

# Out of time: The experience of contrasting temporal frameworks in participatory art

Ditte Vilstrup Holm<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Department of Business Humanities and Law, Copenhagen Business School, Porcelænshaven 18, 2000 Frederiksberg*

\* *dvh.bhl@cbs.dk*

**Abstract** Participatory art turns the artwork into a process of engagement and co-creation, and it thus involves forms of time-based coordination that influence the experience of creating participatory art. In this paper I argue that participatory art is underscored by two contrasting temporal frameworks. One is the framework of long-term durational approaches that have been internalized among artists as an ethical and political obligation toward participants; the other is the short-term temporary framework that typically comes with project funding and steers the project toward delivery of target outcomes. To show the tensions to which these contrasting temporal frameworks can give rise, I analyze the development of a participatory art project in Copenhagen's South Harbor. Specifically, the analysis emphasizes how tensions arose in respect to delimitations of project aspects such as who constitutes the creative team, what is the task before us, and what is our expected contribution to the community. By emphasizing the tensions arising from contrasting temporal frameworks, the article contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the experience of creating participatory art, and to problematizing the question of time for participatory art.

**Keywords** participatory art, community engagement, durational practices, temporary organizing, boundary work

## INTRODUCTION

Participatory practices in the field of art have changed the relationship between artists and audiences, and in the process have engendered a critical discussion about potential conflicts in art projects of this kind (see, for instance, Bishop, 2012). What power dynamics are involved in participatory art? What role do the participants play, and what influence do they have on decisions? Who is credited and paid for their participation? And what do the participants make of their experience in participating? This article draws attention to a different conflict in participatory art projects, one that pertains to temporal frameworks. As participatory art turns the work of art into a process of involvement and co-creation, it also enlists specific temporal frameworks to structure the practices of participation. Broadly, I suggest that participatory art is underscored by two contrasting temporal frameworks. One is the framework of the temporary project, the other the framework of long-term durational approaches (Kwon, 2004). While the framework of the temporary project is typical of the terms defined by project funding, the framework of long-term durational practices is internalized among artists as an ethical and political obligation toward participants (Beech, 2011). As I will show in this article, these contrasting temporal frameworks affect the project participants in their creation of participatory art projects.

Discussions of participatory art have normatively supported long-term durational approaches that enable the open-ended inclusion of participants in creative work and decision-making (Kwon, 2004; Kester, 2011; O'Neill & Doherty, 2011; Finkelpearl, 2013; Heeswick et al., 2021). Art theorist Dave Beech suggests that art producers are caught up in an ideology of duration, because 'long term' is framed as a good in and of itself (Beech, 2011). However, participatory art is often organized in the form of temporary projects with a fixed starting point and end and with the expectation that the project will deliver some form of tangible result – a collective work of art, the documentation

of participatory practices, or a measured scale of impact (Hall & Robertson, 2001). In this paper I lean upon Lundin and Söderholm's (1995) theory of the temporary organization to examine how contrasting temporal frameworks can affect artists and other participants involved in creating participatory art. I use a participatory art project in Copenhagen's South Harbor as an empirical case to analyze the participants' situational boundary work, which entailed "negotiating, establishing, managing, challenging, or removing demarcations," (Stjerne & Svejenova, 2016, p. 1774) with respect to the boundaries of project work, defined by Lundin and Söderholm as team, task, time, and transition (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). The article demonstrates how contrasting temporal frameworks gave rise to specific tensions at different stages of the project development. In so doing, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the experience of creating participatory art.

## TEMPORALITIES IN PARTICIPATORY ART

In art theory, discussions of participatory practices and community engagement have normatively supported long-term or durational approaches, especially when these take place outside formal cultural institutions (Kester, 2011; Finkelpearl, 2013; O'Neill & Doherty, 2011; Heeswick et al., 2021). For example, in her analysis of the celebrated curatorial project *Culture in Action* – an early example of community engagement in art exhibitions – Kwon emphasized the success of two long-term projects (Kwon, 2004). The scale of measurement for project success was here specifically temporal, that is, the creation of a new community that outlasted the temporary frame of the exhibition. Since then, what art theory has specifically termed 'durational' artistic approaches (O'Neill & Doherty, 2011) have garnered increasing art world recognition. Celebrated examples include *Project Row Houses* in Houston, Texas, Kerstin Bergendal's community politization of an urban development project in a Stockholm suburb, and Jeanne van Heeswick's bottom-up approaches to community development (Finkelpearl, 2013; Wilson, 2018; Kluitenberg, 2018). Perhaps the culmination of the art world's recognition of durational approaches was last year's *documenta fifteen*, which brought together a range of global community oriented artistic practices (Documenta, 2022).

The long-term engagement of durational practices resonates with artists' aspirations to enable and support a more open-ended inclusion of community participants in creative and empowering work. Art theorist Dave Beech refers to this as an ethical imperative: "Duration is required to allow the artwork to test its own hypothesis, but duration is also its ethic, its mode of address and its commitment to the process of a culture coming into being." (Beech, 2011, p. 314) Here I will unpack his argument in more detail, as it offers a convincing analysis of what drives and motivations many artists. Beech refers to the ethical imperative as a form of ideology. Leaning on Marxist theorization, he underscores that ideology does not imply that durational practices are bad or false, nor that there is no merit in empirical cases of durational practices, but rather that "duration is ideological because it is isolated and abstracted as something valuable in itself." (Beech, 2011, p. 317) As he further specifies,

It is only by first separating duration from actual cultural practices that duration then returns to normatively shape cultural practice. [...] It acts simultaneously as an injunction to perform competently and as a measure of that competence. It links these individuals to the universal social body. It also assigns legitimacy and privilege. In other words, it is ideological currency (Beech, 2011, p. 317).

For Beech, this ideological currency has its historical roots in the experimental art forms of the 1960s and 1970s, and particularly in the ontology of endurance in performance art, which was adopted as historical precedent for a new community-oriented 'new genre public art' (Lacy, 1995). Beech

suggests that durational practices have become a new form of monumentality, but measured in time rather than in the weight of stone: "Having rejected the monumental object of public art, new genre public art does not sacrifice monumentality altogether but converts it from being a quality of the object into a quality of the temporal experience of community arts projects." (Beech, 2011, p. 319) What I am specifically interested in here is how the ideology of duration affects the creation of participatory art projects. Beech's argument is that duration becomes a measurement of artistic competence, as well as of the artists' ethical and political commitment. In this way, it not only refutes the criticality of other temporal formats, but also complicates the problematization of time for social engagement in the arts:

Duration is problematic because it is presented as a solution for art's social contradictions, whereas the only viable political solution must be to problematize time for art [...] We have to stop keeping tabs on *our own use of time*. Let's think instead about delay, interruption, stages, flows, of instantaneous performances and lingering documents, of temporary objects and permanent mementos, of repetition, echo and seriality and break with this binary opposition altogether (Beech, 2011, p. 325, italics in original).

In this paper I take up Beech's challenge to "problematize time for art" by contrasting the ideology of duration with the temporal constraints of short-term project funding that so often constitute the framework for participatory art. While celebrated durational practices are often self-funded or come into being on the grounds of exploratory artist residencies, the durational ethos nevertheless influences artists working within the framework of more temporary forms of community participation. To critically analyze the tensions that arise from durational ethics inside frameworks of temporary participatory art, I use the theorization of temporary organizing, specifically as regards creative work.

Temporary organizing, in broad terms, is a way to manage the balance between exploration and control (Sahlin-Andersson, 2002). A project organization is thus put together to complete a particular task that might to a greater or lesser extent be routinized or exploratory – such as, for instance, the construction of a building, the development of a film, or the innovation of a particular product or organizational process. According to Lundin and Söderholm, temporary organizing involves four basic forms of demarcation: time, task, team, and transition (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). The notion of time indicates the existence of time horizons and time limits; and the very idea of a temporary organization is that it is bracketed in terms of time, which has the effect of diffusing a sense of urgency, because "time is always running out since it is finite from the start." (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p. 439) 'Task' is the *raison d'être* for the temporary organization, the very reason why it was developed in the first place, and while such a task might be variously standardized or unique, it is "not being attended to by someone else in the same way at the same time." (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p. 438) 'Team' points to the centrality of those taking part in the temporary organization, not just as resources, but also as carriers of specific "beliefs, attitudes and expectations." (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p. 441) Finally, Lundin and Söderholm point to 'transition' as the fourth demarcation of temporary organizing, indicating that something must be changed or accomplished by the temporary organization. It implies both the dissolving of the temporary organization in itself, and some form of bridging, i.e., the transmission of a product and/or experiences.

Lundin and Söderholm's theory offer an important framework for understanding the mechanisms of temporary organizing. However, it suggests a similarity across all types of temporary organizations, regardless of sector and context, while also suggestively bracketing off the temporary organization too sharply from its context. As Engvall has argued, it is important to understand the wider organizational context of a temporary organization as well as its history and

expected future (Engvall, 2003). All these factors influence the process dynamics of a temporary organization. Consequently, a project's success or failure cannot be analyzed without recourse to wider organizational contexts, including institutionalized practices and interpretations (Sahlin-Anderson, 2002).

According to Svejenova et al. (2011), creative projects – or projects of passion – are distinct from those projects that are driven by profit or client expectation. In projects of passion, freedom and novelty are key motivational drivers, freedom being understood as meaning “directed to and associated with a state of permanent exploration in the domain of ideas,” (Svejenova, 2011, p. 507) and thus as the ability to engage in intensive experiments and explorations to create novelty. Project outcomes for projects of passion are respectively authenticity (staying true to oneself and the artistic vision of the project) and impact (in the form of the aesthetic, social, and economic value appropriated by third parties) (Svejenova et al., 2011). But how then does project work unfold in creative practices, and what does it entail? Researchers have pointed to various practices in which participants engage to define, negotiate, and develop their work and position in temporary project work, including role-based coordination, boundary work, and temporal translation (Bechky, 2006; Stjerne & Svejenova, 2016; Hernes & Shultz, 2020). Such practices take place within and between projects for the purpose of sustaining a career in a precarious creative sector. In a study of film production projects, Bechky, for instance, emphasizes institutionalized practices of enthusiastic thanking, polite admonishing, and role-oriented joking that indicate expectations about possible future interaction (Bechky, 2006). In other words, you qualify for your next job by your ability to perform satisfactorily, including socially, within the environment of film production.

Another key element of project work is the ongoing ‘boundary work’ involved, “which consists of negotiating, establishing, managing, challenging, or removing demarcations.” (Stjerne & Svejenova, 2016, p. 1774) As the temporary organization involves the creation of a number of boundaries to facilitate the efficiency of project development, “e.g. boundaries in time and space, boundaries in terms of task, boundaries regarding who is to be involved, and so on,” (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p. 453) thus, correspondingly, boundary-opening practices hinder the temporary organization from carrying out its task, or at any rate complicate its ideal progression. Boundary work might also take place between projects. In a study of a film company's development of a series of films, Stjerne and Svejenova study how tensions arise and are resolved by way of boundary work that also “bring[s] in shadows of past and future projects to address the tensions.” (Stjerne & Svejenova, 2016, p. 1773) Here the four basic demarcations of a project – time, task, team, and transition – are thus not settled in stone, but continually negotiated in situ, both rhetorically and by actions taken in the process, subject to ongoing interpretation (Sahlin-Andersson, 2002). It is this continual negotiation that opens or closes the boundaries of a project against organizational contexts, past and future projects, as well as toward other institutional framings of meaning.

## CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

In the following I will analyze the case of a participatory art project in Copenhagen's South Harbor to unpack the influence of contrasting temporal frameworks on participatory art.<sup>1</sup> The project formed part of the cross-European artistic project Centriphery, which received funding from two EU funds, respectively supporting immaterial cultural heritage and exchange among professional artists.<sup>2</sup> The title Centriphery connects center and periphery, emphasizing the project's intention to

1 The project came to be entitled *Summende Sydhavn* (*Sydhavn is buzzing*) and the project website is available here: <https://summendesydhavn.dk/> (accessed August 9, 2023).

2 Details of the finalized Centriphery project are available here: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/projects/search/details/597492-CREA-1-2018-1-AT-CULT-COOP2>. In the following I quote from the EU application, but it is no longer accessible online at <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/selection-results/>

grant regional peripheries and their communities a central role: “as every Periphery is its own Centre, Centriphery will give the citizens of the so-called ‘periphery’ a central voice in the transformation of local myths and empower them to participate in the recreation of both local identities and European narratives.” (EU application, p. 4) As a collaboration between cultural venues spanning nine European regions, the purpose of the project was to make site-specific “performative, participatory and cocreational art” (EU application, p. 1) about local myths and stories that would involve and engage the local community. The Danish project partner for Centriphery was Dansehallerne, a Copenhagen-based national resource for dance and choreography, and they chose the South Harbor area as a ‘periphery’ of Copenhagen, collaborating with the young and experimental South Harbor Theater as local partner.

The intervention in South Harbor was developed over two years, from 2019 to 2020. I followed its realization using ethnographic methods, including observations, participation in activities, ad hoc conversations, notetaking, photographic documentation, and diary notes for summaries of events and ongoing reflections (Czarniawska, 2014). In addition, I had access to project applications, budgets, shared files, email correspondence, and visual documentation. In my fieldwork, I did not employ specific affective methodologies, but the tensions I observed gave rise to reflections about temporal patterns, and this motivated my interest in employing theories of the temporary organization (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). Knudsen and Stage argue that analytical concepts offer one way in which to trace affective forces in empirical material (Knudsen & Stage, 2015), and in this paper I mobilize the notion of boundary work for this purpose, as it draws attention to affective tensions in project development (Stjerne & Svejnova, 2016). In analyzing the case I have thus been guided by the research question: How do the project participants’ various experiences of the temporal frameworks become visible in the tensions around project boundaries? In the analysis, affect is considered a subjective and cognitive force rather than a pre-discursive form (Knudsen & Stage, 2015), as I target the project participants’ relational interactions, temporal negotiations, and voiced critiques of boundaries. In analyzing the case, I thus focus on how the boundaries around team, task, time, and transition were negotiated in situ by the project participants, and I argue that this boundary work reflects the contrasting temporal frameworks respectively of the ideology of duration and the temporary project frame.

## THE SOUTH HARBOR INTERVENTION

From the start, the intervention in South Harbor was characterized by boundaries that were both ambiguous and porous. These proved to be subject to ongoing interpretation in the process of the intervention’s development and realization. Balancing exploration and control were an indispensable part of Dansehallerne’s project management, but one that were challenged to its limits in the process, as the *raison d’être* for the project was its exploratory and innovative format, which, at least on paper, seemed to imply a commitment to an ethics of durational engagement. In the following analysis, I start by delineating the porous project boundaries around team, task, time, and transition, before charting the intervention as it developed.

### *Team*

The project team could be defined in various ways. Most narrowly, the team consisted of four ‘international artists’ chosen from the pool of artists appointed by the European partners in the Centriphery project. Two of these – Boaz Barkan and Xiri Noir (the latter identifying as non-binary) – had been chosen by Dansehallerne, while the other two – Cornelia Scheuer and Bart Bijmens – had been selected by two of the European partners. In the South Harbor intervention, early planning

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europa-cooperation-projects-2018\_en (accessed March 4, 2021).

specifically centered around these four international artists, as they were to develop the conceptual and artistic direction for the project. More broadly, the project team included Dansehallerne's project manager, communications officer, and production assistant(s), as well as managers and artists from South Harbor Theater. These were to aid and take part in co-creating the intervention, from planning and execution to creating workshops and artistic activities. In addition, the team included various residents and community members, who, according to the EU application, were to take part in co-creating the artistic project. Most important was an appointed local ambassador, Kaj Jessen, who had in-depth knowledge of the area and who participated in both the project activities and the planning meetings. His published book on the history of South Harbor is one of the sources I cite here. Other members of the local community were to be engaged through workshops, as attendees at events, or by performing various communicative functions such as photographing or writing about the project.

### *Task*

The task was very loosely defined, while at the same time conveying highly ambitious expectations. The team, whichever way it was defined, was to create one or several artistic activities which might "take the form of performances, exhibitions, installations, films, compositions, short festivals, or a combination of the above." (EU application, p. 8) These activities had to relate to past and future local stories, thus constituting a new and original artistic work, and the output was to be co-created with community members. The EU application described the project as fostering "an intensive dialogue" between international artists, local artists, and participating citizens. More specifically, it underlined how audience development was defined in a broader sense, "not only extending access to underrepresented groups and people with special needs and abilities, but also engaging citizens in the creation process while, at the same time, fostering capacity building through intensive workshops." (p. 4) One indicator of the expected scope of community involvement was the target number of workshops: the project description specified fifty 4-hour workshops (EU application, p. 34). It was not just the four international artists who were responsible for these; South Harbor Theater also had to contribute workshops and did so with successively greater intensity. However, this number added pressure to the already high expectations that followed from the aspirations to achieve unique and original artistic work.

For the international artists, furthermore, participatory ambitions implied that the process of co-creating the project with the local community had to be carried out in ethically and politically responsible ways, in accordance with what Beech refers to as the ideology of duration. As Lundin and Söderholm argue, team members are important not just in fulfilling a role in project development, but also because they are 'carriers of specific beliefs, attitudes and expectations.' The four international artists to varying degrees carried with them an ethos of duration, having past experience of developing their work in collaboration with others – both professionals and non-professionals – and they likewise entertained a strong interest in collaboratively developing the intervention in South Harbor. During the project's development, they expressed critique of other participatory art projects that had not entailed sincere forms of community involvement or were organized by one artist only, thus forgoing collective project development.

### *Time*

In temporal terms, the timeline for the intervention in South Harbor expressed a tension between the temporary project framework and the durational approach. On the one hand, it was to be organized according to the logic of a project-driven temporality, the target being to complete a certain task within a delimited timeframe; on the other hand, it implied a commitment to more durational practices and to proper citizen engagement. The project as described in the EU application was to

be “developed in a collaborative, bottom up and open-source approach,” in which “citizens and local stakeholders are the local experts at the heart of this process-oriented project.” (p. 4–5) Still, the artistic intervention in South Harbor was scheduled in accordance with the phase structure outlined in the Centriphery project, specifically revolving around three intensive interventions – respectively scheduled as two one-week residencies and a final four-week residency for project completion – in which the team of four international artists would come to the area, meet local experts, local artists, and local communities, and co-create the project. These three interventions would facilitate project development by functioning as specific time slots that were bracketed out, and somewhat “...decoupled from other past, contemporary, or even future sequences of activities.” (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p. 446) In between these interventions, South Harbor Theater was expected to conduct workshops and, in this way, sustain local interest and engagement in the project. The first intervention was scheduled for September 16–22, 2019, the second for February 17–23, 2020, and the third and final one for May 11–June 7, 2020, with the expectation that this would culminate in a final presentation of artistic work. The timeline, however, experienced a major change when the Covid-19 pandemic hit Europe in the early spring of 2020. The second intervention was completed just before the Danish lockdown, while the third was eventually rescheduled and carried out from October 27 to November 21, 2020.

### *Transition*

In Lundin and Söderholm’s theory of the temporary organization, transition implies that the project terminates, and its results are transferred to another context. On a basic level, the project had to deliver proof of satisfactory project realization to the EU funders, as well as contribute to joint learning among the collaborating regional partners. More ambitiously, and in tune with the various project participants’ aspirations – including the artists, Dansehallerne, and South Harbor Theater – the hope was that the project would make a meaningful contribution to South Harbor and its community. In their supplementary project application to the Danish Arts Foundation, Dansehallerne framed the purpose of the project as “opening new ways for community engagement between people and across the areas of South Harbor,” by “establishing new sustainable, common stories about living in South Harbor.”

This aspiration addressed the major divide between the old and the new part of South Harbor. The area formerly comprised two thriving but very different working-class communities (Jessen, 2010). One consisted of union-organized social democrats and was manifested in the construction of a neighborhood of apartment buildings in showcase red brickwork; the other was made up of a blend of unskilled workers, anarchists, and creatives whom the city had offered small, rented allotments out on the meadow where they themselves could build a temporary house, an initiative that led to the development of small, precarious garden communities. With the twenty-first century, the harborside industry gave way to a new residential neighborhood that now attracts more affluent citizens, often newcomers to the expanding capital who are able to pay higher rentals for accommodation. The old and the new part of South Harbor are bisected by a heavy-traffic road, but development projects are also increasingly making inroads into the old area; apartment buildings emerging on sites that until recently featured storage houses and old factories, along with a controversially de-listed meadow (Stenbro, 2019). The current development projects in the area bring back memories of past struggles in which the garden communities of the old South Harbor had to fight to keep their homes. A particularly famous event was their assembling, in 1991, of the World’s Longest Coffee Table as a protest event against a planned railway line that would cut across the garden communities and result in tenants being evicted. According to rumors, the event was approved by the *Guinness World Records*; the railway tracks were eventually built, but the final route was less intrusive than originally planned. The coffee table event would also become inspirational

for the artistic intervention in South Harbor. Boaz, one of the artists chosen by Dansehallerne, designed a mobile coffee table that the four international artists – and to varying degrees the other project participants – brought with them as they visited the different parts of South Harbor to invite people for a talk over a cup of coffee, while also exploring the table as a format for experimental performances.

## TENSIONS AND BOUNDARY WORK IN PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

After this initial analysis of the South Harbor intervention's ambiguous as well as porous boundaries related to team, task, time, and transition, I move on to show how these boundaries were variously managed, negotiated, and challenged in the process of developing the project. I move chronologically through the process, dedicating a part to each of the three temporally divided parts of the intervention. For each part, I have created an introductory vignette that distills a particular situation, with the intended purpose of forwarding a dominant tension in the respective phase of the project development. As I will proceed to argue, the tensions I observed across all three interventions arose from the same clash between two different temporal frameworks – the project-driven temporality and the durational approach – but in each intervention, the clash generates different forms of boundary work as the timespan to project closure shortened.

### *First intervention: between research and performance*

*It is Saturday afternoon, and the four international artists have set up the coffee table in front of a second-hand shop in Mozart Garden City. The two previous days, we've visited the red-brick area and the new harborside residential area, engaging with people to hear their reflections on the historic World's Longest Coffee Table event as well as their present experience of living in South Harbor. Today, we are at the heart of where that event took place, and we are meeting community members who actually took part in organizing it, crafting flower vases for its decoration, and brewing endless amounts of coffee. After a few hours of coffee drinking and interaction with community members who pass by, the artists decide to test the table as performance stage. It's an improvised choreography in which they interact and entangle with each other and with the coffee table and the props of coffee pot and cups. They also start to move the table into a narrower side-alley as they continue their improvised collective performance, all the while being closely followed by a locally resident photographer Dansehallerne has hired to document the intervention. As Cornelia, one of the international artists, later suggested, the presence of the photographer impeded them from engaging community members in the dance, turning it rather into a staged performance for audiences to watch.*

The first intervention was marked by a tension between the four international artists' interest in researching, testing, and collective learning and Dansehallerne's interest in documenting the presence and the constituent events of the intervention. This was a tension between interpreting the intervention as residency or as performance – that is, between a durational approach, which emphasizes ongoing development, and a temporary framework, where the project outcome is central to the activity. Cornelia gave voice to this tension in her comments about the photographer, whose role created a problematic boundary between the artists and the community; it also came up in the artists' ongoing reservations about requests from Dansehallerne that they should announce beforehand when and where they would visit parts of South Harbor. The announcements were intended to support their contact with the local community, but it pressured the artists to follow a predefined schedule, instead of allowing them to move around the area freely in response to what emerged.

Informed by pre-descriptions of the first week as an intervention, I entered it with an expectation more of performative events than research-based undertakings. At the very first project meeting,

however, the common denominator was residency. In my subsequent reflections on that first week, I felt it was characterized by blurred boundaries between research and performance, with a little of everything, often intermingled and difficult to clearly separate. Was the team of international artists researching the area and meeting the local community when they rolled out their coffee table decorated with lace doilies, second-hand porcelain, and an old-fashioned vacuum coffee brewer? Were they researching when they danced in front of the second-hand shop?

In this early phase, the blending of research and performance fitted into a durational approach, in so far as it enabled the artists to employ artistic means as part of their methodology of citizen engagement. This exploratory practice was also supported by Dansehallerne's project management. Dansehallerne had scheduled the intervention with various ingredients that were intended to facilitate project development, but at the same time it was open to adjustment. The schedule's description of the international artists' own time as "Artist workshop/talks/research, driven by the artists" and of the visits to various parts of South Harbor as "Interventions/meetings with citizens" expressed the porous and open intermixing of research and performance. The schedule comprised both early "check-in" and closing day "reflection" sessions, to which was added a note that "The timeslots are flexible and can be moved if they interfere with interventions or other activities."

The tension between durational and temporary framework was expressed only in minor comments and – as in the case of Cornelia's reflection – with a view to encouraging small adjustments as the project continued to develop. Deadlines were not yet acutely affecting the project participants' experience of project development, although there was a collective sense that one week of interaction was far too little to begin project development for real. The team of four international artists were just beginning to get to know each other, their interaction underscoring acts of courtesy, curiosity, and generosity by way of gift-giving (chocolate from home), learning about each other (images of cats and family were exchanged), and taking time to socialize in the evening (beyond the scheduled dinner). The tension experienced in this phase was mainly between the flexibility of an exploratory durational approach to artistic research and Dansehallerne's interest in early documentation and outward communication of the project with the objective of facilitating community engagement and delivering on the project targets specified in funding applications.

#### *Second intervention: between progressing and stepping back*

*Bart has laid out seventy small cards on the wooden floor. I count the numbers afterwards from my photographic documentation of the exercise. Each card has a word or two written on them. Some capture specific people involved in the project; the individual artists each have a card, and so does the local ambassador Kaj. Other cards indicate places or communities in South Harbor: 'Karens Minde Kulturhus' (the home of South Harbor Theater), 'Yum-Yum' (a yoga bar in the new area), or 'walking ladies' and 'winter swimmers.' Some relate more to artistic methods and ideas of community involvement: 'empowerment,' 'improvisation,' and 'performance.' Bart calls them mood cards, which is what is used in modeling jobs to direct the models' expressions. Boaz is the first to organize the cards, and he chooses to arrange them around two keywords: 'the coffee table' and 'the frog' (a reference to an endangered species that used to live in the area, another historic campaign for the old South Harbor). Cornelia builds on Boaz's constellation, but adjusts the cards slightly so as to position each of the artists in relation to specific topics or places. Bart reworks the cards to indicate barriers as well as connections between people and places in South Harbor. In his mapping, the new and the old South Harbor are the key barrier to overcome. Xiri reframes the assignment, writing their own cards: 'HONESTY,' 'What is the URGENCY...?', 'Activation of the artistic in the everyday...', 'Artist citizen,' 'Who and what do we connect to?' Xiri says that they are unable to place their cards among the others. Boaz suggests that their cards are just more abstract and less concrete than Bart's.*

The second intervention was characterized by a tension in respect to the expectations of where the project was in its phase of development. From Dansehallerne's perspective, the time was ripe for adding further precision and specifying community contributions to the conceptual frame of restaging the World's Longest Coffee Table. As the final intervention rapidly approached – only two months away – the project should move swiftly to clarify the details required to produce the final event. Between the four international artists, however, the phase of creative exploration was not yet close to finalized, and neither was the decision on the project's overall artistic frame. The four resisted scheduled opportunities that had been prepared by Dansehallerne and South Harbor Theater to meet specific local communities, opting instead to spend a few days isolated in the rented apartment where the artists from abroad were staying during the second intervention. Here, they would take turns designing exercises to explore and facilitate their collective conceptual development of the project.

The contrasting temporal approaches – the project frame vs. the durational approach – were also expressed in two different sets of questions distributed to the team of artists, questions that variously sought to close or open project boundaries. One set was from Dansehallerne, asking for project specification in the form of titles, timeline, program details, necessary props, and technical equipment for the upcoming and final intervention in May: "A working plan for the residency in May – when, where and how?" "What kind of material/props/scenography is relevant to work on? Still the tables?" "How can you as a citizen be a part of or as an audience from outside South Harbor be connected to the project in May?" The other set of questions came from Xiri, who took a leading role among the artists in pushing their creative development in a new direction. Among their questions were: "How do you define your artistic practice (or desires of future practice)?" "How can you connect your own practice and desires to our project in South Harbor?" "How do you imagine your relation to South Harbor and your connection to the other involved artists three years from now?"

The two sets of questions mark distinct forms of boundary work in the process of developing the project and its relationship to other contexts, including past experiences and future expectations. Dansehallerne needed to prepare communication and technical support and deliver a final product within the framework of the EU funding; they thus called for decisions on project specification. Xiri, instead, sought to better align the project with the artists' own desire and ethos, with their past and future aspirations. Community engagement was a joint aspiration shared among all three parties – the artists, Dansehallerne, and South Harbor Theater – but it was facilitated by different practices. Dansehallerne's project focus underscored the necessity of specifying workshops and events so that the community were able to partake in something. It called for decisions because they support the delivery of events. Xiri's questions underscored the necessity of such activities being meaningfully grounded in authentic relations in order to make them valuable at all. They prompted self-reflection to support learning and development.

Bart's exercise, which I sketched in the introductory vignette, sits somewhere in between, trying to bridge the task of fitting all the pieces into one big picture. Xiri's intervention in Bart's exercise underscores their interest in broadening the topic from the specificity of South Harbor to the larger meaning of engaging with communities at all. The outcome of the second intervention was a simultaneous fracturing – into seventy different cards, to some degree – and flipping of the artistic idea from restaging an old local story to developing various projects that could support the empowerment of many different local stories (see, also, Holm, 2022). While the first intervention had been entitled 'Coffee across South Harbor' in homage to the historical protest action, the final event was ultimately named 'South Harbor is Buzzing' and became more of a festival with various loosely connected workshops and events, in which each of the artists would mainly take individual charge of their own project part(s).

*Third intervention: between closure and continuity*

*It is Tuesday, October 27, 2020, and it's a bit chilly. It's the launch of the final intervention, and we are gathered outside of Karens Minde, the home of South Harbor Theater. The team of international artists are here, and so is the local ambassador Kaj. Present is also a larger staff than before from the Theater and from Dansehallerne. There is an air of anticipation and gentle excitement, despite the circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. Before my arrival today, Dansehallerne's project manager told me I should not expect to be included in the ensuing planning meeting. Last week the government issued new Covid restrictions, limiting inside gatherings to a maximum of ten people. After the initial greetings, the project manager prepares to move the essential participants inside, pinpointing who can join in and who cannot. I am not on the priority list, and neither is the local ambassador Kaj. Xiri protests: "Why is Kaj not coming? It makes no sense." The project manager underscores that it has to do with Covid restrictions. Also, she explains, the purpose of the meeting is to share details and coordinate the planned activities. Xiri repeats that they do not understand: "Kaj is important. We are doing this together with the local community." The situational compromise is that we stay outside a little longer, using the semi-open space of a pavilion, which offers chairs and blankets to keep warm.*

In the final intervention, the tension between the temporary project frame and the durational approach is more intense. Following the logic of the temporary project framework, Dansehallerne and South Harbor Theater are moving markedly toward narrowing the boundaries around team and task in order to facilitate the project toward closure. Xiri instead is seeking to expand the exploratory phase to deliver a different kind of product – less a product in any final form than a practice of engaging in common creative and activist engagement. To include Kaj or not signals the boundaries for the team of participants, but also of the task and transitional aspirations, and thus for the way time should be spent in the project. The Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to this tension between finalizing the project and keeping it open to explore further opportunities. Dansehallerne and South Harbor Theater were hard pressed to support the project realization amid ongoing threats of lockdown and changing Covid rules. Many workshops and project parts were already cancelled, while Covid restrictions challenged the realization of others. Cornelia could only do her dance workshop with school children via digital media, offering less than ideal ways of connecting with them. Every event and workshop had to adjust to restrictions on the numbers of participants and the closeness of their interaction. Rescheduling of the event from spring to fall meant that Boaz had other engagements, complicating his ability to partake in much of the third intervention. Xiri was the one who most vividly, and despite the circumstances, still expressed a desire to co-create, emphasizing “we” rather than “I,” in planning meetings.

The temporary project frame underscores the need to ensure that the project is realized. While many workshops and activities were already prepared before the launch of the last intervention, the practical details were not yet fully fixed. In addition, the final Saturday event, constituting a form of closure and showcasing what the project had accomplished, was to be collaboratively organized during the final intervention. By contrast, the durational approach implies that the task lies in the process itself and how it affects the local participants and the artists in their turn. For Xiri, the interaction with local community members was central to their work. It was not finalized on paper to be practically specified for production; it would instead emerge as part of the very process of collectively working together. In one sense, their project would never reach an end, but would continue to be a step in an ongoing, collaborative exploration. In the course of the four weeks, Xiri did in fact manage to facilitate the creation of a new performance piece that addressed the experience of not being Danish enough in South Harbor. It involved a poet they had met at a local poetry reading night and a dancer already engaged by South Harbor Theater to do a workshop, the three of them developing the performance collaboratively together with

Kaj. It was eventually staged at the final Saturday event, in between two talks also organized by Xiri, discussing past and current community struggles, in which Kaj would also participate, of course.

## TEMPORAL TENSIONS IN PARTICIPATORY ART

In my analysis of the artistic intervention in South Harbor, I have focused on how two contrasting temporal frameworks for participatory artworks affected the project participants' experiences of developing the project, and on how these tensions became visible in various forms of boundary work. The analysis has sought to show how the two contrasting temporal frameworks and their affective charge came to light when they rubbed against each other and created tensions. The analysis is based upon my observations of the project as it was being developed, but it is also specifically supported by theories of durational ideology and temporary organizing. The durational approach, which art theorist Beech refers to as an ideology of duration, implies a dedication to extend time as long as possible for the project to develop authentically, expressing "commitment to the process of a culture coming into being." (Beech, 2011, p. 314) By contrast, the framework of temporary organizing implies an emphasis on project result as the principle guiding the planning of steps necessary to accomplish the project task, thus moving backward from expected result to organize the temporal framework around time, task, team, and transition (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995).

The South Harbor intervention was specifically affected by this split because – at least on paper – it simultaneously aspired to an ambitious form of genuine community engagement, while at the same time offering less than 'durational' time to develop such engagement. The project participants were to various degrees influenced by the durational approach and attached their professional aspirations to such an ethos. Following Svejenova et al. (2011), artistic projects, as projects of passion, are driven by the possibility of engaging in permanent exploration and retaining authenticity toward self and artistic vision while achieving recognition from audiences and stakeholders. However, in durational approaches, to follow Beech, this implies that the deliberate sharing of creative freedom with communities becomes 'passionately' enlisted, while authenticity and impact are measured by the aesthetic intensities of engaging and co-creating new forms of relations. In the case of the South Harbor intervention, it was exactly such intense relations that the artists, and most specifically Xiri, envisioned and sought to establish by way of building up the project, one step at a time – and this inevitably takes time. The temporary framework, however, is also bound up with professional aspirations and affect. It underscores a professional proficiency to support an exploratory process which requires agile skills of coordination and communication. In this case, it was also driven by the hope that the project would develop new forms of meaningful community engagement and new artistic formats. For Dansehallerne, this was specifically related to the qualities of dance and performance in engaging communities and creating new connections between the areas of South Harbor. To do so, however, the project needed to bring artistic formats to the community, to generate workshops and events that the community could participate in.

In the first intervention, the tension revealed itself between, on the one hand, the international artists' research and experimental testing of performance formats and, on the other, Dansehallerne's interest in early documentation and publicizing of the intervention as an artistic event. This tension centrally concerned the definition of the task at hand in the first week of the project, including how to engage community members in the expanded team of participants. In the second intervention, the tension appeared in respect to where the project was in terms of its stage of development. While Dansehallerne was pushing for production details, the four international artists took a step backward to reconceptualize the artistic direction. This reconceptualization implied another definition of the task, one less about recreating an old story than about exploring and empowering

new stories. The third intervention displayed tensions related to different types of desired project outcome and transition to other contexts. I have emphasized Xiri's work, in which the activity of engaging in dialogue and creative development with local community members constituted the work in itself, even if – interestingly – the co-created poetry-dance performance was, from an outsider's perspective, one of the more classic artistic expressions on the final Saturday event. Among the other artists, efforts were also made to gradually build upon activities and attract local community members to the events, but given the circumstances of Covid-19, aspirations centered on fewer outreach formats, mostly pre-planned before the final intervention. In general, there was a thrust toward project closure, exacerbated by Covid-19.

## CONCLUSION

Within discussions of participatory art, there has been a succinct interest in learning about successful durational approaches. Through analyzing the influence of contrasting temporal frameworks in the intervention in South Harbor, this article has sought to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the experience of producing participatory art, and of how this experience is bound up with a politics of time. The intervention in South Harbor was neither a grand success nor a failure. The project was carried out, despite the circumstances, and the artistic activities and events did create new relations across South Harbor and between project participants, including the international artists, local artists and community members. In my analysis I have emphasized tensions, but the case study also shows how Dansehallerne consistently adjusted the temporary project frame to accommodate durational approaches, while Xiri in their durational ethos adjusted their practice to work within and around the restrictions of a temporary framework.

Success and failure are determined by the choice of scales of measurement. In this case, as in many others, however, the project was entrusted with aspirations that its temporary format did not support. The EU funding both enabled the project's coming-into-being and became the source of its temporal tensions. The grand aspirations expressed in the funding application – and its intent to deliver both community-engaged art projects and cross-European exchange of artists – implies longer durational practices than the temporary framework can support. In this sense, however, Centriphery and the intervention in South Harbor are not exceptional, but rather the expression of a typical dilemma facing participatory art – not least because the competition for funding encourages the overstating of a project's scope of participatory engagement within the available timeframe. For participatory art projects, thus, time is always about to run out.

## AUTHOR BIO

Ditte Vilstrup Holm is Assistant Professor at the Department of Business Humanities and Law, Copenhagen Business School. She holds a research MA in art history and a PhD in art and organization studies. Her work focuses on the intersections between art, aesthetics, and practices of organizing in the expanded field of public art practices.

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