

# Report on peer-led voluntary initiatives in Finnish museums

Reviewed cases: Kulttuuriluotsi and Kultu.

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# 1 Preface

This report was commissioned by Culture for All and the Department of Community Relations and Development KEHYS at the Finnish National Gallery. It seeks to shed some light on the work developed by *Kulttuuriluotsi* and *Kultu*, two voluntary actions led by two major Finnish museums. These initiatives were designed in order to attract new and diverse audiences into participating in and with the museums and other art and culture-related institutions. Both programmes have promoted activities that range from peer-led tours to decision-making in peer-led projects involving the museum's collections. Among their central priorities are the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities within the art and culture scene and, in the particular case of *Kultu*, the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. The research was conducted from September to November 2011. It deployed a mixed methodology, involving one-to-one interviews with key members of the groups as well as the available documentation and existing literature.

Developing participation through volunteering, the first section of the report portrays a brief overview of the notion of volunteering; how this civil action is perceived in Finland from the legal framework, and how the lack of national strategy regarding this specific matter is key to jeopardising the volunteering ecology within the art and culture arena. It also examines *Kulttuuriluotsi* (known in English as Art and Culture Companions), an innovative voluntary initiative created by the Educational Department at the Jyväskylä Art Museum. It responds to the need for increasing accessibility in the Jyväskylä region in Central Finland to cultural and art-oriented events, activities and services to society at large – particularly for the elderly, people with disabilities, and individuals that are not familiar with the art and culture spheres.

Activating and including youth in museums within the volunteering discourse focuses on the young people's voluntary group at the Kiasma Museum for Contemporary Art. *Kultu* was devised by Kaija Kaitavuori and created under the wings of the avant-garde programme Youth Art Interchange (YAI), a trans-European youth initiative that served as a catalyst and a platform for young people (between the ages of 16 and 25) to

collaborate creatively with and within art institutions. The department of Culture for All selected this group as its main focus in order to establish whether Kultu's primary goals regarding cultural diversity and inclusion of people with fewer opportunities were still taken into account. It is important to bear in mind that the research took place in a time when the group was heading in a new direction, since the YAI programme had ended, they had no fixed supervisor, and they had been on a long break from activities.

Since both groups have been in a constant state of flux since their conception, it is important not to conceive them as fixed products that can be reproduced, but as examples that can encourage or inspire fellow museums to approach similar attitudes accordingly to their institutional aims. With this matter in mind, the final discussion centres on two key issues that are of pivotal importance for the well-being of the researched initiatives: the role of the volunteer's coordinator and how these groups have dealt with the topic of addressing otherness.

## 2 Introduction

The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.

Marcel Duchamp

At their best, museums can be critical and political arenas with a significant relevance in society by producing or enabling innovation capital. Used creatively, their nature as repositories of historical memory<sup>1</sup> can help establish a comparative framework and a clear understanding of what really is different, new and contemporary about the present and thus, challenge the assertions of cultural difference – or identity – with which we are constantly bombarded in this global media epoch that lacks historical awareness.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Many institutions continue to be fixated in either defunct or stale patterns of representation and are unable to engage in a dialogue with the complexities of the present and the community-oriented notions that have arisen in recent decades. This is accentuated, especially if we take into account the complex sharing platforms that the Internet has generated (open-source software, web 2.0, social media, etc). As a result, in the last few decades, the audience spectrum for museums, galleries and performing arts institutions has been impaired.

As Groys states, “in order to properly assess the predicament of the museum as an institution one must first acknowledge the fact that, rather than representing the majority of those interested in art and culture as it did in the past, the museum now only speaks

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<sup>1</sup> Groys, 2008

for a minority”<sup>2</sup>. Clearer examples of this situation can be found in the USA<sup>3</sup> and the UK<sup>4</sup>, where current research has shown that the main audience and volunteers at the institutions in these countries represent predominantly people from a white ethnic background who are middle aged or older. Although this might not be the particular case in Finland, it is still important to evaluate the art and cultural institutions of this country and to ask whether there is room for forward thinking, diversity and youth.

There is an immense amount of work to be done for the survival of the arts and cultural institutions. Therefore, there is an undeniable need to rethink and update the museums, their staff and protocols, so they can still be a viable option, and an option willing to engage in dialogue with all people, disregarding their social status, savviness, minority position, physical ability or disability, etc. Improving institutional practices requires a systemic effort and an open debate regarding the principles that concern the entire museum<sup>5</sup> and their surrounding communities. There can no longer be room to think of standardised target groups or a homogeneous audience, but many, with different levels of involvement, interests and needs. Art and cultural institutions have to keep up with the changes in the art paradigms, which go hand-in-hand with the increasing state of flux in the audiences’ roles; from passive spectators and visitors to participants, users, customers, consumers, learners, prosumers<sup>6</sup>, or producers<sup>7</sup>. The categories may overlap according to the intensity of engagement and compromise what the individual is willing to give, or to what is required – and allowed – by the artist, the artwork, or the institution. For the museum's benefit, it is important to consider the audience’s active participation as a way to renew its position within the community structure.

Taking some of these issues as starting point, the report focuses on museum volunteering not only as a sustainable tool used by cultural institutions to subsist, but

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Simon, 2010

<sup>4</sup> CASE, 2011

<sup>5</sup> Kaitavuori, 2008

<sup>6</sup> Concept coined by Alvin Toffler (*The Third Wave*, 1980) which combines producer and consumer.

<sup>7</sup> Concept coined by Axel Bruns which combines producer and user. More info on <http://produsage.org/node/9>

mainly as a feasible option to reconnect, activate and engage new people with the art and cultural spheres.

## 3 Developing participation through volunteering

Volunteers are vital assets for the ecology of most art and heritage institutions; many depend directly on volunteering in order to be able to operate. It is precisely for that reason that volunteers must not be perceived just as a free workforce, but as an invaluable resource that can open up and further activate these institutions, providing them with fresh perspectives and new audiences. The range of tasks volunteers undertake varies across museums and this can directly influence who chooses to get involved with a particular institution: younger people are more prone to go to museums where they feel they are represented and that their voice is heard. In this sense, it is crucial to raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering as a form of active engagement with art and culture, and to understand that it requires investment, creativity and understanding to build the capacity of museums to involve volunteers.

### 3.1 Overview

Volunteering has been a central pillar of civic renewal strategies, seen as a core act of citizenship and a key to developing strong and prosperous communities<sup>8</sup>. In the best scenarios, volunteering can provide platforms that foster non-formal learning, critical discourse and the exchange of ideas; it increases citizens' awareness regarding decision-making processes as well as their participation within social structures. Volunteering may also help to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences; strengthen the notion of equal rights and opportunities among individuals; and uphold intercultural understanding, respect and diversity.

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<sup>8</sup> D'Souza et al., 2011

There is not one but a variety of definitions concerning voluntary work, and all of them require the following criteria to be satisfied: that it is an unpaid activity, undertaken upon the volunteer's own free will, and that it is beneficial for others. A more flexible understanding can be seen in recent definitions which propose that volunteering can include some financial reward or incentive as long as unpaid time is also involved and that volunteering can be undertaken as core activities in courses or programmes.

According to Wang (2004)<sup>9</sup>, the primary motivations for individuals to volunteer are:

- Altruistic value: personal values and belief in helping others.
- Personal development: challenging self, gaining experience and sharing skills and knowledge.
- Community concern: making a contribution to the community and promoting volunteering.
- Social adjustment: volunteering is important to significant others, family members.
- Ego enhancement: volunteering to feel part of a unique experience.

### 3.2 Volunteering in Finland: legal framework policy and the role of active citizenship.

According to the national study on volunteering outlined in the *Study on Volunteering in the European Union – Final Report*, Finland lacks a legal framework for the regulation of volunteering, as well as a clear and consistent policy regarding volunteering at a national level<sup>10</sup>. This might seem at odds if it is considered that the concepts of volunteering and non-formal education have had a substantial impact on Finland's history as decisive agents “in the process of nation building which took off from a cultural awakening to create a status for the Finnish language and foster a distinct Finnish identity”<sup>11</sup>. During the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth

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<sup>9</sup> Wang (2004) quoted in Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> In Finland, volunteering is mainly regulated by a number of laws. Non-profit organisations engaging with volunteers do not need to notify public authorities about volunteers as long as they are carrying out activities for the public good, and they are not engaging in delivering services on behalf of a public or private organisation. For profit-making organisations, the employer is responsible for the insurance and protection of an employee if he or she carries out voluntary work during working hours. For more information about these subjects see the *Country Report*.

<sup>11</sup>Hilger, 2008

century, volunteering and civil associations were primary channels that promoted and fostered the redistribution of social rights and responsibilities, as well as platforms to advocate for the rights of women at home, basic human rights and education. Both mechanisms had a crucial role in the 1930s and 1940s in “providing people [with] activities to take part in during their free-time and to forget about the difficulties suffered over the past few decades”<sup>12</sup>, as well as to help to reconstruct the country's morale.

The *Study on Volunteering in the European Union. Country Report: Finland (2011)* states that although the number of voluntary organisations remains high, membership-based volunteering is in decline. Voluntary members of local voluntary groups are getting older and therefore there is a concern about the future of voluntary organisations. There are no signs of lower levels of involvement in volunteering or less interest, the difference lies in the sense that Finnish people, young people in particular, now prefer to determine the level of their involvement. They speak more openly about what they want to achieve with their voluntary engagement, showing greater interest in project-based volunteering.

The topic of active citizenship is a seminal concern in the current volunteering discussion. In Finland, the issue has moved from the margins of the policy line-up to a key position in the current political agenda as a result of the increasing concern within EU policies to focus and fund projects that promote democratic principles<sup>13</sup>.

Kansalaisyhteiskuntapolitiikan neuvottelukunta KANE, a committee designed to enhance the cooperation between the civil society and the public administration, is a result in this shift of interests. KANE is currently working on removing the obstacles that affect the work of voluntary organisations.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>These topics will be addressed in more detail further on in the report.

### 3.3 Addressing volunteering in the art and culture sectors

The above-mentioned reports touch vaguely on the subject of volunteering in art and cultural sectors. The *Country Report* mentions the clear correlation between education levels and the tendency to volunteer, and the increase over recent years in the number of cultural associations – many of them focused on one particular theme: different art forms, the preservation of the local community, promoting multicultural dialogue, and so on.

It is important to underline that while volunteers give their time freely, they are not cost free. In order to gain this 'added value', art and cultural organisations must provide them with good quality support. Fundraising is a central activity for the survival – and autonomy – of the organisations that support volunteering. In recent years, this has become a challenge since the growth of voluntary initiatives has increased. This is a central concern, since in Finland voluntary organisations depend more on self-financing than many of their European counterparts as the proportion of state funding is relatively low<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore, it is vital for the well-being of volunteering to establish a national strategy that may help to channel funding into key priority areas such as youth volunteering and volunteer management. It is also important to identify current trends, invest in research, and promote the active use of evaluation tools in the current initiatives in order to tackle the need for robust evidence and raise awareness of the benefits of supporting volunteering in the field of arts and culture. It may also help to turn the focus into proactive voluntary activities that might be overlooked in the current reports<sup>15</sup>.

With this in mind, we turn our focus to *Kulttuuriluotsi* and *Kulttu*, as key examples of voluntary participation within the national museums agenda that can be implemented elsewhere in the art and cultural sectors. Both groups have made a substantial

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<sup>14</sup> *Study on Volunteering in the European Union. Country Report: Finland (2011)*

<sup>15</sup> The *Country Report* mentions that beyond volunteering in the sports sector, there are no further studies on other types of activities undertaken by volunteers.

breakthrough in the museums they have worked with and the target groups they aim to affect. Both have inspired others to undertake similar actions.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.4 *Kulttuuriluotsi*. An innovative voluntary service created to increase access to culture

Kulttuuriluotsi – translated into English as Art and Culture Companions – is an innovative service of “voluntary friends available for museums and exhibitions, theatre or concerts”<sup>17</sup> with the goal of enhancing the quality of life and well-being of the persons involved. Developed in the spirit of 'Culture for all' by Sirpa Turpeinen, educational curator at Jyväskylä Art Museum, this peer-supported bottom-up initiative arises from the desire to promote and develop high quality voluntary work in the art sphere by applying the principles of voluntarism to the cultural services of Jyväskylä. It responds to the need for increasing accessibility to cultural/art-oriented events, activities and services to society at large – particularly for the elderly, people with disabilities, and individuals that are not familiar with the art and culture spheres. The service is free of charge and can be used by individuals, associations and institutions.

The programme started in 2006 at Jyväskylä Art Museum in cooperation with the Alvar Aalto Museum, the Museum of Central Finland, the Finnish Craft Museum, Jyväskylä University Museum and the Natural History Museum of Central Finland. As a result of the intense networking and dedication of their coordinator, Hannemari Laitinen – as well as from the active participation and interest of the volunteers – the original cooperation has expanded and currently includes Galleria Becker, Kuokkala Manor Gallery, the Aviation Museum of Central Finland, Jyväskylä City Library, Jyväskylä City Theatre and Jyväskylä Symphony Orchestra.

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<sup>16</sup> An example of a young peer-led voluntary activity inspired by *Kulttu* can be seen in *Tennaris*, a group organised by the Helsinki Art Museum. A conversation with their coordinator, Amal Laala, can be found at Appendix 2

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.jyvaskyla.fi/taidemuseo/english/art\\_and\\_culture\\_companions](http://www.jyvaskyla.fi/taidemuseo/english/art_and_culture_companions)

Since 2010 other organisations, such as the Central Finland Dance Organisation, have used Art and Culture Companions in order to broaden their audience and attract new participants to their events. Giving the volunteers the opportunity to choose to be educated in dance and film (Dance and Movie Companions) has been a way to encourage a new audience to enjoy dance performances and promote alternative films and festivals (Laitinen, 2011). Access to museums is free for the companions and users of their service. The Theatre, Symphony Orchestra and Dance Organisation offer special discounts on the ticket price for events at their venues as well as free training courses related to their activities.

### 3.5 Performative definition and aims

Kulttuuriluotsi's literal translation into English is 'cultural pilots'. The decision to change the English name to Art and Culture Companions seeks to portray a clearer view of the volunteers' performative action: they are trained in subjects related to art and culture in order to act as peer guides for targeted groups and individuals in museum exhibitions and other cultural activities.

The project was initially designed to meet the needs of senior citizens, individuals with mobility and sensory disabilities and health problems, and support activities in their retirement and nursing homes. It is also focused on socially excluded individuals and anyone who needs encouragement to take part in the cultural activities of the city. Among the main aims conceived by Art and Culture Companions since its inception are to:

- Promote life-long learning opportunities.
- Promote community and well-being.
- Promote participation and involvement of senior citizens and individuals with special needs in the cultural field.
- Increase knowledge and understanding of art and cultural practices for an older audience who may have limited experience in these matters.
- Promote the consumption of culture services.
- Combat social isolation, loneliness and boredom.

- Generate a sense of empowerment and inclusion.
- Build a functional network of voluntary cultural 'ambassadors'.
- Provide recreational opportunities for everyone involved.

### 3.6 Group enrolment

The programme is flexible, thus allowing the actors to do as much as is suitable for them according to their own interests, possibilities and time at their disposal. It has been noted that the most recurrent characteristics of those joining the group are that they are retired or that their social group has recently disappeared, and that they are willing to learn, get involved and share their time with others. As Laitinen says, “they get so much for themselves from this activity that we don't have to make any special tricks [in order to attract them]; it's just ordinary activity”<sup>18</sup>.

The promotion for the group enrolment relies on word-of-mouth by the group members and the staff of voluntary and health branches. Subscriptions are made via telephone or e-mail to the coordinator; the compulsory information consists of telephone number, address, e-mail and personal interests. No further data is required and is left to each person's will if there is anything else they would like to share, i.e. areas of expertise, personal interests and wishes. The volunteers are organised into groups according to their interests, selected activities and opportunities. While the training is organised by Laitinen, the internal organisation of the volunteer groups should work autonomously.

### 3.7 Participants' characteristics

There is no particular volunteer profile, although there are some characteristics that are common among the participants. Many of the volunteers in this project had previously been involved in other voluntary activities such as work with the Finnish Red Cross; pastoral work; Save the Children; youth organisations; mental health organisations and

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Laitinen at Appendix 1.

other health promotion associations; grassroots work with the elderly, people with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and prisoners; as well as volunteering in sports, nature and culture schools (Laitinen, 2009).

Currently there are around 120 active *Art and Culture Companions*. The age range is quite wide, the oldest volunteer is 82 years old and the youngest is 20. There are approximately ten people from the first course (2006) that are still active. One of the common features of the participants has been that most of them – 9 out of 10 – are women, and most of them belong to the ethnic majority of Finland. Many of them have various craft or cultural interests and hobbies, and are retired, unemployed, or active members of organisations for the disabled and for promoting health – such as nurses. Younger members are mainly students from the fields of art education, cultural management, nursing and social sciences.

### 3.8 Training the 'companions'

Since the volunteers will accompany visitor groups acting as their peer guides, the training is crucial to help them familiarise themselves with the space and the staff of the venues and to generate trust between the volunteers and the cultural agents. Free-of-charge training is offered to the volunteers as a tool for introducing them to museums and other cultural venues, and to provide them with information regarding the cultural services that are offered in their region.

The trainee group consists of 25 to 30 people who are elected accordingly to the order of registration and the information provided by them. The basic training includes a visit to the main partner museums. The curators and/or educators of each venue act as tutors for the 'companions' and provide them with a guided tour through the facilities and related information (history, current activities, special services and contact information). Visits are made every few weeks, lasting approximately two hours each. The training seminar ends with a summary of the information provided by the museums as well as discussions on peer guides, voluntarism, well-being and topics related to the exhibitions. Secondary training courses may be available in order to provide the

'companions' with basic know-how for dealing with the target groups or individuals with particular necessities (Manerus, 2009). The activities are delivered in a friendly, flexible and relatively informal way.

Further training and activities are provided by other cultural institutions, often in accordance with the year's cultural highlights. This consists of meetings, museum visits, guided tours, exhibition openings, seminars, lectures, workshops, museum etiquette, events, other voluntary work in museums, and the social development of the peer group (Laitinen, 2009). The training and seminars are also designed to enable the volunteers to take a more active role, thus facilitating the formation of autonomous groups (Manerus, 2009, Laitinen, 2011). It is important to denote that knowing and understanding the particularities of the places they will visit in the future increase feelings of confidence, involvement and ownership, which allows them to provide a better service for others.

### 3.9 The volunteer coordinator and the challenge of fundraising

The volunteer coordinator is a central point of contact and enhances the communication between the volunteers and the related institutions. Since 2008 the person responsible for the project and the coordinator of the programme has been Hannemari Laitinen. Her background is in Art Education and Community Art, which, according to Manerus (2009), has directly influenced the operational nature of the organisation. The main responsibilities of her position are the coordination of the programme and related events, planning and organising the training and educational activities, contact with the volunteers and the cultural venues, networking, information, contents, and updates for the website and other forms of dissemination, support for the volunteers, and pairing<sup>19</sup>.

Being a service based on voluntary activities, the costs of the programme are quite low – the funds are allocated mainly to the coordinator's salary and printing materials. Up to the current time, the programme has received a grant of EUR 3,000 from the Ministry of

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<sup>19</sup>The coordinator 'pairs' the groups or individuals with a Companion according to mutual interests and time availability.

Education and the support of Jyväskylä Art Museum. Laitinen is currently employed by the Jyväskylä Art Museum and Cultural Services. It is important to stress that although Laitinen has been working for the past three years shaping, developing, organising and constructing the day-to-day of Art and Culture Companions, she is still hired on a six-month contract basis, which makes her job and the continuation of the programme dependent on the support of Jyväskylä Art Museum and the willingness of other organisations to fund the initiative.

### 3.10 Dissemination, visibility and evaluation of group activities

Generally, the information of the service is transmitted via word-of-mouth and by the volunteers and workers in the cultural, social and health branch – mainly through the nurses and staff of older people’s homes and nursing homes. It has also been made public through Vapari, a volunteer newsletter and website based in Jyväskylä, and other cultural newsletters. The visibility of the activities to the general audience relies on Taideapteekki, a brochure that promotes public cultural services and events designed for older people living in the Jyväskylä region, the webpage of Jyväskylä Art Museum<sup>20</sup>, and the webpage of the Art and Culture Companions<sup>21</sup>.

Information for the companions is communicated via e-mail and posted on their webpage. The web resource was implemented bearing in mind the relentless use of social media tools among senior citizens, and was designed by Milka Manerus to provide visibility, further information for the members of the programme and to allow the 'companions' to keep in contact with each other through the chat application. As for its evaluations, the programme relies on feedback and brainstorming with the volunteers.

### 3.11 Benefits, repercussions and new relationships

“Instead of the pharmacy pills you get art pills” (Laitinen, 2011)

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<sup>20</sup>[http://www.jyvaskyla.fi/taidemuseo/english/art\\_and\\_culture\\_companions](http://www.jyvaskyla.fi/taidemuseo/english/art_and_culture_companions)

It is the only online information of the service in the English language.

<sup>21</sup><http://kulttuuriluotsi.ning.com/>

The Finnish Museum Pedagogical Association Pedaali awarded their 2009 annual prize to the Art and Culture Companions project and its co-workers. Although the recognition of the work they had made is clear, the benefits the service has provided to the volunteers and the users had been documented and researched is quite scarce.

The Art and Culture Companions initiative has prioritised citizens that are lonely, socially excluded or forgotten due to their age, physical or mental disabilities, by providing a service that allows them to meet new people and to be active participants in the cultural life of the city. The programme has challenged the notion that activeness and learning are related to youth, proving that it is has more to do with willingness to proactively participate in life.

Other benefits that have been stressed by the volunteers are that participating in this type of activity has given a new meaning to life after retiring: it increases social interaction and it favours the creation of new bonds among peers by fostering a sense of community and a sense of belonging. It strengthens the self-esteem and boosts a sense of empowerment of those involved, and mainly it facilitates the experiencing of new cultural experiences. In internal reviews it has been mentioned by many 'companions' that this service and its related activities had "made their life richer" (Manerus, 2009; Laitinen, 2011).

In order to more clearly grasp the benefits these types of activities have, there is a need to further explore the positive repercussions and the relationships that have emerged between the volunteers, the institutions, their staff and the users of the service.

Therefore it is important to establish research regarding the repercussions that the Art and Culture Companions service has had in the cultural sphere of Jyväskylä and among its actors.

In the conversations with Laitinen and Manerus, it was mentioned that this programme is activating the local museums and their staff by fostering dialogue and interaction with new people. This interaction poses different challenges such as how to create an

exhibition for those who cannot visit the space, or how to reconsider the museum and its exhibitions, bearing in mind the physical, mental or cultural other.

Reciprocally, the volunteers have been activated within their local art scene. There are two relevant examples of the increasing interest and compromise with the cultural sphere, relating directly to the spirit of Culture for All. Kultsi is a group of eight 'companions' with a common curatorial interest. Jyväskylä Art Museum has offered them the option to select works from their collection and they will provide them with a space within the museum for the show, planned for February 2012. Art and Culture Companions Do Art Themselves is a group of amateur artists who presented their works in an exhibition at Jyväskylä City Library in April 2012.

### 3.12 Forthcoming agenda and further research topics

In the forthcoming agenda, the group has been challenged to tackle the growing requirements of the city to promote inclusion and enhance dialogue with members of the international community of Jyväskylä. Accordingly, they aim to attract and develop a group that includes individuals from foreign backgrounds and immigrant communities as a way of helping people become adjusted to the Finnish culture (Laitinen, 2011). They also plan to continue fostering the autonomy of the volunteers so they can independently organise their own activities.

During the conversations with Laitinen and Manerus, further discussion was had in terms of the need to promote the service as an important part of the cultural agenda and well-being strategy of the City of Jyväskylä towards securing a future for the Art and Culture Companions initiative. It is also important to provide a clear panorama of the influence of this programme in other organisations and institutions that have been inspired to start their own voluntary groups – in cities like Kuopio, Turku, Oulu, Lahti, Vantaa, Hanko and Tampere. A clear example of the programme's influence can be found in the Age Institute of Finland, which is launching a 'Culture Friend' service for old people in Helsinki and Sagalund Museum in Kemiö, which will also start its own service.

The growing services of cultural companions and art friends might benefit from uniting under an umbrella. Therefore, it will help to create a network system that allows them to share information, knowledge, contacts and ideas in order to strengthen and update their resources, thus providing a better service to their communities. Further on, this platform will allow us to reflect on and research the question whether the growth of cultural events and related activities in museums – in Jyväskylä and other regions – is related to the increment in demand promoted by these voluntary initiatives and the services they provide.

## 4 Activating and including young people in museums within the volunteering discourse

[The] formation of personal identity is emphasised when young people are growing up. Art and cultural heritage are important parts of this process. A historically multi-layered living environment and education in cultural heritage gives young people an opportunity to get in touch with the past, to create an individual view of the world and to see themselves as a part of larger temporal continuum. At its best, knowledge of cultural background increases willingness to acquaint oneself with other cultures, understanding of diversity and dialogue between cultures. Culture and art give the child a chance for participation where communality and individuality are simultaneously realised. (...) Voluntary child and youth organisation activities play an important role in the development of children and young people. Taking place in non- formal learning, that is to say learning outside the educational system, is largely self-motivated. (...) Children and young people must be supported and encouraged to find their own strengths and talents. Every child and young person has an opportunity to become part of the common cultural heritage, get acquainted with works of art and experiment with different forms of artistic expression in order to develop themselves, the community and its culture through them.<sup>22</sup>

*The Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007 – 2011* was issued by the Ministry of Education in order to “define the aims, focus areas and practical measures to improve the well-being of children and young people”. It is an essential document for the discussion in this report since it underlines how important the Finnish government considers the voluntary youth organisations and the contact with the art and cultural arena for the development of child and young persons.

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<sup>22</sup>The Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007 - 2011

The Child and Youth Policy emphasises on the vital aspect of promoting cultural content and the importance of culture in order to enhance the communitarian bonds. It conceives museums as 'learning environments' and relays the task of promoting and involving with the art and cultural spheres mainly to the individual, schools and other youth organisations. If we consider museums as public spaces and platforms for learning, then it is imperative that these institutions share as well the interest and the task of generating a dialogue with the younger generations. This is done by addressing them through proactive and challenging initiatives designed to increase the representation and participation of kids and young persons within their programmes. The aim is not only to serve society better, but to conform a strategy towards involving, ensuring and cultivating new audiences for museums and institutions at large.

On another discursive level, the non-formal learning promoted by generating voluntary initiatives can also be conceived as vocational education and training, thus providing the youngsters with qualifications that are beneficial in the employability dimension. Youth volunteering within the art and culture sphere can therefore be re-affirmed as an emancipatory practice that favours young people on their search to clarify who they are and who they want to be. Youth-led platforms starts with young people who chooses to be involved, engages with them on their terms through a negotiated programme, and work arduously towards outcomes they help to shape. The non-formal education approaches, established by carefully developed trusting relationships, aim to open up new opportunities both for personal learning and for expressing the young persons' voice. Through it, young people can become more aware of themselves and their surrounding environment, thus becoming more confident in responding to it.

## 4.1 Youth in Action programme: considering youth from a European perspective

The aims of the Finnish government with regards the inclusion of young people follow the aims of the European model. The fifth clause of Article 149(2) of the Treaty establishing the European Community (ECT) states that community action is aimed at "encouraging the development of youth exchanges and exchanges of socio-educational

instructors". Responsibility for youth affairs rests with the Member States, and action by the EU is essentially initiated by the European Council, primarily through recommendations and programmes designed to develop cooperation and mobility at the EU level. Such action is guided by an open method of coordination.

The 2001 White Paper on a new impetus for European youth marked a new stage in EU action. It essentially proposed that cooperation between Member States should be enhanced and that more account should be taken of the youth dimension in sectorial policies. Following up the White Paper, in March 2005 the European Youth Pact identified the fields in which consolidation is required, with a view to achieving the Lisbon Strategy objectives and strengthening education and training. The pact places the emphasis on improving the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans, while helping to reconcile work and family life.

Going beyond this general framework for action, the Union is able to call on specific instruments to promote cooperation, thanks to the *Youth in Action* programme for the period 2007 – 13. This programme is designed to encourage young people, especially the most disadvantaged and the disabled, to participate in public life, and also to promote their sense of initiative, entrepreneurial spirit and creativity. In this way it boosts the mobility of disadvantaged young people in an informal education setting, and also, through the European Voluntary Service (EVS), it fosters involvement in projects within associations and local communities, both in Europe and developing countries, thus promoting mutual understanding.

The Youth in Action programme was adopted by the European Parliament and Council for the period 2007 to 2013, aiming to promote non-formal learning<sup>23</sup> and young people's active participation in society. It fosters social cohesion and mutual understanding and seeks to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and the labour market (employability dimension), as well as to promote the

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<sup>23</sup> Terminology in Appendix III

active engagement, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people (participatory dimension) regardless of their educational, social and cultural background.

It contributes to supporting the 'Youth on the Move' flagship initiative of the EU 2020 Strategy which puts young people at the centre of the EU's agenda to create an economy based on knowledge, innovation, high levels of education and skills, adaptability and creativity, inclusive labour markets and active involvement in society. Youth in Action also fits into the context of the new EU competences conferred by the Lisbon Treaty (article 165), which calls the European Union to encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.

The general priorities addressed through the programme seek to promote dialogue on the following topics:

- European citizenship: encourage young people to reflect on European topics and to involve them in the discussion on the construction and the future of the European Union by generating and supporting programmes that should reflect a 'European dimension', and offer young people the opportunity to identify common values with their peers in spite of their cultural differences.
- Participation of young people: encourage young people to be active citizens. By supporting various forms of teaching, promoting and fostering participation to young people, Youth in Action seeks to increase their participatory role and involvement in the civic life of their communities as well as in the overall system of representation.
- Democracy: the Youth in Action programme encourages young people to get involved in projects that have a positive impact on the community in general.
- Cultural diversity: by stimulating awareness and reflection on differences in values and facilitating joint activities of young people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, the programme aims to develop intercultural learning, promote respect for cultural diversity and fight against racism and xenophobia.
- Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities: promote effective access to formal and non-formal education, transnational mobility and participation, active

citizenship, empowerment and inclusion of all young people. The programme fosters the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities who face social and economic barriers, disabilities, educational and cultural differences, health programmes and geographic obstacles, etc. in order to enhance social inclusion and contribute to social cohesion and accessibility for all.

2011 was the European Year of Volunteering, aspiring to encourage projects aimed at raising the awareness of the value and importance of volunteering as a form of active engagement and as a tool to cultivate – or improve – competencies for personal, social and professional development. Other key priorities were aimed at tackling youth unemployment by encouraging projects that focus on issues of youth unemployment and/or stimulating unemployed young people's mobility and achieving their participation in society; generating inclusive growth by encouraging projects addressing the issue of poverty and marginalisation and encouraging awareness and inclusion of young migrants, disabled young people, and where relevant Roma youth; and to promote creativity and entrepreneurship by encouraging youth initiatives aimed at stimulating young people's spirit of initiative, and their ability to think imaginatively and originally.

## 4.2 Youth Art Interchange programme

Several museums have groups for young people, which organise programmes for their respective age group. These groups meet frequently, work with museum staff and artists, and ponder consider ways of bringing museum collections to the attention of various audiences and of interpreting the collections to these audiences. (...) Successful projects show that audiences may have much to offer museums. It would be peculiar to suggest that museum staff members are the only people who are capable of relevant thinking.

(Kaija Katavuori 2010)

In 2007 the British Council brought together a group of educational curators from Tate Britain, Tate Liverpool, Centre Pompidou, Kiasma and Reina Sofia<sup>24</sup> in order to encourage European arts institutions to make use of their Youth in Action programme. Together they envisioned the Youth Art Interchange (YAI) programme, an innovative European cultural exchange programme managed by young people between the ages of 16 and 25.

YAI was designed and curated by Eleri Lloyd, Mark Miller, Laura Turner, Shaun Curtis, Abigail Christenson, Lindsey Fryer, Florence Morat and Kaija Kaitavuori, and is a partnership between Tate Britain, London; Tate Liverpool, Liverpool; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki. Support and funding for this programme came from the European Commission through its Youth in Action programme, the British Council, the Youth Opportunities Fund, the Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust, and the participating institutions.

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<sup>24</sup> Reina Sofia left the project before its completion.

With the Youth Art Interchange programme, the opportunity for young people to interact with professionals from a wide spectrum of the cultural field and to add their own voices to ongoing discussions about art, identity, cultural democracy and European citizenship is opened up. The programme was conceived as a trans-European youth initiative<sup>25</sup> functioning as a catalyst and a platform for young people to collaborate creatively with art institutions. This hands-on participatory project provided new ways for diverse young people from four European countries to express themselves and engage in professional practice. In order to achieve this, the educational curators and the coordinators of the groups carefully crafted experiences that allowed the participants to create, share, and connect with each other, thus contributing to more fluid and equitable relationships among staff members, visitors and community participants of the museums involved.

### 4.3 A Sense of Perspective

YAI rose as an experimental platform that allowed young people to meet, share experiences and contribute to the creative and cultural life of their communities through work with art and artists. The programme was divided into two phases; Phase I, referred as *The Mail Art Project (2007)* and Phase II, entitled *A Sense of Perspective*, which ran from 2009 to 2011. YAI phase II hosted collaborative cross-gallery collection-inspired events that were curated by and for young people. During a two-year period, around forty young people developed a project entitled *A Sense of Perspective* in the four museums. With a shared objective they chose to work on the theme of 'democracy' in London, the theme of 'fear' in Helsinki, the idea of the 'in-between' (generations, cultures, countries) in Liverpool, and 'controversy in art' in Paris.

The participant groups in *A Sense of Perspective* were Young Tate, from Tate Liverpool, created in 1994; Tate Forum, from Tate Britain, created in 2002; Art

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<sup>25</sup>Salto-Youth resource centre describes transnational youth initiatives as follows: "could be realised in common with young people from at least one other country. This project should be based on a real partnership and aimed at exchanging and sharing the practices developed by young people in their respective communities. It must involve a minimum of 4 people in each country, aged 15 to 30. To support this initiative, a well-structured programme and a timetable for the project must be provided. It must be clearly linked to the objectives. The project can last anywhere between 3 and 18 months, including preparation, implementation, evaluation, dissemination and follow-up. Furthermore, the project must have a European dimension and an impact in the local community. More information in <http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/participation/youthinitiatives/>

Sessions, from Centre Pompidou, created in 2007; and Kultu, from Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, created in 2008. The groups – with young people aged between 16 to 25 – had the common aim of appealing to every young person who is available and motivated into participating and generating activities within the museum for their peers.

The structure for the second phase was centred on four 'launch weekends' of cultural activities, one in each city, attended by eight young people from each museum accompanied by two educational curators as supervisors. The launches were preceded by a 'feasibility visit' that consisted of two young volunteers from the partner museums to contribute to the construction of the events with planning and ideas. The activities (debates, workshops, artistic collaborations and performances) and the exhibitions were created by the young people for young people with the supervision of their coordinators.

The main concern was to create intercultural dialogue and inclusion of young people in core decision-making processes. Simultaneously, the project explored the possibilities of contemporary art as a platform for participation with the core value of advocating for pro-positive human relationships across countries and cultures. Accordingly to YAI's core priorities, it addressed topics such as European citizenship, participation of young people in democratic life, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, and the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

Through the structure, designed by the educational curators, the young volunteers were able to learn concrete professional skills on how to conceive, shape and construct an exhibition. Thus they gained a deep insight into the museum endeavours and artists' practice. These hands-on experiences helped to build their confidence and boosted a collective pride. It allowed them to meet new people that share the same interests. In addition, it increased the employability dimension of the participants; some of the young people gained paid employment or internship placements in the museums they participate with.

The direct consequence of the programme was the creation of youth groups at Kiasma and Centre Pompidou, as well as the possibility of free access to the permanent collections of those museums for the young volunteers. It created a platform that allowed young people's ideas to impact the main programme of the museums involved, hence diversifying the audiences within those institutions. This situation can be clearly seen at Kiasma, with the flow of young people attracted by the events organised by *Kultu*. Another important aspect is that by promoting such activities they created a sense of trust and formed a lasting relationship between the institutions and the members of the group.

The events for YAI were widely promoted on the website and in the magazines and brochures of the participant institutions, through social media, and specialised publications. Other ways to share information about the programme consisted of a closing seminar at Pompidou, a peer-lead evaluation report (constructed through the quantitative and qualitative data collected directly from the participants in the project as well as the quarterly reports required for each institution, and peer-lead evaluation), and a forthcoming in-depth report on the whole project.

## 4.4 Kultu by the kultus

Through the report there has been an interest in having the members or participants within the group to have a spokesperson and to describe their activities. The following part includes briefs of the conversations that took place in September 2011 with the following Kultu members:

### **Eeva Sarlin/Kultu member since 2009**

She heard of the project through a random encounter on a night bus with a neighbour's daughter who had been part of Kultu. *My background is more in sports and when I told my friends I was DJing at Kiasma, they would be like "oh, in Kiasma? I can't go", and I realised how black and white it can be. Before I didn't think I could be artistic or creative*

*in any way, I just thought I like sports, and that is the mentality. I couldn't imagine the ice hockey team going to the museum just for fun. Well now it is easier, but when we were 16 it was really sort of strict, you had to be in one group and you couldn't mix different identities.*

**Reija Meriläinen/Kultu member since 2009**

She got the info through Facebook. *Petra posted the link to the Kiasma page with the comment 'Art fools unite' and I was thinking, I'm an art fool, I want to unite! It just sounded good on the website so I applied.*

**Sarah Dilin/Kultu member since 2010**

She heard about the programme through Ahmed Al-Nawas. *Kultus is a small community, a family; everyone motivates and helps each other. I think it is still early days and that in five years it will be much bigger and we, as Kultu members, can help activate others.*

**Wisam Elfadi/Kultu member since 2010**

She heard about the programme through Umayya Abu-Hanna. *You meet people who are excited about the same topics you are, everyone involved in the meetings wants to do something, there is an active sharing and after the reward of travelling and knowing that you are working for something big.*

**Päivi Matala/Päivi inherited Kultu in 2009 and worked with them as their coordinator until June 2011** (or 'Kultu mamma', as she was referred by Reija and Eeva) *Kultus are my favourite thing in my work, to see them get new ideas and interact with each other. They have so many ideas and are so inspiring; they spread the energy outside of Kiasma and bring new people here.*

**Minna Raitmaa/Head of the Education Department at Kiasma**

*My mission in the museum is to show people that contemporary art is a tool for anyone to understand their life better, it is very personal and very intimate and it works in every environment and for anyone. There are no limits to what you can get involved in.*

## 4.5 Kultu: young people as cultural interpreters

When people ask what kultus are about I just say well... ah... hum... We do all these projects... It's not something that I can easily explain. It is a platform, a way to put your energy, creativity and ideas together and get inspired by other people's ideas. Also the good reputation Kiasma allows you to automatically attract new people [members], if you were to do this without a back-up organisation it wouldn't be as easy to get people interested, and also to gather together the facilities, the good location and the resources of Kiasma makes organising projects much more easier. It is like they say that when you have your foot in the door it is easier to get in. This is something quite unique for me; before I was involved in Kiasma for me it was a big institution, sort of inaccessible, cold and really big. Usually you go to museums abroad and then realise that there is one closer to me as well.

Eeva Sarlin

*Kultu* started in 2008 under the wings of the then Head of Education of Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Kaija Kaitavuori. The group was inspired by Young Tate and was created after the brainstorming encounter promoted by the British Council in 2007 in accordance with Kaitavuori's interest in developing positive initiatives aimed at developing audience participation and inclusion in and with the museums. The young cultural interpreters, aka 'kultus', are young volunteers (currently aged between 18 and 25) united by a common interest in art and culture and actively working for art-related projects in Kiasma. Since its inception, the group has aimed to attract more varied audiences to contemporary art and to the museum exhibitions<sup>26</sup> in order to increase its accessibility. It is an attempt to bring contemporary art closer to people that it usually does not reach, and with a particular emphasis on young people and cultural minorities.

The programme seeks to offer young people the full use of the institution for producing their own activities with their peers as the audience in mind. Under this philosophy, the

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<sup>26</sup> <http://kultublog.wordpress.com/>

'kultus' are both participants and users. According to Kaitavuori, “in a participatory approach, visitors are considered sovereign citizens who have something original to say about the work of the museum, they have a personal relationship to the content of that work, and they appreciate the museum’s significance in their personal lives and in the wider society. Users of a museum have the complete confidence of the museum to make their own decisions with regard to their personal relationship to the museum. (...) From the viewpoint of a museum user, a museum is not a place for learning new things or acquiring new experiences, but rather a place for bidirectional interaction. Museum users have something to offer the museum, in which they are not just there to take something away”.<sup>27</sup>

## 4.6 Coordinator post (also known as Kultu's mamma)

Working with them taught me a lot about organising things; doing and learning at the same time. I feel like their mother, I organise things and take care of them. I have deadlines and keep the concept of the projects in order to get everything ready according to the museum schedule. Trust me, the bigger picture was in my hands.

Päivi Matala

Kaija Katavuori was in charge of the group from 2008 to 2009. Päivi Matala was the coordinator from 2009 to June 2011. Until November 2011 there was no fixed coordinator, the role was covered temporarily by the members of the Department of Education, Minna Raitmaa (Head of Education) and Sanna Hirvonen (Educational Curator). All the coordinators have been members of the Department of Education at Kiasma, sharing their time between the coordinator post and their regular activities at the museum.

Everyone is taking it very easy now, before Päivi came there was another Kultu's mamma, and now we are waiting for a new mamma to come. The main point is us, the Kultu's mamma helps to reach and connect between

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<sup>27</sup> Kaitavuori, Op. Cit.

the members and with the museum. There is always somebody with us, sending a message out about the projects that we can get involved in.  
Sarah Dillin

Although most of the activities are designed with a peer-lead concept in mind, allowing young people to take responsibility and work on their own, the coordinator provides the framework in which they can operate within the safety regulations, protocols and schedules of the museum. They supervise the group's activities, gather material for their workshops and projects, mediate with the group and the museum's staff, coordinate the activities with the partner museums in the YAI programme, and conduct the evaluation process according to the protocol established by YAI (quarterly reports and internal evaluations). The coordinator did not seek to secure funds for the activities and since 2009 to June 2011 the project funding has been allocated by YAI with the support of Kiasma. The main challenge of the coordinator was to activate the young people.

## 4.7 Group enrolment and internal dynamics

The older ones are passing on the knowledge; they organise the boot camps and teach the newcomers what it means to be a 'Kultu' in order to get the group working.  
Päivi Matala

By November 2011 the group had 31 participants, and of those the majority were in their early 20s and were predominantly women. According to Matala, providing further data on the participants' background was not made available for the YIA quarterly reports since it "would be incorrect in Finnish culture to ask in terms of privacy". The group has open applications once a year, generally during the autumn and the numbers of entries depend on how many members are still active after the summer holidays. The basic requirements to participate are that the person is aged between 16 and 25, interested in art, active, and willing to learn new things. The members of the group

review the future applicants' letters and decide who will be accepted. Every active participant will receive a diploma certifying their involvement within the group.

Kultu has relied on boot camp training sessions for new members. For 2011, training was provided by the members conjointly with the Department of Education. Alongside these formal activities that aim to initiate the new members into the group, there is continuous, non-formal training that is exercised through their workshops, particularly the ones designed for YAI. In this sense, each activity was carefully planned to address particular priorities and produce the desired learning outcome for the young people.

The general dynamic consists of the 'kultus' having meetings with the coordinator and meetings among themselves. In every project there is at least one group member who takes responsibility for the activity and the follow-ups, according to their possibilities, free-time availability and skills; some of them are studying – or are skilled in – photography, graphic design, cultural production, journalism or translation. The 'kultus' can choose to participate in the activities according to their skills or the skills they want to learn. On occasions this has been a difficult approach since it might fix their activities and roles within the group.

As was mentioned in the first section of the report, young people are more likely to participate if they can determine the level of their involvement. On this subject Matala states:

When they choose their activities they are really responsible, we can trust them. We can't do anything if they are not into it. We had certain things where they could choose something, but if it doesn't come from their ideas, and they don't get a certain amount of liberty or see that it is interesting for them it is not going to happen. It is really hard to get them to come here and do things since everything is voluntary. It doesn't work if we have ideas and they don't buy into them. The crucial thing to motivate them is that they know that it is for a real audience, they are cooperating with professional people and are treated as equals. [We] allow them to come up with and enact their ideas.

## 4.8 The effect of the Youth Art Interchange programme

For the interviewed members of Kultu, the activities related to the Youth Art Interchange programme were the highlight of their involvement with the group. The members who participated within these activities were selected accordingly to the activeness and commitment they had shown, as well as the amount of free-time they had. 'Kultus' were in charge of collecting data in Helsinki for the international events as well as taking care of the arrangements of the related activities, marketing and workshops. The communication between the museums was performed in English, relying mainly on e-mail since the social media platforms presented many challenges. 'Kultus' had two feasibility trips, one to Paris and another to London, where they shared what they had been working on with the other groups. They were also responsible for reporting to their fellow 'kultus' on the travel and the development outcomes of the projects.

The inter-museum meetings were pivotal in order to develop a communal view of the project, learn and share information with their groups, and developing a deeper understanding of how things work in museums and how to share and negotiate their ideas with different people. Since the main language of communication was English, they were also able to practice another language.

I have learned about the structure of the museum and the bureaucracy behind it and I've learned a lot about the profession of being an artist. I'm going to be an artist and I think it has affected the way I will be. Event planning is something that I wouldn't learn otherwise, including where to get sponsors, how to do marketing, and discovering interesting people and ways of doing things.

Reija Meriläinen

Through the YAI platform they were also able to get inside knowledge on how artists work, since they collaborated with renowned artists from Finland and abroad. They were involved in creating their own exhibition, from conceptualisation to the creation of the work of art, the making of the exhibition design, developing a press release and invitations, and carrying out the marketing of the show.

## 4.9 Networking and main activities

Besides the YAI connections, Kultu members have had contact with Kiasma staff, and have met and/or worked in projects with the following artists:

Marita Liulia, Kalle Hamm, Pipilotti Rist, Adel Abidin, Heta Kuchka, Samba Fall, Juha Mäki-Jussila, Georges Adeagbo, Patricia Guerresi, Laura Horelli, Romuald Hazoume, Andrew Putter, Elina Saloranta, Ditte Johnsen and Michael MacGarry. The 'kultus' also met the curator Jari-Pekka Vanhala, Urban Festival's producer Mikael Aaltonen, the film-maker Ville Tantu, as well as journalists, sponsor representatives and the entire staff of Kiasma.

The main activities besides the group's workshops during Kiasma's Free Days and Night of the Arts where:

- Holy Shit, an event with Marita Liulia.
- Video project with Kalle Hamm.
- Meeting with Pipilotti Rist and a partner event, *Hertan Päivän ilta* during Night of the Arts. 'Kultus' organised a series of workshops along with the Department of Education inspired by Rist's exhibition.
- Video documentary on Adel Abidin's work presented at Kiasma. For this exhibition, the making of a video on Abidin's work was organised. The five participating members were provided with video cameras and filmed each other talking about Abidin's body of work presented in the show.
- The *First Time* exhibition curated and produced with Heta Kuchka. This was part of the launch event for YAI's *Sense of Perspective*. *First Time without Fear* was the main Helsinki event where the 'kultus' organised workshops, performances, panel discussion, a closing party and hosted the international members of YAI.
- Workshop with Samba Fall for the *Ars 11* exhibition.

## 4.10 Visibility and evaluation of the group's activities

Kultus relied on Kiasma's magazine and website, social media (Facebook, Twitter) and their blog: <http://kultublog.wordpress.com/> to inform the public and fellow peers on their activities. For their evaluation they relied mainly on the tools provided by the YAI platform, which consisted mainly of quarterly reports and peer evaluations. It remains to be seen whether they will retain those methods or which will be selected, and whether they will be beneficial to the group and the museum if they continued to carry out at least an internal evaluation to assess how the group is functioning. In addition, it is crucial that the museum generates further evaluations of how the group activities are being perceived by the public, in order to better assess the tangible benefits of maintaining such initiatives within the institutional agenda in a more permanent way.

## 4.11 Dissemination of activities and the challenge of reaching others

There are only certain people that are interested in Kiasma and they know how to apply to Kultu. You need to be at some kind of art school to know about it, and without Ahmed<sup>28</sup> or Umayya<sup>29</sup> I wouldn't have heard about it, and it's because they know this field. It is easier to send the information to Taik, because that is where the arts students are concentrated, than to take it to Itäkeskus or somewhere else, even though it is very important to attract people from different parts of Helsinki. What was interesting at Tate and in the Paris youth groups is that they have people from different fields participating, very few who work in the arts, which is not what happens here. (...) Being part of YAI phase II gave us the chance to meet young people from all over Europe and that was the multicultural part. There are only two immigrants in the group, me and one girl from Iraq.

Wisam Elfadl

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<sup>28</sup> Ahmed Al-Nawas has been the Cultural Diversity Adviser of Culture for All in the Community Relations and Development KEHYS Department at the Finnish National Gallery since 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Umayya Abu-Hanna is the former Cultural Diversity Adviser of Culture for All in the Community Relations and Development KEHYS Department at the Finnish National Gallery.

Dissemination of the group and their activities had relied on word-of-mouth, social media, Kiasma's media, a teachers day, and on occasion by the 'kultus' in schools. During the first year the information was also available from Helsinki City's youth centre and on another occasion they had their own table outside Kiasma during Night of the Arts, where they promoted and spread the word on the activity. Reija Meriläinen recalls: "Petra posted [on Facebook] the link to the page for Kiasma (...) It just sounded good on the website so I applied. The text on the website was very vague and it took a couple of months of taking part in the project before I realised what it was all about...I think I am still learning."

Since its conception, the dissemination and promotion to participate in the group has been contained mostly within the museum and the members' reach. This situation has proved to be a manifest problem regarding reaching social and cultural others, or people who are not in direct contact with art. As Sarah Dillin mentions: "I didn't know anything about the project until Ahmed told me about it, 'There is this group, are you interested in it?' and of course I was interested in art but I didn't have any contacts, how to get in touch. I had this stereotype of what art was and when I started to read that you didn't need to know about art, you just needed to be interested and motivated, and want to get involved different projects with artists, I got very excited."

Over the years there has been a changing factor regarding openly seeking – or not – new participants with a multicultural background. Members that have applied in previous years mentioned that they were not certain of what kind of activity they were applying for. On this matter Elfadl further comments: "The truth about Kultu is that it is more diverse than multicultural. When I applied there, I thought it was more multicultural and there would be more immigrants – because multiculturalism in Finland [refers] to immigrants – than European youth involvement. I thought it was more for those immigrants who had been living for a longer time in Finland, [in order] to create some kind of door-opener for the rest of the young people and teach them how to welcome people to the museum, but it was different. Now I'm very surprised but very thankful that I joined. There are more artistic people on the group. But I understand,

because there are so few immigrants who actually take part in the arts in Helsinki and it is very unusual for them to choose an artistic job or to study in the field. Girls go for social work and health and the guys go for 'useful jobs'. So it is more diverse and just different kinds of people wanting to meet each other.”

For the 2011 applicants, having a cross-cultural background was an advantage to getting in the group. Regarding previous years, the 2011 application managed to be clearer regarding what the group is, what they are searching for and the range of characteristics and commitment they are interested in. In this trial period it was also important to add younger people to the group, since many of the participants are in their early twenties and their current study or work agenda does not give them the time to be as active as the projects they participate in often demand. Also, the aim was to reach people from different sectors of Helsinki.

## 4.12 What's on Kultu's agenda

With regard to what the museum conceives as the future agenda for the group, Minna Raitmaa states: “We want to find new members, talk with the active members in the Kultu group about the problem that there should be a broader representation and younger people, in order to get to know other young people, not just the ones that live in or around the city centre. Challenge them to reconsider how to learn together in this small city. We want to start a think-tank together with artists, go to the suburbs and do things that are interesting enough to involve others. Kaija is interested in training the kultus in activist education, meet activists, see films, be together, see what is important and what they can do for society. We will start by finding artists that work in this field and then see what can happen from there.”

## 4.13 Benefits for the museum in involving youth

At least in our events we have brought more young people to the museum, our reach can be bigger, but the reach we have [has] affected young people

in terms of thinking that this could be cool or something and changing their attitudes towards the museum.

Reija Meriläinen

There is something for young people and things from younger perspective, because the people that come to the museum are much older or tourists.

Eeva Sarlin

The museum is much more open for younger people, it is our museum now.

Wisam Elfadl

There is this idea: if we could open the museums, they would be a place for living.

Päivi Matal

Actively involving and investing in young people is an important challenge for contemporary museums in order to break the fixed stereotype and the aura of inaccessibility they are surrounded with. Involving young people allows these institutions to mutate from learning environments to open spaces where life takes place and ideas are shared. Their presence activates the museum staff by questioning them and prompting them to share their expertise. Their involvement can create new discursive platforms within the museums' programmes and projects, allowing more audiences to get involved, many of whom would not otherwise access these spaces. Therefore, opening up the possibility to enhance the dialogue and understanding between generations becomes a milestone in the process of actualisation of the museum as a whole. In this sense, it is important to create strategies that allocate these types of initiatives to function permanently at the museums.

## 5 Conclusions

Although the significant role that volunteers play in building the capacity of museums and other heritage institutions is unquestionable, through the report it has been stressed how volunteering in art and culture hangs by a thread due to the lack of a national strategy that may allow a healthy sustainable future for volunteering. In Finland and around the globe there are thousands of places that could not function without the generous support and dedication of volunteers. Without volunteers it would not be possible to preserve and avoid the loss of valuable and relevant artefacts pertaining to human history. Therefore, policy-makers and museum directors have to be conscious that we can no longer rely only on citizens' own initiative to participate, especially in our current epoch with all its complexities. There is a need to proactively challenge people in order to awaken their curiosity, their sense of belonging and their historical awareness.

The voluntary-based initiatives that we have addressed in this report have proven themselves to be relevant examples, constantly striving for outreach and the involvement of the different strata of the Finnish social fabric. Jyväskylä Art Museum and Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art have shown how investing creatively and proactively involving volunteer programmes in the museums' agendas challenges the institutions as a whole and their surrounding communities. Peer-led platforms are valuable resources for empowering people to participate actively in their community, learn that they have a voice and that they can use it to improve their own life and the lives of others. If these platforms are carefully designed, they can increase the participation of individuals and communities in decision-making processes in every realm. These initiatives are vital for the country's future, since they promote the exchange of ideas and experiences, mutual understanding, equal rights and opportunities among everyone involved.

These voluntary initiatives have helped to promote self-organisation, provide valuable skills and thus increase self-confidence, set up the foundation to establish social bonds and networks, and they generate a sense of community and belonging. Furthermore, they develop artistic knowledge, help to shape informed and active participants, and creatively challenge the institution and its staff. The involvement of different members from society gives space to create new discursive platforms within the museums' programmes and projects, allowing more audiences to get involved, many of whom would not otherwise access these spaces. For these reasons it is crucial to create strategies and policies within the art and culture fields that allocate these types of initiatives to operate permanently within the museums. It is important to secure a post within the institution for an individual to work with the volunteers. If the initiatives involve young people or members with complex backgrounds, it is crucial that there is a coordinator or supervisor that they can rely on. Human bonds are vital for the positive outcomes of the members' well-being and it is good practice for a museum.

At their best, voluntary initiatives within the museum sphere can open up the space and provide a warm welcome for diversity within audiences and discourses. Opening up the possibilities for enhancing dialogue and understanding between the institutions and their surrounding community becomes a milestone in the process of actualisation of the museum as a whole.

## 6 Good practice: the role of the volunteers' coordinator

Ellis Paine (2006) notes that the way in which museums manage their volunteer programmes and communicate with individual volunteers deserves investment in terms of thought, time and money. In many cases the employment of a coordinator as a member of the museum's professional staff, where this is not already the case, can generate a real dividend in terms of enhanced volunteer effectiveness and morale<sup>30</sup>.

The volunteer coordinator provides structure and focus to the programme: they are in charge of providing a sense of direction and support for the volunteers, they inform them about their roles and responsibilities, they identify their needs, organise their trainings, workshops and activities. Furthermore, the coordinator serves as liaison between the museum and the volunteers, they deal with the bureaucratic procedures, secure funding, mediate between the flexibility of the programme accommodating it with the institutions' needs, and they have to think creatively in terms of how to engage new volunteers and challenge the current volunteer base.

As mentioned throughout this report, it is important to invest in volunteer support and management in order to benefit from the true impact of volunteer involvement. Well-supported and involved volunteers tend to be happier and stay longer; therefore working towards sustainable funding for volunteer management is a fundamental issue for museums that want to develop volunteering. Short-term, limited capital investment funding programmes can enhance volunteer involvement, but the challenge is for

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<sup>30</sup> Accordingly the *Country Report* mentions that there is an increasing need for highly skilled and experienced individuals to participate in voluntary activities in order to deal effectively with complex administrative and bureaucratic issues.

organisations to scale up and ensure the sustainability of this investment and for funders to adopt a flexible and supportive approach<sup>31</sup>.

## 7 Good practice: addressing otherness

Museums and other art and culture institutions currently face numerous and varied challenges. Among them, there are questions such as how to create an exhibition for those who cannot visit the space or how to think about the museum and its exhibitions, bearing in mind the physical, mental, sexual or cultural other. Some innovative answers to these ongoing discussions can come from a positive involvement of the surrounding communities. With regard to favourably including others in the conversation, an enormous amount of work remains to be done.

Voluntary-based initiatives' aims and goals vary from museum to museum. The corresponding departments should consider what kind of group they would like to be working with and what the main issues are that they want to address in order to establish their volunteer profile in a clear way. This point was made clear by reviewing both groups. *Art and Culture Companions* had managed to keep a stable volunteer profile and a clear service base. Whether they are able to engage similarly with other groups - i.e. cultural minorities and members of the international community of the city - remains to be seen since the group is ethnically homogeneous and there is an unclear view of how to relate to the cultural others. During the interview,<sup>32</sup> Laitinen mentioned that if immigrants would be interested in participating in the service, they should be grouped among themselves, with the “depressed people” or with the “regular” group.

Kultu as a group was designed from its conception to address intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities according

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<sup>31</sup> Paine et al, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Appendix I

to the main aims of Youth Art Interchange programme. There were few attempts to concretise these aims within the surrounding communities of Helsinki. Mostly, the intercultural dialogue, as expressed by the interviewees, was concentrated on the visits and meetings with the groups in France and UK.

Based on the 'accessibility for all' principle that both groups are aligned to, the call to participate within groups should be addressed to anyone who is interested without paying any heed to their origins. In dealing with otherness and diversity, it is important that the groups do not reinforce the stereotypes they are trying to tackle. In this case, there have been talks about Kultu as an elitist group, a label that would reinforce the art superstructures instead of tackling them. If there is an aim to make the group more inclusive, it is important to stick clearly to the group aims and disseminate the information in spaces that support diversity and where people who have the same interests might attend. It is also relevant to bear in mind that diversity includes more than just 'cultural and ethnical others' and to question the terminologies that are employed, since they can also be used to segregate.

Among the possible places in Helsinki where further groups could disseminate their information are: Kanneltalo Cultural Centre, Malmitalo Cultural Centre for North and North-East Helsinki, the International Cultural Centre CAISA, Stoa, the Cultural Centre of Eastern Helsinki, Vuosaari House/Vuotalo, and the Annatalo Arts Centre.

## 8 Recommendations

Voluntary activities are usually under-resourced, thus making them fragile and dependent on the willing. To maintain voluntary groups in museums as strong and operational resources, it is vital to ensure an open policy that allows and reinforces voluntary activities and services in museums. In this matter I recommend the following:

- The promotion of voluntary groups in museums within the Ministry of Education agenda and under its umbrella.
- The structuring of a voluntary policy for state funded museums that allows for positive participation of their surrounding communities.
- The creation of the position of a supervisor that provides continuity to the projects.
- The securing of a coordinator position for the voluntary groups as part of the museum staff.
- Seeking to involve key players in city councils, other government entities and realms, in terms of opening the discourse surrounding the allocation of resources for volunteering within the art and culture sphere.
- Seeking corporate funding and diversified fundraising.
- The creation of a viable infrastructure, including websites, mailing lists and space allocations.
- The construction of a network of collaboration between museums, youth organisations, youth centres and cultural houses to disseminate the information and open up the circle of influence.
- The development of a network that serves as a liaison between peer-led and/or participatory activities in art and cultural institutions (zine or newsletter/by and for volunteers).
- Taking into account that some people are more outspoken, think of solutions that create a safe space where group decisions have taken all the young people's voices into account.
- The construction of hybrid missions within the group in where the arts intersect with other issues such as community development, youth development and social services.

- Relying not only on the institution as a space of action but also on other cultural organisations, local schools and community spaces.
- Supporting peer-to-peer and mentoring relationships.
- Promoting the continuous internal evaluation of the volunteer programmes.
- Promoting more youth evaluations of the museums contents (Do the contents in the museum work out for young people? Was the exhibition successful? Clear? What are the problems they notice?)
- Being more inclusive, introducing broader concepts – otherness, diversity – and being particularly careful with the concepts you use and their connotation in the common imaginary – like “multiculturalism” and “immigrant”. Words can segregate as much as they can unite.
- Being careful that the groups do not reinforce the stereotypes they are trying to break down.
- Generating initiatives within the group that involve the young people in a responsible way, not only in their work, but to be responsible towards others. What can these groups give back to society?
- Programme activities that would promote the knowledge of the city where the young people live, and confront them with the diversity of their own home region. We cannot deny the novelty and appeal of the international other, but what about local diversity?

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# APPENDICES

## 1. Kulttuuriluotsi - Conversation with Hanne Laitinen and Milka Manerus, 14 September 2011. Jyväskylä

**GE.** How did the *Art and Culture Companions* programme start?

**HL.** The idea was, in the beginning, to lower the step to get in the museums; to be able to get more people to be part of the environment and also to influence and to get involved.

Of course there are many kinds of difficulties for people to be able to use the services we have here, so that was also the point. Sirpa Turpeinen had been working as a peer-guide for gymnastics or some kind of group, and she invented this kind of idea to also work in culture, so why not take someone with you when you go to a museum? That was the idea and the beginning of *Art and Culture Companions* (A&CC).

**GE.** What would be your definition of a peer-guide?

**HL.** A peer-guide is a person who has the same kind of experiences, is not a 'higher' person or doesn't look from the educated point of view, like a grassroots mate.

**GE.** Like a companion?

**HL.** Yes, a companion, especially if you think that the peer groups will meet regularly. Our system works for the peer groups and the volunteers; they meet each other, they get to know each other, they make friends in this A&CC and then I get orders: I get calls from the people in the field who perhaps work with people with special needs, and they ask for this A&CC and we try to match it up. I ask their needs and then try to find a someone who wants to go with them, maybe to the theatre or to a concert or to museums. Museums are the most requested, which make us happy since we started from the museums and we have still so many people who have never visited the local museums here in Jyväskylä.

**GE.** What is the social context in Jyväskylä that made it necessary to develop A&CC? Does this programme seek to respond to a need from the social structure? And if so, what kind of need, what kind of social problem made this programme happen?

**HL.** Before this kind of activity they had several other campaigns and Sirpa worked for so long as a museum educator, so she knew a lot of groups that never go to museums - I think that was the first idea - and then, of course, she had been working with young people and many other kind of projects too. I think it was quite clear for her that we always need to offer to those that don't come on their own to museums the possibility to get to know more about the environment. I think many of our colleagues don't think of it that way... And people with mental health problems or with learning difficulties, or many kind of social problems or just lonely old people who don't have any friends or anyone who can benefit from this social activity and to get to know other people. When someone wants to go with an A&CC it is always an event that can become a kind of relationship. They meet a person, and we have many successful 'orders': they want to come again; maybe they choose another place or they liked a certain companion and they want to take him or her next time, if he/she is available.

**GE.** So they can choose?

**HL.** If they want to choose we can try to make it the same person, but that doesn't always happen. There are certain groups who have ordered a companion for maybe five times if they want to go to different places. The most commonly requested is the Craft Museum; last year it was Art Museum but maybe because we had so many events there that year. And the third one has been Cultural History Museum, so those are the most requested and also because they are city museums so it is OK for us. And after the museums the A&CC wanted to have more because they were so excited and they wanted to know more and more and then we got the Symphony Orchestra, Jyväskylä City Theatre, Kuokkala Manor - an historic place - and the Planetarium. Last year we received some further education from the Central Finland Dance Centre and Central Finland Film Centre, so we now have dance companions and film companions.

**GE.** How do you define an A&CC? What do they do, what is their basic structure?

**HL.** We wanted the title of the activity to be *Art and Culture Companion* - which is not the same in Finnish, the exact translation would be 'Culture pilot' - because we thought it is so wide that you cannot just put it into one box and this word 'pilot' doesn't work so

well because you might mix it up with pilot programmes, so we decided on A&CC. It was invented in the Art Museum context, so it is good for people to know that it has to do with art, since we also have the Natural History Museum and the Central Finland Aviation Museum, which is the sixth museum in the area, about 20 km away. And an A&CC is a person who is a companion to any art event or museum visit or maybe they can take the 'bag exhibition' (portable museum) to old people's homes, they have used this resource quite a lot – it is around a 30-minute situation about memories and this is to deal with an.. It's imaginary artists' bag.

**GE.** Who curated this 'portable museum'? Did you work with an artist on this?

**HL.** Yes, this one was made with the Natural History Museum, it was a kind of project. These portable bags are made by our museums, you can loan them, everyone can do it, and this is a form of art education which the companions can choose if they want to do it. Many of them work in different voluntary programmes so they already have their social group before they came here, so they can use it in their groups and they have done it; maybe they want to be an actor or do their own show, some of them.

**GE.** How many companions are currently active?

**HL.** Around 100 or a little more that are active now, I haven't counted them since spring time so I'm not quite sure, but around 110 or 120. Sometimes I ask Milka, who is now working with us, but even if you are working you can do it on the weekends, so if she has free-time sometimes I ask her if we have a special 'order' that would need a young person. She also has a background in film and dance, maybe there are three or four of us who have the same education.

**GE.** Is there a certain age range?

**HL.** Most of them are retired, but then we have some young people, students, maybe art education students or they are studying nursing or social sciences and also cultural producers. It is very good that we have a range of different ages.

**GE.** How do you become a companion? Where do you find out about how the programme works and how you can enrol?

**HL.** We have organised courses. On the main course we go through the five city museums and give them more information about volunteering. Perhaps we get together with the older companions and after that they say: "Yes! I want to join in!" and they get their diploma and they can enjoy, come to these gatherings and further education

meetings. Today they have a meeting for a literature group, they started last spring, and tomorrow we have a meeting about the exhibition we are curating; we have started our own project with a group that has started planning the exhibition and the opening will be in February next year. That is an offer the Art Museum has made for them, they can choose from the collection that was put together in 2000 and they can freely curate a show.

**GE.** How was Kultsi formed?

**HL.** Whoever wanted to join – and they have been actively taking part in this project I think...(counting the persons from the webpage group)

**GE.** Around eight people...

**HL.** Yes, and maybe it will get smaller as we continue

**GE.** Are they keeping a blog with all the information?

**MM.** That is a conversation group.

**HL.** This (referring to their webpage <http://kulttuuriluotsi.ning.com/>) was designed for the members to keep in touch and get further information, because I think the information I send them weekly is quite big, so we could put it here so they get fewer e-mails. And they can also keep in contact with each other and chat.

**MM.** I don't know if anyone is using the chat function...

**HL.** I did! I have done it twice...I also have a blog here; they can create their own events so they can create here.

**GE.** And in these events, do they meet with a supervisor or do they meet and organise their events as an autonomous group? Do you regulate them in a certain way, giving them some kind of guidance or direction?

**HL.** I think I'm still a guide... somehow. I would like to get more involved with them, but as you know they are older people and not so many of them are used to using this chat facility. We tried first with a group on Facebook but most of them said: "No, never!", so we kind of cheated them... making the pages using the same system as Facebook, and of course we realised because we have so many older people and Facebook is changing so quickly that they would get angry. Even though, this is difficult for some of them still, so I had three training sessions one week ago and today I realised one woman who was going to this meeting couldn't find the information on our pages, and it

was there; it was in three different places that it would start today at 2 o'clock so they are there now.

So this is one example of the activities they have created themselves. They asked for this and I was in the first meeting and then we have one volunteer who is taking charge because I think they need some kind of group advisor.

**G.E.** It is interesting that they came up with this idea as the Kultu group with Art Interchange programme has organised an exhibition at Kiasma and they were part of this exhibition at Tate with other groups and they created this exhibition from the archive, they selected and curated it, chose the topic according to the European precepts - a dialogue with democracy, active citizenship and multiculturalism...

**HL.** We haven't made any precepts; we started in April with the exhibition group and they can make whatever they want, of course they want to do the extra programme and discussions and we want to raise questions also and what we want to take part in and we want to do good things too. We made a statement for this music house, we don't have a good place for the symphony orchestra so we made a statement and maybe one or two weeks later they said in the newspaper that there would be a new building, they have been waiting for that for thirty years now. So many things have happened but we hope we get it, we don't know when. They are creating new plans and I think the impact of that was that they just wanted to make it quicker, I'm not quite sure. Of course we have had some training from the symphony orchestra so it was a natural continuation of that.

**GE.** Have there been other examples of the repercussions A&CC have had culture-wise? You mentioned that in the past year they started to create more activities in the Art Museum; has this growth in activities been in any way related to an growth in demand? Has it been taken into account that the people related to A&CC are more interested in culture or more interested in art and that they have someone who is actually listening to their voice and their interests in these ideas?

**HL.** I think they can also ask what they want in terms of this kind of training, but still I realise we also get offers on the events - dance, Jyväskylä summer festival, and things like that. We get offers from them, I think that is a good idea, but still I find that when we get tour-guides at the university museum, we also have that and it has been closed for so many years because of the lack of money, but last spring they introduced the first

hall that was renovated and even though I thought that people are so busy in springtime there were about 15 people that wanted to see it, because they are so curious and want to know, and they come, especially when we have something new . Of course it varies in terms of who will come to what, they have their own idea of what they want and need and when we have something that interests them, they will come. I think the next thing I have to arrange is this National Costume Centre introduction, we have been missing that. We try to make it as wide as possible and they also say, "We want to go there! Arrange it" or something, and then I say, "You can do it yourself"...

**GE.** In this structure, what would be your role? Do you work as a mediator between them and the institutions, do you propose the activities? What would be your role here at A&CC?

**HL.** It is kind of complex, I think of it as a kind of mediator too, but still I have this art education and they also think that I'm a companion myself.

**GE.** And do you see yourself in that way?

**HL.** Yes, I see it too because I think the roles as a professional, as a human being, as a normal volunteer are not that different. It is OK for me. And I also think of myself as an artist - I do that too - and an art teacher. For the volunteers the one good thing is that you are at the same level; even though they know I have studied Art History and I have some silversmith education and stuff like that, they think I'm an ordinary A&CC. I think like that, so I have many roles in this situation and I also studied Community Art and that is the main thing that affected me when I started working here, so that is why I think we always need to have ongoing dialogue with the A&CC, it's no use that I think of what is good for them, they are used to that, that they can suggest to me all kinds of funny things, "We want to go there!" I say "OK, you can arrange it, I don't have time right now". And they have done that, last spring one of the members arranged our spring trip to Säynätsalo, she did it all herself and we had a museum bus taking us around there and they were guided, it was a really nice thing. So I also encourage them to do it because maybe they have time, maybe they have been trained as guides; we also have those A&CCs who are art teachers or something like that so why not, they don't need me.

**GE.** What is the structure of the programme, how many people work on the organisational side of A&CC? And also, how do you refer to the other person who is not an A&CC, like the person you are accompanying?

**HL.** We call them *luotsata* in Finnish.

**GE.** Do they change that role to an A&ACC or do they always stay in the accompanied to certain activities...can the roles be flexible?

**HL.** I think sometimes, the best and oldest ones will always have this idea of being a companion, they won't lose it, but still there is this question that if visitors want to be an A&CC, they have been informed that anyone can do it. I think that is also one result of this programme that more and more people think "Oh, this is something I have done already." It's not such a big invention; in fact, it is very natural, very natural for me, maybe for you too; we did that already before we join the group.

**GE.** I'm interested in the repercussions of this event and this model, could it or has it been transported to other cities in Finland? Have they been interested in taking it over, are they taking it over? Is there a bigger network?

**HL.** Yes, I have been going around and at least now we know for sure Kuopio started a theatre for old people last autumn, so they have experiences there. And then they started in April in Turku in a private old people's home that has many different volunteer organisations who work with the old people, and they are involving some museums in this, I don't know the results exactly but it sounded that it is working well for them and they are interested in Oulu, and Lahti has already made some kind of programme I think. And Mikkeli, did I said that already?

**GE.** Is there a network between all of you that connects you and can allow the sharing of the information and data you produce?

**HL.** Yes, I have shared as much as I can, and we have been in contact for a while and also I had a phone call last summer from a lady in Espoo that wanted to develop this kind of activity there and I told her to get in touch with Elina Rautavaara, the museum's director. So we'll see what happens. I visited Manchester in 2009 and I realised that there is lots of volunteering in museums all over the world - there has been for a long time, but this kind of activity which has some many museums working together didn't exist. So it's really like Ahmed said: "you are the first ones".

**GE.** Museums often works in an individualistic manner...

**HL.** And there are so many interests also, and the public and the people who come in, they can be into so many different kinds of things and I think the reason it works here is because it is small enough and we have special museums like Alvar Aalto and the Craft Museum, and the Craft Museum is not so old; it has many good programmes for the audience and deals with a real discipline or subject that touches everyone and the programme has been so good they have had so many exhibitions for men, blacksmiths, silversmiths, puppets, self-made stuff; it is so close to everyone's everyday life so it is easy. Also I have to say, one thing we have developed is a kind of culture orientation - last Sunday we tried to develop some kind of tour to the cultural places and other spots you might never otherwise get in to, so you can see here the resorts and checkpoints and we try to make some special programme for runners, hikers, - hunts, orienteering is a sport, we have also world champions and a winner in the city so it is very famous here in Jyväskylä.

**GE.** What are the activities that you have developed that have proven successful, that you keep repeating because people look for them?

**HL.** Things they can do themselves or special lectures. Last year we started a dance course, it was very popular, also movies, people asked "when will the next one be? because I can't join in now..." There are things we have gathered as a result of this long cooperation, we have the connections, and we have the network. The idea from the dance course came from the Central Finland Dance Organisation and because they want to broaden their audience and perhaps get people between the dances and organisations and audience so they have many roles, and they have organised dance events in old people's homes. But still I think it needs more activity from the organisations, from the dance centre so they can keep in touch with this specialised dance companions and movie companions. Milka and I want to remind them of the special offers.

**GE.** How do you work with these organisations, because in a way you are giving them an audience, do you get special packages or prices?

**HL.** Prices, yes, and the training were free for them. So that was a very good offer, and in some shows and events we get free or reduced prices for some performances. And in museums they get in free and the visitors get in free, but for the theatre and the symphony orchestra we get special prices. We try to make deals with each organiser,

which is not always convenient for the old people because they are not always sure what the last offer was so they need help with that. Sometimes when we get some information and e-mails - they get so many e-mails - they call me: "What's up today? I don't understand..."

**GE.** Do the retirement homes involved in your service have calendars of what is happening so the elderly people can keep in touch with your events? Do they help to distribute the information to the elderly about the activities you are involved in or the programmes you have developed?

**MM.** I think in their calendar they have just what is happening inside the house, so I don't know if you keep any contact with them?

**HL.** Not really. But we have these coloured booklets, *Taide Apteekki*, I made for everyone so they can enjoy the varieties we are arranging, but still some volunteers are really working quite a lot in certain day centres or older people's homes. It is a different thing but they also feel they are A&CC, they have this urge somewhere inside them.

**GE.** To be active and have a role...

**HL.** Yes, and perhaps they are trying to get the whole group to an exhibition, now perhaps to Art Museum, they have a show which deals with landscape as well as old and new art.

**GE.** The main working structure, is it only the three of you? Or how do you work, how do you delegate responsibilities?

**MM.** Basically it's only Hanne who is working full-time, Sirpa and I have other things, but of course I try to help her. But basically she is it.

**HL.** She consults me or asks some questions. Sirpa is not aware of everything we do because she is an art educator, she arranges all kinds of student tours and she teaches the art education students to guide the school groups. She has quite a lot to do, and she is also developing the whole museum education programme, so she is also dealing with many networks. The idea came from her, and it is certainly not a bad one! But it needs someone to coordinate it and I think the thing that helps is that I now know our volunteers, I know who can and who will, who wants to take this kind of group. I know who will work with people who are depressed and one of our challenges is that we need more of these people to come with us. We tried last autumn to organise a small group which had depressed people and...

**MM.** Foreigners

**HL.** And people from *Gloria*<sup>33</sup> or somewhere else. And we got one from Iraq and one from Iran and nobody with depression, so we will try maybe next spring with them to come to our course and be part of A&CC, because I think they would benefit very much from being part of a group, especially if they are able to go out, and they can go perhaps to see a museum or concert with someone. And of course it needs a special kind of support. But still it is our big challenge. We have tried it once before and we thought it might work but still... This autumn we are starting the Korpilahti group and we are starting next Monday. Korpilahti is about 20 or 30 km from here...

**MM.** It's a small place outside Jyväskylä, I don't know how many thousand people

**HL.** A few, not so many...and it also has quite a rich cultural history so we are trying to make a small group there. We've already had one person as a companion for about two years and we have an organisation which is from the social branch which is organising these kind of peer groups in rural areas in Central Finland, so we cooperate with that group and Tuija Seppänen is also an A&CC so she knows how it works and will support me as much as she can. We'll see how it works and we also invite them to our group. The exhibition in the Art Museum contains some paintings from Korpilahti, so they might want to get in contact with Art History more and the curator will have one lecture with them.

**GE.** Who funds this activity or your position? Who ensures the continuity of this programme?

**HL.** I'm employed by Cultural Services, even though I'm sitting here. The organiser or the coordinator could be employed by any kind of activity or organisation or voluntary centre or health and social department or anyone, but I think it has helped the community and of course it had helped me to think like this. Of course it helps if you have certain information, if you have been educated in history, art or culture, or many other things that have to do with this subject, but still you don't necessarily have to be an art educated person. Because the idea is so simple...and to coordinate. Of course you have to know about people's disabilities and how to act.

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<sup>33</sup> Multicultural centre located in downtown Jyväskylä <http://www.kyt.fi/monikulttuurikeskus/>

**GE.** In his case, how did he know how to reach you?

**HL.** I usually ask them where they get the information from and he said: "the Internet". I don't know where he had been surfing, but he got the information somehow.

**GE.** How do people usually get to you, through the booklet or the Internet?

**HL.** I think the main thing is that they hear about us from someone, or maybe they read about it in the newspaper.

**GE.** Do you advertise?

**HL.** We don't advertise.

**MM.** We sometimes get articles written about our activities

**HL.** Very small, in fact. And of course we get some information about these kind of events but of course it is very small. We have information in old people's guides and we have the *Taideapteekki*.

**GE.** Are there cultural newspapers or magazines in Jyväskylä which inform about your services?

**HL.** Sometimes but not so often, it is very rare. I think the most common thing is that workers in the social and health branch know and if they have some patients or customers that could use this service...I also had a call from home care, they asked if they could get a companion for this old man who is lonely and has lost a friend to take him to a concert. I think that is the best way they can find us, because if the nurses and the staff are aware that we are here for them.

**GE.** They promote your services..

**HL.** Yes, and also when I started working here we arranged the first course that contained about 20 people from the old people's home and care and day centres, they were trained and they can also take the group directly and they inform me at the end of the year so I know a small part of the orders. I'll try to look at how many groups asked for us this year...Maybe you could ask Milka something in the meantime..

**GE.** How do you start volunteering in the A&CC programme?

**MM.** Actually I came to the Art Museum as a trainee and Sirpa was my instructor so I heard about this activity, got quite interested and I took part in one of the courses. I trained in the five museums and found it quite interesting to learn all this stuff about my own town and so on. I was working here for a while and when it was time to write my

thesis they offered me this topic and it was a great topic to be working on, I found it to be really useful so I used it for my thesis...

**GE.** What was the central question for your thesis?

**MM.** The most important thing was to describe this activity because it hadn't been done before.

**GE.** There wasn't any literature about it..

**MM.** Yeah, exactly.

**GE.** And how do you describe, in your words, what this activity meant for you.

**MM.** Meant for me? That is a big question...In the thesis I first describe this activity in terms of volunteer work and peer work and I found it really important that the companions are peers to each other or they learn from each other, connect, make friends and so on. It really has an effect on their lives. The culture part gives them a lot of experiences and new things, and also community. It is important to mention that people felt that it made their life richer to have this kind of activity.

**HL.** I think rich is a good word.

**GE.** Do you collect in any way their thoughts and opinions about the programme?

**MM.** We carried out a survey and ask about many kinds of things like where did you hear about this activity, how and why you take part, what are your favourite things, what are the negative sides of this activity, and so on. And the other part of the thesis was to find these developing points for this activity. From there we saw that we needed a website.

One thing I wanted to say about the advertising is that the expenses this activity has are really really low, because we basically need to get funds to get paid, of course, but in addition to that the expenses are quite low so it doesn't need much money to fund this kind of programme, but you definitely need at least one person supervising.

We have had some funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture, small funding for one year, and the last one was..

**HL.** In spring time, it is for two years.

**GE.** To make the booklets and that kind of things?

**HL.** Yes and also for my salary.

**GE.** This activity has been structured mainly with older people in mind, but how many young people are involved? Do they come from background similar as yours (Milka) or from social services?

**MM.** I cannot remember that very well but we have some teachers.. the young people are basically studying the same subject I was studying, Cultural Management or Art Education mainly.

**HL.** So basically students and the problem with students is that they leave when they graduate and the older ones stay. I think the oldest is about 82 and the youngest about 20. We have 5 or 10 that are still with us from the first course and quite actively since 2007 and in 2008 some disappeared because they were nurses and people from the old peoples home whose boss ordered "You have to take this course!".

**GE.** OK...

**HL.** Yes, but we planned the course together so she was clever and she wanted the staff to know more about culture and to get the experiences themselves. And we also organised four workshops for them so they could do themselves; we have felting, graphics, painting with natural materials and architecture course, we involved them so they could try themselves. And also I have been working in collaboration with this centre hospital so we also have projects with them so we know that it is a very tough job to be a nurse so they need some art in their lives, it helps. When the nurses realise they get joy from the culture and art events they can also share this experience with the patients and the people who live there.

**GE.** And this programme you were mentioning with people from different backgrounds, non-Finnish backgrounds, have they taken part before? Or is it an interest for the future to have foreign companions for foreigners?

**HL.** Yes, it is also a challenge, I think and these two people are not so very active now, I discovered one of them and the other one is active in Gloria. So Anu tries to make some people come with us and they promise them a tutor or a person who will be with them as a supporter and they didn't really need one, they were so good, even the one that was introduced, he couldn't speak such good Finnish but he was an art critic, writer and artist so it was easier for him because he had been to all these museums before he went to the course, but he enjoyed being in a group and he is proud. He has been

helping in one international group with me. We are supposed to speak Finnish so they learn it but we spoke all languages, English, Finnish, Arabic, whatever!

**GE.** Do you have a big international community here? I know there are a lot of students that come and go..

**HL.** Refugees we get every year and immigrants they are many; it's more international now than it was ten years ago.

**GE.** And how would it work with them, do you think there is a special group needed to work with the immigrants – so that they could also join the group themselves and start to generate a community with them – or is the same group for everyone since it shares the same interests?

**HL.** That's one idea, but still it needs more effort, I don't think there was time for that, but anyway Anu is also trained as an A&CC and they realised that culture and art is such a good way of helping people get adjusted to Finnish culture so it is natural in these circumstances. But we'll wait, I think we'll get more, maybe we could try after this year's projects again, and these people with depression and immigrants. Maybe we can make two groups or maybe they are all part of the normal group so there would be no differences.

**GE.** Maybe that option would be more interesting to avoid segregation..

**HL.** The ones with special needs support might get a tutor, like in a buddy system. You know in the Manchester 'In Touch' programme they have this 'buddy' system, I was there and met the volunteers and heard about this programme. It was around 2007 – 2009 and they started again this year and it is a big programme with two different museums, lots of people, lots of workers and people with many kinds of social problems or unemployed or depressed or drug users and things like that. So they have a very different kind of approach: to bring them back to society. Our approach is that we tell them that they could get more from their environment, more joy and share these visits and experience with others. Of course we have some companions who have many illnesses and it is almost impossible for them to come to our meetings, but still it's not so many that they can take to some places, but still they want to be with us and they are proud.

**GE.** Do they wear something?

**MM.** Yes, a badge.

**HL.** We don't say that they have to do so many volunteer gigs to be a good one, just to see how they have been empowered doing this for the years I have been working here.. I don't know their ages or their personal things; they don't have to tell me if they don't want to. I just need their telephone number, address, e-mail and if they want to tell me what they are interested in and what they are not. But still it is not necessary that they are structured so much, they are free. I think one advantage of this activity is that they can do as much as is suitable for them, in what they are interested in themselves. They get so much for themselves from this activity that we don't have to do any special tricks; it's just some ordinary action activity. One thing to join us is that they had retired recently and their social group has disappeared and they start to think "I could do something, I could learn something more and I could something fun" and then they find us somehow. I get asked maybe a few times every month if "I could join the group" and then I say "I'll send you an e-mail when we have the next training group" and then I can put them on my e-mail list so they can get the information even though they are not trained by the A&CC.

**GE.** How often do you have these training sessions?

**HL.** We have had them once a year and last year we had two groups since we had this special group with the people with depression and the immigrants. I think we will change it now because we don't need these big groups anymore and we will try to make it cosier and smaller and they could be trained and the visits could be made by the A&CC

**GE.** To pass the information between themselves..

**HL.** Yes. Last spring we have a companion who did a part of the Craft Museum, I think she was great, so the pedagogues and educators have more time to do something else, because the thing they most need is: Where is that? How do we get in? Where are the exhibitions? What special things are there? Of course some of our members are already trained as guides, we also have those kind of activities or active persons, or they have chosen the Art Museum as their favourite place and they come to every meeting that has to do with that, or they found out themselves and they use the Internet and want to study by their own, it depends. The basic thing is that you have visited the place before; you know what is coming up and what the exhibition at the time is. Of

course we have so many exhibitions that are temporary so this requires activity, really, if you want to be online.

**GE.** Do you have participation from the museum staff? Does the curator or educators give them special tours or talks?

**HL.** Sometimes they do, if they have a new exhibition they can arrange this introduction or they can ask them to visit their museum. We arrange many of the events at the Art Museum because we have a place there, but still anyone can ask the companions to go to these places. It depends too, because when they know the staff and feel familiar and cosy it brings about mutual trust, they know what to ask from them and museum staff and curators trust these companions and know their interests. It is kind of free, I think it is good that it is not so structured because it allows for space to develop this activity where it is really going, that it doesn't limit too much.

**GE.** There is Milka's thesis, you have been giving talks but are there other platforms where your methodology has been disseminated or someone speaks about it. I'm thinking about how people can get to know it and get more information about how to implement the programme.

**HL.** Not enough information. We are supposed to be involved in some research by a Chinese researcher for her thesis here in Jyväskylä but we haven't heard about her, we don't know. I think she had a questionnaire and she put it on our website, but we are waiting for her to contact us since this was supposed to be finished in May this year.. I think she is back in China, I will send her an e-mail this week. I think she realised what she wanted to ask and we really need this information. We are glad that you are doing this research, in fact.

**GE.** Do you have some kind of evaluation of the programme, or has this programme been evaluated? You have the website which helps to disseminate the information and helps to make it visible for others, which is important since sometimes these programmes are not so out in the open. How do you...measure is not the right word, but how do you make your achievements visible?

**HL.** First it was Milka's thesis but we haven't done this well, I think. Like the structured evaluation we are doing it all the time and of course I do it inside my head, but still.. We have some meetings with the volunteers that are asked to have a brainstorm about what could be done better but it's still unstructured.

**GE.** How often do you have these brainstorming meetings?

**HL.** At least once a year, maybe twice. And of course we had this show at Kirjasto, we were asked to tell them about A&CC...

**MM.** It was a small seminar to develop this activity around two years ago.

**HL.** 2009, in December, so we should do it again.

**GE.** Since the A&CC are also dealing with people with special needs, do they come to you with questions or for support? How do they relate with you in this matter?

**HL.** They ask questions, yes, but I think it is best if we try to ask them before we meet whether there are any special things and mainly they send me an e-mail or they tell me when they see me next time how it went, if it was OK. Mostly it is OK, we also have special offers from this voluntary centre, or in any case we can get counselling or give support so they can get tactical directions, or they can ask me if something went wrong. We have had so few things that have gone wrong or that the visitors didn't feel well.. twice I have got complains. One was because the companion didn't feel well, she was a former guide and had left visitors alone in the Natural History Museum, which didn't sound at all normal. And another group with special needs, both were special needs groups. One of them was visiting the library and it was too complicated for them to understand, the culture companion didn't talk slowly or simply clear enough to the people. These are the ones I know of. Once it happened that the companion touched something in the museum and also I heard that someone took a flower from a flowerpot. Of course sometimes they ask, especially when I meet these volunteer coordinators, how can I relay, how can I trust them to behave properly or how can I trust them to deal with this special.. to deal with difficult situations, I know because I have been there myself, so I can't guarantee how they are doing, they are all different people with different abilities, interests, how much they know about a certain place, maybe they haven't been there for a year.. it is a learning situation for them too. And of course I think if I got more complaints I could talk to them and see how the companion is feeling. When I know their abilities, when I have met them and worked with them, I can predict whether they can handle it or not.

**GE.** It must be a tough decision to select and pair them.

**HL.** It is not easy, they have made choices about what they want and their interests and then I look who wants to take them and it hasn't been there late; kind of deal these gigs

(referring to the pairing of the companions with the users of the service). Sometimes there can be a lot of gigs for the same person, maybe because of the timetable, or maybe they want to. Sometimes I get a gig and call 20 people and they are all busy. Most of the groups I get these gigs for are from special group programmes and they meet once a week at ten o'clock when our museums are closed, they open at 11, but sometimes they let them in so we can deal and negotiate how it would work. Last year I got 33 calls and this year more than 20 this far.

**GE.** I think it will be interesting to see how the exhibition you are putting together will come about, what the questions and their interests will be..

**HL.** You will get an invitation when it happens!

**GE.** Thanks! And you are doing it in the Art Museum?

**HL.** Yes, downstairs and in the lobby, we will make a small cafe and use it as a meeting point so we can arrange things and events in there, we can ask artists or writers.. And I think the title could be something like 'choosing' or 'choices'.

**GE.** Are you working with local artists or just with the collection of the museum?

**HL.** We can choose from the artworks that have been bought from 2000 to 2010 that are part of the city collection, if the group wants it we would lend them. The good thing in this case is that we also motivate the museum staff differently; I hope someone will do some research about this too.

**GE.** In what sense are the museum staff motivated differently?

**HL.** Because they have to deal with new people, with volunteers, and they are learning how to do this kind of thing which is very new to most people. And of course when you are planning or curating an exhibition with such a big group, there have been 5 or 6 of them who are very active, so it is a different kind of process. And they get to know each other and of course Jaana has been showing us the collection in many places so she has to plan how she will show us these things. Lena, as one of the curators, had a slide show about this process. Last May we visited Ateneum and saw this exhibition, and it was a learning trip of how things are made there.

**GE.** Thinking about how they are reactivating or reformulating the role of the museum staff, have they worked with artists? In some places artists have distanced themselves from social engagement and maybe by pairing the artists with these social actors or by getting the artists involved through lectures, workshops, etc., getting in touch with these

actors will not only benefit the group involved but maybe also the artists and hopefully reactivate their role too. Have artists manifested their interest in participating or being part of the A&CC?

**HL.** We have some artists in the group, a dancer who went to Shanghai last year and at least there is a big group which are doing art themselves. They don't think they are professionals but they do many kinds of things. We are also arranging – the idea came from this exhibition we are making – for us to develop our own exhibition, so we started a new group called *Art and Culture Companions Do Art Themselves*, and we are holding that exhibition opening maybe on 15 April in the City Library.

**GE.** So at this moment you are organising two exhibitions, one from the curatorial perspective and the other in the art process and the art as a result of these meetings?

**HL.** Yes, and perhaps the previous things they have done, it is open now to what they want to bring. It is kind of an example and an encouragement to people to do art themselves.

**GE.** How does the museums relate to volunteer work here?

**HL.** We are city controlled, I work for City of Jyväskylä, so it is a very special form of volunteering and I think the museums can have volunteers, but they don't use it very much, they have used it sometimes for special events or serving coffee at a birthday party or things like that but still it takes time from the staff to guide these things and there have been many problems in England or wherever, so...there is still some line between professionals and voluntary workers. In Manchester, it was very nice the last hour I was there: I popped into a gallery, there was a volunteer guide and I took a tour with her and she was very nice and well organised, and the things she said, why she was there, was to guide people around – she had created her own tour – to make the visitors come again, that was her main line. Then I talked with her after that, she had studied Art History and she made the tour based on her own interests and made it chronological. It lasted maybe less than an hour but still she made the audience discuss, and talk about things; I think she was even better than the professional guide. She had passion. Sometimes these guides are more enthusiastic and even more detailed experts than perhaps the guides there. And they use them, maybe they do that once a month for a few hours or so, but the energy these volunteers have.. why wouldn't museums use them? It gives the feeling that there is the real connection with

society. And they have a counselling programme and several other projects with immigrants. It is a big museum, Manchester Museum, and the other was the Imperial War Museum and the difficulties were that the staff to get used to these volunteers so the new museum had no problem accepting the volunteers as "guides". It looks so interesting and well planned, structured, and also these volunteers get their travel costs paid and if they needed day care for children that was arranged too, and like five pounds for a meal. And they have at least two coordinators working for them full-time.

**GE.** How did you get the City to fund the project and have it under its umbrella?

**HL.** We are still working on it.. I have had my job for just six months, and next year we have a new boss.

**MM.** Our last boss retired last spring so we have been without a boss.

**GE.** So now she could be an A&CC...

**HL.** She has been invited!

**GE.** So bearing in mind the repercussions and the effects that A&CCs have had on the City of Jyväskylä and its senior inhabitants, from the different projects in the arts and culture, the coming exhibitions and these companies that want to get involved, do you have something that states all those benefits this programme has had in the arts and culture of the City? Because if you have the facts of the projects and the sharing and activeness of the companions which has led to certain institutions deciding to get involved...Presenting something with the achievements, even only, because having persons interested in making exhibitions and making art as a result and being in touch with another human being...

**HL.** We have collected some facts and is in the strategies, so of course you need less of these pills, instead of pharmacy pills you get art pills. And it is in the air that many of the cultural projects are seen now as part of the normal well-being of all the people, and we got this new Culture Minister with a new programme for the next five years and we have to show to the people who decide that this has to be in their strategy for the city. We are still there, we will have a new organisation in two years and this is one part that they can be proud of, that's why we are perhaps on their wings, somehow. But still we have these bad times coming and cuts and things like that. We don't know yet how is it going to be next year; but even if I didn't get any pay, they have to make the exhibition.

I think this activity is more neutral being under the city's responsibility, if it was run by an organisation it would be different.

**GE.** In that sense it would be interesting to have, not necessarily young people but those who are also involved in working life, since they are making the policies...

**HL.** A&CC is available to everyone, I don't say no to anyone. Once I said no, because they were interested in making a business, she wanted to make it part of the tourist business so I said I can get you this if you are interested in knowing what it means, but you are doing business then that is different. She wanted it for tomorrow and we were all busy so she didn't get any bite of this! Because I think if you really need to go somewhere why not to say "yes", at least we can try to get someone. And it might be a good idea to show the social workers what it is all about; last year we were invited to speak about it at a seminar and we offered them the chance to come to the museums and then we had one commission from an international youth organisation which were holding a camp here, and it was in English, quite demanding, but I think it was good to let people from all over the world know what we are doing here. In 2008 we had three groups from PALAPELI, they had a very nice leader and we went to the Craft Museum, they went around and we found out that they needed a lot of A&CCs and we did a number of workshops like bending iron-wire and it was fun because it's too much for them to always talk, and these groups were really multicultural, we spoke Finnish, English, Arabic, Persian, and many of the Asian boys were so skilful. What I also discovered was that they were learning Finnish and then they wanted to tell us about their culture. They do their things in the Craft Museum and they give them the idea of what happens at home. So maybe it is also important for this kind of group that the leader is from immigrant background. I had some other group from PALAPELI with a Finnish leader, they were interested but it is difficult to explain and talk in just simple Finnish, it is a very demanding situation, is not an A&CC thing, but these associations should be more in touch with museums and their pedagogical departments.

## 2. Tennaris - Conversation with Amal Laala

### ***What is Tennari?***

Tennari is a programme that engages youth, providing resources so they feel safe to voice their opinions and ideas, ask questions, learn through experimentation and explore their world through creativity. Including young adults into the Helsinki Art Museum's structure and activating them to become not only an important part of the museum but also their own communities.

*The core* is a peer-led board of 14 people aged 14-22 who work with the Helsinki Art Museum to produce events and programmes for other young adults, with targeted projects feeding off this into wider activities. The group meet weekly, visiting exhibitions and devising events and programmes, developing tools to gain a deeper understanding and interpretation of art, the museum and the role they can play in society.

The group started in September 2011 and it runs from 5 – 7 on Thursdays.

### 3. Conversation with Amal Laala, 19 September 2011

**GE.** How did the programme start?

**AL.** There has been a youth group here for quite a while, but it has been a small group of girls, mainly doing workshops. They come and do workshops relevant to the exhibitions and things like this, but it hasn't been peer-led; sometimes they say things they want to do, but there is always someone who is running the workshops and providing things for them. I have been doing workshops with these three or four girls since the beginning of the year, because I was working only a couple of hours, the workshop couldn't develop any further. When I began doing my internship here the idea was to develop the youth programme, to change, because the head of education here has also had an idea for a long time to change the group but there is just not enough time. So for the last couple of months I have been meeting people, developing relationships and working out how to get more people interested in a group like this; and also, as you were saying, how to access these young people interested in art. And then the first session, you saw that there was an application for that, because in the

beginning we thought we'll do it with a mix of hand-picking and online applications, but because we already have four participants from the previous group it ended up only being an online application and e-mailing and letting as many people know as possible that this was happening.

**GE.** I have seen, also in Kultu, this pattern of dissemination of information: sending it to people we know, and sometimes there are people who are interested in art but don't necessary relate to other persons working with art; so, how do we attract people from outside the circuit and let them know that they can participate in these kind of activities?

**AL.** I was also very interested in getting people from different cultural backgrounds and I know that there are some centres and places like this. In the beginning I was looking for youth centres, but these are already places for young people to go so these kinds of organisations don't really want to give up their kids to another programme.

**GE.** Did you come up against some kind of barrier with them?

**AL.** It was just I mean really it is just making more meetings to meet more people and it is really time consuming, so I kind of have to.. Like I met with Oranssi and other kinds of organisations to look at collaboration with them and see what they knew so I did get in contact with some people, some young people they worked with, from different backgrounds, but there wasn't any response really. Also the idea is because it's peer-led, so that means that they are doing all the work so it can't be me searching for these people because once they are a part of the programme it doesn't show any initiative for those who are willing to do work. So, in the end, I just thought it's better for the group to become bigger in this way and then we can do more activities with this group for different people and audiences. At the moment the main idea is just to have this core group of people interested in doing things, and even from the first meeting, it's not a selfish kind of thing, they all want to do events and for young people to have a voice and not just between the group but to open it up to more people in Helsinki.

**GE.** How many young people did you get for the first meeting?

**AL.** 14

**GE.** Besides the four girls, did some of them knew each other previously?

**AL.** Only two sisters.

**GE.** Do you have young people from mixed backgrounds?

**AL.** I have no idea, I haven't asked. I know that in the last session there were some people talking about living and growing up in different countries, but I don't know.

**GE.** Regarding the group of girls that were here before...

**AL.** Actually they started at the same time as the Kultu group because they went to Liverpool with them the first time, but then they are actually quite a lot younger because if you imagine they are now like 16, 17. So at that time they were like 13, 14 and the rest of the group are quite a lot older. But they did not continue with the rest of that project. They have been here quite a while but the group never actually expanded from there; it has always been the thing like they will bring friends sometimes but not at other times. Because they all go to different schools so it's just a social thing for them to get together to see each other and they kind of like this small group, the four of them.

**GE.** Did they say anything regarding having this other group, like expanding in a way?

**AL.** Well, when I started working on the first workshop here, I think it was really free before that, they would come and just draw or paint; sometimes there would be projects. So when I came in I had this structured kind of thing and introducing myself and blah blah blah, and after that like half of them didn't come back; they were like six or something, because they were just so used to it, and they didn't want us and the structure. They just wanted to be there and hang out and like this, so..

**GE.** They just wanted an open space..

**AL.** Yeah, they didn't actually want to work on projects and do things like this. But then also the Head of Education was talking a lot of times about ending the group, not having the group anymore and every time she mentioned this to them they were "No, no, no!" but because it was so small it was just too difficult.. You know, it has just been staying the same for so long that it needed to develop a little bit further, so I wasn't sure. And they actually produced the little flyer for the new group; so this was a way to integrate them also rather than this new session starting off. I got them to come beforehand and three of them came, and I told them "this is what is happening with the group now, and I'm doing an internship here and what do you think". I spoke with them beforehand and told them that we'll make a flyer for the new group so they kind of took it as a session; they knew what was happening before the group came and I told them to apply online.

**GE.** Did they have some output on what they were interested in for this new group?

**AL.** Well, I kind of just had a random list of possible things to do, just like these dream kind of things that you could do, so they went through the list and said that they were interested in this and that and I kind of said that we wanted it to be 10 or 12 people and things like this, but other than that they didn't have too many, like "oh, we want it like this or that". But last week I was really surprised actually, because now they feel comfortable with me because I have been with them since the beginning of the year, I thought they would stick together, but they really separated; when we separated into different groups they separated and integrated with different groups and they have more like this kind of powerful proud role like "oh, this is what we have done before, we have done this and that" and kind of like speaking to the rest of the group of what had happened before so they seem very happy. I think they also like it now there is a position for them not just in the background but also as a way that they understand a little bit more about the museum and how things work here.

**GE.** How was the application and selection process?

**AL.** We didn't get so many that we had to pick and choose because I was feeling really bad that if we got a lot then we would have to say no. But then I thought also if we got a lot there was the possibility of splitting them into two groups or something. Maybe some are more interested in the techniques and some in organising events and curatorial stuff.

**GE.** What was the interest that you noticed in this first meeting? What topics were they interested in discussing, how often are they planning to meet? What is the age range?

**AL.** The ages are from 14 to 22, it was open for applicants up to 25 but we didn't have applications for the higher ones, and the main age is like 16, 17 and 18, so it is a much younger age, which I know from the Kultu group that they are quite a lot older and they feel like is mainly people from Taik, art schools and things like this, so it is a very different professional field. With this group they are very much like "oh, we don't have anywhere to go and we want more active kind of things happening" rather than "well, I want to put this on my CV and I want to produce things". They meet once a week and it is from 17:00 to 19:00, so it's two hours, this is as a beginning thing. Last week when I met with them we mainly just did activities to get to know each other and things like that. My role in the group...at the moment I'm just kind of constructing the group and running the workshops and things, but this is a changing role and in the end it is going

to be them running the group and I'm just there as a support. But because obviously they don't know each other from the beginning it is very difficult for them to just come and start doing things, so it's going to be kind of a more structured, brainstorming and working on what they want to do and develop more workshops; and by the end of the year there are going to be more projects, if it is an event or if it's a zine or a photographic kind of thing or an exhibition, just whatever the group decides on itself.

**GE.** What are your motivations for working with them?

**AL.** I also talked about that last week with them because I'm also an artist and I am interested in this collaborative community-based work and also all my work is about activation and about giving people a voice, so I mentioned to them that this is also very interesting being here to support you guys, to give you guys a voice. The thing I would be happier about it if I could come and didn't have to do anything, they did everything and if they need practical things they would ask me or if they needed support or something with some areas and to contact people, so this would be more my role and they will be running things themselves.

**GE.** How will your role as supervisor work if you are now an intern at the museum?

**AL.** I plan to stay with them until; I mean I don't know when. The internship is just in the office but I'll still be doing the workshops and developing elements of that. Not like a full-time kind of position, just to be working with them and another project. Also part of the workshops idea is that every week they get to meet a different group of the museum, so this week they are going to meet the pedagogical staff and next week it will be the exhibition staff and the collection staff, so they will go around so they can actually see faces, who works here, and then they could give also a little introduction of what they do, hoping this would give more connections between, not only for them but also for the staff here, to get more of this collaboration going on so they are not so much relying on me being the contact point, obviously that contact point is also important, but also so they know who else is working and what kind of opportunities are here. Because I cannot give them everything because my area of expertise is obviously just one area, with other people they'll find other project ideas that could come from this. So it is about opening up the kids, but also about opening up the museum.

**GE.** How do you fund and support this activity to, in a way, ensure that it has continuity?

**AL.** There is a budget here at the museum for the youth group, but it is quite low this year and the Head of Education said that she'll see next year about getting more funding for the project in general. And also we are keen to do more partnership work with some galleries and museums in the Nordic Region or in the UK, so this is also extra funding that I need to find, to build these partnerships. I was looking at the Youth in Action programme as a way too, because all the kids want to travel and it is also good experience for them: to experience somebody else's culture and to develop different relationships between different groups.

**GE.** If you want to apply to the Youth in Action programme, like the Kultu group did through the Art Interchange programme, there are certain precepts, like having a dialogue with European identity, democracy and multiculturalism, which are part of the European funding. Is this something that you consider interesting for the kids, since you are leaving them an open game, to get into this kind of discussion, or to allow them to have their own particular set of discussions? On one side is getting funds, but on the other is putting concepts to them beforehand and whether the freedom of choice you are interested in them having can be affected by aligning their thoughts and guiding their dialogues? Because how can a teenager feel or not feel European when they are dealing with their own identity crisis... Should it be something that they must be thinking about? Within this construction there is also the idea of active citizenship which is interesting, so if you are maintaining this openness would this be part of the discussion? It these are subjects they are interested in getting involved in?

**AL.** I think it is a possibility also, but at this stage it is just difficult to get them to talk about anything, it is a very different process and the way I'm thinking about it is more by doing, doing stuff that they want to see and do, and through this, we will have discussions and conversations. It's just to get people more proactive about their own lives and their own communities, about art and culture and about being in the museum; taking them away from hanging out in Kamppi and doing something active. So I think this kind of entails the whole democratic feeling, because once they feel their voice is heard they will go on to voicing their opinions and doing other things. In terms of directing or instigating discussions on these kinds of things, I don't know. As much as you'd like to stay neutral in some things when you show them certain elements it is very much your own perspective and very much your own style which you show them, you

try to show them things without being too influential, I think. I don't know, I think the discussions are important but I think in Finland discussions happen too much, like there is not enough action and things happen by themselves so at the moment I'm not thinking of developing those kinds of things, more about action. And maybe that is what they are interested in, what I saw about their brainstorming, what they want is more of these places to be able to communicate with other people and to be comfortable in and to be able to be more active, to be able to have a voice and to do more things.

**GE.** What else were they interested in?

**AL.** Quite a few of them were interested in certain simple things like setting up a dark room to be able to produce some photographic images, just really basic stuff like that. And then there was another group who was interested in starting their own bar, kind of like a club where young people could go. They were like “yeah, we don't want it just to be art, we want music”, a place where they could develop all different kinds of art forms and they could mix with each other and a place they could go. They also mentioned the youth centres, saying they are so structured and they don't feel very comfortable in them, so this is one thing they thought that this group could be more open to, like what they could maybe do, rather than just coming and doing a workshop. And also another group was interested in doing more like this TateLoud kind of thing, with these different kinds of elements happening, because there are quite a few that are interested in drawing, quite a few that are very interested in reading and poetry, so it's not so much these painting elements, also photography and video kind of elements, because at that stage I think they are experimenting and interested in many art forms so it's nice to be able to have these events where they can mix many elements together. Some of them are interested in music; they play musical instruments with bands and stuff like that.

**GE.** Do they have their own space in the museum?

**AL.** Yes they have the studio. But that is also the thing that we need to see what they are interested in doing because there is a kitchen and some things, but there is not much space where they can be comfortable and set up to make it more cosy for themselves.

**GE.** Have you seen the Louis Vuitton Young Art project? The kids are younger, which relates them more to your group, and they are also doing exhibitions and some other interesting things: they have their webpage and they comment not only on the

exhibition in their galleries but also on other exhibitions as well and they have a podcast and different things that allow more visibility in terms of how the programme is being run. Because with some other groups, like the one at Pompidou or here, it is just the afterwards of what happens, but the construction of the day-to-day of the group and how it is going on, and how the kids are thinking, so it becomes a way of having their voices out there. Filming their exhibitions and doing interviews to head curators and other cultural actors. Are you planning for them to have a blog?

**AL.** We are at the beginning so at this moment it is all so vague even in the webpage it doesn't say anything about the group and the whole thing is, for them to do it and not about me saying we should do a blog or we should do this or that; at the moment it's just getting them to know each other more and getting them to see how they want to represent themselves. If they want to be a group that doesn't want to let people see what they are doing, it is their choice. Or if they want to be more open or have a blog and these kinds of things, updating all the time, I think it is nicer the more the people know about it because it opens things out more but I'm trying to take as little control as possible so they'll feel comfortable and that it's their project rather than me telling them what to do.

**GE.** I understand you want to keep things open and what they want to do, but do you have certain guidelines about how will the group form, like how often will you receive new members?

**AL.** No and this needs to be talked about too, because there are other people that are saying I want to join the group, one girl was saying "my friend wants to join but she found out late, is it possible that she can come?", and this has to be spoken about because it's not my decision, it's a group decision. There is no structure from another place that I'm using, I'm just trying to work with the teenagers here and see what they are like. Obviously there is a lot of experience in these kinds of areas in the UK, and I have taken a lot of interesting elements and shown them what is happening there, but I don't know, maybe teenagers here are totally different.

**GE.** Would you be interested in making a bridge at some point and have the Tennari meeting the kultus?

**AL.** Yeah, I have spoken to Minna and Sanna from Kiasma and they were also interested in the two groups meeting to try to work out different things they want to do.

So, yeah, there are many things in the future to be done but at the moment and until the end of the year I just want this group to work very tightly with each other just so they get to know each other and they can actually produce things, and then the next year is more open for collaborations and different kinds of things that can happen within the community, because also the idea is not just that they are based in the museum, but that they also do many other things, this is not just an individualistic thing, they need to work as a group and these things take time, just to get to know other people.

**GE.** Are there other volunteer activities here in the museum?

**AL.** I'm not sure about the plan, but with the group, obviously in the beginning they'll do small projects, but if they start running events and doing bigger things, then the head of education mentioned that they will need to get paid, so it's not just them working for free within the museum, if they are running events and doing things that are part of the museum programme, they would get paid for it. In a way it is kind of a job, to be able to do these kinds of things. So it is not always a volunteer position just because you love the arts, it is also if you are putting in a lot of work then you should get paid for it, and also the opportunities for some travel and things with funding, so it just depends, in how interested you are and how much you want to work on things so... But as volunteering, I know there is the internship and there is also a family workshop on Sundays, but yeah, I don't think there are so many young people involved in volunteering at this time.

## 4. Terminology: Learning processes

The *Terminology of European Education and Training Policy* of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, which is firmly located in a continuous learning policy, defines three types of learning processes<sup>34</sup>:

**Formal learning:** Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (e.g. in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification.

**Non-formal learning:** Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. Non-formal learning outcomes may be validated and lead to certification. Non-formal learning is sometimes described as semi-structured learning.

**Informal learning:** Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. Informal learning outcomes do not usually lead to certification but may be validated and certificated in the framework of recognition of prior learning schemes. Informal learning is also referred to as experiential or incidental/random learning.

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<sup>34</sup> Cedefop, 2004. [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4064\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4064_en.pdf) Last reviewed: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2011

## 5. YAI's Groups

### Young Tate

[young.tate.org.uk](http://young.tate.org.uk)

Each Tate Gallery has a group of local young creatives who organise events and workshops, discussions and long-term projects for their peers. Young Tate is a youth art initiative run by and for young creatives, giving everyone the opportunity to reach their own conclusions about art.

- Young Tate Online – [young.tate.org.uk](http://young.tate.org.uk) – youth-led platform for young creatives where they can discover, share and discuss art.

**Tate Collective** (formerly Tate Forum) at Tate Britain – meets every two weeks at Tate Britain to plan creative, social and cultural public events for other young creatives.

Relevant activities:

- Loud Tate – free annual art and music event at Tate Britain, run by young people for young people. The concept for 2010 was SUPERminitinyBIG and the group came up with workshops to explore ideas of scale, hierarchy and the unmeasurable.
- Visual Dialogues – ground-breaking programme for young people delivered by Tate and six museums and galleries across the UK between 2004 to 2011. Young people worked with contemporary artists in order to find innovative ways to interpret and engage with art works in the National Collection at Tate and other regional collections.

**Young Tate** at Tate Liverpool – the group runs projects and events for other young people in the area.

Relevant activities:

- Alternative Turner Prize – Tate Liverpool set the challenge to create a piece of artwork in any medium inspired by the artwork of one of the four nominated artists for the Turner Prize. A selection of ten entries was on display in the gallery and online.
- *New Perspectives* – exhibition of new emerging young artists.
- Catalogue for the YAI exhibition *A Sense of Perspective*

## Art Session | Centre Pompidou

[artsessioncentrepompidou.wordpress.com](http://artsessioncentrepompidou.wordpress.com)

Art Session is a sister group of Kultu, created in 2007 following the same principles. The voluntary group consists of 16 young people (aged 18 to 25) from different backgrounds that pertain either to school or working life. The group, supervised by Florence Morat, Project Manager in the Department of the Publics, is unique in France and aims to create a dialogue between young people on a national and international scale by organising events and forming creative collaborations. 

Principles of Art Session:

Art Session is interested in modern and contemporary art because:

- Art makes you think and reflect
- Art engages the imagination
- Art allows you to escape from the routine of life
- Art allows you to communicate

Relevant activities within the Centre Pompidou:

- Podcasts. The group started recording podcasts in 2009, which allow visitors to the museum to learn more about Pompidou's key artworks from the young person's perspective. Each member addressed the work from their personal feelings and impressions.
- Evaluation of mediation tools. The group tested the mediation tools (audio guides, description pieces) of the permanent collection. They also tested an exhibition according to the following criteria: comprehension, visibility, scenography and route.
- Les Jeudis. Events held in the museum once a month on Thursdays, which consists of performances by peer students from various art fields (circus, theatre, dance, design, etc.). Each time, the performers give their own interpretation of the artworks and provide the audience with a new and lively image of the museum. During these events, the mediation is provided by other students – enrolled on courses related to art – and also by Art Session, in the role of "souffleurs". The souffleurs are present during these events in order to guide the public and inform them about the school and the performances. They also ensure the smooth flow of the audience, and the protection of the art works.