

COLLABORATIVE ARTISTIC PRACTICES FOR CULTURAL ACCESSIBILITY: BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY

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Abstract: Services in the field of disability, immersed in the paradigm shift of diversity, are being transformed into *bridge organizations*. This new model is emerging to offer personalized support to citizens with different kind of disabilities who demand full participation in the community. The Tuya Foundation is a bridge organization that promotes Aireas: international meetings where people with different capacity gather to build a more inclusive world.

The new concepts of cultural inclusion, social museology and accessible cultural heritage have promoted the emergence of art and education projects aimed at the context of disability. Museums and art centres are creating programmes and projects aimed at persons at risk of exclusion to enable their greater participation in the community. Pedagogías Invisibles is an independent cultural association that acts as a bridge between people with disabilities and the cultural environments of Madrid and Berlin.

Keywords: accessibility, disability, contemporary art, participation, mediation.

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CULTURAL ACCESSIBILITY AS A PATH TO FULL INCLUSION

Becoming Aware of Human Diversity

The paradigm of disability is experiencing an historic moment of change that is directly connected with the global transformation in the way of understanding human diversity.

Since the adoption of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in 2006¹, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in a democratic society has finally become a legal and ethical issue. The *Convention* has been the result of efforts made since the 1960s by social groups involved in fighting discrimination and seeking equality, in conjunction with the active participation and persistent action of people with disabilities.

Groups that have suffered discrimination because of their physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities demand new policies that consider all citizens under a new light: as a community of interlinked and diverse individuals.

The Independent Life Movement² philosophy is that everyone, regardless of their level of disability, has the right to enjoy a life as independent as possible in their community and to enjoy the best available social and personal support.

The main demand of people who have any kind of impediment (functional diversity) is deinstitutionalization. This is based on the idea that the processes of normalization operating in the society cause the part of the population labelled as «disabled» to be directed to specific services that, instead of promoting their inclusion, perpetuate their invisibility.

We would like to clarify that our study focuses mainly on the problem faced by citizens with intellectual or developmental disabilities as they constitute a group at greater risk of social exclusion. Here we should note that throughout this article we shall refer to the group of people who have specific limitations in their cognitive functioning as:

- People with intellectual or developmental disabilities;
- People with cognitive functional diversity.

People with *intellectual or developmental disabilities* is the expression proposed by the Spanish Confederation of Organizations in Favour of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (*Plena Inclusión*³) to denominate that group of people. The Confederation has taken its definition of *intellectual disability* from the one adopted by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: «It is a disability characterized

¹ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, April 21, 2006. Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 December 2006 and ratified by Spain: BOE of 21 of April, 2008. Available at <<http://www.conveciondiscapacidad.es/index.htm>>.

² GARCÍA ALONSO, 2003.

³ Available at <<http://plenainclusion.org>>.

by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills». That is to say, it is a limitation in the skills that the person has to learn in order to function in his daily life and that would allow him/her to respond in different situations and in different contexts.

People with *cognitive functional diversity* is the expression proposed by the group of people with disabilities who lead the Independent Living Forum (Foro de Vida Independiente⁴) in Spain. The Forum is a platform created to disseminate the philosophy of Independent Living, which defends a *new model of diversity*. This new model states that functional diversity is part of human diversity. Full dignity must be provided to all people, regardless of their diversity. Full dignity means giving the same value to all human beings and giving the same rights to all people⁵. The Independent Life Movement posits that main strategies for full inclusion are:

- Personal assistance (giving individualized quality support to create as independent a life as possible within the community);
- Elimination of the barriers of the environment.

We shall use both concepts in this article to highlight the fact that today different models of disability coexist. The result of this coexistence is that we can find different and divergent ways of acting.



Fig. 1. People with cognitive functional diversity, 2016. ©Amanda Robledo

⁴ Available at <<http://forovidaindependiente.org>>.

⁵ PALACIOS & ROMAÑACH, 2006.

Paradoxically, while the model of diversity (full inclusion) gains in acceptance, models that lead to social exclusion continue to be maintained: the exclusion model (which accepts eugenic practices such as population control), the medical-care model (which defines disability as the absence of health, designing segregated environments where patients can be treated by means of therapies and drugs) and integration dynamics (established by two groups of citizens: the minority group [integrated] and the hegemonic group [integrators]). This happens because we live in a society democratic only in theory, in which normalization processes operate that assign more value to some citizens than to others. Such discrepancy is reflected in society's use of these terms (some of them totally disrespectful) and in how society organizes its individuals.

Unfortunately, standardization does not only affect functional diversity; anyone outside the norm is more likely to suffer discrimination in their daily lives than those considered normal.

When disability is at large associated with dependency, and people with different functions are stereotyped as incapable of greater achievement than receiving help, that vision affects the way people with functional diversity perceive themselves. Frequently, the personal and social identity of people with functional diversity is reduced to their uniqueness, relegating to the background the rest of their values as individuals.

An in-depth awareness of human diversity leads us to question this social and legal classification of disability, which divides citizens into dependents and non-dependents. On the other hand, those who believe we are not dependent are denying reality, because in our life, sooner or later we are or we will be dependent on each other. Therefore, it can be stated that: *All of us are interdependent people with functional diversity.*

We want to underscore the idea that every human being, regardless of his or her characteristics, is diverse in his or her functioning, that is, in the way of being and of being in the world, and is connected to others, on which to a greater or lesser extent they depend to live. If we want to build a more inclusive world and a more just and egalitarian society for all, we should accept and love our own diversity and that of others. From this perspective, we understand that wealth and happiness lie in celebrating the similarities and differences that make us unique and diverse.

CULTURAL ACCESSIBILITY AS A RIGHT

The violation of the fundamental rights of people with disabilities, particularly their access to culture, is a problem not yet fully addressed. For one thing, cities still have urban barriers that impede full accessibility to many places. Furthermore, the majority of people with functional diversity do not enjoy an independent life and consequently their participation in the community has to follow the patterns of the specific services created to cover that necessity. As a consequence, the majority of persons with cognitive functional diversity do not fully enjoy the benefits they deserve as members of society,

have very few opportunities of equal participation in community life and participate in the community only on a reduced scale.

Existing barriers in social spaces do not only affect the disabled community. Generally speaking, a fundamental aspect of the paradigm shift of diversity is to understand that the functionality of a person depends on their interaction with the environment: the fewer barriers there are, the greater the inclusion of the population. It is obvious that designing cities without barriers benefits mainly people with functional diversity, but it is also evident that it makes products and services more accessible and enjoyable for the rest of the population.

Within the community there are specific environments (what we might call «cultural heritage»: cultural centres, museums and art centres, meeting places, public places to gather diverse people with a common interest) that due to their characteristics favour greater social inclusion. When society shows sensitivity to excluded individuals and groups, it incites cultural institutions and agents to undertake actions to encourage public engagement with functional diversity. In other words, to look for and create innovative experiences that break stereotypes about disability and encourage accessibility to culture.

In addition to the elimination of physical, sensory and cognitive barriers, the key to full inclusion is to create spaces where people with and without disabilities can coexist, spaces that change our way of understanding human diversity, transform our style of relating to each other and strengthen our common bond.

Throughout the 1990s, growing interest in universal design drove the creation of «universal design principles»⁶, which guide architects and designers today in creating accessible spaces and objects. Although institutions, architects and politicians focus on overcoming the physical and sensory barriers of cultural environments (the most visible), that does not ensure a design suitable for all. Access to cultural heritage is limited not only by these types of barriers, but also by cognitive barriers and especially attitudinal barriers. Up until recently, museums still had not perceived people with intellectual or developmental disabilities as potential visitors. Today we know that there are so many ways as people to approach, perceive and experience cultural heritage. Espinosa's concept of *accessible heritage*⁷ surged forth to defend the right of any citizen to enjoy our common heritage; the meaning of accessible heritage («inheritance» and «communal good») guides us also in this regard. We already know that cognitive barriers are the most complex, and therefore difficult, to detect or act upon, since there are as many cognitive functions as people. In order to achieve a design for all, the intervention of people with cognitive functional diversity at all levels of cultural accessibility projects

⁶ Available at <<http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/>>.

⁷ ESPINOSA & BONMATI, 2013.

is essential. The best way to act on cognitive accessibility is through first-hand feedback about experiences in cultural institutions and ways of perceiving the world.

The Conect@Blog⁸ project of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNACRS) investigated new strategies of cognitive accessibility and social inclusion. Over the course of two years, a group of participants in the Museum project, with and without intellectual disabilities, analysed the museum's universal accessibility and related actions. If training professionals both in cultural and social spheres is key in terms of increasing accessibility, providing real inclusion in cultural environments that allow training in social skills and aesthetic sensibility of people with functional diversity is essential. Removing barriers and the inclusion of people with any diversity do not necessarily carry the obligation of programming specific activities.

Paying attention to the specific carries the risk that, trying to integrate, we could fall back into exclusion, even if it is a «positive» exclusion. Any special treatment is in itself discriminatory. It is much more appropriate to adapt existing resources to each type of audience than to design programmes, exhibitions or special events. In spite of that, museums still use specific programmes as the most habitual form of educative activity directed to this group of people. It is understandable, since people with functional — especially cognitive — diversity are supported by the specific organizations created to help them. Specific centres organize cultural activities for groups (group activities) when they program training seminars or working sessions. It is only during leisure time that people can decide their own private cultural agenda and manage personally what (natural or professional) can be helpful for their own enjoyment. Groups of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities participate in the greater culture through such group dynamics, users and professionals, that scarcely allow interaction with other groups. Connect@Blog precisely seeks to dilute the usual hierarchies and modes of interaction in the context of disability.

When we analyse the didactic programme of MNCARS⁹, it is clear that its methodology has evolved over the last ten years to offer activities designed for all audiences today. The Education Department of the museum was the first to offer in Madrid programmes aimed at people with functional diversity. Drawing from accumulated experience and deep reflection, the Museum has since incorporated practices originally designed for audiences with functional diversity and applied them to general audiences.

The value of human diversity entails working with languages other than just the verbal. Since our daily activities are connected to a verbal and written environment, we assume that only literacy in those linguistic expressions is imperative. Coexisting with disability means living alongside people who do not always fully possess those skills,

⁸ Available at <<https://conectamuseoreinasofia.wordpress.com>>.

⁹ Available at <<http://www.museoreinasofia.es/educacion>>.

who have only partial abilities or who can carry out those abilities in a special way. What unites us beyond speech is an interest in the aesthetic and the expressive. In this way, to enrich all kinds of audiences, MNCARS uses in their visits new elements and more sensory processes, such as using the body as a fundamental tool or performances and music. Now the whole programme of the museum is universally accessible, which makes it easy for diverse audiences to participate successfully in any visit.

We can synthesize some key points to gaining cultural accessibility in our museums and art centres:

1. *To combine the specific with full inclusion.* The necessity of combining specific programmes aimed at the context of disability with truly inclusive initiatives where diverse audiences coexist;
2. *More personalized and long-term activities.* Promote programmes and projects developed over a long period, instead of programming specific visits. Working over a longer period allows group dynamics to result in activities designed with each participant in mind;
3. *Encourage a loyal audience.* Make partnerships with organizations focused on disability issues so that, through these programmes, a relationship that encourages a regular presence of people with functional diversity in museums can be established;
4. *Promote special projects based on collaboration.* Provide collaborative experiences that allow us to discover new ways of working based on dialogical practices, co-creation, transdisciplinarity and horizontality.

BRIDGE ORGANIZATIONS AND THE COLLABORATIVE TURNAROUND

The artistic manifestations in the context of disability remained unrelated to the world of Art until the appearance of the term «outsider art»¹⁰ in 1972. Since then, the work of these unconventional artists has been gradually gaining higher visibility in art galleries, exhibitions and permanent collections of museums and art centres, both public and private. But what happens with the creators themselves? Are they, as individuals, also present in the ambit of artistic production? While it is true that the presence of some of their creations on the walls of galleries and museums challenges the traditional artists profile, training and professionalism of people with functional diversity on equal terms with others remains a challenge too. Since the 1970s, internationally, cultural projects have emerged from the context of disability. Those projects, even though heterogeneous, offer at least a creative space to people with cognitive functional diversity. Most of the creators with disabilities who develop their artistic work in bridge organizations

¹⁰ CARDINAL, 1972.

have been excluded from the training and promotional channels enjoyed by most other artists. We should recall that there are very few opportunities to access to an inclusive education, which is key to obtaining a quality training in Art. As a consequence, in the specific case of Spain, the majority of young people and adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities participate solely in artistic workshops programmed to people with disability. Unfortunately, the most prestigious and internationally reputed entities in that area (Creative Grow Art Center¹¹, Creahm¹², Danza Mobile¹³ or Thikwa Theater¹⁴, among others), both in terms of trajectory and professionalism, are accesible only to a few of those artists. Actually, most people with cognitive functional diversity are allowed a place in facilities that offer curricular activities and workshops oriented for the most part to handicrafts rather than visual arts, and whose education programmes are usually taught by professionals and/or social workers with little training in contemporary art.

Changing the paradigm of diversity is to demand something special. It asks us to leave segregated spaces behind and embrace everyone's right to fully enjoy community cultural services: museums, art centres, galleries, festivals, meetings, facilities, seminars, education courses, etc. Aware of what full inclusion means, those very valuable spaces for the education and artistic creation of people with disabilities are already looking for new *bridge* actions that allow them to move from specific, individual-oriented actions to broader, community-oriented actions. As we will see below, at the international level, projects based on contemporary artistic practices already emerging. They incorporate participation and collaboration in the cultural production process. Other experiences, focused in community development, are also arising at large.

Debajo del Sombrero Association: Inhabiting the Community

A good reference in matters of cultural accessibility is the association *Debajo del Sombrero*, a platform for the creation, research, production and dissemination of art whose main protagonists are people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. When in 2006 the team of founders devised *Debajo del Sombrero*, we made a key decision: to develop the project within cultural institutions of the community instead of creating an exclusive space. With this strategy, *Debajo del Sombrero* developed its programmes in Matadero Madrid, La Casa Encendida and the Department of Fine Arts of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM). The association's programmes allow participants to live with others, share activities with community cultural entities and disseminate the artistic value of the project. *Debajo del Sombrero* acts as a bridge between issues affecting disability and community. The platform connects adults with intellectual and develop-

¹¹ Available at <<http://www.creativegrowth.org>>.

¹² Available at <<http://www.creahm.be>>.

¹³ Available at <<http://danzamobile.com>>.

¹⁴ Available at <<http://www.thikwa.de>>.

mental disabilities interested in the visual arts with formal environments for promotion and artistic training. One example is the collaborative project Artistic Workshop with the artist Jaime Vallauré¹⁵, an experience developed within the European Expanding Realities Project, in the Intermediae facility at Matadero-Madrid. This drawing-and-action workshop, designed by the artist, generated a space of collaboration between three groups: students of the Ártica school, students of the Fine Arts Department of the UCM and artists of *Debajo del Sombrero*. The workshop's proposed subject addressed several important topics such as new ways of artistic mediation, how to manage the diversity of the participants and the connection between formal and informal educational contexts, among others.



Fig. 2. «Debajo del Sombrero Association: inhabiting the community», Madrid 2008
Carlos Mariscal's Project

From Participation to Collaboration

As we analyze in Jaime Vallauré's artist workshop, the interest in public participation moves many current contemporary art creators to approach their work transversally, that is, as the intersection of their own interests with the needs of community

¹⁵ For more information on the project, see <<http://www.debajodelsombrero.org/proyecto.php?id=894>>.

contexts. Museums, artists and mediators are joining the fight against exclusion through projects involving those less present in the cultural landscape. In the field of art there has also emerged a commitment and interest towards minorities in a situation of inequality. Social commitment and activism are the essential features of the new collaborative art movements. This commitment is used by museum education teams and art centres to design new programmes and projects based on participation. One example is the projects of visual artists and professors Isabel Banal and Jordi Canudas, invited by the La Panera Art Center, Lleida, as part of its series of participative projects aimed at audiences at risk of social exclusion. Through two proposals, Taller Casa Dalmases (2008) and Mercat de Santa Teresa (2009)¹⁶, the artists used participatory artistic practices to offer people from special centres for adults in Cervera and Lleida an inclusive experience in contemporary art. The education service team at La Panera explains the conclusions of these workshops:

We considered these two workshops as a good example of an inclusive artistic practice, since these workshops could have had as participants other groups such as students, children, the elderly, among others¹⁷.

Raising awareness of the fact that a special education programme is of interest to any member of the public is the path we should follow in order to transform something specific into something that is universal. Based on this approach we can devise inclusive strategies that encompass diverse sections of society within a shared cultural project. Teachers at La Panera have also highlighted the importance of generating activities in which the participants play an active role. Working with contemporary art helps to train participants regarding aspects such as self-determination, thanks to the freedom of choice, decision-making and autonomy characteristic of any creative act. The involvement of contemporary artists within the realm of disability can lead to some exciting and creative projects that also constitute marvellous learning experiences, both for people with functional diversity and for the professionals working at the centres and the artists themselves. However, we know that in order to bring about a profound shift in the paradigm of disability we must dilute the habitual roles granted to participants with and without disabilities and make progress in a horizontal sense.

An analysis of the programmes and project outlined above encourages us to take a further leap, from mere participation to full collaboration. What does this mean? It means that we must rely on people with functional diversity themselves when it comes to designing the cultural projects they take part in, and not only in terms of implementing

¹⁶ Available at <<http://www.lapanera.cat/home.php?op=62&module=editor>>.

¹⁷ PICAZO, 2011.

these projects. Let us not forget the slogan of the Independent Living Movement: «nothing about us, without us». This subtle but essential shift corresponds to the full-inclusion needs of the disability realm. Disabled people are attempting to overcome existing hierarchies between professionals and users in order to make progress in terms of self-determination. In this sense, collaborative artistic projects constitute an extremely rich experience for this group. It is important to point out here that co-creation entails establishing a point of departure and building a project according to the interests and decisions of the participants. The shift in paradigm of disability requires self-determining participants, people who are able to lead transformation within their particular realm. Whilst participative projects are proposals that originate from outside disability contexts and depend on the presence of external agents from beginning to end, collaborative projects grant greater independence to the participants and give them a bigger say. The idea of working from the perspective of collaboration is to co-create initiatives for change that belong to the participants within the realm of disability themselves.

Pedagogías Invisibles: Accessible Cultural Mediation

*Pedagogías Invisibles*¹⁸ is the name of a group whose goal is to make learning that we acquire unconsciously, invisible learning, visible, with a view to transforming that knowledge which we do not like. Contemporary art is our great ally throughout this entire process and our work in art + education ranges from mediation to training, not to mention the management of cultural events and research.

Being well aware of the problems of people with functional diversity when it comes to gaining access to culture, we promote specific projects aimed at persons with cognitive functional diversity at occupational centres, special education schools and associations. These projects are based on cross-learning experiences through art, in which all participants, including teachers and support and accompanying staff, can open up other ways of understanding and building new and useful tools that can be brought into play during the day-to-day work of these institutions. In this respect, we carry out various sessions, the first at habitual work, study and meeting centres, and the rest at the hall, museum, etc. Throughout these sessions we address different questions, such as the process itself, autonomy, identity and the different languages with which it is possible to take action, being well aware of the fact that the result of this experience is an additional contribution within the realm of cultural production.

One example of accessible cultural mediation at museums consists of our programme known as *Arte Accesible: Más Que Una Visita* («Accessible Art: More Than Just a Visit»), which we have implemented at the art centre Sala de Arte Santander (Ciudad

¹⁸ Available at <<http://www.pedagogiasinvisibles.es>>.

Grupo Santander, Boadilla del Monte, Madrid) since 2013¹⁹. This project fulfils a two-fold objective: on the one hand, it brings the realms of art and culture closer to the context of disability and, on the other, it conceives of the art centre as a learning space in which it is possible to acquire teaching tools that can be taken back to the participants' own environments, thus contributing to the goal of full inclusion. Our working methodology can be consulted on the Foundation's web page, where we have published the teaching summaries for the exhibition entitled «Looking at the World Around You» Qatar Museums Collection (2016)²⁰. These summaries are especially aimed at teachers working within the field of functional diversity and the objective is to provide them with a proposal that helps them to see how many different ways there are to approach contemporary art and the learning opportunities that can arise based on the different perspectives we are able to generate. At the same time, the fact that such projects have been conceived from the perspective of accessibility does not mean that they are limited solely to this context. Quite the contrary, in fact. They can be developed within any learning context and, in this respect, are aimed at all and any teachers interested in working the idea of diversity.



Fig. 3. «Pedagogías Invisibles: Accessible Cultural Mediation» Madrid, 2013
Arte Accesible Programme, Pedagogías Invisibles

¹⁹ Available at <<https://www.fundacionbancosantander.com/es/accesibilidad>>.

²⁰ Available at <https://www.fundacionbancosantander.com/media/files/Arte/Fichas_experiencia_arte_accesibilidad.pdf>.

Another example under the heading of accessibility is provided by our «Mural E» Project²¹, which we carried out in Instituto Cervantes of Berlin, in 2016. In this case, *Pedagogías Invisibles* joined forces with the Thikwa Art Centre in order to design a collaborative art + education project. *Thikwa/Werkstatt für Theater und Kunst*²² is a centre for the training and promotion of artists with functional diversity. In recent years, the creative team at Thikwa has been searching for new ways of boosting the Centre's participation within the community. As a cultural mediation intern at Thikwa, the author promoted this inclusive experience, building bridges between the educational realm, the world of art and the context of disability. The project's objectives were as follows:

- to create more accessible institutions and foster social inclusion;
- to offer a collaborative art experience by applying democratic working methodologies through contemporary art;
- to break away from the stereotypes that exist regarding intellectual and development disabilities.

Convinced of the importance of enabling new generations to enjoy inclusive experiences in which people with disabilities play an active role in terms of contributing something to their community, *Pedagogías Invisibles* and *Thikwa/Werkstatt für Theater und Kunst* created a team to jointly design a creative work proposal aimed at a class at the Joan Miró school. The goal was to create a collective mural on the large windows of the Cervantes Institute building in Berlin in order to celebrate the institution's *Sommerfest*. During the working sessions, the team of artists and mediators guided the students and teachers in the creation of the mural, to which everyone contributed. Artists, students and teachers thus made up a learning community that resulted in an original and unique project. The collective mural was presented on Saturday 18th through an Open Workshop, in which members of the public were invited to collaborate by adding their own designs to the mural.

Through collaborative ideas of this kind we are able to promote the empowerment of all participants, effectively promoting shared leadership and horizontal approaches.

²¹ Available at <http://berlin.cervantes.es/FichasCultura/Ficha108701_57_1.htm>.

²² Available at <<http://www.thikwa.de/werkstatt/index.html>>.



Fig. 4. «Pedagogías Invisibles: Accessible Cultural Mediation», Berlin, 2016. Mural e Project in Instituto Cervantes Berlin, Pedagogías Invisibles, Thikwa Theater, and Joan Miró School

Airea: An Invitation to Reflect and Act Together

One initiative that offers full-inclusion experiences is known as AIREA, run by Fundación Tuya²³. This social body, created in 2009, is a guardianship foundation for persons with intellectual and development disabilities and it works with people both within and outside the realm of disability at an international level. The Foundation's initiatives are enriching for people whom Tuya refers to as «pathfinders»: other citizens who are also searching for new ways of living and working within the community. Based on this vision, Fundación Tuya has created what is known as «Airea» («Aerate»), a space for exploring and achieving a more in-depth understanding of the values of inclusion. Airea invites people with functional diversity, professionals and families within the realm of disability to work alongside other citizens interested in the idea of social inclusion.

«Aireas are inclusive learning spaces. This means that we learn alongside people with different experiences and different needs. «Airear» or «to aerate» is to prepare the soil for subsequent cultivation. Together we seek to create communities that work well for all kinds of people. John O'Brien asked us in the «New Paths to Inclusion Network» (2011): *What else is possible? How can we support people individually so that they can live*

²³ Available at <<https://fundaciontuya.net/airea/>>.

*a full life within the community?*²⁴. We believe that the answer to this question depends, in large part, on the quality of the community. We created AIREA in order to consciously enhance communities, in order to create a better space for reflection for all people». Ester Ortega Airea involves three key elements:

- diverse teams of people with and without intellectual disabilities, which is to say, citizens of any profile who are interested in enjoying a unique inclusion experience;
- progressing through questions that inspire reflection, departing from the personal realm in order to reach a collective level;
- learning by doing, through a methodology based on praxis, this being the ideal means of guaranteeing universal accessibility.

AIREAs are implemented in residential environments that are located close to nature over periods of two or three consecutive days, so that participants have sufficient time to both reflect deeply and develop their interpersonal relationships. These days are designed in a simple and attractive way, a way that makes sense for each and every one of the participants. The experience is structured by means of a series of actions in which visual and body language facilitate a horizontal dialogue amongst the participants.



Fig. 5. «Airea: An Invitation to Reflect and Act Together»
Fundación Tuya and Pedagogías Invisibles, Porto, 2017

²⁴ Available at <<http://www.personcentredplanning.eu>>.

[At the workshop PINCELADA AIREA PORTO, which took place in the afternoon session at the Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, as part of the international meeting Representing Disability in Museums, Imaginary and Identities, we presented Fundación Tuya's AIREA Project by means of a series of actions that invited the participants to learn about and discover this experience. Given that Airea is something more than just a training proposal, this workshop was just a «pincelada» or «brush-stroke» of what Airea could mean to your community. You can find further information on the web page of Fundación Tuya].

CONCLUSION

Collaborative artistic practices constitute a type of action that fosters *empowerment* within the context of disability. Working in a cooperative manner allows both professionals and individuals with *cognitive functional diversity* themselves to take on active and horizontal roles. In turn, these actions drive greater awareness regarding the shift in the paradigm of disability, which cannot occur through traditional services, structures and roles. The social capital that exists within the realm of disability has an immense potential, one that only becomes visible when taking part in the cultural life of the community. Based on the idea «Nothing about us without us», collaborative projects allow people with functional diversity themselves to lead transformation within their immediate environment, thus breaking down the stereotypes that exist regarding disability. In this respect, it is essential for new cultural programmes and projects aimed at the realm of disability to facilitate cooperation amongst diverse people, thus demonstrating new ways of maintaining interpersonal relationships amongst participants.

Thanks to collaborative projects, a new organisational model based on a *bridge* concept is emerging. *Bridge agents* (professionals, artists, independent organisations, etc.) play an essential mediating role between social bodies and cultural entities, breaking down the structural rigidity of these institutions and creating new links between them. Through these full-inclusion experiences in cultural contexts, we are able to build community services that are accessible to all.

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