JSSE

Journal of Social Science Education

2024, Vol. 23(1)

Edited by:
Reinhold Hedtke
Johan Sandahl
Andrea Szukala

Article

Towards public social pedagogy: Participatory theatrical events as pedagogical encounters

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Keywords: dialogical encounters; participatory theatre; public pedagogy; public social pedagogy; social pedagogy

- Temporary spaces for unlikely encounters can function as an antidote for polarization.
- Keeping the skills for dialogue alive requires spaces for practicing dialogic capacities.
- Participatory theatre has pedagogical potential as a space for dialogue on social and political issues.
- Public social pedagogy could be useful in embracing new types of citizenship education in the public sphere.

Purpose: This study considers the pedagogical dimensions of an event concept that combined participatory theatre and social scientific research to approach questions relating to ethnic relations and racism. The article aims to establish, with the help of a practical case example, the notion of public social pedagogy.

Approach: Ethnographic research on 24 participatory theatrical events. The analysis utilizes the taxonomy of public pedagogy by Gert Biesta to provide an empirically informed theoretical 'autopsy' of the events.

Findings: The analysis shows the pedagogical and societal importance of fostering encounters, encouraging communal discussion and nurturing dialogic competencies. *Public social pedagogy* would specifically address pedagogical processes relating to the public sphere, which revives the tradition of public deliberation.

Practical implications: The study directs attention to pedagogical processes within the public sphere which have not been very prominent in social pedagogy or citizenship education. The autopsy of the participatory theatrical events provides perspectives for similar artistic interventions.

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Suggested citation:
Ryynänen, S. (2024). Towards public social pedagogy: Participatory theatrical events as pedagogical encounters. *JSSE - Journal of Social Science Education*, *23*(1).
https://doi.org/10.11576/jsse-5843

Declaration of conflicts of interests: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

1 INTRODUCTION

Three social scientists and three performance artists enter a bar in a suburb of a medium-sized Finnish city. It is early evening but already almost dark outside and raining slightly – typical Finnish weather in October. One could also describe the bar as typically suburban: darkish, rugged sofas, dartboard in the corner, cozy in a rough way. The reason for being there is far from typical, though. It might well be that it is the first time the place has seen (participatory) theatre, or an event that focuses on questions of migration. (…) After a couple of hours, our 'intervention' is over and we are done with packing our things. Before leaving, we stop at the counter for a pint. This is what most of us always do, hoping for a more informal conversation with the regulars. Two (assumed) men past middle-age approach us, wanting to share their thoughts on what they have just experienced. One of them reflects: "I would say that through the conversation we just took part in, I gained more insight into questions of migration than from watching the news during the past ten years. And about my comrades, with whom I've shared a pint here for the past 20 years, I learnt things that we have never touched during all our conversations combined". (Author's fieldnotes, 2 October, 2019, translated from Finnish by author[1])

'We' in the fieldnote excerpt refers to *Puhekupla*[2], a Finnish collective of three performance artists and three social scientists who combine participatory theatre and social scientific research to approach, with various audiences, questions relating to ethnic relations, discrimination and racism. Between 2017 and 2019 the collective organized 24 participatory theatrical events, or interventions, in suburban bars, libraries and nursing homes with the objective of initiating and inspiring reflection and dialogue on themes relating to migration, specifically on discrimination and racism in everyday life, among people who do not necessarily share the same 'social bubbles' (thus the name *Puhekupla*, which means speech bubble in Finnish). The core idea was to approach the topical and controversial subject of (im)migration, specifically ethnic relations, through participatory drama and discussion in a way that could enable unlikely encounters and open new perspectives to all participants, including members of the collective themselves (Ryynänen et al., 2017).

In 2015, Finland received a record number (at that time) of asylum seekers: 32,476 in comparison to previous annual numbers of 1500–6000 in the 2000s (Ministry of the Interior, Finland). This unprecedented situation sparked numerous acts and initiatives of solidarity (Merikoski, 2021; Salmi-Nikander & Laine, 2017; Vaarala et al., 2017), but also contributed to the strengthening of neonationalist/right-wing anti-immigrant politics and loud anti-immigrant and racist activism (Keskinen, 2018; Mäkinen, 2017) which, in turn, contributed to increasingly widespread acceptance and normalization of racist discourses and practices (Vuorelma & Tilli, 2021). The *Puhekupla* collective was formed as an antidote. It was a tentative move to create, in the form of artistic intervention, temporary live spaces for encounters, dialogue and deliberation that would differ, for instance, from (anonymous) social media platforms with a tendency to form 'reinforcement bubbles' or to make aggressive and often openly hostile outbursts commonplace. The collective toyed with the

idea of participatory theatre as "a return to the ideal of the theatre creating a space for communal discussion" (O'Connor & Anderson, 2015, p. 30) and encouraging exchange of ideas among those who do not necessarily share the same views on the issue at hand. *Puhekupla* can also sit in the tradition of social or political street theatre which aims to "disturb the minds of the audiences" (Ranta-Tyrkkö, 2010, p. 9); that is, to act as a call for audiences to think about and reflect on the social and political issues raised by the play or the set of vignettes and to discuss them from their own perspectives.

In this article, I (as one of the researcher members of the collective) approach the *Puhekupla* events as (possibly) pedagogical encounters by using public pedagogy as a theoretical framework and analytical tool. I consider the pedagogical dimensions of the *Puhekupla* events as processes that were not constructed with specific pedagogical ideals or objectives in mind, and what could be said about the pedagogical, social and political significance of the events on the basis of their pedagogical dimensions. The analysis is informed by Gert Biesta's (2012, 2014) notion of public pedagogy as a 'programmatic' approach and three possible understandings of it: pedagogy for the public, pedagogy of the public and pedagogy in the interest of publicness (Biesta, 2012). In the analysis, special attention is paid to the role of participatory theatre in the events by articulating how the artistically informed approach has operated as an informal pedagogical process, and by examining its pedagogical specificities.

The theoretical objective of the article is to establish, with the help of the practical case example, the notion of *public social pedagogy* as an extension to ongoing discussions in the field of public pedagogy. By suggesting this concept, I aim to better recognize the partially overlapping fields of social pedagogy and public pedagogy. Moreover, my aim is to suggest an analytical lens that could, for instance, both open up new perspectives on the pedagogical roles and meanings of artistic (and other types of) interventions in society, and help to pinpoint the pitfalls or possible problems of such approaches. The practical objective of this article is to provide inspiration and perspectives for similar artistic interventions, as well as to develop the *Puhekupla* approach further by reflecting on its strengths and weaknesses.

The article is based on the ethnographic research process conducted throughout the (first) active period of the *Puhekupla* collective from 2017 to 2019, with 24 events in different locations in Finland and an accompanying process of collective autoethnography. The research material consists of participatory observation of the *Puhekupla* events, their (auto)ethnographic reflection by both the author of this article and the whole collective, and audio recordings of nine *Puhekupla* events. In what follows, the method, data and analytical approach are articulated in more detail after first outlining the article's theoretical framework. The analysis section provides an empirically informed theoretical 'autopsy' of the *Puhekupla* events according to the three categories of programmatic public pedagogy. In the conclusion I will offer a tentative definition of public social pedagogy that also derives from the analysis of the *Puhekupla* events.

2 PUBLIC (SOCIAL) PEDAGOGY MEETS PARTICIPATORY THEATRE

2.1 Public (social) pedagogy as an intervention in the public domain

The concept of public pedagogy refers to pedagogical activities or processes in informal sites that can be classified as 'public', and understanding the nuances of the concept requires specifying what is meant by something being *public*. Philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) identified two possible meanings for the term. First, *public* can refer to something that "can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 50). Accordingly, public pedagogy is often associated with analysis of how media, popular culture, public spaces, commercial spaces, dominant cultural discourses, everyday life and society at large function as educative forces. However, as Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick (2011) have observed, the concept of public pedagogy is surrounded by considerable "conceptual confusion" (p. 339), with a variety of differing articulations of what public pedagogy is, can be or should be. Based on an extensive literature review, they identified five conceptual categories of public pedagogy according to different usages: (a) citizenship within and beyond schools; (b) popular culture and everyday life; (c) informal institutions and public spaces; (d) dominant cultural discourses; and (e) public intellectualism and social activism (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick, 2011). The list implies that the 'public' in public pedagogy can be and has been interpreted as something more than just being publicly available. This leads us to the second meaning Arendt (1958/1998) assigned to the term *public*, namely the "common world" (p. 52). This gives a slightly different outlook on both the field and the outreach of public pedagogy by bringing together the idea of the "common meeting ground for all" (p. 57) and the "simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects' (p. 57). This perspective also makes the concept *public* relevant to analysis of the *Puhekupla* events.

The difference between the "two closely interrelated but not altogether identical phenomena" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 50) that the readings of the term *public* suggest, can be captured by making a distinction between *public space* and *public sphere* (Biesta, 2012). It is from this distinction that Biesta (2012, 2014) derives the formulation for his 'taxonomy' of public pedagogy. He suggests that public pedagogy can be understood as analysis of the pedagogical processes 'happening' in the public space – which is how the concept is most often used – but also in a "more *programmatic* and more *political* way" (Biesta, 2012, p. 684, emphasis original), as intentional pedagogical processes located in the public sphere and with an objective of contributing to its publicness. Biesta's programmatic reading of public pedagogy is rooted in the normative idea of the public sphere as a certain form or quality of interaction, or as a form of togetherness, rather than some concrete or symbolic place or location (as in the concept of public space). For Arendt (1958/1998), the defining features of the public sphere (or public realm, as she also called it), and the preconditions for collective action that construct it, were freedom and plurality. Arendt's notion of freedom departed from freedom as an individual quality and embraced it as an essentially

collective and democratic phenomenon that cannot make its appearance in isolation. For Arendt, the public realm was both the precondition for freedom and something constituted by human interaction characterized by freedom and plurality (Arendt, 1958/1998; for a more detailed discussion in relation to public pedagogy, see Biesta, 2012, 2014.)

The programmatic understanding approaches public pedagogy as an "active and deliberate *intervention* in the 'public' domain" (Biesta, 2012, p. 691, emphasis added); or, more specifically, as an "educational intervention enacted in the interest of the public quality of spaces and places and the public quality of human togetherness more generally" (p. 684), instead of something that just 'happens' in the processes of socialization through media, popular culture, or public discourse. In other words, the programmatic understanding assigns educational responsibility to the whole society, instead of it being just a 'platform' for various learning and socialization processes. Such a notion should be, essentially, accompanied by reflection on which parties respond to this call and how they do it.

In contrast to the analytical interpretation of public pedagogy that directs us to recognize and analyze more or less individualized learning processes, the programmatic reading of public pedagogy coincides with (critical) social pedagogy, with its focus on collective processes and its normative social and political orientation. This analogy invites me to ask what, specifically, a social-pedagogically-oriented understanding of public pedagogy – that I have opted to name as *public social pedagogy* – could be, and whether such 'extension' of public pedagogy would be theoretically relevant and practically useful. This question runs through the analysis in this article and a tentative answer will be offered in the closing section.

As a theoretical concept and a practical approach, *public social pedagogy* locates itself in the sphere of civic education, broadly speaking, rather than in the field of social care and welfare activities. Here I refer to the two partly overlapping fields of social pedagogy deriving from its historical development. For instance, Karl Mager (1810–1858), in his early definitions of social pedagogy, stressed the communal and societal nature of education as opposed to individual-centered approaches (Hämäläinen, 1995, 2012; Smith 2009). Following this understanding, social pedagogy has been developed as a theory of citizenship education in general (Hämäläinen, 2015). The line of social care and welfare activities, in turn, can be traced back to Mager's contemporary Adolph Diesterweg (1790–1866), who defined social pedagogy as an approach that specifically sought to meet and overcome social problems and other social ills with educational tools (Hämäläinen, 1995, 2012; Smith 2009; Quintana, 1994). This line of development has resulted in the understanding of social pedagogy as a field of special education and a system of social professions dealing with people's special needs and vulnerabilities, as well as with questions of marginalization and risk (Hämäläinen, 2015). The latter appears to be the predominant understanding today in many countries where theoretical understanding and practical applications of social pedagogy have been developed (Úcar, 2021). Even though this does not apply to all countries, in order to account for both the nuances of the historical development of social pedagogy and the complexities of social contexts today, there is nevertheless a need, as

Úcar (2021) argues, to update "the term 'social' with renewed connotations" (p. 1). This article is one tentative step in that direction.

In defining the programmatic understanding of public pedagogy, Biesta (2012, 2014) has distinguished three forms or possible readings of it: pedagogy for the public, pedagogy of the public and pedagogy in the interest of publicness. Their common denominator is the public sphere; that is, they all imply pedagogical processes that entail both a pedagogical intention and the idea of a common meeting ground, but they differ in the type of intention and pedagogical interaction involved. Pedagogy *for the public* coincides with traditional educational processes that follow the logic of teaching or instruction under the guidance of an educator who is assumed to have a superior knowledge of the issue at hand. Pedagogy *of the public* is about more collective pedagogical processes that can be described as (co-)learning or conscientization. However, according to Biesta (2012), in such processes is embedded the logic of 'right' or 'correct' knowledge which is often brought about in the form of an instructor or convener. In other words, there is a logic of knowledge-based learning processes involved which Biesta has conceptualized as intrinsically unequal and thus problematic, especially if the aim is the cultivation of freedom and autonomy (and eventually emancipation – see Biesta, 2010; Ryynänen & Nivala, 2017). However, I suggest this question could also be approached in a more nuanced way, by understanding the emancipatory process "as something that a person does by him- or herself [sic] with the help of the competencies that this person has developed through education" (Moilanen & Huttunen, 2021, p. 732), or in other processes with a pedagogical quality. The latter approach suggests that the more traditional pedagogical processes also contain elements of freedom, although they might not always work towards that direction. Moreover, as a "concern for the public quality of human togetherness" (Biesta, 2014, n/a) rejects 'pluralism-without-judgement' (and 'judgement-without-pluralism'), it is necessary to reflect whether it is possible to maintain the possibility to 'judge' without "prescribing and policing what can be done" (Biesta, 2014, n/a). The question is especially pertinent in relation to matters such as racism, where it is particularly necessary to clearly reject the idea of 'pluralism-without-judgement'.

The third category in the programmatic understanding of public pedagogy, pedagogy *in the interest of publicness*, differs from the first two in being less intentionally – and less traditionally – pedagogical in the sense of conveying specific ideas or content. Instead, its ethos can be described as free-flowingly processual. To make the idea more concrete, Biesta (2012) has discussed it using the artistic intervention *Permanent breakfast* as an example. *Permanent breakfast* is about collectively breakfasting in random public places and committing to pass the practice on, to keep the process going (Permanent breakfast, n/a). It is a process that apparently does not aim for anything special – it is 'just' an intervention in the public space. However, what makes it special, following Biesta's (2012) argument, is that the act of having breakfast in public *interrupts* something and, with the interruption, *Permanent breakfast* manages to act for the public quality of the chosen places, being pedagogical in that specific sense. As such, it is "an enactment of a concern for the possibility

of forms of human togetherness in which freedom can appear" (Biesta, 2012, p. 694; see also Desai & Darts, 2016). Moreover, Biesta (2012) argues that pedagogy in the interest of publicness manages to meet the Arendtian notions of freedom and plurality – that is, the defining features of the public sphere when it is understood as a certain quality of interaction. In contrast, the other two types of programmatic public pedagogy rather "take politics out" (p. 693): pedagogy for the public "by teaching citizens how to act and be" (p. 693), and pedagogy of the public "by bringing it [politics] under a regime of learning" (p. 693). The same logic applies in Biesta's analysis of emancipatory education (Biesta, 2010). However, it is worth remembering that Biesta's understanding of the emancipatory and 'political' potential of pedagogical processes is but one interpretation, as Antti Moilanen and Rauno Huttunen (2021) have shown in their analysis of German models of emancipatory education. They have argued that these are based on a theory of education as cultivation – which Biesta saw as problematic – but in the sense of developing "skills required for self-determination, participation, and communicative action" (p. 740). They also ask a question relevant to this article: whether "the idea of emancipatory pedagogy without the transmission of knowledge and through only summoning students to self-activity leads to freedom" (p. 741). There is naturally a question of whether emancipation or freedom should be taken (only) as desired outcomes of pedagogical processes or whether they should be intrinsically implanted within them. It is, however, worth asking whether Biesta's 'judgement' of the first two types of programmatic public pedagogy has been too simplistic and whether it has missed some of the nuances of the processes of programmatic public pedagogy. This discussion continues in the analysis section.

2.2 Participatory theatre meets public pedagogy

The key methodological inspiration in designing the *Puhekupla* event concept was participatory and interactive theatre, especially the forum theatre approach developed by Augusto Boal (1931–2009). Forum theatre is an invitation for the audience to intervene in the course of a play or scene or to reflect, together with the performers, on the events on the stage. Boal (1974/2000) criticized theatre's deep-rooted division into actors and spectators, equating it to the dividing line drawn between the knowledgeable and the ignorant in 'traditional' education (Freire, 1968/2014). Thus Boal devoted his theory and practice to seeking ways to dismantle such divisions: "I, Augusto Boal, want the Spectator to take on the role of Actor and invade the Character and the stage. I want him [sic] to occupy his own space and offer solutions" (Boal, 1974/2000, p. xxi). In the forum theatre approach, the spectators, or rather, spect-actors, are advised that they can stop the scene anytime and either suggest a change to it or enter the stage to act the new version themselves. Boal's objective was for the 'ordinary people' to become not only the protagonists of plays in the course of a theatrical event, but also the protagonists of their own lives by contributing to the development of their capacities as critically reflexive citizens. Moreover, he argued that participatory theatre, by utilizing the distancing safety of the aesthetic space,

has the capacity to encourage the expression of ideas, to stimulate debates and to set processes in motion (Boal, 1974/2000; see also Chinyowa, 2012; Erel, Reynolds & Kaptani, 2017; Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008). In sum, Boal advocated for the possibilities of theatre in the empowerment and emancipation of individuals and communities. He argued, in line with his compatriot, educational theorist Paulo Freire (1921–1997), that the joint reflexive processes of seeking knowledge and better understanding are the central preconditions for societal change (Boal, 1974/2000). Boal's ideas about the passive spectators of traditional theatre and the possibilities of participatory theatre to 'activate' or 'liberate' them can be criticized as rather simplistic, but his contribution to the development of participatory theatrical forms is nevertheless unquestionable.

The educational or pedagogical potential of participatory or interactive theatre and performance art has been widely explored, and there is also a body of research addressing them specifically as public pedagogy (e.g. Darder, 2011; Desai & Darts, 2016; Godwin, 2018; Harvey et al., 2019; Hill & Paris, 2020; Katz-Buonincontro, 2011; Zorrilla & Tisdell, 2016). The available research shows that the (publicly) pedagogical quality of participatory or interactive theatre can be approached from different angles. Jen Katz-Buonincontro (2011) has referred, when using improvisational theatre to develop leadership skills, to a specific aesthetic learning process with emotional acts of catharsis and empathy and heightened sensory perception as its key elements. Jane Bird and Kate Donelan (2020) have approached the question from the perspective of performance ethnography and an accompanying staged performance that they found to provide an "authentic, engaging and pedagogically effective learning experience" (p. 224). The four elements they identified as critical to learning in an interactive ethnographic performance were: 1) affective and cognitive engagement with the characters and their experiences through identification; 2) engagement in the fictional and theatrical framing that made it possible to project oneself into fictional situations and to bring real-life experiences into the fictional context; 3) embodied problem-solving through interactive and embodied drama activities; and 4) structured activities, such as the post-activity discussions, that invite individual and shared reflections (Bird & Donelan, 2020). Together these form a "multilayered learning experience" (p. 231) that cumulatively enhances and stimulates learning processes. Dipti Desai and David Darts (2016) have examined the pedagogical potential of the arts from the perspective of disruptions to our daily routines by public interventionist art which have the potential to provoke us to "imagine alternative ways of seeing and being that are not governed solely by corporate capitalism" (p. 193; see also Zorrilla & Tisdell, 2016; Biesta, 2012). Harvey et al. (2019) have referred to the potential of affective, embodied learning experience brought about by a theatrical performance to function as a public pedagogy of solidarity, drawing upon Biesta's notion of *pedagogy in the interest of publicness*.

What is common to these and other similar articulations of the performance arts as public pedagogy is the capacity of the arts to invite empathetic and embodied engagement, as well as affective states of being, when provoking new insights and generating new knowledge – to go beyond cognition, that is. The resulting experiences can be "visceral,

intellectual and emotionally resonant" (Bird & Donelan, 2020, p. 225). However, it could be questioned whether the pedagogical potential of such approaches is at times overemphasized by assuming that certain types of artistic processes almost automatically produce certain types of results that are pedagogically beneficial. Using theatrical approaches is by no means a pedagogical panacea, and it should not be treated as such.

3 METHOD, DATA AND ANALYSIS

The initial idea for the *Puhekupla* process was to design a concept for an event that could be taken into different public or semi-public environments, from bars to libraries, to serve as an invitation to a joint discussion. However, the first event showed the concept's additional potential as a research platform that could serve various research interests. From the second event onwards, the collective began to produce data in the events and the participants were informed of the research aspect, including the necessary ethical considerations, such as anonymity. Some of the members of the collective kept a field diary of their observations during the events, and the experiences were also processed together in joint discussion sessions throughout the project. In the selected events (9 out of 24), participants were asked for their agreement to audio-record the event. The collective also processed their experiences of both the events and of working together systematically as a multiprofessional team in the form of collective autoethnography. In this article, I conduct a meta-level analysis of the *Puhekupla* events utilizing the material produced throughout the process.

The suburban bars in particular were a far from ordinary research setting, underlined by the fact that in some events some participants were visibly intoxicated. This made questions concerning research ethics especially pertinent. As the discussions did not concern any personal matters, and participation in the conversation was voluntary, we did not find the setting problematic in such a way that it would have violated ethical standards. In moderating the discussions, we made sure to protect the dignity, integrity, right to self-determination, privacy, and confidentiality of personal information of all participants (Declaration of Helsinki: WMA, 2018). Separate ethics approval was not obtained.

The research material utilized in this article consists of participatory observation notes of the 24 *Puhekupla* events in different locations in Finland from 2017 to 2019, as well as an (auto)ethnographic reflection on the events by both the author of this article (from the position of a researcher member of the collective) and by the whole collective in the form of a collective autoethnography (four transcribed online discussions between September and December 2020, 113 pages, Times New Roman, pt 12, line spacing 1). Transcribed discussions of nine *Puhekupla* events (274 pages, Arial, pt 12, line spacing 1) have been included in the analysis, where applicable.

The analytical approach is theoretically-informed content analysis with the three categories of the programmatic reading of public pedagogy (Biesta, 2012, 2014) as its starting point. In his distinction between the three forms of public pedagogy, Biesta (2012) aimed to "provide concepts and distinctions that can help with the empirical study of the

significance and impact" (p. 685) of artistic interventions in the public sphere. In this article, these concepts and distinctions are put into practice. I argue that Biesta's taxonomy of public pedagogy is a relevant framework for the analysis of the *Puhekupla* events even though most of the places where the events were held, namely suburban bars and service centers for the elderly, did not meet the conventional definition of 'public places'. However, interventions like the *Puhekupla* events can potentially contribute to the public quality of places that are not public as such, following Biesta's (2012) argument that "it is actually a particular form of action that makes spaces public" (p. 686).

The analysis proceeded by carefully going through the data and selecting all the material that in any way responded to the question: What have the events been about? Following this, analysis was conducted in the form of an autopsy of the *Puhekupla* approach: the collection of relevant excerpts was analyzed through the lenses of the aforementioned categories, one by one, paying attention both to the overall concept of the events and to practical, often improvised solutions within them. The main focus of the analysis was to consider how the *Puhekupla* events related to the notions of *interruption*, *learning* or *conscientization* and *teaching* or *instruction*. In the analysis, the focus is on the event concept, but the specific characteristics of the three locations are taken into account when considered relevant for the objectives of the article.

4 THE *PUHEKUPLA* EVENTS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE CATEGORIES OF PROGRAMMATIC PUBLIC PEDAGOGY

4.1 The concept and form of the *Puhekupla* events

We arrive at the bar well in advance to sense the energy of the place and to find an appropriate place for our improvised stage, that is, a free spot for three chairs for the performers. When we enter as a group of six strangers, we inevitably attract attention. We get questions on who we are and why we are there. One of us researchers ends up having a conversation with driver of a sanding truck. He is interested in hearing how research is done, what it is possible to research and where the research topics come from. The researcher gets to hear about what sanding work is like, what motivates it and how the work is done. The event kicks off when the performers move to their chairs. One of them raises her voice so that she can be heard over the chatter and starts to talk about a small participatory performance relating to the themes of migration that is about to start and will be followed by a joint discussion (…). (Author's fieldnotes, November 2017)

When the concept of the *Puhekupla* events started to formulate, the idea of unlikely encounters came up frequently. Suburban bars, and later nursing homes and libraries, were seen as locations where varied social and professional bubbles could end up in contact with each other and an "ethics of plurality" (Harvey, 2019, p. 79) could be enacted. Our collective consisted of six white majority Finns between 30 and 45 years of age with academic background, working in universities, in the third sector and as freelance artists. The

participants in suburban bars were mostly middle-aged blue-collar workers and represented the Finnish white majority, whereas the participants in the nursing homes were socio-economically more varied and, naturally, considerably older. The discussions in the nursing homes and libraries tended to have a more polite undertone, whereas the events in suburban bars sparked more straightforward commentaries.

The participatory theatrical approach as the backbone of the *Puhekupla* events came about organically as half of the collective were professionals in performance arts. Participatory theatre, as theatrical activity that transgresses the traditional boundaries between stage and auditorium and aims to generate engagement from the audience (Jackson, 2011), was seen as an appropriate means to break the ice and reach out to audiences in unconventional settings. Moreover, the ideal of participatory theatre coincided with our aim of creating a space for encounters and communal discussion. In practice, the events consisted of six theatrical scenes followed by joint discussions. After each scene, the participants were invited to fill in a 'quiz form' that consisted of simple questions relating to the scene with no right or wrong answers. Then each scene was acted for the second time, and participants were invited to intervene in some of them either verbally or in the form of acting, with the aim of resolving the problematic situation which had been presented. This approach consisting of performative scenes that welcomed embodied participation was inspired by Augusto Boal's (1974/2000) forum theatre approach. One of the actors was responsible for the 'forumization' of the selected scenes, performing the role of the 'Joker', and the joint discussion was moderated by one of the researcher members of the collective.

The scenes, or vignettes, were loosely based on the real-life experiences of either the members of the collective or those reported in research literature. The vignettes showed the perspective of white majority Finns (whom all the members of the collective represented) and concerned everyday interactions with prejudicial, discriminatory or openly racist undertones, and situations that call for some kind of intervention in racist language or behavior. The vignettes were intended as an invitation to reflect specifically on discriminatory or racist majority behavior and its consequences.

In what follows, the events will be reflected on from different angles utilizing the three categories of programmatic public pedagogy. The categories will be used as an analytical tool to reflect the (social) pedagogical dimensions of the events, rather than trying to find one fitting category for the *Puhekupla* events as a certain type of public (social) pedagogy. The analysis begins with pedagogy in the interest of publicness ('interruption') and proceeds to pedagogy of the public (learning or conscientization) and pedagogy for the public (teaching or instruction). This inverts the order in which the categories were introduced, enabling me to analyze the *Puhekupla* events first as a pedagogical act *per se*, and then to consider in more detail the pedagogical dimensions of the form and content of the events, including the challenges of the approach.

4.2 The *Puhekupla* events from the perspective of pedagogy in the interest of publicness

Pedagogy in the interest of publicness, as one of the categories of programmatic public pedagogy, posits the public pedagogue as someone who interrupts instead of being an instructor or facilitator. Biesta (2012) refers to the category as a test of the "public quality of particular forms of togetherness and of the extent to which actual spaces and places make such forms of human togetherness possible" (p. 693). As such, it is a kind of 'experimental activism' which shows that there are alternatives and that it is possible to do things differently (Biesta, 2014). When this perspective is applied to the *Puhekupla* events, it directs attention to what the events did simply by existing and emerging in places where such events are not commonplace.

In the suburban bars particularly, the *Puhekupla* events were out of place: something that did not belong at all to the daily routines of those places. Suburban bars and pubs are sites for varied social interactions and various forms of sociability (e.g., Thurnell-Read, 2021). Apart from being places for meeting friends and acquaintances, they might host troubadour gigs or darts competitions. However, a participatory theatrical event followed by a moderated discussion that would require active attention is not commonplace there, at least not in Finland. Moreover, in most cases, we arrived uninvited. Despite having arranged our visit with the owner of the bar and despite them perhaps sharing information about the event on the bulletin board, most of those present were unaware that something out of the ordinary was about to happen in their 'living room'. Their participation in the event, as either listener, discussant or even 'actor', was naturally voluntary, but in many cases the bars we visited were so small that it was not possible to completely escape to some remote corner. Thus we inevitably affected the daily routines of the bars we visited, interrupting not only the ongoing discussions but also something more profound in the customary order of things, which at times might have irritated those present. The events were interventions in a very literal sense.

> Here [in this bar] as well, these grouchy types who sit here all evenings, they also could get something else to think about than whether to take one pint or two. Now there was something different here and I think it somehow woke up plenty of people here. (Event 13, 1 October 2019; Participant feedback after the event)

The excerpt above is from a conversation after the event itself had ended. We often stayed in the bar after the event to continue discussions in a more informal setting and to get some feedback on the event. After that particular event, we got some of the most enthusiastic participant feedback of the whole process. What makes it especially interesting is that, from our perspective, the event was not very 'successful' in the sense of being something that we had initially had in mind. Many people were more drunk than had been customary at our events, the situation was rather chaotic at times, and – again, from our perspective – the discussion lacked any coherence. However, interestingly enough, precisely because of this, the event might have enacted the Arendtian idea of freedom as

something that does not control the ways in which others respond to our beginnings (Arendt, 1958/1998; Biesta, 2012, 2014). Occasionally there were, on our part, attempts at such control in the form of asking the participants to stay on topic, but these were decisively overridden.

In libraries, as spaces that customarily host various types of events, the interventional character of the *Puhekupla* events was perhaps less present. In nursing homes, our arrival was often regarded as a warmly welcomed change in the daily routine. There the interventional character of the events derived rather from the invitation to collectively reflect on the sensitive topic. It was often explicitly stated that the themes of ethnic relations, discrimination and racism the *Puhekupla* event raised might be actively avoided within one's social circles to avoid possible conflict. The *Puhekupla* events, in contrast, staged these themes in the form of joint discussion that related to everybody; that is, not as something that you ought to have only in small, like-minded circles.

> If you think, for instance, this our house [nursing home], if I speak honestly, if there are a lot of residents [present], we can't have such discussions. There are such strict opinions to and fro that you can't. But in smaller circles you can. (Event 3, 8 November 2018)

For Biesta (2012), *Permanent breakfast* exemplified a free-flowing interruption that managed to act for the public quality of the chosen places by cultivating the Arendtian notions of freedom and plurality. It ended up being pedagogical specifically because it did not intend to be pedagogical; it was a performative call to experience and imagine alternative ways of seeing and being (see also Desai & Darts, 2016). By simply appearing in suburban bars or by staging a joint reflection on actively avoided themes in nursing homes, the *Puhekupla* events could be argued to have played, at least momentarily, a somewhat similar pedagogical role. The events interrupted the customary order of things and turned the bars and nursing homes into something else – something more public, one could argue. By inviting people to participate in collective reflection, the events enacted the public quality of human togetherness, or at least aimed to do so.

However, the *Puhekupla* events also differed significantly from *Permanent breakfast* and other similar public interventionist art, even containing elements that acted against the ideal of pedagogy in the interest of publicness. This is why it is both relevant and necessary to extend analysis of the pedagogical dimensions of the *Puhekupla* events to the perspective of Biesta's other two categories.

4.3 The *Puhekupla* events from the perspective of pedagogy of the public

The second category of programmatic public pedagogy, *pedagogy of the public*, with an approach centered around (co-)learning or conscientization, coincides well with some of the notions that guided the design of the *Puhekupla* events. The events aimed to bring people together to reflect on ethnic relations, discrimination and racism in such a way that it would also be possible to learn from one another in dialogue for a better understanding

of the world, other people, and oneself (see Alhanen, 2016).

> - We didn't try to achieve any specific outcome with the events, did we?
>
> - I agree, we hadn't said anywhere that with these events people's attitudes towards immigration will become 20 per cent more positive, or anything like that. But we tried to create a space where interaction would be possible, and if we expected some change, it was perhaps about making it easier for different and dissenting people to live together, perhaps something like that. (Collective autoethnography, Session 1, 25 September 2020)

One of the researcher members of the collective acted as facilitator of the discussions, and her role in creating the overall ethos of the events was a central one. As the facilitator's actions were for the most part improvised according to the flow of each event, the facilitation style differed slightly from one event to another. This, together with varying audiences, also made the discussions quite varied in style and content even though they took the unchanging format of participatory vignettes followed by joint discussion. From the perspective of pedagogy of the public, what was especially interesting were the moments when the facilitator kept the conversation flowing by suggesting new perspectives in a subtle way which nevertheless challenged the other participants to reflect on the matter further. In Freirean terms, such moments were a call for critical reflection which opened up possibilities for processes of conscientization (Freire, 1968/2014), but it is worth reflecting on whether or not they also worked towards the reduction of freedom and plurality (Biesta, 2012; see also Harvey et al., 2019, 78).

> Facilitator: I noted here [in the vignette] that nobody said promptly that we had here [in an imaginary hospital] a certain kind of open job position where a certain kind of competence was needed, and we managed to find just the right person to vacate it, so it was a justified decision. (…) Many of the arguments [in the vignette] were a bit sidetracked, weren't they, and we could stop to reflect on that a bit further… (Event 3, 8 November 2018)

In some events there were moments when the vignettes, together with the participants and the overall energy of the event, created an atmosphere that seemed to truly encourage joint reflection on themes such as white privilege and oppressive power relations between the majority and minority groups in Finland, or invited participants to actively challenge commonly circulating, often erroneous and discriminatory myths about migration and ethnic relations that came up either in the vignettes or during the conversation (Ryynänen, Nortio & Varjonen, forthcoming). Occasionally, ideas, experiences and knowledge were shared between the audience and collective members in such a way that the roles were momentarily somewhat mixed, which we had hoped would happen even more when designing the events.

> Performer of the *Puhekupla* collective [referring to vignette]: I noticed when I was a part of one conversation [in an improvised scene, with an event

> participant as co-actor] how hard it was for me, even though I had a role there. How challenging it is to be, like, with people who think differently than yourself if you are being completely honest. It's easier to be like, "yeah, yeah, it's like that, no, no".
>
> Audience member: Or to stay silent.
>
> Performer: Or to stay silent, yeah. (Event 3, 8 November 2018)

Our guiding principle was the aim to create a forum for encounters that would allow the sharing of experiences, thoughts and knowledge. The theatrical approach created an open-ended setting for exploring thoughts and provided more ways to participate than a straightforward conversation. Some of the vignettes were often 'forumized', that is, reworked using the approaches of forum theatre. In practice, participants were encouraged by the 'Joker' to give the characters suggestions for how they could have acted differently in a given situation, and the performers then acted the scene again, changing the suggested components. Occasionally the participants were also willing to enter the stage to perform the role themselves. Such techniques made it possible, for instance, to try to contest racist commentaries in a safe setting – which, according to Boal (1974/2000) might make it easier to do something similar in real life. This relates to the notion that learning in informal sites often takes on a "subtle, embodied mode, moving away from the cognitive rigor commonly associated with education and toward notions of affect, aesthetics, and presence" (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick, 2011, p. 348).

Planning the vignettes proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of the whole process. Deciding on the vignettes' tone of voice was something we struggled with throughout the whole process, knowing that they would set the ethos for the whole event.

> I have often ended up reflecting whether (…) what we can say, can we say this or that at all, is it possible to make a scene on this, is this too harsh and also whether the scenes are too tame considering the actual problems that the rhetoric on migration causes, racism and all. I have reflected oftentimes, like [another member of the collective] just said, on whether we are actually too careful here. (Collective autoethnography, Session 1, 25 September 2020)

When planning the events we knew that they might involve some kind of risk, especially in bar settings, because the topic of migration often causes explosive reactions on social media and elsewhere and because our approach contained unpredictable, albeit freedom-enhancing, elements, like forum theatre. We also often reflected on whether opening up a platform for discussion of a topic that is known for openly racist excesses also meant one more platform for racism, despite our attempts to carefully moderate the events with a balancing act of not reducing difference to sameness (see Biesta, 2014). Nevertheless, we felt that an ethical and responsible stance towards our topic also demanded moral judgement in favor of equality. As Biesta (2014) has argued, "a concern for the public quality of human togetherness is not about the promotion of *any* plurality" (n/a, italics

added). In practice, the *Puhekupla* events meant striking a balance between keeping the platform for discussion open but also making it clear that racism and discrimination are not accepted, neither in the context of the *Puhekupla* events nor in society at large.

> We don't aim for people to start thinking the same way or to agree on these topics, but maybe something like, if we manage to create respectful discussion and respectful disagreement, if necessary, then maybe it will be easier to live together with different people and different opinions. (Event 13, 1 October 2019)

Interestingly, apart from a very few (unfortunate) exceptions, in practice we ended up encountering a challenge that was quite the opposite of the racist commentaries we had feared. There were moments – and even whole events – that left us wondering whether participants had commented on the vignettes according to what they had assumed to be 'correct' opinions on migration and ethnic relations – that is, performing underlying agreement and commonality (see Arendt 1958/1998). The recording of one event in a nursing home was a telling example (Event 6, 27 February 2019). There was a moment when a relatively large number of attendees were divided into smaller groups for discussion. The tape recorder captured, accidentally, part of one group's discussion that we organizers would not have otherwise heard. The negative aspects of immigration were suddenly shared apparently without constraint, whereas in the joint discussion a few moments earlier, it was mostly the positive aspects of migration that the same people had brought up. Although it is not relevant here to try to establish whether one of these discourses was more 'true' than another, from the perspective of the (assumed) pedagogical quality of the events it is nevertheless interesting to reflect on whether the event concept was taken, at least occasionally, as an invitation to some kind of performance of a good citizen.

In the last event in 2019, the opposite happened: racist commentaries more or less took over the event without us being able to change their course.

> What we had on many occasions discussed and referred to a bit, sort of erupted [in the Dec 2019 event] in a rather brutal way, and I mean here [the discussions on] whether there is a danger that what we're doing will transform into something else completely than what our intention has been. (Collective autoethnography, Session 4, 14 December 2020)

The examples above show that as a discussion platform that invited participants to joint reflection, there was no certain formula that the *Puhekupla* events followed; nor is it possible to establish what set the overall ethos of the events, apart from the facilitation style. As the focus here is on the pedagogical dimensions of the events, and in this section specifically on the processes of co-learning and conscientization, it can be concluded that the *Puhekupla* events at least occasionally managed to create a setting propitious for both learning from one another and practicing skills for dialogue. However, the event concept is not without problems. The topic occasionally demanded facilitation or moderation that stifled conversation instead of encouraging it (see also Biesta, 2012, p. 689), and discriminatory or openly racist comments during the events raised ethical considerations on

whose voices we want to give space to.

Biesta (2012) has criticized pedagogy of the public because of its implied demand to learn to become a better political actor; this takes politics out "by bringing it under a regime of learning" (p. 693) and by assuming right, correct or true understanding as the basis of agency. I argue that with subject matter that essentially includes a dimension of ethical judgement, as was the case in the *Puhekupla* events, the question is more complicated. Perhaps practicing and learning 'right understanding', if it is understood in ethical standards as the equality of all people, is exactly what political action demands, especially when it concerns questions of ethnic relations. I argue that for such learning, the *Puhekupla* events had the potential to provide relevant perspectives.

> Among the blokes, it's easy to think that we don't need anyone or anything here, and the like, but yes, you bring good points to that, however, so that one has to nod, well, yes, we could be a little wrong as well. (Participant feedback after Event 13, 1 October 2019)

4.4 The *Puhekupla* events from the perspective of pedagogy for the public

The last of the analytical categories, *pedagogy for the public*, is likened with teaching or instruction; that is, with more traditional educational processes led by somebody who assumes a position of superior knowledge (Biesta, 2012). In the previous section, the practical consequences of the choices we made when designing the vignettes and facilitating the events were analyzed principally in relation to the discussion dynamic. The perspective of pedagogy for the public leads me to analyze whether the events included something that can be classified as outright teaching, and what it might have been and meant in practice. In the previous section, the focus was more on the process; now I move towards content.
The initial spark for the *Puhekupla* events arose from the notion that academic research often stays in its own bubble, and that academic researchers discuss their research only with other academic researchers. When the idea of the *Puhekupla* events as a forum for encounters and a platform for discussion started to take shape, the very first idea of the events as a way to disseminate research information moved to the background – but not altogether. Performance art and social sciences were our natural anchors for positioning ourselves in relation to the theme of the events. In the events, the facilitator often ended up citing research evidence or theoretical perspectives to suggest a novel aspect to the discussion in the form of comments such as: "This has in fact been researched quite a bit" or "Statistics show that…". Such references were often brought into discussion in a conversational manner, but they also suggested an expert position and underlined our perceptions of a specific relation to knowledge, owing to our academic professions, that the participants were aware of. We considered our research references and the like as our part of the exchange that the joint discussions involved – but they might also have been interpreted or functioned as 'teaching', in a good or bad sense. There were also moments when the facilitator's comments introduced a clearly educational tone to the discussion.

These could be labelled as moments of 'gentle teaching'.

> Facilitator: One could say it's quite human [to categorize people] but one could also at times stop and reflect a bit to ponder whether it is logical after all, or whether it's fair to categorize the world like this or to act according to it; and where it leads if we automatically categorize people and make big interpretations based on their backgrounds. (Event 3, 9 November 2018)

Among the participants there were also many kinds of experts present, including those who positioned themselves as experts on the basis of obviously false or intentionally misleading information regarding migration and migrants (see Ryynänen, Nortio & Varjonen, 2024). If no other participant contested what was said, we considered it ethical to problematize the obviously false information or provide opposing research evidence.

> Participant: The research evidence shows that (…) [information omitted: a clearly untrue, racist categorization]
>
> Researcher member of the collective: Could you please specify which research you refer to?
>
> Participant: My own research! (Author's field notes on pilot event, 19 February 2017)

Biesta (2012) has criticized pedagogy for the public as an approach that contains the idea of superior knowledge and thus involves "the risk of replacing politics by education" (p. 684). Even though the *Puhekupla* events were far from the traditional educational settings Biesta refers to, his notion pinpoints an obvious challenge in the approach of the *Puhekupla* events regarding their aim of creating a space for encounters and dialogue. On those occasions when a participant started to believe that we wanted to 'teach something (and that the event had some ulterior motive), it naturally did not contribute to creating a setting propitious for dialogue – quite the contrary.

> Can I criticize even a bit? It [the vignette] was a dramatized setting but it pushed a bit toward a certain way of thinking, it was presented in such a way that I must say like this or otherwise I'm a bad person.
>
> - Yes, I agree, it's as if a TV camera films you, you have to put it in a certain way, it takes guts to say as you really think, and not everyone has it. (Participant feedback after the event, Event 13, 1 October 2019)

As commented earlier, we had carefully tried to formulate the vignettes in such a way that they would not end up somehow validating the discrimination or racism they referred to, but nor were they anti-racist manifestos, which they could also have been if we had chosen a different approach. Rather, the vignettes were moments of everyday life in performative form, with an admittedly anti-racist underpinning. In some vignettes it was perhaps more obvious than in others, as the excerpt above suggests. Moreover, at times we got inquiries about whose cause we were promoting with the event, or which organization

or (left-wing) political party we represented. Although our collective had no such commitments, and we made this clear in each event, it would be untruthful to say that we did not represent *any* cause, nor that we had aimed for (false) neutrality. As individuals, the members of the *Puhekupla* collective had links to anti-racist activism, but the collective's starting point for the project was more of a research-oriented interest in encounters that could open up possibilities for learning from one another than outright activism. We did not regard ourselves as experts who had arrived specifically to teach something to the audiences or to mold their opinions, but at times we were identified as such.

In sum, even though the *Puhekupla* events concentrated on the idea of creating a space for communal discussion, one of their pedagogical dimensions included disseminating research-based knowledge in a conversational manner. The events did not include teaching in the traditional sense, but Biesta's critical stance toward pedagogy for the public nevertheless resonates with some aspects of the events. Although the research-based perspectives often seemed to contribute positively to the joint reflections, and although we were at times explicitly thanked for providing new information, our positioning as providers of knowledge also introduced a "position to tell others how to act and how to be" (Biesta, 2012, p. 694). However, some of our own assumptions also proved erroneous: it was a learning process for ourselves as well.

4.5 The *Puhekupla* events as public (social) pedagogy

Based on analysis of the *Puhekupla* events through the three forms of public pedagogy, it could be argued that the event concept, with the objective to act as an invitation to communal discussion, represented a kind of hybrid model of programmatic public pedagogy with some traits from all the categories. Such a hybrid character can be seen either as a strength of the event concept, or problematic – or even an oxymoron if I consider the requirements Biesta (2012, 2014) has defined for political action. However, the hybrid quality of the *Puhekupla* events derived mainly from the fact that the single events opened up very different (potentially) pedagogical spaces according to their audiences and locations. At times, one dimension of programmatic public pedagogy was more prominent, at other times another. Some events tilted towards pedagogy of the public, with more nuanced processes of joint reflection, whereas in other events the ethos of pedagogy for the public was more prominent, with regular instances when the moderator corrected false information or provided research data to support her arguments. Interestingly, those events in suburban bars that could have been judged less 'successful' from the perspective of our initial intentions, with an anarchistic undertone, might have come closest to the kind of freedom-enhancing public pedagogy that Biesta (2012) identified as specifically creating a pedagogical space characterized by plurality.

The events showed that combining social-scientific thinking and artistic practices can contribute to creating spaces for unlikely encounters, sharing ideas, embracing plurality and learning from one another – that is, spaces for public social pedagogy. The events

particularly demonstrated the pedagogical potential of participatory theatre as a space for and invitation to a dialogue on social and political issues. The scenes captured the attention of the audience even in the bar environment with several 'competing factors', and they invited reflection which involved settling into another person's position, at times also concretely on the 'stage'. Despite the complex subject, the theatrical approach and the 'pub quiz' brought elements of playfulness to the events, which seemed to make it easier to approach the complex theme (on the meaning of laughter and humor in relation to difficult subjects, see Sotkasiira & Ryynänen, 2022). The social pedagogical specificities of participatory theatre in the context of the *Puhekupla* events relate to the overall approachability the use of vignettes brought to the events and to their capacity to inspire conversation and to invite empathetic and embodied engagement.

Dialogue as a process of people learning from one another paves the way to a better understanding of the world, other people and oneself. It is a skill based on a set of capacities, which needs to be practiced in order to keep it alive in a social context that often works in quite contrasting ways for people and their relationships (Alhanen, 2016). The *Puhekupla* events managed to act as a space for enacting those capacities: to connect with other people's experience and to resonate with it, to deliberate on the social context and its realities, to playfully and hypothetically experiment with possible realities, and so forth. Moreover, the events brought together people who perhaps would not otherwise have ended up discussing social and political issues together. From a social pedagogical perspective the encounters with difference were perhaps the most valuable aspect of the events.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have presented the participatory theatrical *Puhekupla* events as pedagogical encounters. My main aim has been to provide new perspectives on the pedagogical roles and meanings of artistic (and other types of) interventions in society. The notion of programmatic public pedagogy and its three categories (Biesta 2012, 2014) have guided the discussion of the pedagogical dimensions of the *Puhekupla* events. The perspective of interruption, deriving from pedagogy in the interest of publicness, enabled recognition that being out of place can work as a pedagogical element and served as a reminder of the importance of acting for the public quality of the public sphere. The perspective of (co-)learning or conscientization deriving from pedagogy of the public directed attention to the pedagogical importance of fostering encounters, encouraging communal discussion and nurturing dialogic competencies. The perspective of teaching or instruction deriving from pedagogy for the public helped me to reflect on the nuances of an expert position from a pedagogical perspective and showed that while assuming an expert position can be considered problematic in dialogical processes, it has, in the context of the *Puhekupla* events, also occasionally proved valuable and necessary. The analysis showed that when the process of programmatic public pedagogy deals with controversial subject matter, it requires both specific ethical reflection and practical choices that might be pedagogically

challenging but ethically necessary. Participatory theatre proved to be an invaluable tool in addressing these difficult subjects. The analysis suggested that two factors that fundamentally contributed to the (occasional) realization of the communal discussion space in the *Puhekupla* events were a subtle facilitation style and a playful participatory theatrical approach.

There are at least two aspects that require further analysis and research. The first concerns the inevitable balancing act between the ideals of freedom and plurality, and ethical 'judgements' pivotal in the interventions somehow relating to questions of basic rights and (eco)social justice. The second relates to the pedagogical meanings of acting out the role of a 'good citizen' that this kind of an event concept occasionally seems to invite.

Methodologically, this paper has contributed to the empirical study of the processes of public (social) pedagogy, specifically artistic interventions in the public sphere, and their significance, by implementing Biesta's (2012, 2014) distinction between three forms of programmatic public pedagogy and suggesting one possible way to utilize it. This analysis represents an insider's view of the process, as the author of the article is also a member of the *Puhekupla* collective. This has made it possible to gain insight into the process that would have not been possible otherwise, but it has also involved questions of positionality regarding the analysis that have required careful reflection throughout the research process. Researching processes of public pedagogy that necessarily involve many layers, requires multifaceted data that can open up many perspectives and directions. We conceptualized the process as research in its early stage which made it possible to produce data throughout the process, including recording part of the events, which proved invaluable in making this research.

Theoretically, this paper has contributed to the literature on public pedagogy, as I have focused on an empirical process of public pedagogy and provided information on how and why such pedagogy has been enacted (see Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick, 2011). Moreover, analysis of the *Puhekupla* events has confirmed our initial idea or hypothesis that taking a specifically social pedagogical perspective on public pedagogy by introducing the term *public social pedagogy* could be relevant and useful. The *Puhekupla* events as public social pedagogy focused on collective, dialogue-enhancing processes with a normative underpinning and creative participatory approach.

There are two reasons I argue for the use of the concept *public social pedagogy*. First, the term *public pedagogy* is ambiguous and arguably (too) broad in its scope, as Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick (2011) have shown. It might refer to pedagogical processes that are socio-pedagogical by nature, but also to individual-centered processes that have very little in common with social pedagogy. The term *public social pedagogy* would specifically address pedagogical processes relating to the public sphere, which foster people coming together and revive the traditions of communal discussion and public deliberation which are rooted in the Arendtian ideals of freedom and plurality. The discussion in the *Puhekupla* events offers one example of what this could be in practice – and of the possible pitfalls.

Second, the term *public social pedagogy* would direct attention to pedagogical processes within the public and semi-public sphere which have not been very prominent in discussions in the field of social pedagogy or citizenship education but which, unarguably, ought to be taken into greater consideration. If social pedagogy is to be understood as being "about accompanying people in their daily life processes in the socio-cultural and environmental settings in which these take place" and as a "pedagogy of everyday life", as Spanish social pedagogue Xavier Úcar (2021, p. 2) suggests, the idea of explicitly considering social pedagogy also as *public social pedagogy* is a natural direction that could enrich the field. In practice, *public social pedagogy* would mean embracing more systematically the communal pedagogical processes in the public sphere, taking inspiration from relevant theoretical discussions and practical applications of public pedagogy, such as Biesta's (2012, 2014) formulation of programmatic public pedagogy. This would be one opportunity for social pedagogy to "offer an appropriate response to the complexity of social life today" (Úcar, 2021, p. 3).

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ENDNOTES

[1] All data excerpts translated from Finnish by Author.

[2] The author of this article is a researcher member of the *Puhekupla* collective, specializing in social pedagogy. Other members are three professionals in the performance arts, Pinja Hahtola, Niina Hosiasluoma and Jenni Urpilainen, and two researchers in the field of social psychology, Emma Nortio and Sirkku Varjonen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank the rest of the *Puhekupla* collective (Pinja Hahtola, Niina Hosiasluoma, Emma Nortio, Jenni Urpilainen and Sirkku Varjonen) for the ongoing discussions that have contributed to the formation of this article. It is we together that have made the whole *Puhekupla* process possible.

Funding: Kone Foundation, Finland. Project nos. 201710561 (2018–2021) & 201903968 (2020–2022).

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