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Artistic creativity and dementia

Exploring how co-creative visual art practice can reframe the meaning of life with dementia.

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Abstract

En biomedisinsk modell for å forstå demens har dannet et narrativ som fratager personer med demens muligheter til å utøve sitt medborgerskap. Denne semi-systematiske litteraturstudien utforsker hvordan billedkunst gjennom kreativ samskaping kan endre synet på demens. Denne studien undersøker komponenter og mekanismer i kreativ samskaping, som tillater andre former for kommunikasjon og dermed en alternativ narrativ tilværelse.

Litteraturgjennomgangen viser at billedkunst gjennom kreativ samskaping kan gi personer med demens mulighet til å utøve sin narrative handlekraft og dermed sitt medborgerskap. En estetisk tilnærming til demens kan føre til en relasjonell forståelse av demens og et inkluderende samfunn for alle.

Keywords: citizenship, co-creativity, dementia, visual art

Nøkkelord: billedkunst, medborgerskap, kreativ samskaping, demens

1. Introduction

In this thesis I have chosen to focus on artistic creativity in the context of dementia. The purpose of this study is to explore co-creative visual art practice in the field of dementia. More specifically, I want to explore the relational mechanisms during visual art-based interventions and see if there is a potential to change the perception of dementia and to challenge the dominant public narrative, that is an offspring of a cognitive biomedical framework, by considering new forms of communication.

1.1 General background: What's art got to do with it?

It is a well-known fact that as a society we are getting older, and this will result in an increase of people with dementia (Norge Helse- og omsorgsdepartementet, 2020). In Norway 101.000 people have dementia and also this figure is rising with an estimated number of 139.770 in 2030 (Nasjonalt senter aldring og helse, n.d.). More than 140 Norwegian municipalities engaged themselves in working towards a dementia friendly society (Nasjonalforeningen for Folkehelse, 2022).

The modern society has given people a longer life, but with only one role to fulfill as welfare state foremost clients at the expense of respect (Daatland, 2008, p.43).

To create a society that enables older people to use their strengths and abilities 'A full life - all your life; A quality Reform for older persons' (2017-2018) offers improved municipal solutions including better services and activities (Meld.St.15 (2017-2018)). Activities will provide enjoyable moments, stimulate the senses and facilitate participation in society (Meld.St.15 (2017-2018), p.23). Arranging socialization and activities makes life meaningful and can prevent both physical and psychological health problems (Meld.St.15 (2017-2018), p.10).

The Dementia Plan 2025 (2020) serves to counteract the lack of activity in everyday life, both for home dwelling people with dementia and nursing home residents. Hereby ensuring the activity offer has a meaningful content (Norge Helse- og omsorgsdepartementet, 2020). In 'A full life - all your life' (2017-2018), many examples of activity projects are cited, but remarkably most of them do not involve art (Meld.St.15 (2017-2018)).

In her book *Forget Memory* (2009), Anne Davis Basting emphasizes that creativity does not rely on memory (Davis Basting, 2009). Yet the words 'dementia' and 'creativity' are not terms that frequently find themselves associated with each other (Camic et al., 2018, p.1). Be that as it may be, with no effective pharmacological treatments ahead in the near future, there is an increasing interest in 'living well', person-centered approaches to dementia, often emerging by adopting art-based interventions in the field (Bellass, 2019, p.2800; Schneider, 2018).

1.2 My pre-understanding and the art of prioritizing

To achieve a deeper comprehension, a researcher's pre-understanding shall be clarified, to avoid that during research the focus solely revolves around data that could acknowledge one's own perception (Dalland, 2021, p.60-61; Maxwell, et al., 2020, p.1).

'It's all about prioritizing!'

This was the answer I got, asking the head of the dementia department if there was a budget for art supplies. Although I have a formal visual art education and am currently working with people with dementia, I have never had the opportunity to implement art interventions in this field. I often notice that the assumption is made that when language is diminishing and cognitive decline comes into the picture, there is no reason left to activate, let alone stimulate patients with mild to advanced dementia.

The artist in me despairs at the fact that art resources seem not to top the list of priorities and art as a domain is often overlooked. I do know that, as a social educator, it is my duty to create a meaningful existence for and together with the people I work with. As well as it is my duty to practice my advocacy for people whose voice stays unheard. Searching for ways to change the mechanisms and attitudes that dominate today's care practice and looking for possibilities to navigate a new way of experiencing a life with dementia, is a part of that, as well as it is a pathway to a dementia inclusive society. Considering this, my research will revolve around:

*Exploring how co-creative visual art practice can reframe
the meaning of life with dementia.*

2. Theoretical framework

In this section, terms and concepts will be defined and relevant theories to answer my research question will be presented.

2.1 Dementia

The World Health Organization defines dementia as a syndrome in which the cognitive function of the mind declines beyond the expected usual consequences of biological aging (WHO, 2021). The syndrome can be caused by a variety of injuries and diseases which primarily or secondarily affect the brain (WHO, 2021).

The most prevalent form of dementia is Alzheimer's disease (60-70% of the cases), other common types of dementias include vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia, frontotemporal dementia and mixed forms (WHO, 2021).

Dementia can affect comprehension, memory, orientation, learning capacity and thinking, language and judgment, while consciousness stays unaffected (WHO, 2021). These changes in cognitive functioning can coincide with changes in emotional control, mood, behavior, or motivation (WHO, 2021). Other symptoms may include hallucinations, anxiety, depression, and apathy. People who are diagnosed with dementia will go through gradual functional decline and finally become entirely dependent on others (WHO, 2021). Dementia has psychological, physical, social and economic impacts which affects people living with dementia, their families, carers and the society as a whole (WHO, 2021).

2.2 How is dementia understood?

Mittner et al. (2021, p.26) show that dementia is mainly recognized as an individual brain disease that causes people to lack the capacity to perform everyday tasks and

act rationally. Dementia is described as a condition that leads persons to lose their self and the perception of what was (Mittner et al., 2021, p.26). Identifying rational thinking as a prerequisite of a full-fledged life is the premise that characterizes psychosocial and biomedical perceptions fostering these understandings (Mittner et al., 2021, p.26).

As a consequence of identifying dementia as an individual brain disease, help is needed when rationality and personality are at stake and support is mainly directed towards enabling living a life as before the diagnosis (Mittner et al., 2021, p.26). Defined on the basis of what is considered as 'normal', social and technological assistance is orientated towards cognitive skills (such as memory and language) and rationality with the intention to maintain a certain level of function (Mittner et al., 2021, p.26).

2.3 Citizenship through arts

Meta-narratives shaped by public discourse, healthcare literature and policy guidelines that situate people with dementia within a medical model of lost and deficit, have a devastating effect on how people with dementia are being represented, namely as 'doomed' and 'socially dead' (Dupuis et al., 2016, p.258-259). Such popular perceptions reinforce the general fear of the diagnosis (Lotherington, 2019). According to Dupuis et al. (2016, 258-259) misassumptions driven by these public narratives about dementia are being reproduced which causes discrimination, oppression and stigma, and as a consequence people with dementia are being denied their rights of citizenship. However mental decline can indeed augment more rapidly with dementia, than in normal biological aging, Lotherington (2019) emphasizes that this does not mean that mental decline denies people living with dementia to be citizens with the right to experience the creative arts and participate in society (Lotherington, 2019).

These tragedy meta-narratives produce the general perception of dementia, as well as they affect how people with dementia perceive themselves and consequently on how this group of citizens is denied opportunities to exercise their citizenship (Dupuis et al., 2016, p.359). Such dominant meta-narratives have a tremendous impact on the way the concept of being a citizen, the citizenship content and the space in which

the population with dementia can exercise their citizenship, is constructed (Nedlund & Nordh, 2015, p.124). By framing dementia within the biomedical model, people with dementia are identified as clients and patients and this at the expense of being recognized as a citizen (Dupuis et al., 2016, p.359). Persons living with dementia, are as non-citizens denied (Dupuis, 2016, p.360) “the most fundamental of powers—the power to be” (Behuniak, 2010, p.233).

According to Dupuis et al. (2016, p.361) the citizenship model of Bartlett and O’Connor (2010) displays a relational approach aiming towards unconditional inclusion:

Social citizenship can be defined as a relationship, practice or status, in which a person with dementia is entitled to experience freedom from discrimination, and to have opportunities to grow and participate in life to the fullest extent possible. It involves justice, recognition of social positions and the upholding of personhood, rights and a fluid degree of responsibility for shaping events at a personal and societal level. (Bartlett & O’Connor, 2010, p.37).

This model of social citizenship reflects the significance of relational content of experiencing citizenship, and allows the unique expressiveness of citizenship in the context of dementia (Dupuis, 2016, p.361). By connecting the dots between citizenship, personhood and narrative and by acknowledging that all humans are narrative beings, Dupuis (2016, p.361) refers to Baldwin (2008) who offers a reconceptualization of citizenship. Baldwin’s concept sheds light on the ways people with dementia, through narrative agency, mediate their experiences. Baldwin (2008) points out that this agency depends upon; “a) being able to express oneself in a form that is recognizable as a narrative, even if one’s linguistic abilities are limited ...; [and] (b) having the opportunity to express oneself narratively.” (Baldwin, 2008, p.225).

There are various ways by which people with dementia can express their narrative agency. When stories that need to be told, no longer can be processed, understood and accessed in a conventional way, creative and artistic opportunities are of great importance to express and regain citizenship for individuals who are narratively dispossessed (Dupuis et al., 2016, p.361; Baldwin, 2006, p.105). Stories can be told by verbal means, through actions and finally through body language, because narratives can be embodied (Baldwin, 2008).

Offering opportunities for narrative expression and opening up for co-constructing narratives is of great importance in forming the citizenship entitlements of people with dementia (Baldwin, 2008). This conceptualization of social citizenship emphasizes the relational content on an interpersonal level as well as on an institutional level of policies and practices (Dupuis et al., 2016, p.362). “Being able to tell [a different version of the same story] depends on how our story interacts with those of others and the opportunities and resources we are given to tell that story.” (Baldwin, 2008, p.227). By facilitating creative opportunities, preeminent and overbearing meta-narratives can be weakened, while new stories can be co-constructed and so new ways of being can be conceptualized (Dupuis et al., 2016, p.363). The latter reflects the possibility of narrative citizenship and describes the way of including people with dementia (Dupuis et al., 2016, p.363).

2.4 Framing artistic creativity in the context of dementia

The tendency to associate creative processes with authentic and tangible acts of production which are linked with individual motivations, is strongly present in prevailing concepts of creativity from both neurological and psychological perspectives (Camic et al., 2018, p.2). The ruling narrative of the ‘artistic genius’ and the ‘creative individual’ contributes to social understandings of creative activities and impacts the ways in which notions of creativity do not relate to people with dementia (Camic et al., 2018, p.2).

The implementation of creative and arts-based interventions (music, drama, poetry, dance and art) in the field of dementia is gaining ground (Bellasi, et al., 2019, p.2800). Such person-centered practices create social inclusiveness, validate personhood and counteract the biomedical model of loss and deficit (Bellasi, 2019, p.2800). Nonetheless, implementing creative practice in care of people with dementia is on the rise, little attention is paid to the more mundane forms of creativity that could capture in-the-moment creative experiences contributed by persons with dementia (Bellasi, 2019, p.2800-2801).

The interpretation of creativity as an act of a genius who produces a novel product which leaves a long-lasting legacy, has become proclaimed as ‘Big-C’ creativity and is much different than more mundane everyday creativity, called ‘little-c’ creativity,

associated with improvisation, imagination and problem-solving (Bellass, 2019, p.2800-2801). Little-c creativity can arise across various domains of human experience and can emerge in the context of dementia (Bellass, 2019, p.2801).

Little-c creativity offers a micro-level view of creative practices which are meaningful in everyday lives, but will probably never have a remaining legacy (Bellas et al., 2019, p.2805). It is the little-c creativity people use to adapt their environments by flexibility and improvisation to negotiate within interpersonal relationships and complexities of everyday life (Bellas et al., 2019, p.2805).

Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) add two more categories to be able to theorize more nuances in creativity, namely 'Pro-c' and 'mini-c' creativities and by that create the Four C Model of creativity. Pro-c creativity is situated between Big-C and little-c creativity and will be facilitated by domain-specific expertise over time, in shared spaces and can possibly provide a short-time legacy (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). According to Beghetto and Kaufman (2007) the concept of mini-c creativity contributes to comprehending the everyday internal creative processes related to a person's development and learning. By introducing mini-c creativity, 'creativity-in-the-making' (Moran & John-Steiner, 2003, p.61) as a dynamic and internal, also called intrapsychic process, can be acknowledged (Bellas et al., 2019, p. 2806).

Relating to research that examines the effects of art-based interventions in the context of dementia, Bellas et al. (2019, p.2815) argues the importance of critically approaching such research with the concept of little-c and Pro-c creativity in mind, because people with dementia and their surroundings can engage in Pro-c and little-c creativity. According to Camic et al. (2018, p.4) everyday artistic creativity in the context of dementia, can be identified as little-c and mini-c creativity in which the non-expert takes on a crucial role.

Recognizing that creative acts can be produced both collectively as well as individually and linking creativity as much with process as product, might broaden our understanding of artistic creativity in dementia (Camic, et al., 2018). Situating creativity predominantly as a cognitive domain, forms a barrier that prevents application of creativity in dementia care and research (Camic, et al., 2018, p.2). It is important for clinicians and researchers to realize that the potential for creative

activities is not eradicated, because of cognitive impairment and decline (Camic, et al., 2018).

2.5 Creative artistic expression and arts in the context of dementia

Cross disciplinary research on the arts, dementia and creativity is on the rise (Camic et al., 2018, p.3). Art-interventions are often seen as psychosocial interventions in research (Schneider, 2018). They tend to be categorized in different ways, but can include: visual art (e.g., visual art making, viewing art, visiting museums, visual art conversations, handling art), music (e.g., listening to, making music, singing) drama/movement (e.g., dancing, acting, storytelling, songwriting, poetry, story-telling, creative writing, reading aloud, theater) (Schneider, 2018; Camic et al., 2018). Related to manual art and crafts in dementia, little research has been conducted (Schneider, 2018, p.2).

It has been acknowledged that creative expression through artistic activities (for example music or painting) is a valuable way to access and express emotions, regardless of cognitive impairment (Camic et al., 2018, p.3). Openness and willingness to allow sense impressions affect our consciousness, by letting them pass through the skeptical shields of reason and logic, are presuppositions for aesthetic experiences and regarding this, being diagnosed with dementia, could be seen as an advantage (Lotherington, 2019).

According to Camic et al. (2018, p.3) creative art-activities are more often used as a form of therapy to treat emotional and behavioral problems in dementia, rather than a treatment for cognitive deterioration. Yet, Lotherington (2019) points out that the prominent purpose of art therapy especially is to normalize behavior and to improve the functioning or memory of the person with dementia. Steered by the preeminent medical approach, art therapy situates the fundamental problem of dementia in the individuals' brain, navigating therapeutic efforts towards brain functionality, with the interest in evaluating changes in outcome related to this and document improvements (Lotherington, 2019).

Research based arguments point out to the potential of art therapy benefiting as a non-pharmacological intervention for dementia to improve quality of life (Camic et al.,

2018, p.3). However, there is still a lack of knowledge relating to the optimal conditions in design of art-intervention; further identification of the fitting components of art-interventions to foster creativity in dementias is needed (Camic et al., 2018, p.3). A recent review of studies on art therapies revealed incoherent assessing tools and methodologies to evaluate creativity, while most of the studies focused on a final product, rather than on the process of engagement in the art creation (Camic et al., 2018, p.3).

Although, artistic expression will change after dementia has set foot in someone's life, one can wonder if this suggests a reduction of creativity or does this simply mean a different form of creativity (Camic, 2018, p.4)? According to Camic et al. (2018, p.4) in pursuance can be asked: What type of creativity is giving thought to?

Lotherington (2019) encourages the increase of art therapy and art as entertainment within elder care and particularly within dementia care. Unfortunately, these arts activities often divide those with and those without dementia, by using art as a tool rather than as a value in itself (Lotherington, 2019). A different blueprint to measure short and long-term changes in the brains of persons with dementia, could be achieved by laying the groundwork for co-creative art practices according to the terms of creative arts, meaning involving both healthy people and people with a diagnosis, but without classifying them by health condition (Lotherington, 2019). Besides that, co-creation, whether it is painting, writing or dancing, embraces aesthetic experiences in the moment itself, there is a rising awareness regarding co-creative arts practices and how - while engaging everyone, they create reciprocal moments in which the diagnosis seems trivial (Lotherington, 2019).

2.6 Artistic co-creativity in the field of dementia

An agreed definition of co-creativity is currently non-existing and therefore the concept itself remains unclear. In the context of business and design, the meaning of co-creativity is emphasized upon the transmission of value from an end product to a shared process, in which the participatory aspects and all those participating play an essential role in creating something that is reciprocally valued (Camic, et al., 2018, p.4). Artistic co-creativity in the field of dementia, shows parallels with the business

and design concept of co-creativity, more specifically regarding the possibility that the clear classification of the artist-producer and participant-artist can be eliminated (Camic, et al., 2018, p.4). Correspondingly, it is relevant to underline the equal input of all those involved, with the major conceptual difference that the main purpose of input is not to co-design a work or product towards a single performance or composition (Camic, et al., 2018, p.4). Matarasso (2017) describes how artists in co-creative practice are not instructors, but rather distributors of the authority related to their skills and thus granting the privilege to the creative process over an end product.

Although, the concept of co-creativity is not fully theorized, a number of participatory aspects are identified as relevant key components, namely: relationality, reciprocity, inclusivity, the absence of a single creator and the emphasis upon a shared process (Camic et al., 2018, p.4). Co-creativity builds on empathic and dialogic approaches, where through an exchanging process, “understandings can be expanded, although not necessarily resolved”(Camic et al., 2018, p.4). Co-creative art practice offers individuals with dementia, regardless of the absence of sensible language, the opportunity to express and communicate and to become recognisably creative contributions (Camic et al., 2018, p.4).

The demand for a creative caring environment for people with advanced dementia in care homes, has not been considered possible to integrate in national dementia care policies (Camic et al., 2018, p.4). However, by emphasizing relational and communication processes rather than focusing on a specific outcome, co-creativity could provide also in residential care home settings the possibility for a mutual exchange (Camic et al., 2018, p.4-5).

3. Design and objective

A literature review is useful when one aims to evaluate a theoretical framework of a specific area and to examine the validity of a certain theory. Moreover, literature reviews are used to engage in theory development and provide often the case for building new conceptual models of theory (Snyder, 2019, p.334).

3.1 Semi-systematic review

A semi-systematic review is also called a narrative review approach, and is often used for topics that are conceptualized differently across a variety of disciplines (Snyder, 2019, p.335). Typical for a semi-systematic review is the use of a synthesizing approach related to meta-narratives instead of measuring effect size (Snyder, 2019, p.335). The aim of this semi-systematic literature review is to explore how co-creativity using visual arts, can reframe the meaning of life with dementia. This review includes evidence from qualitative studies to evaluate the potential effect of co-creative visual art practice on the meaning of life with dementia.

3.2 Analysis

While conducting a semi-systematic review different types of analysis can be used. These methods to analyze findings from a semi-systematic review often show similarities to qualitative research approaches in general. Common techniques in semi-systematic reviews are thematic analysis and content analysis, which can be defined as a method to identify, analyze and report certain patterns in the form of themes in a text (Snyder, 2019, p.335).

3.3 Validity

Since the three studies selected for this review had generated their own findings, I initially derived a shared understanding about my topic by conducting a cross-case comparison, while preserving within-case uniqueness. Though this strategy developed into a manifest¹ and latent² content analysis. Compared to other forms of research a content analysis is characterized by simplicity and is highly practical to complete (Educational research techniques, 2015). Because of the richness of data in the studies, this review progressed into an emergent thematic analysis which added value to my discussion part.

¹ Manifest content refers to evidence directly seen such as words in an interview (Educational research techniques, 2015).

² Latent content refers to underlying meanings such as an interpretation of an interview (Educational research techniques, 2015).

It is always hard to assess the validity of a content analysis, because one can not avoid that the results reflect the subjective opinion of (an) individual(s) (Educational research techniques, 2015). Although, because of the specific nature of my research, a content analysis seemed the most appropriate form to explore how visual art can reframe the meaning of life with dementia. The choice of the studies used in this semi-systematic literature review, induce a high face validity. A satisfactory or high degree of face validity is considered if the collected data are accurate with regard to the study's intentions (Grønmo, 2020, p.252).

3.4 Fundamental premise

Last but not least, I need to mention that the possibility that co-creativity can challenge the dominant biomedical perspective of dementia (as the equivalent of irretrievable loss), by creating opportunities for creative agency, is the fundamental premise of this bachelor thesis.

4. Methods and reliability

To reassure the reliability and quality of my findings, the structured approach I undertook to my literature review, is well described in the sections below.

4.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

All selected studies involved people living with dementia and co-creative visual art-interventions, in peer reviewed English and Nordic publications, published between 2018 and 2022. After running the search all the results included studies which are qualitative of nature and offer empirical evidence which highlights rather social, environmental, relational and situational components in the field of artistic creativity, instead of cognitive elements. More specifically, all research revolves around co-creativity in a supportive environment (residential care home and public spaces such as museums and community centers). In particular, all studies include visual art programs, activities and interventions and the use of visual art in any of the geographical settings mentioned above. I excluded all articles which did not revolve around visual art, but focused solely on other art forms.

4.2 Search strategy

A systematic approach to literature search was used to guarantee replicability of the search process (see attachment 1: Detailed search history). The search was performed in two databases. As I was also interested in finding Norwegian research about my subject, I chose database Idunn. Scopus was used because of a wide access to articles from most disciplines (Jacobsen, 2021, p.48). Norwegian search terms included “demens and kreativ samskaping”; English search terms included “dementia and co-creativity”. The search was narrowed down by implementing limitations in both databases such as date of publication (2018-2022) and by selecting only research articles in database Idunn.

4.3 Quality appraisal

As a quality assessment tool to evaluate the studies, “Sjekkliste for vurdering av en kvalitativ studie”³ (Helsebiblioteket, 2016) was used. This checklist is known to be usable in various disciplines (Johannessen et al., 2021, p.250).

Literature matrixes were created to display relevant components of the checklist and by doing so establish a ground for positive evaluation of the studies included in the literature review. The following items of the checklist were implemented into the literature matrixes: purpose of the study, design - methods - data collection, selection strategy, ethical considerations, data analysis, and findings (see attachment 2: Literature matrixes).

5. Results

5.1 The kind of art interventions investigated

The research of **Lea et al. (2020)** revolves around encountering art and discussing art, during dementia friendly guiding tours in museums, involving people with and without dementia, the art educators and the artworks.

³Sjekkliste for vurdering av en kvalitativ studie: a quality checklist for qualitative methods studies.

Mittner et al. (2021) explore visual art making, namely co-creating a mandala pattern and involves the visual artist and an individual with dementia in a care home.

Zeilig et al. (2018) involve a visual artist who works co-creative with people with dementia in community and care home settings.

5.2 Co-creativity in all its forms

To research the interaction in the art space **Lea et al. (2020)** are applying the concept of co-creativity⁴ to refer to the act in which persons with dementia participate as collaborators in artistic processes. Lea et al. (2020) argue for an open and playful approach of the artistic process characterized by a form of togetherness in which one strives for the most equal and mutual creative collaboration possible. In this case co-creativity revolves around the creative process of dialogue-based art interpretation, facilitated by the art educators. The art-works take on an active role in the encountering face, in which a specific dynamic process between the art and the art spectator takes place. While interpretation, and by that understanding, presupposes participation.

Mittner et al. (2021) use the concept of co-creativity to enable the involution of persons with dementia, in building a collective understanding and the process of knowledge creation, through interaction and meaning-making in art interventions. Engaging co-creatively with multisensorial art forms, can provoke moments of connectivity and aesthetic encounters. In the study of Mittner et al. (2021), framed by the theory of Dewey (2005), aesthetics in this context, refers to the experience through senses as a transformation of interaction into communication and participation. "Aesthetic experiences are shared experiences" (Dewey, 1934, cited in Mittner, 2021, p.67). The process reflects in a continuum of moments. In the study of Mittner et al. (2021) a visual artist describes how the feeling of togetherness, in a mutual encounter of an aesthetic experience, is what encourages a co-creative process. In this study the exclamation lies on the fact that there is no instruction, nor an activity leader present.

⁴ Kreativ samskapning

Zeilig et al. (2018) focus on co-creativity characterized by key components such as; a shared process and shared ownership that is inherent with reciprocity, relationality and inclusivity and is entrusted with empathic and dialogic approaches. This concept of co-creativity sustains within and is shared by a group, while requiring and creating imagination, receptivity and openness. This study highlights artistic practice of artists that work co-creatively in order to understand better the concept of co-creativity. Through this research four features (often overlapping each other) related to co-creative practice emerge, namely: improvisation, structure, leadership and equality.

Zeilig et al. (2018) explain how improvisation can be seen as a way of using space, imagination, bodies and objects in response to the stimuli of the environment, in absence of any preconception, and so allowing in the moment creation. When a predetermined plan is non-existing, improvisation can be linked to a shared uncertainty and in that way contribute to a failure free environment. In the study of Zeilig et al. (2018) the visual artist describes how improvisation can prompt creative openness and consequently allow impulses to be free.

In the research of Zeilig et al. (2018) the element of structure has a close connection with the element of leadership as a predetermined structure within a process, characterized by a true meeting of equals and the absence of an authority. By highlighting codependency in a co-creative process, the leader can be seen as the one that offers a structured framework that can be shaped by a group and is marked by malleability. This notion has the disposition to share leadership and lead by being alongside in a structure shaped by a group.

In the study of Zeilig et al. (2018) the visual artist describes co-creative art practice as follows: “like being part of a sentence with someone” (Zeilig et al, 2018, p.140). This statement emphasizes the intertwined nature of co-creative practice in which all parts are co-depending on the whole for their meaning and therefore are equally relevant.

5.3 Communication: more than words to express oneself

Lea et al. (2020) focus on the interactions between the art educators, the art works and the individuals (with and without dementia) involved. The art itself plays an active role as the pivot point of conversations. The art educator’s knowledge and

improvisation skills, as well as the ability to be flexible, are the key components enabling to react openly to the answers or responses given by the spectators and create equality. Lea et al. (2020) display an example in which as a response to the art educator's question revolving the geography of a painted landscape, a lady with dementia starts to sing a tune. As an open response at her turn, the art educator starts to sing along and by this inviting all the involved to join. An applause follows and the art educator thanks the lady for her input emphasizing the importance of her contribution. Furthermore Lea et al. (2020) described another situation in which the art educator receives as a response, a question in return. The art educator uses her improvisation skills and turns to the portrait of the lady in the painting, while asking her (the art work) what she thinks and relates this with her own art historic knowledge. According to Lea et al. (2020) such observations show how fragile interplay and verbal dynamics can be. Participants and art educators are involved in a joint production of meaning in a shared space of reflection. By letting the artworks own an active role in the conversations and being open for every possible opinion, a constructive interaction can be created.

Mittner et al. (2021) describe how communication is shaped by aesthetic encounters, because aesthetic experiences are interactions. To explain further Mittner et al. (2021) cite Dewey (2005). "Experience is the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication" (Dewey, 2005, p.22). Mittner et al. (2021) concentrate on co-creative engagement with multisensorial art forms that affect relations and shape moments of connectivity. Mittner et al. (2021) describe how the unfolding process of co-creativity between the individual with dementia and the research artist, includes negotiation and encouragement driven by art materials. An aesthetic approach to people with dementia, can be shaped by using intuition and imagination, in a way to fathom behavior that can be described as challenging (Mittner et al., 2021). In the study of Mittner et al. (2021) the artist tries to invite a lady with dementia by simply starting the action of painting, while this person follows her artistic movements with her eyes, the artist hands over a paintbrush and asks her if they can do this together. It is the feeling of togetherness in mutual aesthetic encounters and the acknowledgement of how multisensorial entanglements in these encounters affects relational ethics, in

which the individual with dementia shapes the shared aesthetic experience in the moment, on an equal level, as the artist does (Mittner et al.,2021).

Zeilig et al. (2018) point out that improvisation is essential to enable ideas to come to surface and to notice what exactly can happen in the moment. Improvisation is a method of applying imagination, space, bodies, objects and instruments in response to instantaneous stimuli of the environment, without preconceptions. Improvisation is a way of connecting with vulnerability and allows us to relate more closely to individuals with dementia, who often feel out of control themselves. Improvisation abolishes the artificial and normative strictures of structured therapeutic programming that would counterwork creative expression. Improvisation prompts creative openness; allowing impulses to be free and facilitating creative inventiveness immediacy regarding to all involved. Improvisation is characterized as freeing and allows creating in the moment. Zeilig et al. (2018) point out the importance of improvisation in co-creative practice with people living with dementia. Improvisation means the lack of a predetermined plan and can facilitate the eradication of roles and habitual defenses and hence provoke connectedness with others in a world driven by imagination.

5.4 Empowering components and mechanisms of citizenship

Lea et al. (2020) focus on the social scientific perspective of citizenship and more specifically cultural citizenship, in which one co-authors the cultural context in which one lives. By participation and practicing co-creativity, people with dementia can exercise their cultural citizenship. Co-creativity in the art space between the artwork, the art educators and the participants, creates for people with dementia the opportunity to influence how to understand and interpret art. Lea et al. (2020) point out that looking at interaction as a form of co-creativity, facilitates spotting the potential and capacity of people with dementia to participate in communicative, meaningful, and relational processes with others. And by this their opportunity to be creative, participating, acting people becomes more visible. Lea et al. (2020) describe how the art educators stand alongside the participants and not above or in front of them. Both the artwork and participants have an active role as co-creators in the interpretation process. These interactions are characterized by the fact that the

people take each other and the art works seriously and by that value each other and the art. One of the participants explains how *being shown things of value* (art) is equivalent to *being taken seriously* (Lea et al., 2020, p.56). Lea et al. (2020) show that people with dementia feel themselves valued while being offered the encounter with art of high quality and the opportunity to reflect on art.

Mittner et al. (2021) explain how the overall aim of the research is to strive collectively towards an understanding of dementia beyond individual loss. According to Mittner et al. (2021) aesthetic-based research is a methodical approach, which has the potential to deviate the focus from dementia as a condition in itself, to new forms of citizenship in which people living with dementia contribute to society by creatively expressing themselves. Whereas within a cultural and contextual frame, dementia can be experienced as a disability, the research of Mittner et al. (2021) is built on the GAP model (the Nordic Relational Model of Disability). This relational model of disabilities conceptualizes levels of functioning as a discrepancy - visualized by 'the gap' - between requirements from the environment and individual abilities. Hence this gap can create new ways of being together with individuals with dementia and can thereby be seen as a potential space of creativity and of becoming. Thus, within an aesthetic model of disability, dementia can be understood differently by connecting within ourselves and to each other in an aesthetic universe of imagination. By understanding the gap as a possibility, differences can become a driving force for establishing (new) relations. Acknowledging the fact that people can create to the very end of life affects the way people living with dementia are perceived and how they might perceive themselves.

Zeilig et al. (2018) illustrate that co-creativity is predicated on and can endorse the sense of equality among all involved, who have equally useful contributions to offer and echoes the idea of hybridity. The fact that there was a growth of trust and community within the group of co-creators was a significant finding in this study. Zeilig et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of the artist's awareness that co-creative practice revolves around valuing the equality of human experiences. By that the essence of co-creativity can be seen as the acknowledgement of equality that provides a means of meeting individuals with dementia affirmatively, where they are.

Hence, co-creativity is an ingrained democratic and non-hierarchical version of creativity in which the individual's capacities are intertwined into a cohesive creative process.

6. Discussion

6.1 The creative nature of the art interventions

The art interventions described by Lea et al. (2020), Mittner et al. (2021) and Zeilig et al. (2018), have characteristics of little-c creativity. Encountering and discussing art in art museums and practicing fine arts, can be associated with improvisation, imagination and problem-solving. On this level of creativity, creative processes occur, which are meaningful in everyday life, without the prerequisite of a long lasting legacy. By participating in these specific art interventions, people with dementia can situate themselves in- and adapt their environments, by flexible maneuvering through using the arts and artworks and negotiating with the art educators, artists and other participants with and without dementia. The presence of pro-c creativity is noticeable in the fact that the art educators and the artists can be identified as domain specific experts, that facilitate their expertise in shared spaces (museums, community centers and care homes). On a deeper level, a continuing 'creativity in the making' can acknowledge an intrapsychic process and by that recognising the existence of mini-c creativity.

All three studies point out that creativity can emerge in the context of dementia and that 'creativity in dementia' is not a *contradictio in terminis*, as long as the Four C Model of creativity can be adapted in this field.

6.2 The common denominators of co-creativity

Lea et al. (2020) highlight an equal and mutual creative collaboration, which could be associated with the understanding of a shared process, in which the contributions of everybody involved are equal. Because of the nature of this intervention, namely interaction while encountering art and dialogue-based art interpreting, a dialogic approach (one of the main characteristics of co-creativity), is not more than a matter

of course, while relationality, reciprocity and inclusively are presuming facets.

Mittner et al. (2021) emphasize aesthetic encounters by engaging co-creatively. In this context interaction transforms into communication and participation in a shared process within a continuum of moments. Thereby concretizing two main features of co-creativity, namely a shared process in which communication can be shaped. The togetherness in a mutual encounter, presumes also here in this case that relationality, reciprocity and inclusively, can coincide within a shared communication process. This research takes place in residential care homes and by this points out that co-creativity can provide the possibility for mutual exchange within these settings.

Zeilig et al. (2018) contribute by identifying four novel features of co-creativity. Besides the generally accepted key-elements, namely relationality, reciprocity, inclusivity and the recognition of a shared process, Zeilig et al. (2018) consider improvisation, structure, leadership as well as equality, as main attributes of the concept of co-creativity. This study offers the possibility to reflect upon the constellation of power relations within the concept of co-creativity. The research describes how the necessity of a leader, that facilitates a structured but malleable framework, that can be shaped by a group, does not collide and can coincide with equality.

By recognising leadership in a malleable structure, the study of Zeilig et al. (2018) offers a notion of equality that seems, without any doubt acceptable. While the studies of Lea et al.(2020) and Mittner et al. (2021), lack a similar explanation in this regard.

6.3 Imagine all the people as narrative beings

The emerging feature of improvisation in the study of **Lea et al. (2020)** was an important element to make the connection with the communicative aspect in this review related to the concept of narrative agency. The improvisation skills of the art educators facilitate and recognize the narratives displayed by people with dementia experiencing linguistic decline. Instead of using words, a song is being sung and so - - stories can be told that can no longer be processed, understood and accessed in a

conventional way (Dupuis, 2016). By using improvisation, equality is created, attitudes and habits can be broken and an open mind can be released. Instead of being overwhelmed because of the confusing nature of a question of the publicum, the art educator turned to the artwork itself, asking the lady in the portrait for help. By doing so, the shared space of reflection includes the expert, the art itself and creates the opportunity for the person with dementia to be a narrative being and a creative agent of meaning making. This emphasizes once more the importance of the art educator's improvisation skills, knowledge and competence.

Recognisable as an element that can be associated with improvisation are the elements of intuition and imagination in the moment, which emerged in **Mittner et al. (2021)**. Imagination can comprehend challenging behavior and in an aesthetic approach this behavior can be molded through interaction, into a valuable narrative. The action of painting as a gesture of invitation causes participation through action. This is what Dupuis (2016) refers to as storytelling through actions and by that giving the opportunity of narrative being. The ability to connect and communicate does not abide within an individual's body or brain, but derives through interaction. Thereby it is not the individual's (dis)ability, but the aesthetic experience in the moment that alters perceptions and relations of dementia.

Also in the research of **Zeilig et al. (2018)** improvisation as an essential factor is prominently highlighted. It is improvisation that shapes the base for imagination as a response to the environment. Applying improvisation takes courage, because it connects our inner self with vulnerability as well as it embraces the potential for what Loteringthon (2019) refers to as aesthetic experiences in the moment itself.

All three studies point out how improvisation and imagination are a driving force behind unconventional communication, in which narrative beings can mainstay. Those are as well the two features Bellass (2019) brings forward as main components in Little-c creativity. Little-c creativity is known to emerge in the context of dementia.

6.4 Recognizing different forms of citizenship through arts

The research of **Lea et al. (2018)** is directed towards cultural citizenship, in which one co-authors the cultural context in which one lives. Giving the opportunity to give meaning, reflect and interpret art in an open space, creates room for participation and influences our common cultural heritage. Consequently, cultural citizenship is about citizens influencing the cultural production of meaning. In a constructive interaction in the art space, people with dementia are not held in a powerless position, but become - regardless of diagnosis - equal interlocutors in a common room for reflection. Exposing people with dementia to objects of value (in this case artworks) strengthens their self-worth and personhood. In this case the concept of social citizenship (Barlett & O'Connor, 2010) is applicable because of the recognition of personhood, the respect of a valuable social position and narrative agency.

Mittner et al. (2021) focus on the possibility to deviate from a biomedical model of loss and deficit, to new forms of citizenships that people with dementia can experience through the use of aesthetic-based research. By reviewing the GAP model and implementing the possibility that the postulated gap between social environment and individual abilities diffuses within mutual aesthetic encounters, the gap itself becomes a potential space of becoming. Hence the most fundamental powers according to Behuniak (2013), namely 'the power to be', can hereby be claimed. Based on this aesthetic analysis, Mittner et al. (2021) argue that the gap between social requirements and individual abilities can be interpreted as a space of connectedness between things and beings and a potential space of creativity. This perspective offers Baldwin's reconceptualisation of citizenship (2008) a position, because in this case it is the gap itself that offers the opportunity to express oneself narratively. By this, as well as by emphasizing mutual aesthetic encounters, people with dementia are able to express themselves in a form recognisable as a narrative.

Zeilig et al. (2018) do not mention the concept of citizenship as such. Although, elements of citizenship are recognizable. For example, the sense of hybridity was noticeable during co-creative processes, as well as the growth of a community founded on co-creative practice. The establishment of personhood can be found in the fact that people with dementia were met affirmatively. Zeilig et al. (2018) define co-creativity as a democratic and non-hierarchical version of creativity as a frame in

which people with dementia express themselves. By this co-creativity itself could form a body of citizenship.

7. Conclusion

This review shows that giving the opportunity to people with dementia, to exercise their narrative agency through visual arts, enables them to exercise citizenship. In this context, co-creative art practice encompasses the possibility to challenge the biomedical model of dementia. An aesthetic approach of dementia could lead towards a relational understanding of dementia and an inclusive society for all.

In the light of these findings, this study could be a motivational force to implement co-creative visual art practice into dementia care policies. This would enable utilizing the arts to meet people with dementia in positive and engaging ways. To contribute to significant culture change, more interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary art-based research in the field of dementia should be conducted. Collaboration between clinicians, academics, creative practitioners, people with dementia and carers could build upon the body of knowledge and could trigger a wider interest in the arts as a relevant domain in the field of dementia.

Only a small amount of studies were relevant for this review. In the reviewed studies, the methodological flexibility (needed to capture the complexity of co-creative practice in the field of dementia), displayed a strong heterogeneity. Because of this, it was challenging to generalize broadly from the results. Although this aspect made an emergent analysis possible and contributed to interesting findings.

The emergent part of this research demonstrates a need for greater conceptual and methodological thinking related to improvisation and imagination in 'the flow of moments' in co-creative practice.

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Attachments

Attachment 1: Detailed search history

Database Idunn:

-The Norwegian keywords I have used in Database Idunn are:

“demens + kreativ samskaping”

→I obtained 26 results.

I applied the following filters;

-Limit to: research article

-Timeline of publication date: from 2018 to 2022. (Idunn: 2018-2021)

→I obtained 7 results with on the first place:

Kunsten å ta kunsten på alvor: Personer med demens på kunstmuseet.

Reference:

Lea, E., Hansen, C. & Synnes, O. (2020). *Kunsten å ta kunsten på alvor: Personer med demens på kunstmuseet. Nordic journal of arts, culture and health, 2020/2* (1), 51-67. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535.7913-2020-01-05>

(This was the only article out of the 7 results that was relevant for my research.)

-The English keywords I have used in database Idunn are:

“dementia + co-creativity”

→I obtained 7 results.

I applied the following filters;

-Limit to: research article

-Timeline of publication date: from 2018 to 2022. (Idunn: 2018-2021)

→By this I obtained 4 results with on first place again:

Kunsten å ta kunsten på alvor: Personer med demens på kunstmuseet.

→And on second place:

Re-conceptualizing the gap as a potential space of becoming: Exploring aesthetic experiences with people living with dementia.

(These 2 articles out of the 4 results were relevant for my research.)

Reference:

Mittner, L., Dalby, K., & Gjærum, R. G. (2021). Re-conceptualizing the gap as a potential space of becoming: Exploring aesthetic experiences with people living with dementia. *Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health, 3*(1-02), 63–74. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535-7913-2021-01-02-06>

(The other articles revolved around other art forms and older people in general.)

Database Scopus:

-The keywords I used in database Scopus are:

«dementia + co-creativity»

→I obtained 3 results.

In database Scopus I used the possibility to refine the results related to the publication year of the articles by ticking the year 2018 and 2019 as these dates of publications are relevant for my study.

→I obtained 2 results.

After going through these articles, with visual art in mind, I excluded the article that was dealing with dance and music and did not mention visual art and selected the study which revolved around visual art:

Co-creativity: possibilities for using the arts with people with a dementia

Reference:

Zeilig, H., West, J., & van der Byl Williams, M. (2018). Co-creativity: possibilities for using the arts with people with a dementia. *Quality in Ageing, 19*(2), 135–145.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/QAOA-02-2018-0008>

Attachment 2: Literature matrixes

Research (1) title	Kunsten å ta kunsten på alvor: Personer med demens på kunstmuseet.
Reference	Lea, E., Hansen, C. & Synnes, O. (2020). Kunsten å ta kunsten på alvor: Personer med demens på kunstmuseet. <i>Nordic journal of arts, culture and health</i> , 2020/2 (1), 51-67. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535.7913-2020-01-05
Purpose	The purpose of this study is clearly formulated. This article revolves around what characterizes constructive interaction situations during organized guided tours for people with dementia at an art museum, and how those interactions can be understood. The aim of this study is to explore the interaction in the art space itself during dementia-friendly tours in art museums; between the art educators, people with and without dementia and the artwork. This study focuses on situations where people with dementia say or do something that sets the interaction in the art space in motion; What are the characteristics of such interaction situations, and how can they be understood?
Design, methods, and data collection	The study has a qualitative research design. Empirical data exists of field notes based on participatory observations, and interviews with art educators and the participants. This research describes and discusses the interactions in front of the artworks. The researchers focused on <i>patches</i> . <i>Patches</i> are episodes, dialogues and narratives in data that show a particular relevance for the research in question.
Selection strategy	Participants: art educators and 20 participants whereof nine persons with dementia. Environment: museums / art spaces (KODE Art Museums and 'Komponisthjem'). Visual art as such: encountering art works.

Ethical considerations	The role and responsibility of the researcher is described. Recruitment process, anonymity, confidentiality - privacy and informed consent as ethical issues were considered and respected.
Data analysis	Manifest and latent content analysis by categorizing. The content in this study is referred to as episodes in which people with dementia say something or do something that provokes a motion in interaction.
Summary of findings	This is one of the first research articles on dementia-friendly art tours in Norway. The study contributes with new insight into the importance of artistic competence in dementia care, and greater understanding of how cultural citizenship in relation to people with dementia can be understood and practiced. This study shows how reciprocal and co-creative engagement with the art educators facilitates people with dementia to influence how we understand and interpret our cultural heritage. The researchers argue that collaboration and participation at the museum has the potential for persons with dementia to exercise their cultural citizenship.

Research (2) title	Re-conceptualizing the gap as a potential space of becoming: Exploring aesthetic experiences with people living with dementia.
Reference	Mittner, L., Dalby, K., & Gjørnum, R. G. (2021). Re-conceptualizing the gap as a potential space of becoming: Exploring aesthetic experiences with people living with dementia. <i>Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health</i> , 3(1-02), 63–74. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535-7913-2021-01-02-06
Purpose	The purpose of this study is clearly formulated. This research describes how co-creative art practices can involve persons living

	<p>with dementia as active citizens. The study is built on the GAP model (the Nordic Relational Model of Disability) that conceptualizes levels of functioning as a discrepancy between requirements from the environment and individual abilities.</p> <p>This study explores how reciprocal aesthetic experiences can broaden the narrow biomedical understanding of dementia and by this developing aesthetic perspectives on dementia. The study advances aesthetic perspectives in dementia research.</p>
Design, methods, and data collection	<p>This study has a qualitative research design with a methodological framework of arts-based research and sensory ethnography. Empirical data comprises field notes, writings, photographs and video recordings, assembled into a description (poetically described) of situated art interventions (scenes that open an aesthetic universe through fine art, poetry and applied theater). The descriptions of the scenes were written individually by three authors and analyzed collectively by five researchers of various disciplines.</p>
Selection strategy	<p>Participants: persons with dementia and artists</p> <p>Environment: two residential care homes in Northern Norway.</p> <p>Visual art as such: practicing fine art as a situated art intervention.</p>
Ethical considerations	<p>The role and responsibility of the researcher is described.</p> <p>Recruitment process, anonymity, confidentiality - privacy and informed consent as ethical issues were considered and respected.</p>
Data analysis	<p>Analysis of reciprocal aesthetic experiences by aesthetic analysis + manifest and latent content analysis.</p>
Summary of findings	<p>The research concludes that the gap between social requirements and individual abilities can develop into a space for creativity, in which everyone becomes interrelated and contributes to shared aesthetic experiences. The researchers</p>

	argue that broadening the understanding of the gap can result in new ways of relating to and being with each other.
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Research (3) title	Co-creativity: possibilities for using the arts with people with a dementia.
Reference	Zeilig, H., West, J., & van der Byl Williams, M. (2018). Co-creativity: possibilities for using the arts with people with a dementia. <i>Quality in Ageing</i> , 19(2), 135–145. https://doi.org/10.1108/QAOA-02-2018-0008
Purpose	The purpose of this study is clearly formulated. This study explores co-creativity in relation to artistic practice with people living with dementia. The aim is to describe how co-creativity offers novel approaches for engaging persons with dementia and artists, can contribute to less confining understandings of “creativity” and broaden the understanding of people with dementia as relational, creative and agential. This explorational study of co-creativity with people with dementia contributes to the wider understanding of co-creativity and co-creative practice.
Design, methods, and data collection	Literature related to current conceptions of co-creativity was explored, discussions were held and open interviews were conducted with eight experts. The data was coded and analyzed using the process of emergent thematic analysis based on content analysis.
Selection strategy	Participants: seven artists (including a visual artist) and one academic who all define their practice as co-creative. Environment: the artists worked co-creative in community and care home settings. Visual art as such: practicing visual arts.

Ethical considerations	Ethical restrictions are considered and ethical implications such as power relations, as well as ethical limitations of inclusivity are discussed. Anonymity, confidentiality - privacy and informed consent as ethical issues were considered and respected.
Data analysis	Thematic content analysis of the interviews. More specifically, this research uses emergent thematic analysis, facilitated by qualitative software. This form of thematic analysis is based on content analysis, but has a focus on patterns rather than frequency, and draws upon empirically emergent, rather than theoretically generated themes.
Summary of findings	This paper consequently shows that improvisation, structure, leadership and equality are central elements of co-creative processes and displays how co-creativity can contribute to novel insights related to the way in which the arts can engage persons living with dementia, the relationship between dementia and creativity, as well as the transformative potential ability of the co-creative arts for those living with a dementia.