole, 2019, pp. 980–982.)

The fourth provocation according to Goodley et al (2019) is: what matters or gets said about disability? This refers to the challenges of linguistic expression when talking about disabled people. Disability as a concept is often seen to reflect, for
example, something different from the norm and as dysfunction. Disabling language lives in everyday language in society. Goodley et al. al (2019) also researchers in the field of disability unconsciously and consciously maintain disabilistic language. (Goodley Lawthom, Liddiard and Runswick-Cole, 2019, pp. 982–983.)

The fifth provocation that Goodley et al (2019) highlights is: how can we attend to disability and ability? Disability is often seen as a dysfunction of ability. Ability is seen as an achievement of a successful person and a sign of progress. Goodley et al. al (2019), contemporary ableism values wit, flexibility, success, mobility, and achievement. Goodley et al. al (2019) raise the school system, which is rewardingly based on individual performances and achievements, as one form of the modern ableisms. According to Goodley et al. al (2019) disability can offer opportunities. For example, when looking at reforming the school system, disabled children can give the opportunity to look at arrange ment from a new perspective. Goodley et al. al (2019) suggest that ability can be seen as a phenomenon that can be viewed as a collective potential rather than an individual and more limited view. Goodley et al. al (2019) ask the question: how could the phenomenon of ableism be rethought in critical disability research? (Goodley Lawthom, Liddiard and Runswick-Cole, 2019, pp. 985–988.)

As Goodley (2014) describes, ableism is maintained in different structures of society in different ways and forms (Goodley, 2014, pp. 22). Different art forms can also increase viewers' prejudices towards developmental disabilities. How disability is presented in art has also been the subject of researcher's interest.

In their research, Renwick, Schormans, Shore (2014) examine how disabled people are presented in contemporary Hollywood films. The study examined the appearance of disabled people in films from three different perspectives: Occupational Perspective, Disability Perspective and Media Perspective. Eight films from the years 1999–2009 were selected in the study. The selection criteria for the films were: contemporary, mainstream Hollywood film, based on North American culture, fictional, in English, the main character is an adult with
intellectual disabilities, and they go to work. The researchers analysed the research data using inductive content analysis. The results of the data analysis showed that the disabled people in the movies worked in jobs that are considered socially acceptable, such as waiters and construction workers. The persons were presented in such a way that they liked their work and had the opportunity to spend their free time. Although the main characters with disabilities were mainly presented in a positive light and with good intentions, the researchers still identified some negative generalizations in which the characters were presented. These were, for example, the emphasized childlike behaviour of the main characters and the disapproval of the non-disabled character towards unwanted behaviour. The researchers' conclusions were that the film might strengthen negative prejudices against disabled people when they are presented in a very limited and stereotypical manner. Renwick, Schormans, Shore, 2014, pp. 20–29.)

As Renwick et al. (2014) describe, the risk of ableism always exists when non-disabled people try to portray disabled people. The risk of falling into stereotypes is always there and this should be considered even if the intentions are good.

Richards, Lawthom and Runswick-Cole (2017) used community-based creative methods in their research, which aimed to address and correct some misconceptions related to developmental disabilities. About 40 men with developmental disabilities participated in the research project over a 12-month period. The research used various creative community-based methods such as photography, poetry, drama, filmmaking, sculpture, and painting. The goal was to use creative methods to make the voice of people with disabilities heard and give them a way to bring up their own experiences related to misunderstandings and negative life experiences. The study concluded that the use of community-based methods in research contributes to bringing out the experiences, opinions, and views of people with disabilities, which may be ignored at the societal level. Richards, Lawthom and Runswick-Cole, 2017, pp. 204-205, 222.)

In their research, Schwartz, Blue, McDonald, Giuliani, Weber, Seirup, Rose, Elkis-Albuhoff, Rosenfeld and Perkins (2010) investigated whether watching documentaries about people with disabilities affects the public's perceptions of
disability. The films were screened at The Sprout Film Festival at Hofstra: Focus on Disability Awareness. In addition to the educational goal, the aim was to provide the audience with an enjoyable and thought-provoking depiction of the real life of people with disabilities. Each educational program the faculty in the department of Counseling, Research, Special education, and Rehabilitation at Hofstra University organized a program for the festival according to its discipline. The fields of science, according to the theme of which the films were shown, were Counselling, Special Education, Creative Arts Therapy, Rehabilitation Counselling and Gerontology. (Schwartz et al. 2010, pp. 842–843)

The research was carried out as a survey, which included qualitative and quantitative measures. Volunteer participants answered the survey after watching the film. As a result of the survey on disability, it was concluded that the films had an impact on the respondent's perception of disability. The films also had an educational effect from the student’s point of view. The researchers concluded that the participants had been generally satisfied with the movie experience. Movies were seen as a learning method, giving students new knowledge about disability. (Schwartz et al. 2010, pp. 846–847.)

Vehmas and Mietola (2022) criticize the exclusion of people with severe developmental disability from disability research. In addition, they criticize the fact that disability research based on medical sciences creates a one-sided and stereotypical picture of disabled people and their lives. According to Vehmas and Mietola (2022), disability research should be inclusive and emancipatory, so that disabled people can be freed from the supremacy of non-disabled people. However, inclusive research may exclude people with more severe developmental disabilities from disability research. According to Vehmas and Mietola (2022), disability research has traditionally focused on such cultural, structural, and social actions that prevent equal social inclusion. The focus of disability research has been social and cultural factors, and that’s why the individual’s experience and characteristics have often been neglected. (Vehmas et.al. 2022, pp. 26–28.)
In summary, according to Vehmas (2005), social disability research is multidisciplinary, which can be carried out from the perspectives of social science, behavioural science and humanistic science. Disability research receives criticism. According to Sutela (2017), researchers have, for example, criticized the fact that artistic activity is often seen as a form of rehabilitation for the disabled people and not, for example, as an opportunity to realize one's own creativity. Vehmas et al. (2022), on the other hand, criticize the fact that persons with moderate or severe developmental disabilities are not considered in disability studies and are often excluded from disability studies. In addition, Vehmas et al. (2022) criticize medical research for giving a too one-sided picture of disability. Goodley et al. (2019) present new perspectives and reflections on contemporary disability research. Renwick et al. (2014) identified ableist elements from contemporary Hollywood films that perpetuate a stereotypical image of disability. However, creative methods can be used to influence people's prejudices and increase awareness of disability. Richards et al. (2017) state in their research that with the help of a creative community-based method, it was possible to convey the experiences and opinions of people with developmental disabilities and thus influence the prejudices of the wider public towards disability. Also, Schwartz et al. (2010) stated in their study that the public's prejudices towards developmental disability could be influenced with the help of documentary films. (Vehmas, 2005; Sutela, 2017; Vehmas et al., 2022; Goodley et al., 2019; Renwick et al. 2014; Richards et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2010.) Disability research must examine ethical perspectives, participation, and inclusion of disabled people in research, how research promotes the rights of disabled people in the right way, what elements are used to build the framework of disability research, the suitability of the chosen method for research, how disabled people are considered, and presented in the research.
3 Implementation of the study

This chapter describes the research process from defining the research task and question to the final phases of implementation. The implementation includes describing methodological background, and the selection of data construction and analysis methods and ethics in this research.

3.1 Research task and questions

The thesis aims to create a space where the experiences of the participants could become visible, heard, or recognized. This required non-verbal forms of constructing data. As a medium, animation film can be playful, experimental and it does not have to be subordinate to limiting factors and structures of reality like gravity or other physical forces, for example. In an animation film it is possible to be able to imagine things that would not be possible in real life. That is why it can be a medium for examining complex issues on a concrete everyday life level. It is possible to leave the limiting factors and structures of reality aside. The aim of the thesis is to make some of the limiting factors and structures of the project visible. By doing so, the purpose of the project is to create discussion about societal space traditionally given to a marginalized group – in this case, to people with developmental disabilities in the Finnish society (Sotkasiira et al., 2021). The thesis also aims to clarify the process of this participatory project and the roles of the authors to the authors themselves in a participatory process. By focusing on personal experiences, feelings, and contemplation it is possible to articulate, for example, how the individual choices or actions of different professionals can create possibilities or limitations for inclusion.

The research questions are:

1. What kinds of factors may influence the realization of social inclusion and participation in a community art project when working with people with developmental disabilities?
2. What kind of elements can be identified from the film The Meaning of Life, in connection to the participants’ experiences of inclusion, participation, and meaningfulness in life?

The aim of the group activities as part of this thesis is to support the participants agency and experience of inclusion. In addition, in and through the process of making the animation film, the aim is to increase participants experiences of inclusion and participation. The thesis aims to articulate various types of factors (practical, abstract, philosophical), that may influence the realization of social inclusion. Due to the complex nature of social situations and group settings, it is often difficult to point out exactly what was the cause of certain action or event or series of actions and events. Based on previous research, we suggest that it is relevant and meaningful to contemplate the factors that may influence than to aim to point out exact, straight forward factors that for sure do affect, and possibly have a clear and predictable influence. The thesis aims to explore a communal creative process around stop-motion animation film making. Inside a shared creative process, it was aiming to find factors that could promote or prevent social inclusion and participation. By using a creative process as an approach for creating a community, the thesis aims to reach out for non-verbal ways of answering the research question.

The idea for the thesis arose from the desire to combine social, health and cultural expertise, visions, approaches, and perspectives to explore the phenomena around participation and social inclusion. The authors of the thesis were united by philosophical and critical thinking around the social inclusion and participatory actions. In addition, authors shared a mutual understanding that participatory research and filmmaking itself can be complex by nature. For example, it requires openness and readiness to adapt to changes and simultaneously leans heavily on structures. Accordingly, constant negotiation, reflecting, awareness of power-related issues, and multiple forms of knowledge, can require accepting intuitive thinking as a tool when conducting a participatory project. (Leavy, 2017, pp. 224–254.)
3.2 Research methodology

The thesis is placed in the participatory action research paradigm. It seems to be a stereotypical example of participatory action research in a sense that it easily slips out of definitions and frames. In the research plan the thesis was defined to be a qualitative participatory action research. The field and definitions of participatory action research are not always clearly visible but constantly negotiable. In this thesis, participatory action research includes arts-based practices. In the context of this thesis arts-based practice is the process of making an animated short film by and with the participants. An animation film was chosen as a medium for creating meanings and representations by the participants in an easy access, open and playful process. The process aims to be open for different types of participation as it consists of various types of working phases, as described later in this chapter.

The thesis is not entirely participatory in a sense that it does not include participation in all phases from planning to analysing the data and voicing the results (Leavy 2017, pp. 237–238). Participation is involved only in the creative, art-based, process of making the short film. The participants were not invited to participate defining either the initial problem, research question, or the content or practice of the creative process. The authors were responsible of all those choices.

The thesis is based on subjective-theoretical research tradition (Anttila 2006, p. 475) that aims to create interpretations and understanding. The paradigm is interpretative and hermeneutic referring to Anttila (2006). The paradigm where from the thesis operates, can also be defined as transformative in a sense that it aims to be empowering, emancipatory, and transformative (Leavy 2017, p. 234). Accordingly, the thesis is action research in a sense that it is aiming to find a way to operate in a community in an inclusive way but not in a sense that it has a clear purpose to improve a certain condition of a certain community that would have driven from a community (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020, pp.40–45). The thesis aims to develop practices but not to develop a certain application for certain
purposes. The thesis is practice oriented in its chosen methods, but theory oriented when trying to conceptualise the factors that may have influence on inclusion.

The overall design and research ‘attitude’ are playful and inquisitive, and it aims to create surprising connection between people and multiple types of information. It also aims to pursue multiple ways of knowing, all of them that are in-built in humanity. (Ryynänen & Rannikko 2021, p.18.) The methodology of this research project is complex by nature. It seemed to be a built-in feature of the thesis to define itself to be something and then questioning the definition. The research methodology of the thesis was revisited several times during the process.

3.3 Data construction

The thesis was carried out in collaboration with Rinnekodit at Lakisto activity center (Rinnekodit Lakiston työtoiminta in Finnish). The participants were selected from two different daytime activity groups. First there was an open call for participants to express their interest to participate. Among volunteers, the participants were selected by lottery. A total of ten people with developmental disabilities aged 20–60 participated in the study. During the research, 8–10 participants participated in the implementation groups, depending on the day.

All together six meetings related to the filmmaking were held in Lakisto in own private space reserved for the session. The authors of the thesis were responsible for supervising and organizing the meetings. Creative approaches were used in the group session, and each group session followed a pre-planned structure. In addition, groups had the opportunity for free-form art activities, brainstorming and discussion. The duration of each group was about two hours. The short film was conducted by the participants with the technical support and dramaturgical guidance by the responsible authors. The exact topic for the film was not defined in advance but the thematic frame Meaning of life was decided by the authors as a starting point for the creative process. The participants were the script writers and directors of the film and took part in the hands-on
filmmaking how they chose and felt comfortable. The process of film making was carried out in six meetings where the last meeting was arranged for watching the film and celebrating before the first public screening. The first five meetings were planned before hand by the authors but each time they were prepared to use alternative plans if it was required.

During the meetings, the data was constructed by using systematic observation model (Huhtinen-Hildén & Isola 2020) for creative group activities. Research diaries and observations were written without credentials. Research data was not disclosed to third parties not involved in this project.

Observation took place during group activities using a systematic creative group activity observation model (Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola 2020). The systematic creative group observation model directs attention to four different perspectives:

1. Means and methods of creative activities
2. Facilitating
3. Individual participants' means of being and doing,

The information obtained from the observation of creative group activity was documented on a separate form. The information obtained from the observation was written without interpretations. The research diary reflected on researchers own experiences in relation to their own role as a group facilitator and researcher, and it also examined the factors that may influence the realization of social inclusion in a community art project. The data gathered from the observation and research diaries were saved and stored at Metropolia's secure workstation. The observation and diary material written during the study was be destroyed immediately upon completion of the research.

In this thesis, the visual method was used as a processual tool. The goal of the method was to discover the dimensions within the artistic process, viewed from the perspective of social inclusion. The animation film was given the theme meaning of life by the researchers. Management of health and wellbeing promotion (THL 2023) has developed an Experiences of Social Inclusion Scale
that can be used to measure the experience of inclusion. Experiences of Social Inclusion Scale consists of ten statements, and the meaning of life theme was based on the sixth statement of the scale, "I feel that my life has a purpose". (Management of health and wellbeing promotion, 2023, read on 11.9.23.) During the creative process of making an animated short film theme was carried through different phases of creative process: mind-map, story crafting, storyboard, crafting, filming, editing, sound design and premiere. The data was the process and the short film called *Meaning of life*.

Visual research methods mean methods that can be used to produce visual research material and present research results. In addition, visual methods can serve as a starting point for linguistic material. Various visual materials can be used in research, such as drawings, photographs, cartoons, moving images, daily objects, art objects, and dance and performance shows. Visual material can be produced by a research participant, a researcher, or it can be material obtained from another source, such as a media image or film. When the aim of the research is to investigate the emotions, involvement, opinions, and experiences of the participants, then the participants have an active role as a producer of visual material or its selector. (Hakoköngäs & Martikainen 2021, pp. 82–83.)

Hakoköngäs and Martikainen (2021) describe the advantages of visual methods are that methods can be used to evoke emotions, experiences, and memories in different ways than through written or spoken expressions. Visual methods can create new perspectives for the participants on the topic under discussion and promote critical thinking. According to Hakoköngäs and Martikainen (2021), research using visual methods have found that visual methods usually motivate participants. One explanatory factor has been that the use of visual methods increases the autonomy of the research participants, as they can influence to the content themselves. The use of visual methods in research is seen as one way to lower the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched. (Hakoköngäs and Martikainen, 2021, p. 83.)
The advantage of methods using visual methods has been methods concreteness. Instead of abstract linguistic concepts, visual material can concretize for the participants and the researcher the topic to be discussed and the research goal/target. Visual methods offer a way to deal with abstract topics that are difficult to deal with verbally. Visual methods can be used in research based on various scientific theoretical premises. (Hakoköngäs & Martikainen, 2021, pp. 83–84.)

Visual methods have been used in disability research, for example, as means to bring out the voice of disabled people, to influence the surrounding community, and to increase information about disabilities. For example, Schleiena et.al (2013) used the photovoice method in the research, where seven people with developmental disabilities documented their own lives using photographs. The method gave the participants the opportunity to bring up their own hopes, dreams, and concerns about belonging to the community. With the help of the Photovoice method, it was possible to identify themes that the disabled persons wanted to be noticed from their lives. Themes that emerged were, one's own skills and abilities that had not been recognized in the community, dimensions related to independence, to be encountered as an adult, financial matters, and joining and belonging to the community. It was also found that the community members who participated in the photo exhibition said that the exhibition increased awareness of developmental disabilities. (Schleiena, Brake, Miller, Walton, 2013.)

Participatory video analysis was used in research (Sitter 2015), which allowed adults with developmental disabilities to explore the dimensions of sexual health by designing and producing videos around with the topic. The participants were actively involved in the research process. The participants research the topic by designing and shooting short videos, discussing the topics, analysing, participating in the editing process, and presenting the videos to a target group of their choice. The research results suggest that the participatory video process allowed the participants a way to exam sexual health themes and share their own experiences. In addition, the method gave the participants the opportunity to share information and their own views with a certain audience (caregivers,
relatives, community). In addition, the goal of the study was to increase a deeper understanding of the participatory video method and participatory analysis in disability research. (Sitter, 2015, pp. 910–922.) The limitations of the research in terms of accessibility of participation in the editing process were choice making, time and teaching the technique. Some of the participants were more talkative than others and dominated the editing phase. The situation made it possible for some of the participants to be in a privileged position in the video-making process. Different methods were used to solve the situation. (Sitter, 2015, p. 921.)

3.4 Meetings

The following quote from the authors diary describes the atmosphere in the beginning of the first meeting with the participants and authors, from the point of view of the other author. This quote is added here to describe the emotional tone of the entire group, participants, and authors. The authors consider that this quote can set the ground for the following description of the meetings to be perceived with a certain emotional atmosphere in mind.

We are waiting with Sera on the road for the participants to arrive. We see the participants in the distance as a large mass flowing as they arrive along the road. They are already waving happily from afar and I hear the greetings "hi" and occasionally my own name "Kaisa". When we meet on the road, we are all happy and excited. We go together to the working space, which is not familiar to the participants. We take off our jackets and go sit together around the table. This is where our journey together begins.

First session on the 17th of November 2022. Duration 2h.

The aim of the first group meeting was to get to know each other and the basic principles of making an animation, present the project and the schedule.

The first group session started with an introduction. The facilitators introduced themselves and told what the whole project is about. The facilitators described the goals and schedule of the work. In addition, the group’s common rules were
reviewed and discussed. After this, each group member got to tell their own name and what thing has brought joy to their life lately.

The next step was getting to know animation making with practical examples. Basic idea and technique of making a stop motion animation was introduced by watching a short video and then making a simple roll animation by using a pen and paper. The work phase allowed the participants a concrete way to get to know the basics of animation through practical work. See picture 1 and 2, participant playing with roll animation.

![Participant moving roll animation smiley face up.](image-url)
The next work step was getting to know the theme of the animation. The facilitators presented a pre-selected theme - the *meaning of life*. Participants started building a mind map around the theme of the purpose of life. The work took place in a free form, so that each participant could throw out their thoughts related to the theme and the facilitator wrote them down on paper. Leading questions were used to support the work and an attempt was to describe the abstract concept in plain language. A multidimensional mind map was built around the theme.

At the end of the group, the participants' thoughts, and feelings on what it was like to participate in the group were discussed. In addition, the practical issues related to the project were informed and it was told when the next group sessions would be organized.
Second session on the 21st of November 2022. Duration 2h.

The aim of the group session was to create a story and use the mind map created around the theme of the meaning of life as a pre-research material for the story.

The second group session started with going through how’s everyone doing. Next, we went through what had been done the previous time and presented the topic of the day – the script. The script created collaboratively, in such a way that one of the facilitators wrote the story for the participants by hand on paper and the other on used computer. An application of storytelling (Sadutus, in Finnish) method (Karlsson 2014, pp. 24–40) was used in this work phase. A computer screen was projected onto the wall, where everyone could follow the story. The storytelling happened in such a way that everyone could continue the story, bringing their own point of view to the script. The story was built sentence by sentence. The story was read aloud several times so that all participants could follow its progress. During the session, two stories were created, one of which was Christmas themed and was chosen for further processing.

During the second part of the session, we went through what kind of characters could be in the selected story. In addition, we went through what kind of environments the story contains. Characters, environments, and other ideas were written down. The group session was concluded by reviewing what had been done and telling when the next group session will be held.

Third session on the 24th of November 2022. Duration 2h.

The aim of the third session was to create a storyboard and characters. The storyboard was created together in such a way that pieces of A2 sized papers were attached to the wall. The facilitator acted as the secretary of the working phase and drew the sketches on paper during the session. The second facilitator read the story aloud scene by scene. The participants took part in the work phase verbally by telling their thoughts about what will happen in the current scene. The storyboard was divided into eight separate scenes.
After the storyboard creation, we moved on to the next work phase. The aim was to prepare the characters for the story. Each participant could decide for which character or props to make. Characters and props were made by crafting them using different materials such as paper, coloured carton, fabric, glue, scissors, glitter, wool, fake fur, figures, fake snow, and lace. This work phase included independent work and was supported by the facilitators if necessary.
Fourth session on the 25th of November 2022. Duration 3h.

The aim of the fourth group session was to shoot the entire film. Before the fourth session started, the facilitators had sorted the characters and props according to the scenes. The solution was made to speed up and clarify the filming process, as time was limited. Filming started from the first scene and progressed scene by scene. Filming took place in such a way that each scene was brought to the
filming table and the participant could move the characters and film individually. An iPad was used in the shoot and the setting was lit using the lighting. Characters and their parts were moved slowly and after each movement a picture was taken. This work phase was very slow and required precision. Participation was supported by showing the model, verbally and physically. See picture 5 where props are moved by the participant in the first scene.

![Picture 5. The participant works in first scene, moving windows of the Christmas calendar](image)

Fifth session on the 28th of November 2022. Duration 3h.

The aim of the fifth meeting was to create sounds into the film and record. The first version of the film was edited the weekend before the group session. The sound design process was started by watching the first version of the film, after there was a discussion about what kind of sounds the film could appear. The facilitators guiding the situation, for example by asking leading questions: "What kind of sound could there be in this scene? How to produce a certain sound?".
The design process proceeded in a free form, so that the participants could throw their ideas freely into the air. The facilitator wrote down the ideas. When the voice plan had been done for everyone who wanted to, the role of each voice actor was assigned. Making sounds was practiced together before recording. The verbal performance took place individually, in pairs and with the strength of the whole group. The sounds that were produced during the record session were, for example, single words, sentences, different sounds and singing. The group session ended with the facilitators thanking the participants and telling them when the last session will be held.

Sixth session on the 15th of December 2022. Duration 1h.

The aim of the last session was to gather together to watch the finished film. For this session, mulled wine, and Christmas tarts were served. The group had an open discussion about the project and the participants had the opportunity to give oral feedback. The facilitator recorded the feedback. At the end of the group, the facilitators thanked all the participants for participating in the project.

Public premiere on the 22nd of December 2022.

The public premiere was organized in the banquet hall of the Rinnekodit daytime activity centre Martti at the Espoo Lakisto. The premiere was part of a larger Christmas party, which was attended by an estimated 50 participants. At the premiere, all participants were awarded diplomas and a giftbags for participating in the project.
Picture 6. A diploma was given to each participant

Picture 7. A poster to promote the premiere was made
3.5 Data analysis

The Finnish version of the creative group activity observation model was used in the research. Activities that were not part of this study were removed from the observation model. The research diaries were translated from Finnish to English, written open and combined into one text. The data of the research was analysed using an inductive content analysis method. Inductive content analysis can be divided into three-phase process: 1. reduction/simplification of data, 2. clustering/grouping of data and 3. abstraction/creating theoretical concepts (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, p. 108).

The goal of reducing the data is to remove content from the research data that is irrelevant to the research. The reduction of the data can be done by searching the for expressions corresponding to the research question and separate them from the data. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, p.109.) In this thesis, the data was read several times and the sentences that answered the research question were colour coded with different colours. Sentences describing the same phenomenon were marked with the same colour in the text. Reduced expressions were created based on the original expressions. The goal of data clustering is to classify the original expressions into categories that describe the same concept. The categories are named with a concept that describes the content. A quality, character, or concept of the phenomenon can act as a classification unit. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, p. 110.) Simplified expressions were grouped into categories describing the same concept. In abstracting, we create theoretical concepts. Content analysis is based on interpretation and reasoning, where we move towards a more conceptual view of the phenomenon under study. In abstracting, the data is connected to theoretical concepts and the results present the concepts formed from the empirical data. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, pp. 112–113.) See Table 1. an example of data analysis.
Table 1. Example of the data analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original expressions</th>
<th>Reduced expressions</th>
<th>Simplified expressions</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The more passive participants were encouraged verbally to take part in the process. In addition, the participants encouraged each other to create the story.</td>
<td>Mentions about the verbal and physical support.</td>
<td>Physical support</td>
<td>Forms and levels of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support was offered by both authors, and it varied from verbal supportive instructions like: “Just noin.” to step by step hands on showing how it is done. Some of the participants made several different variations of this exercise.</td>
<td>Different levels and forms of support offered by the instructors.</td>
<td>Verbal support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-operation between the participants and different forms and levels of peer support.</td>
<td>Support given by the facilitators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questions and supportive phrases by the authors and participants</td>
<td>Supported participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal group support</td>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leading questions, giving alternatives, guiding questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal encouragement</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The participants were supportive towards each other and praised each other often. The group was also a good listener when someone was talking. There was laughter in many points during the session.

In some cases, the instructor prepared a roll animation on behalf of the participant in such a way that the participant was present in the activity but did not actually perform the activity him/herself or performance was done partly with physical and verbal support.
The short film *Meaning of life* was analysed by combining film analysis and qualitative content analysis. The analysis is based on film analysis to analyse the filmic content of the data and qualitative content analysis to systemise the material and have a thematic focus. The analysis focuses on expressions of inclusion, participation and meaningful life in audio, visual and other cinematic level.

Films can present the values and hierarchies, and other societal phenomena people experience. Paying attention to text, action, sound, props and characters, time, space, and other filmic aspects it is possible to articulate the meanings that are produced. The film analysis is based on the theory of three levels of meaning by French philosopher Roland Barthes (1977). According to Barthes (1977) it is possible to distinguish three levels of meaning in a film scene:

1. An informal level

2. A symbolic level

3. A third meaning, meaning beyond language.

Informal level operates on a concrete level, what can be seen in a scene, costumes, characters and other recognisable elements, things that are possible to verbalise and communicate. Symbolic level presents what kind of symbols the visible elements can bear and what the author wanted to say. The symbolism can be referential, historical, or diegetic for example. The third meaning reaches out to something recognisable but verbally not possible to communicate. According to Barthes the third meaning is something that is *theoretically locatable but not describable*. (Barthes 1977, pp. 52–68.)

The theory of Barthes (1977) is originally focused on films that include actors or other real people as performers, not animation films, but it is possible to apply the theory for other audio-visual works as film only. As they all imitate time and space as people perceive the world with their senses, and as they all are representations of the experienced worlds.
As the duration of data is only a few minutes long, the qualitative content analysis model is simple. The simplest coding frames consisting of one dimension are rare because they usually cannot provide enough details and depth (Schreier 2012, p. 65). In this case the simple form of the coding frame is justified because it is combined with film analysis to provide more details and depth.

Paying attention to text, action, sound, props and characters, time and space and other filmic aspects it is possible to articulate how the meanings are produced. As the film duration is only few minutes the qualitative content analysis model is simple. The coding frame is depicting inclusion, participation, and meaningful life. The film was divided in ten scenes and analysed scene by scene by asking the following questions:

- Which sounds relate to inclusion, participation, and meaningful life?
- Which characters and props refer to participation, inclusion, and meaningful life?
- How time and space are related to inclusion, participation, and meaningful life?
- Are there any other filmic aspects related to inclusion, participation, and meaningful life?
- Which dramaturgical elements are related to inclusion, participation, and meaningful life?

3.6 Research ethics

In this thesis the research ethics consists of several practical matters, for example required permits, and in-depth considerations of the ethics of arts-based participatory research. In addition, to answer the research questions the thesis
also aims to scrutinize the ethical questions related to arts-based participatory research. According Mykitiuk, Chaplick, and Rice, (2015, p.12) arts-based research has a unique quality that it requires its researchers to *rethink* how to respond to ethical issues. Arts-based participatory research can also lead to surprising ethical questions and require careful consideration from the researchers (Mykitiuk et al. 2015, p.26). In addition, Mykitiuk et al. (2015, p.13) present that arts-based disability research has complex ethical questions. For example, how can researchers create space for accessibility or how the researcher can promote or prevent the possible misrepresentations of the participants (Mykitiuk et al. 2015, p.13). Considering these special features of the ethics related to the arts-based participatory research, it is relevant to discuss the theory related to the ethics with the findings later in the thesis.

In their literature review on participatory research made with people with developmental disabilities, Rönkkö et al. (2022) summarize that the central issue with participatory research with people with developmental disability is, that so far it has not been defined what kind of participation of people with developmental disabilities in research can be called as participatory research. The lack of definition leads having difficulties in defining things like have the participants been able to influence the methods and topic of the research, and if so, to what extent (Rönkkö et al. 2022). This is the main ethical dilemma also in this thesis. Also, it is a one motivation to the whole thesis.

As a conclusion for their literature review Rönkkö et al. (2022) express their worry that the lack of definition may lead to lowering the standards so that simply participating in research as an informant is considered inclusive. Also, if research is defined as inclusive on too light grounds, for example to meet the criteria of funding. If the participation is defined to simply being an informant, then the academic researchers will be the ones who decide the topics and means of research. (Rönkkö, et al. 2022, p. 126.) In this thesis, the authors were aware of the dilemma of when and how the participants were, and were not, participating and that participants were not able to decide on the topic or the means of this project.
The main body of literature used in the thesis consists of peer reviewed articles. In addition, other literature, for example books, has been used. The authors were aware of giving credit to the work of others by citing sources appropriately. The authors took into consideration the principle of maximizing the benefits and minimizing harm. The emphasis was on the importance of considering the well-being of both individual participants and the broader community.

Prior to the start of the research project, research permits were applied from the Ethics Committee of the Deaconess Foundation. After receiving the research permits form the Ethics Committee of the Deaconess Foundation research permits were also applied for from 7 different municipalities. The research permit process was slow and laborious because each municipality had its own research permit application forms and attached requirements. The research permit process took about 3 months. The reason why research permits had to be applied for in each participant's hometown was that the project was carried out during the participants daytime activity service. Municipalities buy daytime activity services from Rinnekodit.

Participation in the study was voluntary and the participants had the right to terminate their participation at any time without consequences or explanation. According to the Research Ethics Committee (TENK 2019), if a person has a disability, they must be informed of the research and participation in an understandable way. The participant must give their consent primarily in person. (TENK 2019, pp. 9–10.) For this reason, the research information and consent were written in plain language and was accompanied by pictures, when necessary. A consent form was reviewed individually with each participant prior to signing. If the participant had difficulties in understanding, pictures were used as support. Permissions for the images used in this thesis have been obtained from the participants with a separate consent form. The images used in this thesis have been chosen to describe and clarify the process and results for the reader. Individual persons cannot be identified from the pictures. The signed consent forms were kept in a locked storage.
Participants were not appeared on their own faces in the animated film. Voice actors were asked for consent separately and it was based on voluntariness. Before recording the voices, it was made clear to the participants that they can be recognized from the film based on their voice. Participants personal matters were not shared outside the project by the authors.

The authors have individual positions in the project based on their background and professionalism. From the ethical perspective it is important to reason different positions and articulate professional competencies related to different tasks and responsibilities. The aim of positioning by professionalism was to improve safety of the group meetings for everybody and provide valid practices in film making. Sera Martikainen is Master of Arts in documentary film and a student in CRASH, culture, YAMK, Metropolia. Martikainen works as director in the field of documentary film. In this thesis, the main responsibilities were film theoretical, dramaturgical and technical questions and practices. Martikainen was working as a supportive co-filmmaker and a facilitator in the filmmaking sessions and throughout the whole process.

Kaisa Lahti is an occupational therapist, ceramic designer and a student in CRASH, social & health, YAMK, Metropolia. Lahti is currently working in Rinnekodit at Lakisto activity center. Lahti has worked in the field of developmental disabilities for five years. The responsibility was to act as a representative of the social and health sector in the project. She works at Rinnekodit and were committed to complying with the non-disclosure agreement as required by her employer. Before the start of the research, Sera Martikainen signed a non-disclosure agreement for students with Rinnekodit.

Restrictions on assembly brought about by the coronavirus epidemic. An opportunity to work distance as a backup. It was possible to reschedule the project if needed.

Funding for the film was provided by Rinnekodit and Rinnetuki Ry. The funding included all costs associated with the production of the film. The rights to use the
film and other contractual matters were coordinated by Communications Manager at Rinnekodit.

4 Findings

This chapter presents the findings that answer the research questions. Four elements were identified that might affect participation and the realization of social inclusion during creative group activities. In addition, this chapter describes the findings that arose because of the content analysis of the film *The Meaning of Life*. The quotations used in this chapter are direct quotations from the research diaries. Direct quotations have been used to clarify and support the presentation of research findings.

4.1 Forms and levels of support

Different forms of support emerged during the analysis of the research data related to how the participants were supported to participate in the activities. Forms of supported participation included verbal, physical, and peer support. According to Nivala and Ryynänen (2019) and Leemann et al. (2015), social inclusion takes place in communities and social interactions, (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, pp. 129–130; Leemann et.al., 2015, p. 5.) People with developmental disabilities may sometimes need support and guidance to interact and be part of the community.

Physical support was shown in such a way that the facilitator physically helped the participant to perform the activity. Such activities included, for example, assisting with scissors, drawing, gluing, and moving characters. Enabling the activity took place in a way that the facilitator carried out the activity on behalf of the participant partially or completely. Such situations where, for example, situations where the participant or facilitator felt that the participant was unable to perform the activity independently. These situations where, for example, the
design and creating of the props and/or character and completing a certain work
phase. The following quotation describes forms of giving physical and verbal
support.

Some of the participants performed the task independently and some
needed more help and guidance. Those who had challenges in fine
motor skills needed guidance. The making process of the roll
animation was done in cooperation with the participants who needed
more support. In some cases, the facilitator prepared a roll animation
on behalf of the participant in such a way that the participant was
present in the activity but did not actually perform the activity
him/herself or performance was done partly with physical and verbal
support.

Differences in fine motor skills influenced the need for support. It was shown, for
example, in productivity and in the ability to use different tools and materials
independently. The differences in drawing skills were shown in a way that those
who could draw independently or only needed a little help were able to progress
more independently in the task. In addition, they could produce more drawings if
they wanted. Instead, those who had little drawing skills needed physical and
verbal support from the facilitator. Since there were two facilitators, support could
be given for two participants at the same time. Others who also needed help, had
to passively wait their turn. Due to the time limit, those who needed more support
were only able to produce one work (roller animation). The same phenomenon
was noticeable in a group session where characters and props for animation were
made. Because the preparation of the characters and props required more time,
the facilitator was bound to work with one participant for a longer time. Again,
others who needed help had to passively wait their turn. Those who needed help
but were partially able to work independently were able to do some other work
while they waited. Picture 8 presents a participant moving reindeer sleigh in
filming session.
Verbal support usually took the form of encouraging the participant to take part in the activity, instructing the participant, introducing the topic to be discussed, giving positive feedback, or clarifying to the participant an issue that they did not understand. Following quotations describes a verbal form of support.

Support was offered by both authors, and it varied from verbal supportive instructions like: “Just noin.” to step by step hands on showing how it is done. Some of the participants made several different variations of this exercise. The authors told and showed what to do in this session. When the participants started to make things themselves the authors went around helping and commenting each of them individually. If someone called, they reacted right away somehow. Can I help? That’s great! Wow! Really good! These are amazing! Were common phrases in this session. The basic principle seemed to be that whatever was done everything was done right and was just perfect.
At first, the topic seemed challenging, but when the participants were encouraged, words began to appear on the board. We used guiding questions to support the working process. I was surprised how versatile the participants were able to create vocabulary around a very abstract topic. Those who were left a little aside in the group were verbally encouraged by the facilitators.

The importance of verbal support emerged in situations where language skills were required. Some of the participants could not read or they had limited reading skills, so the importance of verbal support rose to a strong role in the group situation, which required reading skills and the ability to create a story around an abstract topic. In the group situation, verbal support was manifested in the way that the facilitator used plain language and slowly read the story several times, so that even those participants who could not read the text on the board could participate in their own way. Following quotation describes a verbal form of support.

The story was created together in such a way that the facilitators wrote the story on Word-document, word for word in the way the participants wanted the story to go. A computer screen was projected onto the wall, where you could follow the story. Those participants with reading ability could follow the story at that moment and suggest corrections to the text. Some of the participants also noticed the spelling mistakes and pointed them out. In addition, attention was paid to sentence structures and word forms. Some of the participants who could not read or had little reading skills were left a little aside in this work phase. The story was read aloud a few times. When I read the story, I try to read it clearly articulated and slowly enough so that everyone can keep up with the story. Certain participants were more actively involved in creating the script. The more passive participants were encouraged verbally to take part in the process. In addition, the participants encouraged each other to create the story.

One form of support that emerged from the research data was peer support. The participants gave each other support spontaneously without the facilitator encouraging it. The support given by the participants to each other was expressed as verbal support, physical support and working together. Following quotations describes forms of peer support.

Though they were concentrated they found the time and space to praise and support each other occasionally.
The participants were supportive towards each other and praised each other often. The group was also a good listener when someone was talking. There was laughter in many points during the session.

"Are you nervous? Want to do it together?" Cooperation among the participants took place on their own without the facilitator encouraging or asking for it.

Participants either themselves offered support to another or asked for it directly from another participant. The phenomenon was noticeable at every group session. Following quotations describes forms of peer support.

In the group situation, one participant asked the other participant for help in the story making process. In this situation, participant started to support the other by asking questions and thereby giving alternatives to what the other wanted to tell. The situation ended with the participant who asked for help getting help from another, and with the support of the other, participant was able to tell the idea in the story.

During the group, cooperation was again noticeable. Two participants wanted to do the same characters/props together and by mutual agreement moved next to each other to make crafts together.

The findings based on data analysis show that different forms of support can be used to promote and enable participation in the creative process. Figure 1 visualizes the forms of support. Leemann et al. (2015) emphasize that social inclusion and participation are two different concepts. According to them, participation can contribute to an individual's experience of social inclusion. (Leemann et al., 2015, p. 5.) Observing and assessing participants’ needs of support is one area of professional judgment. Also, Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola (2019, p. 4) and Sutela (2017, p. 77) emphasize the importance of the facilitators pedagogical skills when guiding creative activities for people with disabilities. Figure 1 illustrates the forms of support.
Figure 1. Different forms of support to promote and enable participation in the creative process.
4.2 Creating emotional atmosphere

The expression of feelings emerged repeatedly from the research data. Emotions were expressed, for example, by laughing, vocalizing, saying lyrics, gesturing, crying, shouting, and physically expressed. All emotions were openly expressed, even the negative ones. Following quotations describes how emotion were expressed during creative group activity.

The atmosphere of the third group session was positive and there was a lot of laughter and giggles during the session. Experiences of success were expressed by laughing and presenting one's creations to others and the facilitators.

There was laughter in many points during the session. One of the participants added a personal touch to the roll animation by drawing themselves with their actual partner into it. Romance was in the air!

On this day many people were seemingly tired. Heads hanging, slow movements and one of them even laid their head on the table as soon as they sat. Again, we started with a round of how we are feeling today.

This phase of working changed the mood in the room a little bit. Many who were tired in the beginning started to work with concentration and drive. The tiredness of the group seemed to disappear. It was kind of forgotten. There was on person crying in the beginning but that feeling also vanished as the process moved forward.

The facilitators observations of the participants feelings and interpretations emerged from the research data. The facilitators observe and interprets the emotional states of the group and tries to influence them with their own actions and presence. Regulation of emotional states took place in situations where the aim was to avoid the situation culminating into a challenging one, or to create a common emotional state, and in situations where an effort was made to avoid a negative emotion catching on. Following quotations describes how facilitators regulated emotional states.

I had already stressed beforehand how the participants would "behave". I was nervous about whether there would be challenging situations and how my partner would react to them.
I felt that the first time I overemphasized trying to create positive energy. Based on my previous work experience, I have found that the group instructor’s presence, emotional state and tone of voice influence the group’s mutual emotional state and atmosphere.

Together with the instructor, the participant decided not to continue the second workshop session anymore. The solution was purely professional and was based on the instructor knowing the participant. The solution was also made because it was best for the continuation of the workshop. In this way, negative feelings were avoided for other participants as well. However, after the challenging situation the atmosphere was slightly down. We had a brief discussion about what had happened and then we went on.

Emotions were expressed freely, and a very wide range of emotions emerges from the research data. The expression of feelings was given its own separate time, for example at the beginning and end of the group situation. The data analysis showed how emotions were expressed, how the facilitator interpreted the emotion, how the facilitator and group members responded to other’s emotions, how and in which situations the facilitator tried to regulate emotions and why the solution was made. Following quotations describes emotional work during the group sessions.

The second group session started with a "fiiliskierros". How's everybody doing.

According to the observations, a little tension was noticeable at first, but the tension was released as the group progressed.

When asked, participant said that the filming was too exciting and that is why participant did not agree to participate in the filming while other participants were in the room. After the others left, participant had the encourage to film the last scene of the movie together with the instructors.

Based on the data analysis, it was possible to identify elements that affect the emotional atmosphere during the group session. Creating a safe emotional atmosphere allows the participant a space where they can express themselves freely. According to Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola (2019), a professional needs professional knowledge and emotional skills to create a safe space for group
activities where participants can share their feelings safely. Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola, 2019, p. 4.) See figure 2 elements that affected the emotional atmosphere.

Figure 2. Elements affecting the emotional atmosphere.
4.3. Time and space as structure for participation

As it is discussed in the conceptual framework, creativity, participation, community, and inclusion are described to happen or appear in stages or as a process. For example, according to Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola (2019) a creative group process can happen in stages that can be simultaneous, overlap or be repeated (Huhtinen-Hildén & Isola, 2019). Also, Leeman et al. describe participation as a process and a means of promoting social inclusion. Social inclusion itself is an experiential phenomenon but can also be an action (Leemann et al., 2015). Processes, actions, and experiences happen in temporal and spatial dimensions. Therefore, creativity, participation, community, and inclusion are something that happen in temporal and spatial dimensions. They happen in time and space. Through the data analysis, spatial and temporal factors that may either prevent or promote participation, creativity and inclusion were recognized.

Time limitation, time management, different expressions referring time, rhythm and hurry were mentioned in multiple occasions in the data.

There was a pressure to get over this phase quickly but still so that people could be involved in this process.

I am (again) very aware of the time we have in our hands, and it becomes a bit of an inner struggle to not get intervened too much. It is not worth it to hurry up. Rather let things unfold as they will. I do not need to know how, they just will.

The analysis of the data opened a view for perceiving abstract and concrete time related factors that may have influence on participation and inclusion. The more concrete temporal factors in the data were things like starting and ending the sessions clearly, organizing the whole project proceeding step-by-step in each session, and taking into consideration all the temporal structures around and outside the sessions. Active time management, before and during the sessions, that would support the participants participation was mentioned several times in
the data.

According to the data analysis, the duration of the sessions was planned considering the time needed in a certain phase of working, and the most likely duration for the participants be able to work in one session. The sessions were held during a limited period due to several time limiting factors outside the project and activity itself.

The process was divided into individual sessions that each had a beginning and an ending. Most of the times the beginnings and endings were marked by check-ins and outs. The timing of the meetings was planned to match the daily schedule of the participants including lunch time and other fixed time blocks.

Suddenly the time is up, and people start to rush to have lunch. Me and the other author are left in the space around the table to admire all the things that were just made.

In the data the temporal structure appeared to be meaningful not only to the authors but also to some of the participants. The authors reminded the participants in the end of each session when the next time would be. Sometimes the participants asked for it and sometimes it was told without asking.

This same person asked the dates for all the following sessions and added them to their paper calendar. They wrote: Monday Meaning of life, Thursday Meaning of life, Friday Meaning of life.

On a more abstract temporal level the data drew a picture of different rhythms in a group, in different activities and in different working phases. Even multiple simultaneous rhythms.

Some participants seem to need more time to react to the story than others. It leads me to ponder time. Again. How would it be possible in practice to make sure that there is enough time for different rhythms?
From the data it is possible to point out three different types of temporal working modes. Certain parts of the process were time managed strongly by the authors, for example the filming. In the data, time, or lack of it, is mentioned several times as a limiting factor for physical participation in different activities.

To get the shooting process done in a certain time, the facilitators had to do some parts in advance. In addition, a few process parts were done by the facilitators during the filming situation to speed up the process. These parts were, for example, moving characters, props, and backgrounds together with the participant. If there had been more time, the participants could have participated in the process more independently.

Another temporal working mode in the data were the phases where the participants were able to work independently, at their own pace. For example, making the characters and props for the animation everyone had their own items to work on and they were able to use the time they had as they chose. Some participants made several items fast as some made just one slowly.

The third temporal working mode that arose from the data were the parts of the process where people worked collectively. For example, the story crafting was made collectively. The data describes this collective working to be challenging, for the authors, in a sense that how it would be possible to leave time and space for different types of rhythms and how different working rhythms can match in a limited time frame. In the data this collective working mode includes time management by the authors, each participants own chosen or natural working pace and a pace that includes both above. Figure 3 demonstrates the three different temporal working modes.
Figure 3. Three different types of temporal working modes
From the analysis of the data, the arrangement of the space arose in few different ways in the contexts of social-pedagogical approach and inclusion. How the authors positioned themselves, intuitively or intentionally, how the participants positioned themselves and how the physical elements in the space were arranged for different phases of work.

In the data, the space for the meetings was described as a meeting room with chairs, tables, video projector and a screen. Windows on one wall and a door on the opposite wall. This set a certain structure for arranging the space for creative, shared activity. For example, sitting around the table in one space made things like sharing ideas happen naturally.

The exercise evolved during the session. Rolling the paper was suggested to be made with a pencil. For some of the participants that seemed to be challenging. One of the participants came up with the idea of using a finger instead of a pencil and taught this to others as well. A better version of the exercise was established, and it spread around the table.

Also, the standard meeting room setting allowed a traditional meeting position to happen as naturally. These two settings, sharing ideas around the table, and traditional meeting setting, happen in same space and can create two different social situations for the group to operate from. The more traditional setting is described in the following quote.

The positioning of the audio-visual gear in the space affected on where the authors would sit in the space. They were quite naturally positioned by the end of the table where the leader of the pack usually sits. The facilitatorssat behind their computer and papers so that too created a quite normative, traditional set up for the power structure of the space.
For the filming the spatial factors were considered carefully before hand. Still, the arrangement of the space did not serve the whole groups work in a best possible way. This defined how it was possible to participate as the following quotes describe.

Positioning of the filming table and camera could be better if it was possible to follow what was done on the table. On the other hand, it may give the space for the people filming to do what they are doing peacefully, not everyone getting involved. Though, I do not think in a group like this it would have been a problem.

An iPad tablet was attached to a stand and placed by the table, ready for filming. The shooting table was positioned so that the people filming and moving the elements had their backs towards the space where everyone else were. Others were not able to see what was happening on the table or on the screen of the tablet.

While one participant took part in the filming situation, the others waited their turn in the same space, sitting on chairs at the edges of the room.

Some parts of the process were more suitable for this type of arrangement of the space, sitting around a big, shared table where everyone can see each other. It allowed verbal and non-verbal communication between the group members appear naturally. In some cases, the common goal, like the mind map, was physically placed in the middle of the table. Physical and visual accessibility were motivating factors for the arrangement of the space.

The theme Meaning of life was written in the middle of an A2 sized paper. The paper was put in the middle of the table. Participants sat around the table and told what to add on the paper.

The storyboard was drawn on a big piece of paper, a flip chart so that everyone could see what was happening.

As well as the time the space was managed mostly by the authors. According to data the authors placed the tools and materials as they chose in different phases of work. A certain sense of order and fluency of the process and workflow seems
to have had influence on the choices made regarding time and space. By order and fluency, the authors have pursued participation.

The principle of *mise en place* (*in its place* in English) (Turner, 2019) is present in the analysis of data, and it seems to aim to set up everything needed for the participants to participate beforehand. According to the analysis of the data the *mise en place* for participation includes organising physical, visual, and mental access to the materials and tools, arrangement of the space and managing time. Arranging and creating space for accessibility is an important aspect of the ethics of participatory research (Mykitiuk et al. 2015, p.13). See Figure 4 for three elements of preparing for participation.

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**Figure 4. Three elements of preparing for participation**

- **Arrangement of space**
- **Access**
- **Managing time**

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4.4 Professional roles in a multi-disciplinary project

The findings suggest strengths of different professional roles in different phases of project. It was possible to identify two different strategies point of views of professional choices and roles. The data describes individual and shared responsibilities and an organic shifting between these two. Both facilitators had clearly made choices from the point of view of their own profession to promote the project.

From the research data, typical working methods for one's profession emerged. Professional solutions typical of the social and health sector were, for example, safety-related measures, use of plain language, observation and regulating participants’ emotional states, and instructing style. Typical professional solutions for the creative field were, for example, technical solutions, working methods, directing different working phases, management of technical equipment’s and implementation of animation. In addition, it was possible to identify shared responsibilities from the data, such as different instructing situations and supporting participants, giving instructions, creating an atmosphere, and staying on schedule. Shared responsibilities were not always articulated beforehand or shared consciously but intuitively according to each situation at hand.

The instructors controlled the situation. The other instructor was responsible for directing the use of the equipment and moving of the characters. I worked as an assistant during the process.

Together with the instructor, the participant decided not to continue the second workshop session anymore. The solution was purely professional and was based on the instructor knowing the participant.

Verbal and non-verbal communication and interaction between facilitators during the group emerged from the research data. The importance of communication appeared, for example, in challenging situations and when facilitators changed shifts or had to move on to the next work phase. A reflective discussion took place
after each group session. In the reflection, facilitators reviewed what had happened during the group and what should be improved for the next time. In addition, the reflections made possible to share one's own emotional states.

Implementation the group together with Sera went well. Verbal and non-verbal communication was fluent.

The findings suggest that the authors use few different terms when referring to themselves in different situations or phases of work. Or they use different verbs when referring what they are doing while working in the group, with the participants, to promote participation. For example, instructor, enabler, bystander, assistant, part of a production line.

The instructor acts as an enabler of the activity for the participant either by doing the activity themselves or in a way that the instructor assists the participant by verbal or/and physical support.

The data analysis shows that the question of naming the roles was asked but not answered.

During the session authors use word workshop and the participants say course when referring to this stop-motion animation project. The authors do not discuss about this during or after the session. It is something that was mentioned before or in planning phase and arises now. What is this actually called what we are doing. How do we want or need to categorise it? Which words to use when talking about us, participants or the meetings?

Through the analysis it is possible to recognise even a more personal level of roles. Being a part of the group as a person, in addition, to the professional roles.

I have had the feeling that I can be myself. And that is something that does not happen too often. I would like to remember to thank about this when we meet last time. How welcoming the group has been to a stranger. Other.

Figure 5 demonstrates professional roles and responsibilities in multi-professional project.
4.5. The film *Meaning of Life*

The film, an experimental Christmas themed adventure called *Meaning of life*, draws attention to traditions and holiday stereotypes. The story does not rely on traditional main character driven story but has an episode type of structure. The spectators are guided to visit both Christmas and New Year’s Eve.

The participants were answering the proposed theme almost as a question: what *Meaning of life* by is conducting a short, animated film. From the film as a data, it
was possible to point out many things that make life meaningful. Straightforward answers are appearing in the beginning of the film when things are listed on the screen and voices repeat them.

Family, love, friends, courage, laughter, home, curiosity, pets, joy, adventure, dreaming, sense of humour, sausage, doing things together, having fun.

To maximise expressions and the experience of joy, few giggles are left to echo after the speech. The voices belong to several different people who articulate one word at a time following each other. Different voices refer to a group of people that have shared these meanings of life. A joyous, playful music is playing on the background. The music refers to having a good time and experiences of happiness.

Other elements referring to a group of people, or animals, doing something together in the data were: a choir singing, children around the Christmas tree, reindeers pulling a sleigh and elves spying behind the windows. These elements in the data resonate with the social-pedagogical approach on how the perceived sense of community can be formed by action or symbolically. In the film there are visible and invisible, smaller, or bigger, communities that are formed by acting together towards a shared goal or sharing values and cultural phenomena. (Nivala & Ryynänen, 2019, pp. 130–131.) Invisible communities in the film are formed around symbolic elements like fireworks as the audience is not visible in the film but can be formed in the minds of the spectators. The same thing with the reindeers flying across the night sky. There are no people visible in the scene, but it is possible to catch a feeling or an inner image of impatient children waiting when the Santa Clause comes.

In the data there are many indicators that the conductors of this film have a clear sense of shared symbols, myths, rituals, meanings, and cultural connotations. The use of these communicative tools in the film are versatile, fluent and can create new meanings.
The social definition of disability is strongly connected to values and norms, and the discrimination of disabled people is based on the fact that most structures in society are based on the needs and abilities of the majority of people (the so called 'normal') (Vehmas, 2005). In the film, many normative traditions are represented, but it is not possible, or relevant, to say whether the characters are disabled or abled. Also, based on the film as data it is impossible to tell if the conductors of the film are disabled or abled.

In the film, there are few individual characters. Two kids around the Christmas tree, Santa Claus, reindeers, a dog and Nuuttipukki. In this selection of characters, Nuuttipukki seems different from others. It is not only how the Nuuttipukki appears on the outside, but it is the way they act: mischievous, random, and braking rules and order by throwing cartwheels and going: Ner ner ner ner ner! The story is somewhat conservative depiction of Christmas and New Year. Depicting the most normative traditions like Christmas songs, tree, elves and reindeers, New Year’s fireworks. Many of the scenes are built on normative, traditional festivities of these two public holidays. Food, presents, a home, children, a Christmas tree and singing Christmas carols. In the New Year’s Eve scene, there were fireworks and New Year’s resolution: sausages and bread are forbidden. Several normative and conservative elements in the film is possible to find by listing them from the visual material or using a written to do list from the research diaries of the authors. Both sources confirm the same type of symbols. See Picture 6. example of the props made by the participants.

To do props list: Santa Claus, a fake Santa Claus, Nuuttipukki, an elf, Christmas tree, tin, reindeers, children, a dog, a family, a sauna, a city, fireworks, stars, a black sky.
Besides the public holidays and traditional, cultural festivities, there was one strong social construction appearing in the film: making New Year’s resolutions, making a public promise. In addition, the film refers to other social phenomenon, action of giving and receiving presents, in form of multiple presents falling from the sky. These creative ways of representing social constructions in a film can be taken as expressions of experiencing these phenomena.

Many social structures are based on assumptions on what kind of mental and physical abilities people should have to be able to participate in many fields of society (Vehmas, 2005, pp. 109–110). In this film many phenomena are presented open and accessible. Presents are raining from the sky on everybody, things are floating from scene to scene and the New Years resolution is announced to be the same for everybody as it is flickering across the night sky after the fireworks.

In an animation film, it is possible to let go of realities like gravity, for example. It is also possible to make the characters and other presented items look like however you please. In this data most of the characters and items are aiming to
somewhat realistic expression and style. Playful and nativistic but still realistic. In an animation film it could be possible to use, for example, a stone as a Santa Claus. In this data the creators have chosen they want the Santa Clause to look like traditional Santa Claus.

The title of the film encourages to think that there is more in this film that it appears in the first look. *Meaning of life* points deeper than just the surface level. Could the meaning of life be hidden somewhere under all the Christmas decorations and New Year's fireworks? Can you see it in the eyes of the sausage or is it left in the air floating after every cartwheel the Nuuttipukki throws? For sure, it is somewhere in between love, laughter, giggles, and sausage (*uunimakkara* in Finnish).

Joy and playfulness are the driving forces of this film. The contradiction between chaos and order is ongoing debate while the screen is constantly being filled with stuff and then quickly wiped empty again. New Year's resolutions hold, bread and sweets are banned. But that does not stop having still fun! The anarchistic final show of Nuuttipukki is the last nail in the coffin for seriousness, order, rules and being shy. Nuuttipukki wins and goes *Nar, nar, nar, nar, nar* while winning! Music, food, colors, explosive bursts of pure joy.

Many different types of traditions related to Christmas and New Year become visible in the animation. The whole story is based on normative cliches. Under the surface there is something bubbling under. Nuuttipukki in the end is a burst of anarchist energy.

## 5 Conclusions and discussion

This chapter presents a summary of findings, conclusions based on the findings, and a discussion, including the evaluation of the trustworthiness and quality of the research. The last chapter also contains reflections of both authors.
5.1 Summary of findings

The aim of this study was to explore, what kinds of factors may influence in participation and social inclusion of the participants in communal animation filmmaking. The study aimed to point out some of the factors in this certain individual art project. The research found four key outcomes that may influence on the realization of social inclusion and participation during communal art project. From the short animation film *Meaning of life*, it was possible to identify expressions, symbols, and representations of participation, inclusion, and meaningful life. Figure 6 reflects four different factors that may affect participation and the realization of social inclusion. In addition, Picture 7 visualize the mind map made by the participants, which was built around the theme of *meaning of life*.

Figure 6 summarizes four key outcomes of the analysis and answers the first research question repeated below. The four key outcomes are support, time and space, professional roles, and emotional atmosphere. Different forms of support were recognized during the analysis. Verbal, peer and physical were the main categories of support. All the articulated forms of support may require facilitators pedagogical skills (Huhtinen-Hildén & Isola, 2019; Sutela, 2017). Another outcome is that time and space are resources that can be managed and arranged in various ways, that may have influence on inclusion and participation. As described in the implementation and ethics of this thesis, it is important to arrange space for accessibility, in the widest meaning of the word *accessibility* (Mykitiuk et al. 2015, p.13; Sitter, 2015, p. 921). The third outcome in the figure 6 is professional roles. The analysis showed that it is possible to articulate individual professional roles, and shared, overlapping roles that can shift and be negotiated in the boundary areas (Laukkonen et al. 2022). The last of the four key outcomes in figure 6 is the emotional atmosphere, that can be created and affected by various factors. Promoting a safe emotional atmosphere requires professional skills and awareness of the facilitators (Huhtinen-Hildén & Isola, 2019; Sutela, 2017; Laukkonen et al. 2022). These four factors may influence the realization of social inclusion and participation in a community art project. As the figure 6
presents, these four factors are strongly and constantly connected to each other, and they affect each other. If one of the factors change, the others may get affected and change. During the process of participatory and creative group meetings the facilitators should strive to be aware of the factors and how they may be connected and how they may affect.

1. What kinds of factors may influence the realization of social inclusion and participation in a community art project when working with people with developmental disability?

**Figure 6. Four key outcomes**
Picture 10 is a captured frame from the film *Meaning of life*. The picture 10 is a simplified answer to the second research question below. The film itself can be seen as an answer to the philosophical question of *Meaning of life*. What is the meaning of life? This all resonates with ethical contemplation of the implementation of the thesis that mentioned the researcher’s responsibility of the possible misrepresentations of the participants (Myktiuk et al. 2015, p.13). Also, both the theme, and the film, *Meaning of life*, are linked to the third and fourth provocative perspectives of Goodley et al. (2019). The third perspective: is disability the object or subject of studies? And the fourth: what matters or gets said about disability? (Goodley et al. 2019.) By simply watching the animation it is not possible to define the abilities and skills of the makers of the film. The style and the tone are playful, colorful, even childlike, some might say. The representations of characters, phenomena, time and space, and the created meanings, are traditional, normative and literal or simplified, even. Childlike behavior was one stereotypical representation of a disabled person in films recognized in the research of Renwick et al. (2014). There is a possibility that the animation film *Meaning of life* might strengthen this stereotype. Especially, if the film is presented to be made by and with people with developmental disabilities.

The traditional, normative, and stereotypical representation of symbols related public holidays refers to symbolic communality (*symbolinen yhteisyys*, in Finnish) described by Nivala and Ryynänen (2019 pp. 130–131). The traditions presented in the film refer to shared cultural heritage and values.

One of the aims of the thesis was to find nonverbal ways of answering the research question. Also, it was an ethical choice to present the film *Meaning of life* as a result and a source for analysis. As Goodley et al. (2019) present in their provocations that the aim of contemporary critical disability research is not produce new knowledge but, to evoke discussion and thoughts on critical disability research.
2. What kind of elements can be identified from the film *The Meaning of Life*, in connection to the participants’ experiences of inclusion, participation, and a meaningful life?

![Mind map about the meaning of life made by the participants.](image)

Picture 10. Mind map about the meaning of life made by the participants.

5.2 Conclusions

What should be considered when planning and implementing creative group activities that are aiming to support social inclusion and participation for people with special needs? Based on the findings of this study, we propose to direct attention to four different factors: the different dimensions of support; emotional work; consideration of temporal factors and space structures; and the division of professional roles in multi-professional cooperation. In addition, the connection between these four different factors and how they affect each other should be observed.

Social pedagogy emphasizes the importance of cultural democracy in creative
activity. This means the accessibility of the creative activity so that the participant can participate in the activity according to their own abilities and be an active agency. (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, pp. 213–15.) Also, from the perspective of social inclusion, a person's own agency is emphasized. When working with people with developmental disability the need of support participation emerges. As has already been stated, the experience of social inclusion can be increased, for example, by participating in a community activity. When a person has physical, cognitive, or social limitations, participation in activities can be supported. With the different forms of providing support, the professional's understanding of the participant's needs and interpretation of what kind of support they needs emerges. The role and expertise of professionals in multi-professional projects is emphasized again. When planning an activity that promotes inclusion, the needs of the participants must be considered, so that their own agency can be supported in a way that suits them. This way they can participate in the activity according to their own abilities. Creative activity must be achievable despite limitations of the performance. But it is also very important to note that the form of giving support should not be dictated from the top down. Given support form should be mutually agreed and appropriate for the purpose.

During creative group activities, the importance of emotional work and emotional skills plays an important role (Huhtinen-Hildén & Isola, 2019). It is essential to create an environment where it is safe for everyone to share their feelings, including the negative ones. The role of the group facilitator as a regulator of the group's emotions is emphasized especially when the group discusses something that might bring up negative emotions. How do I act when the participant has a strong emotional state? How do I avoid that the emotional state infects other participants? How to move on when the situation has unravelled? It is also important to consider the context where one works in and one’s own professional boundaries. How are emotions handled in this group under the guidance of these professionals? We agree with Huhtinen-Hildén and Isola (2019) that the emotional working skills of facilitators of creative group activities should be increased and more research is needed on what kind of education is required in the field.
Managing temporal and spatial elements can be vital for participation. Sometimes the choices regarding these elements can seem self-evident and secondary even. Every human action happens in time and space. Managing time and space can be done to support, control and oppress, even. The paradox of simultaneously creating a possibility and a limitation by using, for example, a controlled timeframe is something to be aware of when conducting participatory projects. As it is visible in the findings many factors were considered beforehand to promote participation and inclusion; yet there were many miscalculations or room for improvement. Inclusion seems to be something that can be promoted, prevented but not totally controlled or made to happen (Isola et al., 2017, p. 3; Leemann et al., 2015, p 5; Nivala & Ryynänen, 2019, p. 138; Clifford, Simplican et al., 2014, p. 22).

In addition, the thesis used the collectively made short, animated film as a source of analysis. The aim was to combine different forms of data to produce new perspectives on phenomena. Analysing the result of a participatory project as data was aiming to bring into light something the authors did not realize to ask in the beginning of the process. Letting the participants to show and tell something surprising and irrelevant even. The animation making process divided into small steps turned out to be an easy access activity where there are different forms of creative activities and forms of art present. Therefore, it may be more possible for every participant to find their own way of participating. (Nivala and Ryynänen, 2019, pp. 130–131.)

The *Meaning of life* showed that it is relevant to discuss philosophical concepts like meaning of life with people who may not traditionally have been asked to ponder such concepts. As relevant it seemed to be open to concrete answers to abstract questions. Behind all the joyfulness in *Meaning of life* lies the heavy weight of traditions and how important the traditions were for the participants to be in such a defining element of the whole film. Traditions and rituals are connected to the sense of belonging. But is it the lack of sense of belonging or sensing belonging that makes people want to build representations of traditions, rituals, and norms? Is it because they are participating these or left out? Or maybe both, and something in the middle, as it is not relevant to think inclusion to be
either or, rather than there are different levels or forms of inclusion (Leemann et.al., 2015, p. 5). The film paints a picture of all the normative traditions and elements that are included in celebrating these two public holidays. In the end the joyous normativity is interrupted by an individual who acts and looks like the hairy opposite of all the norms presented and referred previously in the film.

How do the key findings of this study interact with each other? When we look at the findings, we can conclude that each main factor affects the other either by promoting inclusion and participation, or they can act as limiting factors. To summarize the conclusions of the findings, we present them in the form of questions. What kind of support does the person need to participate in the activity? Are the tools that everyone can use? Does the person need aids to for the participation? Are the creative group activity instructions, working methods and working goals understandable? Do you need any aids to support communication, for example pictures and plain language? Is the space such that it enables barrier-free working and moving, can everyone use the space freely, and are the tools positioned so that the participants can use them? Is the schedule designed in such a way that everyone has enough time to express themselves despite the different pace of work? Is time an enabling or limiting factor? Are the work steps and methods planned in such a way that everyone can participate according to their own abilities? Are the responsibilities of different professionals divided in such a way that they can operate within the limits of their own professional competence? As a professional, am I competent enough to guide and deal with the topics discussed in the group and the emotions arising from them? Is there enough time and a safe space for sharing and expressing feelings?

5.3 Discussion

Making an animation is a slow form of creativity. Firstly, you work in in different planning stages and then the actual filming itself is slow. That is why, we suggest that it is suited well in a participatory process as participation and inclusion can be slowly processed as well. At first it seemed that animation is a bit weird choice
for this type of experiment as it is not so instant and effective in the moment. It is important to acknowledge that some aspects of humanity simply take time and space.

In this creative process there were several types of working phases that brought together different art forms, like visual arts, music, acting, literature, as one animation film. It was possible for the participants to be more actively participating in some phases than others. And still be a part of the whole process from the very beginning to the very end.

We thought a lot about time with participation and inclusion. There seemed to be a lack of time in every phase of the project. And now it seems obvious that participation and inclusion require time to happen. They happen in time. Longer or shorter moments in time but still in time. Time is a continuum. Activity, participation, creativity, and inclusion happen in processes not in a singular, individual moments in some temporal-spatial vacuum. It is meaningful to manage your own time and be able to maintain or develop your own working pace and speed. On the other hand, it is safe to be in a managed time frame especially if you are in a process that you are not familiar before with.

In participatory projects and in the field of cultural well-being it is necessary to have self-criticism. When working with ethical questions and humanity it is vital to be able to self-reflect, even brutally sometimes. Societal and ethical evaluation is an essential skill and half-automatic way of thinking for certain fields of art that have a tradition and discourse for discussing such themes. In social and health fields also, but from a slightly different point of view. These two different point of views from different fields combined can produce vital information that can be useful when navigating with ethical aspects among people participating future projects. (Laukkanen et al. 2022, p. 352.)

Has this research answered the question it was supposed to study? When we thought about the validity of the research, we can't close our eyes to the truth that combining facilitation and group observation was challenging. When facilitating a group where participants have special needs, the facilitator has several strings in
hands. One solution would have been, for example, that we would have more clearly divided the facilitation work and observation. We do understand that the skills in question accumulate the more research you do, but we believe that inexperience has had its own effects on the findings. In retrospect, it would have been more fruitful for the research to build a completely own observation model. In our opinion, creating own frame and model would have better directed attention to the researched topic. Although the creative group observation model is a good way to collect data, we believe that we would have been able to answer better to the research questions with our own model. We tried to describe the thesis process as clearly as possible and justify the various solutions made during the research. The conceptual framework was built around the researched topic aiming to open the theory and current studies of the social and health and cultural sectors. All studies that have been used in this thesis were peer reviewed.

One of the limiting factors of the study is the fact that the all the participants had a good performance. In other words, persons with moderately severe developmental disabilities were excluded from the study. As Vehmas and Mietola (2022) emphasizes, this group of people is often ignored in disability research. Including this group of people in the research would have added value to it and led to a deeper examination of, for example, accessibility and the forms of providing support. For us to have been able to include persons with moderate developmental disabilities in the study, we would have needed more time, an accessible space, tools, working methods and information, understanding and professional expertise in their support needs.

In the thesis, the content analysis of the video was decided to add in the mix during the last third of the writing process. It started to appear impossible to leave it out as it would bring the participants voice, handprint, thoughts, and experiences under the same umbrella as the findings that arose from other material for the analysis produced by the authors. If the analysis of the film had been left out completely, then the whole act of discussing meaningful life and things with a marginalized group of people would have been left in the darkness of the marginals again. Also, it felt important to bring the participants artwork into
the context of the thesis to create discussion about the role given to the participants in participatory projects. The thesis would have been more meaningful in the context of arts-based participatory research if the participants were participating also to the part where data was analyzed. (Rönkkö et al. 2022.) As a more general human level, it seemed ethically important to address the participants’ work simply because the work had been done. This way the work and thoughts and processes behind it were acknowledged, appreciated, and not muted and hidden.

SERA: The thesis is complex and problematic in many ways. In addition, I have felt huge personal discomfort planning, implementing, and writing it. Even talking about it in different phases with different people has been difficult. It is hard to verbally articulate all the difficulties. Majority of it has to do with the constant negotiation, reflecting, awareness of power and combining intuitive thinking with analytical. The overall state of awareness and alertness of all the dilemmas and ethical consideration has been exhausting and felt impossible. It is not possible to be aware of everything and all the time, but still at the same time it is ethically needed to pursue perfection in this area. Even though it is not clearly a realistic goal, it has to be the aim.

How did this project promote inclusion? Participation? Is it relevant at all to say that it has promoted inclusion? Maybe it has promoted by adding something to the general conversation? More likely, it offered a possibility for few people to participate something they would not have done without the project just then. In the end it is not possible to speak about others experiences of inclusion but our own. Looking back maybe I should have listened those thoughts more carefully. Looking back there are many mistakes made. Even though, our intentions were nothing but good. This project has been full of paradoxes, and it has led me to think that in this case it is not relevant to find answers but to ask questions and discuss them.

Is it problematic to concentrate on individual experiences of inclusion and
participation if the whole concept of inclusion is basically societal and built in the structures? Should we look to the opposite direction and contemplate the people and especially organizations that plan and execute the participatory, inclusive actions? Is this why we did not want to interview the participants, for example?

What kind of structure this thesis, imitation of a research, project was? Is it possible for us authors to see the structures that we as individuals bring, strengthen, and leave out? They are so attached to our histories, world views, all our previous experiences. Self-criticism, reflection, and constant questioning are vital ethical tools. When aiming for results that are not numerically measurable it is even more important to be able to articulate what is affecting the results and how they are formed.

Based on my own experiences as an artist, or as a member of audience, or a human being living in a shared culture and the whole history of humane culture: art is just one natural and necessary quality of thinking. For everybody. Based on this thesis I am even more convinced that art, creativity, and culture have intrinsic value and they should not be reduced to have only instrumental value.

KAISA: This communal journey made together has been an eye-opener for me professionally. It has made me think about my own profession, and how I have become a professional in the social and health sector. I haven't seen before this project how deep I am in the world of social and health care – in silo. I have always thought that I somehow have a different way of looking, because I also have education and work experience in the cultural field. I have knowledge the truth of how a dominant medical approach to developmental disability in Finnish society truly is. Education, work culture, working methods, goals, clients, and work communities have shaped me to look at things through my own professional glasses - without me noticing. This actuality has made me really ponder my own views and values.

When setting the research question, I approached the thesis from my own point of view. In my opinion, the social inclusion framework has been a trend in the
social and health sector for a long time. Supporting and noticing client’s needs has also been at the centre of client work in my own organization. That’s why these seemed very natural topics to research and, in hindsight, maybe a little self-evident and safe. When we collected data by observing group activities, I often paid attention to the same things that I pay attention to in my work. It was partly natural and easy, but did it guide me too much as a researcher to direct my attention to certain aspects? How to be a researcher, a professional in the social and health sector and a facilitator of creative group activities at the same time? These considerations are elements that I will have to take a deeper look into in the future, if I start, for example, doctoral education.

In my opinion, the project was a very successful, although the research part has produced challenges from time to time. Working with Sera was very natural and seamless, as if we had worked together before. I can say that our professional chemistry matched well. I found the reflections held together after the groups to be very fruitful. It’s a pity that we didn’t record the conversations we had. If I did something differently, I would have used our conversations as research data as well. In addition, I think that the success of the project was influenced by the fact that the participants were very enthusiastic and participated actively. Making an animated film was something completely new for them.

I was left wondering how much the fact that I knew the participants influenced the research and its results? In terms of the success of the workshops, the advantage was that I knew many of them from before and during the group activity I was able to consider, for example, different needs for support and issues related to safety. On the other hand, it would have been interesting to work with a completely new group without any prior expectations. However, it would have required familiarization and understanding of the participants and their special needs. When considering a good community art project made by an artist and a social and health professional together with a challenging group - what kind of position does client knowledge rise to? Koskinen (2019) brings out the role of professionals who know the community in community art projects, as well as professional boundaries and competence. From the point of view of further
research, it would be interesting to investigate which elements affect successful multiprotection cooperation. (Huhtinen-Hildén and Ilola, 2019; Koskinen 2019.)

This thesis journey has brought me everything I wished for. I have learned a lot about myself as a professional and the process has strengthened the thought of where I want to go in my career. One of my goals for the thesis was that I wanted to collaborate with another student. One of my goals for the studies was to supplement and learn more about cultural well-being and of course to find new colleagues. These goals were fulfilled beyond my expectations, and I got to experience a wonderful and successful community art project with Sera. The best fruit of all has been that our cooperation continues even after studies.

We want to thank all the people who participated in our research and in the planning and implementation of the animation film “Meaning of life”. It was a joyful to work together with all the participants. This thesis would be nothing without the enthusiastic participants.

In addition, we would like to thank the communication department of Rinnekodit and Rinnetuki Ry for financing the animation film. Finally, we would like to thank the supervisor of the thesis, Sanna Kivijärvi.
References


Appendices

The subject’s information form 1/2

Tiedote tutkimuksesta

Osallistavaa elokuvan tekemistä Rinnekodissa - osallisuuden kokemuksia etsimässä yhteisöllisen taiteen keinoin

Pyynnöös osallistua tutkimukseen


Olemme arvioineet, että sovellut tutkimukseen, koska olet ilmaissut halukkuutesi osallistua elokuvan tekemiseen. Tämä edote kuvaa tutkimusta ja osuudesi siinä. Kun olet tutustunut tähän tiedotteen, sinulla on mahdollisuus esittää kysymyksiä tutkimuksesta, jonka jälkeen sinulta pyydettään suostumuksen tutkimukseen osallistumisesta.

Vapaaehtoisuus


Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tarkastella osallistujien osallisuuden kokemuksia etsimässä yhteisöllisen taiteen keinoin. Tutkimuksessa analysoitavaa on myös osallistavan prosessiin rakenteita tutkimusaineistoon.

Tutkimuksen toteuttajat


Animaattolukuvan valmistamisessa siten, ettei sinä esiintynyt omilla kasvoilla. Lahnot valmistetaan esimerkiksi muovialuivahasta, paperista sekä erilaisista luonnosta löytvistä materiaaleista. Mikäli haluat ääninäyttelyn animaa8oelokuvassa tehdään sitä erillinen sopimus. Ääninäyttelyinen on vapaaehtoista. Ennen suostumustasi täänäÄäninäyttelijäksi sinun tulee huomioida, että äänesi voidaan tunnistaa animaa8oelokuvasta.
The subject’s information form 2/2

Tutkittavan informointilomake


Tutkimuksen aikana käsitellään henkilötietoja ja niitä säilytetään turvallisesti. Ulkopuoliset eivät voi nähdä sinun henkilötietoja.

Kustannukset ja niiden korvaaminen

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen ei maksa sinulle mitään. Osallistumisesta ei myöskään makseta erillistä korvausta.

Tutkimustuloksista tiedottaminen

Opinnäytetyn valmistumisen jälkeen tiedotamme osallistujille tuloksista sitä varten järjestetyssä tilaisuudessa.

Tutkimuksen päättäminen

Myös tutkimuksen suorittaja voi keskeyttää tutkimuksen ylivoimaisen esteen sattuessa.

Lisätiedot

Pyydämme sinua tarvittaessa esittämään tutkimukseen liittyviä kysymyksiä tutkijalle/tutkimuksesta vastaavalle henkilölle.

Tutkijoiden yhteystiedot

Tutkija / opinnäytetyötekijä
Nimi: Kaisa Lahti
Puh.: 
Sähköposti: 

Tutkija / opinnäytetyötekijä
Nimi: Sera Martikainen
Sähköposti:

Tutkimuksesta vastaa / opinnäytetyön ohjaaja
Titeil: Musiikin tohtori, kasvatustieteen maisteri, laaja-alainen erityisopettaja
Nimi: Sanna Kivijärvi
Korkeakoulu: Metropolia ammattikorkeakoulu
Puh.: 
Sähköposti: 

Appendix 2

The subject’s consent form

Tutkittavan suostumus

Tutkimuksen nimi: Osallistavaa elokuvan tekemistä Rinnekodissa - osallisuuden kokemuksia etsimässä yhteisöllisen taiteen keinoin

Tutkimuksen toteuttaja: Metropolia ammattikorkeakoulu.

Opinnäytetyön tekijät:
Kaisa Laht, [contact details]
Sera Martikainen, sähköposti: [contact details]
Opinnäytetyön ohjaaja, Sanna Kivijärvi, sähköposti: [contact details]

Minua on pyydetty osallistumaan yllä mainitun tutkimukseen, jonka tarkoituksena on tarkastella osallistujien osallisuuden kokemuksia taiteen keinoin. Tutkimuksessa analysoidaan myös osallistavan prosessin rakenteita tutkijoiden näkökulmasta.

Olen saanut tiedotteen tutkimuksesta ja ymmärtänyt sen. Tiedotteesta olen saanut riittävän selvityksen tutkimuksesta, sen tarkoituksesta ja toteutuksesta, oikeuksistani sekä tutkimuksen mahdollisestä liityvistä hyödyistä ja riskeistä. Minulla on ollut mahdollisuus esittää kysymyksiä ja olen saanut riittävän vastauksen kaikkiin tutkimusta koskeviin kysymyksiin.

Olen saanut tiedot tutkimukseen mahdollisesti liittyvistä henkilötietojen keräämisestä, käsitelystä ja luovutamisesta.

Osallistun tutkimukseen vapaaehtoisesti. Minua ei ole painostettu eikä houkuteltu osallistumaan tutkimukseen. Minulla on ollut riittävästi aikaa harkita osallistumistani tutkimukseen.

Ymmärrän, että osallistumiseni on vapaaehtoista ja että voin peruuttaa tämän suostumukseni koska tahansa syytä ilmoittamatta. Olen tietoinen siitä, että mikäli keskeytän tutkimuksen tai peruutan suostumuksen, minusta keskeyttämiseen ja suostumuksen peruuttamiseen mennessä kerättyjä tietoja voidaan käyttää osana tutkimusaineistoa.

Allekirjoituksestanta vahvistan osallistumisen tähän tutkimukseen.

Jos tutkimukseen liittyvien henkilötietojen käsittelyperusteena on suostumuus, vahvistan allekirjoituksestanta suostumukseni myös henkilötietojeni käsittelyyn. Minulla on oikeus peruuttaa suostumukseni tietsuosijaselosteesa kuvatulla tavalla.

Allekirjoitus: __________________________
Nimenselvennys: __________________________

Alkuperäinen allekirjoitettu tutkittavan suostumus sekä kopio tutkimustiedotteesta liitteenineen jäävät tutkijan arkistoon. Tutkimustiedote liitteenineen ja kopio allekirjoitetusta suostumuksesta annetaan tutkittavalle.
Link to the film *Meaning of life*

https://vimeo.com/781822601/c1d1ba9f59?share=copy