



# **CO-DESIGN — MEET ARTISTS**

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Työn nimi Co-design — meet artists  
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Oppinnäytetyöni aiheena on yhteissuunnittelu. Suunnittelijan on erittäin tärkeää ymmärtää yleisön tai kohderyhmän tarpeet ottamalla ne mukaan suunnitteluprojekteihin. Mitä jos yritämme suunnitella yhdessä eri alojen taiteilijoiden kanssa? Luoda jotain merkityksellisempää. Taiteilijat ovat ihmisiä, jotka voivat auttaa yhteissuunnittelun olemaan osallistavampaa, kiinnostavampaa ja luovempaa – olivatpa he valokuvaajia, kuvittajia, näyttelijöitä, tanssijoita, runoilijoita, lavastussuunnittelijoita, äänitaiteilijoita, tai muunlaisia taiteilijoita.

Aloitan tiedonkeruun kirjojen lukemisesta syventääkseni tietämystäni yhteissuunnittelun periaatteista ja yhteissuunnittelusta. Etsin faktoja, jotka tekevät yhteissuunnittelusta hyödyllisen työkalun, jota voidaan käyttää suunnitteluprojekteissa.

Pyrin selvittämään, mikä on yhteissuunnittelua ja mikä on ajattelutapa ennen yhteissuunnitteluprojektin aloittamista. Yhteissuunnittelun ja sen keskeisten periaatteiden selittämisen jälkeen on haastatteluita eri alojen taiteilijoilta, joilla oli kokemuksia yhteissuunnittelusta ja he jakavat näkemyksensä siitä. Olin hyvin utelias tietämään, miten muut taiteilijat ajattelevat ja reagoivat, kun mainitsen yhteissuunnittelun. On erittäin mielenkiintoista kuulla taiteilijoita, joilla on enemmän kokemuksia yhteissuunnittelusta. Kerron myös omat kokemukseni yhteissuunnittelusta ja loppuluvussa pohditaan koko prosessia.

Avainsanat Co-design, artists, mindset, interview  
Sivut 32 sivua ja liitteitä 4 sivua

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Abstract  
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My thesis topic is about co-design. As a designer is very important to understand what your audience or target group's needs are by having them in your design projects. What if we try to co-design with artists who are from different fields. To creating something more meaningful. Artists are people who can help co-design to be more inclusive, interesting, and creative – be they photographers, illustrators, actors, dancers, spoken word poets, set designers, sound artists, or other kinds of artists.

I start my information gathering from reading books to deepen my knowledge about co-design principles and co-design mindset. I'm searching for facts that what makes co-design a useful tool that can be used in design projects.

I'm aiming to discover what is co-design and it's what are the mindset before starting a co-design project. After explanation about co-design and it key principals there is included interviews with artist from different fields who had experiences in co-design and they share their point of views about it. I was very curious to know how others artist thinks and reacts when I mention co-design. It's very interesting to hear artists that have more experience about co-designing. Also, I will share my own experiences as a co-designer and in the ending chapter there is going to be reflection about the whole process.

Keywords Co-design, artists, mindset, interview  
Pages 32 pages and appendices 4 pages

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# 1 Introduction

Co-design is about challenging where there is an imbalance of power within select groups of individuals who make important decisions about others' lives, livelihoods and bodies. These decisions are often made with little to no meaningful involvement of the people who will be most impacted by them. (McKercher, 2020)

My thesis topic is about co-design. As a designer is very important to understand what your audience or target group's needs are by having them in your design projects. What if we try to co- design with artists who are from different fields. To creating something more meaningful. Artists are people who can help co-design to be more inclusive, interesting, and creative – be they photographers, illustrators, actors, dancers, spoken word poets, set designers, sound artists, or other kinds of artists.

Artists see things differently and all artists must be unique to be seen and must be creative all the time in their career. When artists get involved in co-design projects the result might not be the most functional, but it gives soul to the ending result.

Artistry is raising an act to a level of proficiency and clarity that allows it to shine with a brilliance that others performing the same act seldom achieve. It is seeing through to the heart of an activity and performing it with mindfulness and excellence. (Nerburn, 2020, p.28)

Co-design is a way to gather people together, who share a common goal. When we involve many talented artists and hearing their point of view by researching, testing, defining, developing, and even failing in a group co- design is the one tool for the job. My idea to choosing co-design as thesis subject was, I believe that in the future I really want to hang around with co- design and find other co-designer specially artist from other fields to bring more meaning to my designer career, deepen my knowledge and understanding to design and create meaningful products mixed with art.

In my thesis I'm aiming to discover what is co-design and it's what are the mindset before starting a co-design project. After explanation about co-design and it key principals there in included interviews with artist from different fields who had experiences in co-design and they share their point of views about it. Also, I will share my own experiences as a co-designer and in the ending chapter there is going to be reflection about the whole process.

## 1.1 Aims and framing

In the beginning I had many questions that I wanted to seek answers for them. But thinking what my main goals and objective are and that led me to right questions that I wanted to seek answers for them, and they weren't far away from main subject, co-design and artists.

The question by making this thesis is to analyse co-design process, key principals, and creative methods with another artists. For better understanding interviewing artists who have been involved with co- design is part of the thesis.

Also analyzing my own experience as a co- designer and sharing my point of view will be included.

Head and sub questions for this thesis are:

Main question:

1. What is the co-design process with other artists?

Sub questions:

2. What is the co-design?
3. What are key principles& mindsets in co-design?

## 1.2 Information gathering

I start my information gathering from reading books to deepen my knowledge about co-design principles and co-design mindset. I'm searching for facts that what makes co-design a useful tool that can be used in design projects.

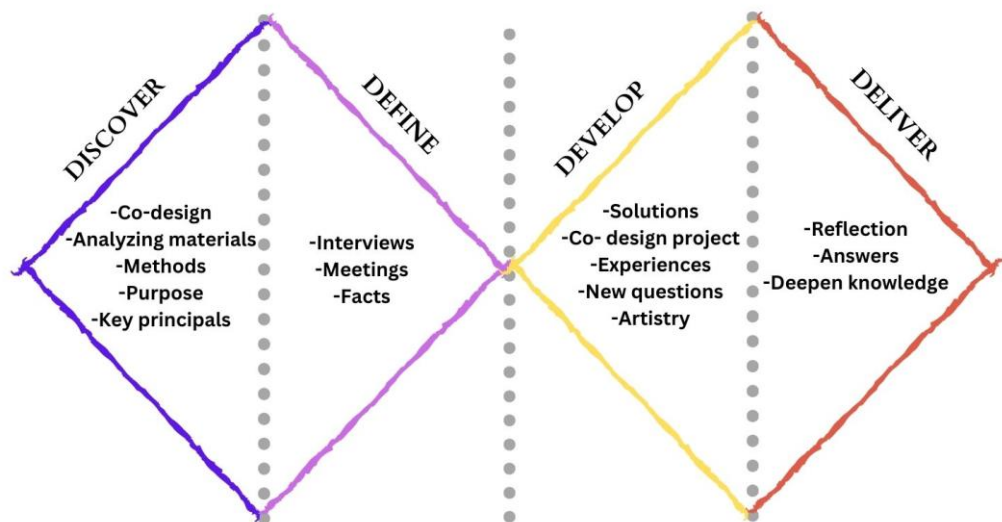
Interviewing other artist as the main audience would part of this research. Asking them to share their experiences and thought about co-design and how they see it as tool for artists. Also, I'm using my own experience is also included for gathering information and as a method for completing and giving more details about the entire process I am using double diamond design process.

### 1.3 Process

For the better understanding of the process I use double diamond design process to visualize the entire process more accurately. The official Double Diamond design model has four stages: Discovery, Definition, Development and Delivery. Together, these stages work as a map designers can use to organize their thoughts to improve the creative process.

First, knowing my whole purpose to start thesis is essential. I start to analyze materials that I had in hand. By gathered information I'm trying to discover for more details and facts to answering my questions. Also, interviewing people who had experiences about co-designing is another phase that is I want to define. Based on those phases I want to develop answers for the questions that in the beginning bothered my mind. In the end based on knowledge that I gained I'm going reflect the whole process of mine.

Picture 1. Frame of reference

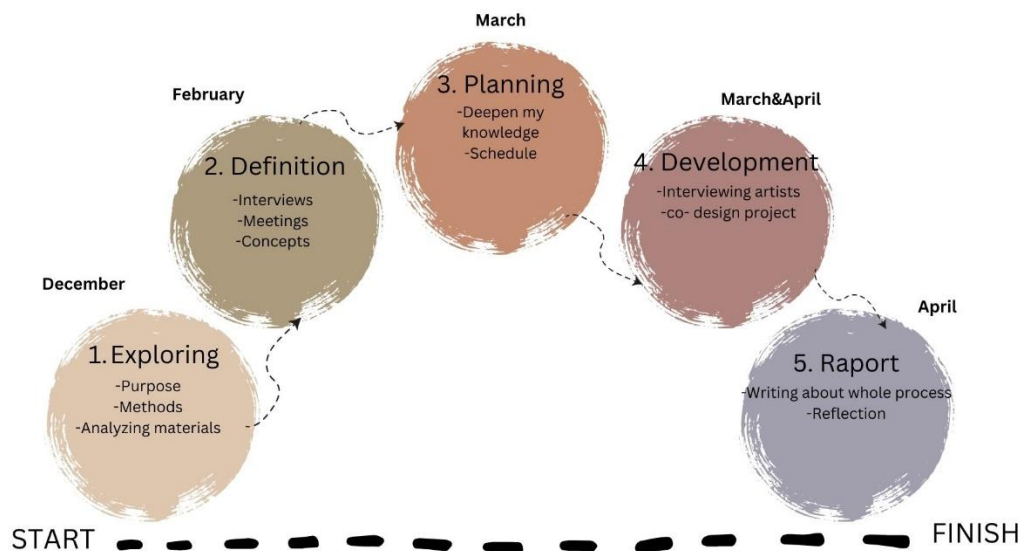




## 1.4 Schedule

I divided my usage of time based on the plan that I have at the picture 2. is timetable of the thesis process.

Picture 2. Timetable



## 2 What is co-design

Co-design is an approach to designing with, not for, people. While co-design is helpful in many areas, it typically works best where people with lived experience, communities and professionals work together to improve something that they all care about. Overall, the primary role of co-design is elevating the voices and contributions of people with lived experience. (McKercher, 2020)

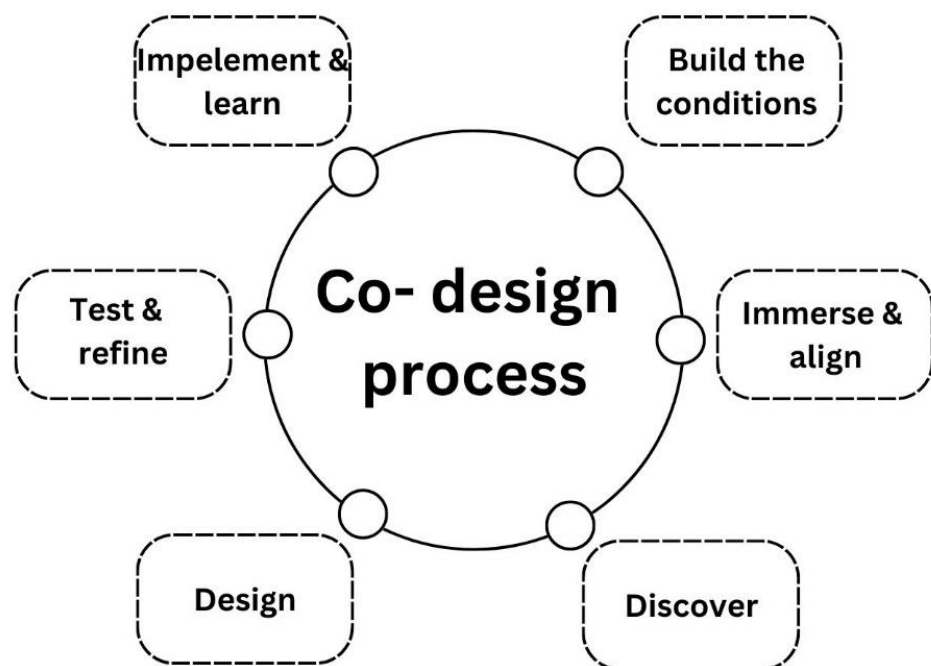
The design-led perspective of co-design allowed us to focus on our work as practice, as doing, as well as grappling with questions of organizing and governing. Design in its broad meaning is open-ended, is future-oriented, explores possibilities, is human-oriented (rather than technology-led), and works with the constraints of systems. The “co” for us denotes cooperation, a term used in English since the seventeenth century, meaning “to work

together, with.” Co-design then gave us a new way of thinking and a set of working practices to discuss the contemporary context of learning. (Gatenby & Cantore, 2018, p.4)

Co-design involves a degree of caring. This is care about the nature of what is being designed—that it serves the intended purpose and that it is humane and evokes a sense of valuing people. (Cantore, 2018)

Participants’ backgrounds can affect the planning process as the type of task, approach or setting can change the requirements of participant recruitment. Resourcing, planning, and recruiting are suggested as ‘fuzzy front-end’ owing to the multiple challenges that need to be overcome during this phase.

Picture 3. Co-design process (McKercher, 2020)



So basically co-design is a collaborative approach to creating solutions that involve the people who will use, deliver, or benefit from them. It can help you build trust, empathy, and shared ownership with your community, as well as generate innovative and sustainable outcomes.

A well-organized project usually begins with a brief which states at the highest level the goals of the project. It may be only a few sentences or maybe several pages, but when we designers receive one, we usually like to see that it provides not only an identification of the design problem to be solved, but also some context as to why solving problem is important.

So much of the learning process happens at the social level. By sharing ideas and experiences with peers we can see things from other perspectives and engage in reasoned discussion and debate. The role of the facilitator or teacher is often to create an environment where learners can be more open to difference. They do this by allocating individuals to mixed groups and give them collective learning activities. (Gatenby & Cantore, 2018, p.21)

In co-design facilitators have an important role to guide the whole collaborative process, someone who is granting and ensuring that every participant's voices are heard, and helping everyone in the group come to common understanding. Facilitator's job is to organize group dynamics, encourage participants to be creative, and keep conversations focused on the main goal. They also must take responsibility for writing down ideas and mentioning to the team their choices during decision making. Overall facilitators are acting as neutral individuals to help teams achieve their main goal more effectively.

Facilitators invite co-designers to be involved in discovery, practise curiosity and be in the grey before making decisions. Facilitators recognise that while knowledge is in the room, it also exists outside the group, and needs to be gathered and understood to inform decision-making. Facilitators ask people to speak from their own experience, never anyone else's. (McKercher, 2020)

## **2.1 Key principles for co-design**

Co-design is about how we are being (our mindsets), what we are doing (our methods) and how our systems embrace the participation of people with lived experience (social movements). To help in the creating of ideas the following approaches can be useful: intuition, scope change, observation, trends, scenarios, mind mapping, group creativity, creative cards, exhaustion, and separation. (McKercher, 2020)

You can use the principles to build a shared understanding of co-design in your team or organisation, as well as to assess how different tools and methods could be adapted to work within a co-design process. (McKercher, 2020)

It involves sharing power, prioritising relationships, using participatory means and building capability. A co-designer is someone who is part of a co-design team throughout the co-design process. I use 'team' (instead of 'group') deliberately to encourage mutual accountability. A co-design team is made up of people with lived experience, professionals and provocateurs. Co-design 'initiative' is used deliberately in place of 'project' to stress that co-design is not merely a project, but a long-term commitment to changing organisational culture and sharing power. (McKercher, 2020)

### **2.1.1 Sharing power**

When differences in power are unacknowledged and unaddressed, the people with the most power have the most influence over decisions, regardless of the quality of their knowledge or ideas. (McKercher, 2020).

In- co-design, sharing power involves fostering collaboration, valuing diverse perspectives, and ensuring decision-making is inductive and equitable. It's about disturbing influence among participants to create a more balanced and democratic design process. Sharing power makes everyone at the same level during co-design projects, from research, design, delivery, and evaluation. To think of risking quality over new solutions and finding new facts makes it a powerful key to connect every artist from different fields.

### **2.1.2 Priorities relationships**

Co-design isn't possible without relationships, social connection and trust among co-designers, funders, and organizers of co-design. Trust paves the way for conversations where we confront the metaphorical elephant in the room (or a stampede of them, in some cases). (McKercher, 2020)

Co-design between artists isn't that much possible without having proper social skills. Talking about your goals, thoughts and late experiences about an upcoming project can tell a lot about you and it builds some trust between other artists. It can tell many things about you and your passion; it can motivate and guide other artists to have a better result in co-design project.

### **2.1.3 Use participatory means**

Co-design provides many ways for people to take part and express themselves, for example, through visual, kinesthetic, and oral approaches, instead of relying solely on writing, slideshows, and long reports. (McKercher, 2020).

In some situation artists don't have time to study and educate deeply in some specific fields that never have thought about it. During co-design process it's possible even innovate a new way to educate other artists by using creative ways that can suit better and it's more pleasant. There is no need to be that academic and taking other participants back to school benches might be boring to some.

To maintain the partnership, the designer must stop or change the conversation when either person seems unengaged. Self-listening naturally happens. We get design ideas. When we design in our head while users are talking, we are no longer letting the user shape our understanding. But if we simply share our design ideas as they occur, we both remain in partnership, and we can codesign with users. In this way, users' experience of work can be directly translated into system possibilities. By sharing design ideas and interpretations as they occur, ideas get quickly shaped and validated, and the user partnership is maintained. (Schuler & Namioka, 2017, p.187)

### **2.1.4 Build capability**

Many people require support and encouragement to adopt new ways of being and doing, learn from others, and have their voices heard. (McKercher, 2020)

In co-design projects, especially while working with other artists, it's important that at the same time want to be heard is to respect others and listen to their ideas. Especially when you don't have enough knowledge to analyze and give solutions. It can guide us to move smoothly during the whole project and get to know each other's way of thinking.

You can use the principles to build a shared understanding of co-design in your team or organization, as well as to assess how different tools and methods could be adapted to work within a co-design process. If you get stuck, ask yourself questions such as: Will this share power? Does it build capability? Are we prioritizing relationships? (McKercher, 2020)

We can try to pick words that encourage people to see that improvement and learning is possible even when situations feel insurmountable. The careful use of language opens up for people the possibility that something is waiting to be learned. Giving attention to routinely offering recognition for effort with the aim of encouraging those who have stretched themselves. (Gatenby & Cantore, 2018, p.26)

## **2.2 Six co-design mindsets**

This section contains six mindsets for practitioners of co-design, McKercher say (2020) which come from my experience across different sectors, countries, communities, and organizations. As a practitioner, you'll practice all of the mindsets. As a co-designer, you'll practice them too. Mindsets are ways of being and thinking rather than design tools. They're about who you are and how you are while doing your work. Mindsets help to examine who you are in your system (your workplace, family, the area where you live) and how systems show up within you (your beliefs, experiences, biases, attitudes, and values).

it's correct that before starting anything you need to put your mind in it by all meaning and be confident what are you after, rather than having a slopy motivation and let your moods and negativity control you. When you are working with other artists, it's very important that you gather those artists that share the same values and mindsets as you, otherwise it can misguide you and might lead you in the wrong direction and get away from the main result.

Like anything else we can practice our mindset. Working with other artists, combining mindset and creativity will create a strong bond to the whole project regardless of how challenging your co- design process is going to be for you and other involved artists.

Here are some ways to operationalize the mindsets:

Ask people with lived experience to explain what the mindsets mean to them and to help you translate them into specific and measurable behaviors. Incorporate the mindsets and associated behaviors into your recruitment processes and role descriptions, including as a way of measuring success for teams. (McKercher, 2020)

Undertake regular learning and practice around the mindsets, including outside people's regular context. (McKercher, 2020)

### **2.2.1 Elevating lived experience**

Too often we speak about people, instead of with them. We think we've understood their aspirations, and we make important and often costly decisions based on our assumptions. Worse, we think we know what's best for them, and this removes the need for their input. (McKercher, 2020).

It's important to have artists with bad, good inspirations and experiences in our team. Hearing them out might give us some hints to put our mind and focus on what is important for everyone and not only us. Working with other artists that have worked on the same problem and hearing their information is a gift during the whole co-design process. It's time saving and we can put our energy into discovering new directions for our project if there are too many questions to be answered. It's not about to do same tests and being successful.

Some nights I will go to bed excited about what I left unfinished only to wake in the morning and find it insipid and incoherent. In the same fashion, I will discard a work as turgid or fragmentary, only to go back to it several months later and find a beauty in it that leaves me wondering what it was that had caused me to discard it in the first place. (Nerburn, 2020, p.36)

Co-design with an artist or artists can elevate the overall experiences of a project or product by infusing it with creativity and unique perspectives. Artists often bring a fresh and imaginative approach to design, which can result in more visually appealing and emotionally engaging outcomes. Collaborating with an artist can help you create something that not only functions well but also resonate with people on a deeper level, enhancing their overall experience.

### **2.2.2 Being in gray**

We live in a complex and uncertain world. Many of our ways of working in systems and institutions are insufficient for complex challenges such as intergenerational disadvantage, increasing polarisation across the political spectrum, and climate change. We often rush to simplify what isn't simple. Our push to get things done leads to hurried conclusions and rushed solutions. By contrast, time spent asking the right questions, mulling over what we hear, deferring judgement, and exploring insights with others can lead to powerful insights and responses. When we can commit wholeheartedly to discovery, the future reveals itself slowly – it's foggy at first but gains clarity over time. (McKercher, 2020).

In co-design project before starting to make any progress it might be somehow difficult to take that first step. There might be many good questions, or many great ideas and you are not sure which is the best possible way to start the upcoming project. If you're a group of artists that are creative and brave enough that accepted to being a part of something new, it doesn't matter how you are starting your co-design project, it's all about that all participants have the will and are agreed to move forward with confidence and are ready for the upcoming challenges. Also moving forward into unknow challenges without thinking, understanding and plans might have that risk that the process of project get slower, or you stuck at some point.

Human creativity is something of a mystery, not to say a paradox. One new idea may be creative, while another is merely new. What's the difference? And how is creativity possible? Creative ideas are unpredictable. Sometimes they even seem to be impossible – and yet they happen. How can that be explained? Could a scientific psychology help us to understand how creativity is possible? (Boden, 2004)

Thinking and paying attention to details before starting anything and answering questions, not a question, might be a very good tactic in the beginning of a project. It can lead us to better answers, but it can also easily lead us to over thinking and it will mislead us from the main direction.

### **2.2.3 Valuing many perspectives**

Understanding diverse views is critical to identifying new opportunities. Diverse views help us to find the systemic causes of issues and identify overlooked resources, as well as see old issues in new ways. (McKercher, 2020).

Valuing many perspectives means recognizing appertaining the various viewpoints, ideas, opinions, and experiences of different individuals or groups. It involves deep listening to and being considering the ideas, concerns, and need of others, even if other participants in co-design project are different than you. This approach promotes inclusivity, empathy, and better comprehensive understanding of complex issues.

While thinking about how perspectives make us select certain aspects of reality as important in a description, I realized I had completely overlooked my own presumption that descriptions in one way or another are mirror images of a given reality. My earlier reasoning had been that because there are different interests in the world, we should always question the



objectivity of design choices that claimed to flow from design as a process of rational decision making. Hence, I had argued that we needed to create descriptions from different perspectives in order to form a truer picture. (Schuler & Naomika, 2017, p.62)

#### **2.2.4 Curiosity**

When curious, we're open to a wide range of perspectives and opportunities, deferring judgement to deepen our understanding. We can't use our professional knowledge or personal experience to 'opt out of curiosity'. Curiosity is a multichannel subscription, beyond the things and people that naturally interest us. Curiosity is always available to us, and we can always be more interested in each other. (McKercher, 2020).

Curiosity is one thing that every artist has in them. Being curious enough to find new challenges is part of being an artist. Curiosity leads to something totally new, for example a unique design or new meaning in art and teaches us that failing is not the end.

Curiosity in co-design is essential because drives exploration, encourages diverse perspectives, and boost innovation. It can lead to more inclusive and effective outcomes by allowing participants to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and find unique solutions. Co-design with artists can be creative and dynamic process. Curiosity in co- design projects involving artists can lead to new ideas, push boundaries, and lead to unconventional solutions.

THINK LIKE A TRAVELER: Like a visitor to a foreign land, try turning fresh eyes on your surroundings, no matter how mundane or familiar. Don't wait around for a spark to magically appear. Expose yourself to new ideas and experiences. (Kelley & Kelley, 2013, p.74)

#### **2.2.5 Hospitality**

Care and connection are grounding virtues for co-design. Our capacity to care about and for others and to make time affects the quality of our relationships. In many cultural contexts, hospitality is critical to demonstrate care and respect and foster connection. In co-design, we long to be seen, heard, valued, and treated as an individual. (McKercher, 2020).

Hospitality can start with knowing basic things about every participant to create a connection between the whole group, by telling our names, being friendly, open-minded, or offering something to drink and eat. During co-design project creating an atmosphere that every

participant feels safe during the project is very important. Feeling welcomed, safe and comfortable to share knowledge, worries and fears and participants feeling free to talk about what the project real meaning is to them, for better outcome in upcoming challenges.

If we can't create an enabling environment for these things, we pay the cost of discomfort. People are distracted and anxious; relationships and trust are slow to develop. Often, people won't come back after a negative experience, and because of their discomfort they also won't say why they didn't come back. When I feel unsafe, I'm quick to remove myself from meetings, forums and groups where I don't feel valued or heard – as I'm sure you are too. (McKercher, 2020).

Picture 4. An example of co- design process (McKercher, 2020)



### 2.2.6 Learning through doing

Learning through doing is a preference for trying things out over talking about them in theory. It moves us from speculation and 'planning paralysis' to learning and doing. Learning through

doing can help to avoid expensive pilots, programs and policies that have not been thoroughly tested before implementation. (McKercher, 2020).

Learning through doing, often referred to as experiential learning, is a way of teaching and learning to approach that emphasizes a means of acquiring knowledge and skills. Learning by doing needs active participants and engagements, which often leads to deeper understanding of the main subject or goal. It shifts the focus from passive consumption of information to active problem-solving and application.

Learning always relates, in one way or another, to what has gone before. There is never a clean slate on which to begin; unless new ideas and new experience link to previous experience, they exist as abstractions, isolated and without meaning. The effects of experience influence all learning. What we are attracted towards, what we avoid and how we go about the task, is dependent on how we have responded in the past. Earlier experiences that had positive or negative effect stimulate or suppress new learning. They encourage us to take risks and enter into new territory for exploration, or alternatively, they may inhibit our range of operation or ability to respond to opportunities. (Beard & Wilson, 2018, p.29)

The meaning of learning through doing lies in its ability to create a more profound understanding of concepts, practical application of knowledge, resilience in the faces of challenges, and the development of transferable skills. This approach promotes a well-rounded learning experience for involved artists and those who are not artists.

### **3 Artists and co-design interviews**

Interviewing professional artists from different fields that have been involved in co-design projects during their career is included in my thesis, especially with other artists. I was very curious to know how others artist thinks and reacts when I mention co-design. It's very interesting to hear artists that have more experience about co-designing. Hearing their stories and their real opinions about co- design made me even more curious to include this part in my thesis.

Around me is surrounded by many talented artists who are taking their job very seriously and they really have a deep knowledge of it. As much as I remember, we have never talked that much about their collaboration with other artists or specially co-design projects experiences. I see this opportunity to ask them if they want to be part of my thesis and answer to some

questions that might be gives them some pleasant and unpleasant flash backs from their previous projects with other artists and what they personally think about co-design.

My first interview was with a dance performing teacher who has been teaching and performing as a professional dancer for over 13 years. Our artist has been involved in many projects with other artists. Some experiences were with Finnish TV channel, from working with children's to grown up people. Also, have been involved in many co- designs and co-producing content with other dance artists from Finland and other countries.

Second artist that I interviewed was a photography and film making artist who started his professional career around eight years ago. Our artist had done many projects with people in the clothing industry, painting artists and other artists who are working in the same field as him.

Third artist is Illustrating designer is one of my favorite fields that I was curious about it. It's one of those fields that can connect people by emotions, without saying any words, from black and whites to colorful books and paintings.

Here are the questions that I asked from interviewee:

1. Being part of co-design projects is something that was easy for you, or is it difficult to absorb?
2. Was the co-designing environment and feeling always the same?
3. What was the challenging part while working with other artists?
4. Did you always aimed to establish something new?
5. Was the result always satisfying?
6. Have you ever wanted to quit a co-design project? (If yes why?)

### **3.1 Dance performing artist**

I started my first interview with a dance performing artists who I knew before. Our artist have a lot of collaborative experiences more importantly in co-design that I ask from them their opinion. We also was part of co-design project (upcoart) that I will explain about it in details on upcoming chapter.

- 1) Co-design projects are always different from each other. I've been involved in easily rolling forward projects as well as those where we had to do a little more work in the

beginning, that common tune can be found. In my experience, the more in a co-design project are factors, the more it takes time and energy. However, the result can be wonderful even if the processes take a lot of energy. I'm also noticed that the better you know the people with whom you do co-design projects, the easier the collaboration goes.

- 2) Every co-design project, I've been involved in has been its own kind. So, no project has been exactly the same, but each project is shaped according to its creators. Other resources have also greatly influenced the course of the project.
- 3) The most challenging thing with other artists is perhaps your own visions verbalizing and understanding other people's visions. When creating art, you must envision something that doesn't exist yet. Being able to describe your own ideas with the help of mental images for fellow artists.
- 4) In my opinion, the goal in co-designing is not always to design or create something new. However, there has been something new in the final result of each project, because the final result has been shaped by its factor and the process is different from its predecessor.
- 5) In co-design, I think it's usually impossible predict what the result would be like before the whole project is done. When co-designing as a pair or with a group, the result is the sum of the vision of each group member. The finished result is something that none of the group members have alone could have implemented.
- 6) Sometimes there have been moments of despair in co-design projects when the project has felt like putting it on hold. Then it may have felt that the project is not progressing or has progressed into that direction that I don't want to be part of it and don't even want to stand for it. However, by talking and working together we could manage to change the direction of the project and shape it again to be more meaningful to continue and enjoy the project.

### **3.2 Photography & videography artist**

One of my favourite subjects have been always photography and using camera. Finding different angles to take photos that gives you good feelings and you can keep it for a memory is art that is so popular world wide and everyone loves it. So I decided to interview someone who has been a camera, long career in the photography and videography field, experiences and knowledge to share with me their opinion about co-design.

- 1) I'm an easy-going person and I really like to work with other artists. It's depending on how much I know co-designing partners. Because we know our styles and it's not difficult to jump straight to the point and doesn't need to put my energy to know better my other team members. Being on time is one thing that is very curational in our work, that means working with someone who is most of the times late or doesn't show up is something that is frustrating.
- 2) I have noticed that it depends on you how you start your day. But the project that I was involved are like each other based on what kind of tools I use, but the locations and feeling are mostly different specially when the doing a co-design project. Sometimes I really enjoying myself when I'm co- designing and co- creating when with I notice people who are I'm sharing my time, ideas and energy are really love their job and they are enjoying being part of the project.
- 3) When you start a project with people who you don't know that much is it can be very difficult. Because some equipment's is expensive and if you don't know that well how you can prepper and use them properly might become a huge challenge during the whole project. But the most challenging part in co- design project is when our teamwork becomes a specific person demand and settlement.
- 4) Establishing something new would be great and cool but not all the time. As the project goes on it's also very interesting that I able to learn something new from other members specially from those who have more experiences than me. To me finding new connections and new people for upcoming projects is also something that I can assume as new establishment for the future co-design and collaboration works.
- 5) Working as a team of artists to create art is always motivational to start. The main result is always fun to watch, I personally like it that feeling when projects end and can enjoy our achievement with other artists. But after having ending reflection conversations is something that can gives you the hints, can you be proud of your work our not.
- 6) It never happened that I wanted to quit a project but one of projects was very energy taking that I really wanted to wrap it as soon as possible.

### **3.3 Illustrating design artist**

Painting is one of my favorite hobbies. But being an illustrating professional designer is something else because you don't do it as a hobby and if you are not talented enough you cannot have a lot of projects and clients. I saw this opportunity fit to ask one of my closest

friends who have been doing illustrating design more than ten years to share their experiences and opinions about co-design.

- 1) In general, my thoughts about co-design projects is that working alone is easier that you don't have to ask as many questions and consider another designer's input. But collaborating with sharing ideas is also exactly why I enjoy such projects. I feel that I learn much quicker new techniques and many times other artists have their own style that can show a new way to approach a vision, not to mention getting new contacts in the field. Deciding to collaborate can happen fast though because it's exciting to meet inspiring, talented people.
- 2) I haven't had many problems with other designers but sometimes when I've worked with creative people who are in a different field of work such as writing, there have been miscommunication problems from time to time. Sometimes we do not have enough knowledge of the others field of work, time management and limits. They might think that something comes easier to the other and vice versa. People also have different levels of professionalism, and it can be very frustrating to work with artists who take your time for granted.
- 3) Well, I always work from home. Couple of times abroad but always from the privacy of my own lodging. I do meet with the collaborators and other participants at bars, cafes, and our own homes to talk about the project but most of the work is done by us, alone and together via online meeting, chats, and email.
- 4) The challenging part is that different tastes, working styles and time management. I might have a different vision than the other and we must establish a common ground for the product. Artists can have quite the ego, me included, so it's important to know when to compromise and kill our darlings.
- 5) I don't think the final product has ever been exactly what was first visioned. The final products tend to differ from the original visions are the details change, we notice some limits on what is possible to do and what is impractical etc. It's part of the co-design process.
- 6) Once I had to quit a project because the other team member disappeared without communicating their reasons.

### **3.4 Conclusion of the interview**

Based on the three interviews with different artists from different fields, who shared their opinion and experiences on co-design, we can understand that during the co-design process

it's easier when you know other co-designers who are participating in your project. Group of people that you can trust that they have the same collaborative mindset and are ready to be part of the project. It can be very irritating when you realize that your team member is not taking any responsibility for their actions or soloing around and mislead the whole project. Co-design is something that needs a lot of communications and teamwork to get the main result.

Sometimes it might be difficult to explain your ideas to other artists and understanding theirs, so during co-designing you must be patient, respect each other and be supportive so no one feels like they are pushed aside.

Another fact is that your negativity is going to affect other co-designers and going to have a huge impact on the whole process. When you notice your physically and mentally under pressure you must take a break and letting others know that you need your own time more a moment.

Co-design process for every group of co-designers is different and methods for seeking answers for the same questions is also can be something that none can even imagine. So, it's not necessary that the wanted results are not always the same. It's not all about to discover something new. It's all about to be brave enough to follow your curiosity and based on that you can deepen your knowledge, creativity to solving problems, learning how to communicate with other co-designer and finding connections for upcoming projects, people who you can trust to share your visions.

## **4 Co-design project Upcoart**

Based on experiences and inspirations during study year's in HAMK, about sustainable, thoughtful designing methods to cutting fabrics and making real products. Believing in that idea I want to challenge myself in many ways to become better designer. One of those challenges and something that I really want to be part of was to be in a co-design project with other artists. Based on the knowledge about the whole co-design concept, the curiosity and ideas led me to one and it was one of the most interesting projects that I was involved. Seeing this opportunity fit to share my own experiences in co-design with other artists.

It does though challenge us to become, through practice, proactive in working with culture and move away from what can be a very pessimistic sense of helplessness. That sense of helplessness is itself an artifact of culture and worth exploring if you feel it. Ultimately,



culturing is about acting to intentionally make and remake the cultural context in which co-design happens. (Cantore, 2018)

Last year (spring 2023) I had a co-design project with artists from different field than fashion and clothing. The participants were professional dance performing artists, photography and film making artists. Each one of them has a long career in their fields with a lot of experience.

Projects idea was to design three out fits for dancers who are seeking to look unique and sustainable for their dance shows and performers. Being stylish and represent their personality and passion without saying any word in an art fashion video. From designing the outfits, choreography and directing the whole video we were making every single decision together. Also, I should mention co-designed outfits in this project all are made from fabric leftovers from my previous collections that I collected and didn't throw away. Being sustainable in every clothing project has becoming one of my top priorities before anything else.

As a person who really wanted this project happens and every participant experience it as a co-design project it made sense that I take the role of the facilitator in upcoart co-design project. I don't have any experiences about it but I thought I can use my knowledge based on what I understand it from reading books and others explanation about the facilitators role I made a simple plan to how to start the project.

People can also be practically supported by a facilitator offering some prompt questions to help reflection and conceptualization. You can do this for one another. It can be worthwhile taking time out as a group to reflect together on a key experience. Yes, learning will happen for individuals as they make sense of what happened for them, but through shared reflections the meaning-making process becomes richer and deeper. (Gatenby & Cantore, 2018, p.73)

I divided the project into two phases and each phase had their own parts. Phase one was based on three parts:

- First part was to find other co-designers because without participants it's impossible to move on and start the whole co-design process.
- Second part of the starting plan was after finding other co-designers was to arrange a meeting for our team to know each other better and creating that comfortable atmosphere for our project.

- Third part was to make sure that our workshops happen in inspirational environment. I thought it's going to have a huge impact on the main result because all of participants are artists and we need to choose our working place to feed our creativity to gain more positive energy to fuel our passion.

Phase two was more about how to work as team and analyzing the whole project with every participant and it included two parts:

- Part one was to plan with out team and analyze our motivation, feeling and what we are aiming for when our project ends.
- Parts two was to co-design every needed element, choreography, outfits, and video to achieve our goal.

I wanted to share this experience to encourage those who are curious about co-design while being student. Giving every important detail that we went through during our project might help students who are interested in co- design and doesn't know how to start, this might give them some tips about it. I will explain about how we co-designers found each other, got to know each other, how we did plan the whole process and how we made it happened.

#### **4.1 Finding other co-designers**

The first task before anything else was to gather and ask from the people that I knew that they might be interested in a co-design project to share this experience with. Searching for some artists who are curious and want to deepen their knowledge in their career following co-design methods by adding their art in it.

First thoughts were to ask talented dancing performing artists and a videographer who are skilled in their job and having the skills to work with other artists. I started to ask one of my friends that I got to know him through a photo shooting project for a clothing brand. Discussing about co-designing and what is the main goal and idea he agreed to be part of project as a participant. This was a big relief that at least co-design got someone's attention. After meeting with photography artist and explaining the whole project concept it was time to approach to dancing artists and share the idea and ask them to join us as participants, if they are interested.

Trying to ask some dancing artists that I could see them fit for a co-design project. It was difficult to get them interested in this no beneficial project. The problem was that during spring most of them are very busy with their work and dance competitions, but finally three dancers were interested to hear more about my ideas for upcoming co-design project. After contacted them separately and explained to them what we were going to create and what are this project's goal they were very excited about it, mostly because co-designing with other artists was very fresh thing to them, and also their curiosity got them to be interested in this project.

At that moment when I realized the main core of this project are gathered it was time to organize a meeting between all members, so we could know each other, talk and start to shape the main project.

## **4.2 Knowing each participant**

As a group first we needed a common place, somewhere that we could communicate with each other, so we agreed on to have a WhatsApp chatroom group, because it's easy to use and everyone had it in their smart phones.

In the beginning I was thinking that, for the starting step creating a good atmosphere for our project and upcoming team members was something essential and important. A good atmosphere for a project includes effective communication, teamwork, clear aims, a positive and collaborative mindset, and a supportive project environment. It's about giving each participant to feel safe, motivated, valued, and encouraged to be brave enough to show their best efforts towards projects objectives.

Getting to know ourselves and communities, putting knowledge to work, collectively identifying issues, finding creative solutions, and testing those solutions—we think of these as the core competencies of the participatory designer. But they aren't always enough. (De la Pena et al., 2017, p.4)

Right after introductions and everyone got to know each other better and shared information about our professions and some ice breaking jokes and conversations. I started a briefing about upcoming project for everyone and that's how we start our first meeting.

The atmosphere was very warm and friendly. It felt like this is not our first project together and everyone was accepted each member as a long-time co-worker.

After some time, we notice that if we want save time we should go straight to the point and share everything. For example, our fears, questions, experiences and finding good ways to communicate to each other if something is difficult to explain. All participants agreed to be clear and simple when we are communicating and share our worries.

### **4.3 Environment**

After creating a safe and co-design friendly atmosphere the second important thing is to find out what kind of place and space is fit for our project to start works. Designing spaces and environment can have huge impact on the start of the project, it can boost motivation to focus. A good and pleasant working environment can also lead you to a satisfying result, specially while designing in a group full of creative and talented people. A comfortable and inspiring workplace with natural light. Environments that can give us flexibility and adaptability to accommodate different working styles, preferences, and project requirements, allowing the team to pivot iterate as needed.

The Theory of the *Dérive* (literally “drifting”; Debord 1956) developed by the French philosopher and anarchist Guy Debord, alongside his organization Situationist International, invites people—usually in groups of two or three—to allow themselves to drift and notice the emotions they experience in different locations. People’s reactions when you invite them to *dérive* vary from intrigue to being very dismissive. Those who try them with an open mind usually return having had new and surprising experiences and learning. (Gatenby & Cantore, 2018, p.62)

We held our meetings in every artist group working environments to help us know better each other and it created a feeling that we are interested in each other’s field and everyone presence is essential to this project.

### **4.4 Planning**

We figure out three common points that connect us all based on our feelings toward the main subject and our main plan was based on this three.

First thing was harmony, because it’s an ability to work together smoothly, cohesively, and effectively toward a common goal. The second was black and white vibes, we thought it can create a striking contrast, evoke a sense of simplicity, or emphasize the interplay of light and

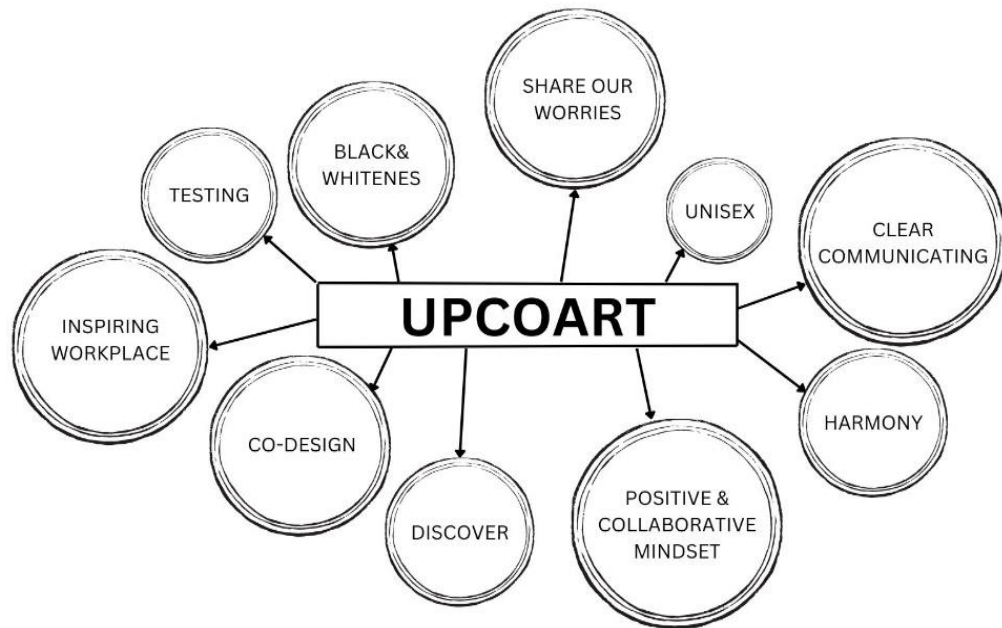
shadow in the artwork. The third was unisex, because in our project we didn't want to be limited to a particular gender, allowing for more diverse and open interpretation by viewers regardless of their gender identity.

The plan itself was obvious and clear. We wanted to co-design three outfits and choreography for fashion video. I suggest that we can start to make mood boards after a, so that we can visualize everyone's feelings and vibes about the whole project, from clothes till the end. Everyone agreed and all of us was curious about how we were imagining the whole project in our mind.

Irving Janis (1982), a psychologist, developed the idea that when people work together in groups there is a pressure that builds to aim for agreement in any decision. This can become a pattern, and, as a result, decisions can end up being made that reflect the thinking patterns and relationships in the group rather than the data presented to them about the situation they face. Such groupthink is indicative of an absence of learning between those involved. Instead, social factors and preferences dominate the group learning culture. Learning does not happen in a vacuum. (Gatenby & Cantore, 2018, p.30)

Analyzing everyone's moods and feelings for this project we realized one clear similarity and it was black & white. The classic black & white had that feeling that everyone can understand it and it's the symbol of being simple, artsy, and minimalist. We could visualize our visions about project, what we talked before starting project and this made it much easier to understand basically because none of us had ever worked together before. Based on this data we start to make a simple mind map to remind us during the whole process of co-design what is our plan and aims.

Picture 5. Mind map



#### 4.5 Co-designing process

Based on those three key words harmony, black &whitens and unisex combined and combining our mind map, we wanted to start design outfits and the dance choreography for the main video. All of us together were trying to make a choreography based on harmony, black and whiteness and unisexist.

Given the relational nature of co-design, taking time to work with groups drawn from across the system to reflect together seems a key activity and one that needs to be given priority. It is fundamental to gaining the most from the learning that takes place in and through the work we do together. (Cantore, 2018)

We thought choreography might be our first co- design workshop, because during that week there was only one free time that would suited our group and we saw it perfect, otherwise the next free time would have been one month after.

The second co-design workshop was related to clothes and all the three outfits. We agreed based dance choreography it would have been much easier to design the outfits. Mostly

because that all of us saw the movements and somehow its much easier to visualize the outfits and how they are fit for dancing.

#### **4.5.1 Choreography — first workshop**

This time the best choice for our meeting was dance studio that our dancing perfuming artists were teaching there. When starting something that you don't have any experience at it is difficult, but it's also fun to figure out how and all by yourself. So, we start by playing the music that was going to be in the fashion video. Moving clueless in front of mirror and watching each other was something new to me and for our video& photography artist but not at all for the dance performing artist. We talked and communicated with each other during our moves or should call it dancing. One of dancing performing artist made a very complicated dance move also awesome, some of us agree to have it in the video but or videographer disagreed and was totally against it because shooting that would have needed different kind of camera and expensive tools.

As an artist, you are a creature of your senses. You have trained your eye to see beauty, your ear to hear music; you see patterns where others see nothing; you see the extraordinary in the ordinary. Life itself is your raw material, and life does not cease as your years increase and your senses dim. You cannot shut off the creative urge or stop the flow of ideas. Even if you cease composing music or painting canvases you will never cease hearing the music around you or seeing images in the world that passes before you. You have an artist's eye and an artist's heart. You are afflicted with the joyful curse of an endlessly curious imagination. (Nerburn, 2020, p.185)

We continue to discovery that what moves could be fitting for the fashion video while wearing designed outfits. In the middle of our co-designing, we got many good moves from each participant. But the thing was when you notice that while we were co-designing it happened that we also co-creating the whole dance choreography all of us involved without having a second thoughts. It was also first time for dancing perfuming artists to design a choreography was part of making dance choreography and showing to professional dancer how a dancing move should look like, and to them it was fun, full of joy and laughs.

After almost one hour it was time to figure out what is going to be useful for us and what not and we went through everyone's created moves to combine them to become a choreography. In the end all of us agreed that in fashion video the acting dancers use clear hands, sharp arm moves, and body should be relaxed.

#### **4.5.2 Outfits — second workshop**

One week after we started second workshop with the co-designing outfits. We gathered this time at my place, because had some tools to help our process. After a short briefing that what we did and reminding everyone what we are aiming this time we continue to think what is going to be the best option to save time for co-designing outfits.

Nobody had any clue how we should begin this phase. Somehow it feels like that based on our professions that I should something in my sleeves. Before mentioning my idea, I also added that I never tested this before. The suggested idea was, what if we start to design in one common A3 paper and everyone one of us can add max two option in every outfit, front and back. Every participant uses different color than others to make it easier to understand what part is designed by which participant. All of us agreed and got excited, mostly me because I never have been trying this method before.

In some contexts, we have time to frame questions. This may be best done with others. In other contexts, an opportunity emerges for us to pose a question, and so practicing to listen well and shape interesting questions is a great skill to support learning in systems. (Gatenby & Cantore, 2018, p.39)

I drew two human figures on A3 paper one from front, other from the back for every outfit and we started our workshop. It was very interesting to see how this process is going on and how everyone one of us was so focused, like we were in dance studio it had same feeling.

The time flies fast, but it took us almost three hours to co- design all three outfits. After that we went through all co-designed outfits and double checked it with everyone. All of us satisfied with the designs.

#### **4.5.3 Video — third workshop**

This part from our project didn't get much more time to be co-designed. Verbally we had agreed to not deep dive for this phase and let it be all the photo shooting responsibility to our videography artist. We had a script based on harmony, black& whitens and unisex. Also, we talked in our group chat that what is going to be the best solution to include the co-design process.



The best choice was that we just got to make it happened at the main shooting day, less than one hour. We start warming up shoots with co-designing it together. Videographer, one of the dancers and me were looking at the screen while two other dancers were dancing, to discovering what is going to be the best angle for our video. This approach happened in five circles between dancers that each of them can be involved in the co-designing process of video making.

It was fun to be co-directing the video and for us who never had experiences to hold a professional camera with many confusing switches it was fun, even its was short and simple.

## **4.6 Result**

The careful use of language opens up for people the possibility that something is waiting to be learned. Giving attention to routinely offering recognition for effort with the aim of encouraging those who have stretched themselves. Praise the learning and the learners! (Gatenby & Cantore, 2018, p.26)

As a group we had a good synergy from the beginning it was like we had cooperated before. But beforehand you have these thoughts that what if doesn't work at all do you have a backup plan? But we had each others back and I think it was our backbone to succeeded. This project was my first co-design project with other talented artists. Personally, Upcoart project was opportunity to see how other artists handle different situations and how they solve their problems when they bump into one. Getting to realize our pressure handling level and how creative we might become at that moment when the struggles catch us off guard.

From the beginning of Upcoart co-design project I had that feeling that it's going to have a good starting point for my upcoming co-design projects in the future, especially with other artists from different fields, not only creating art but deepen my knowledge about art and learn from other artists something new.

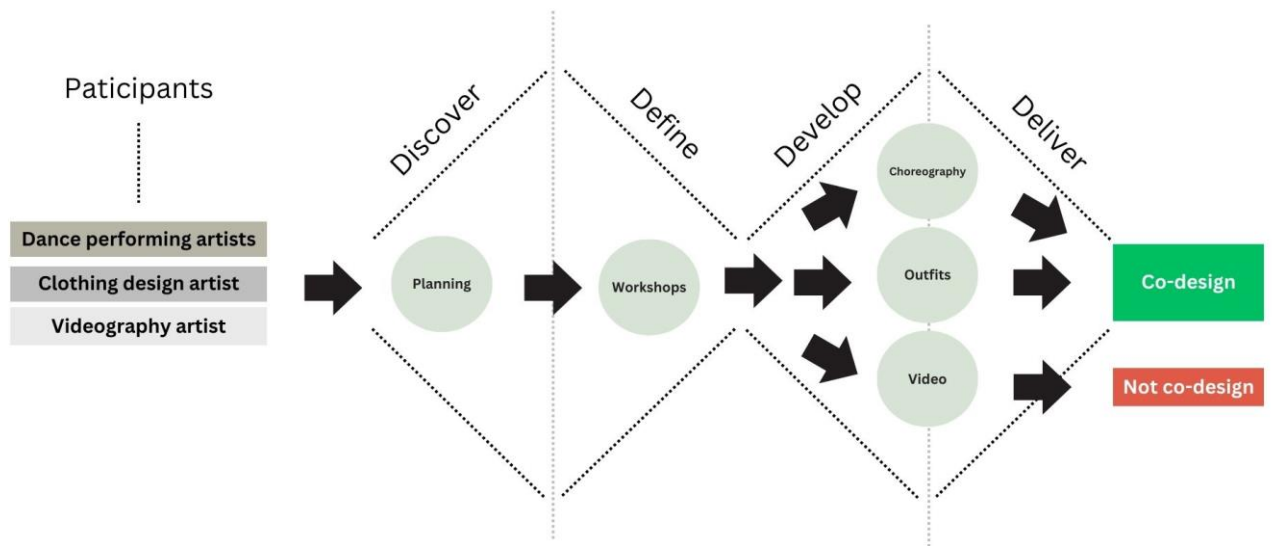
Based on this first co-design project, working with other artists is something that I can recommend to every artist, especially when everyone is from different fields and professions. It can be a good motivational and inspirational for our upcoming projects. Every participant had something to share and something to learn. For example, how to understand, respect other people thought, emotions and ideas even if you are thinking differently from them. Co-design projects with artists it's very colorful and gives you options to realize and analyze a

subject from many points of views. You learn to listen, because for many it's difficult to listen other's opinion.

For example, you learn to be patient and not act solo on decision making and not rush to get everything done by yourself. You can practice being brave enough to talk and spit out your ideas, solutions and worries in front of others. Learning to hear others and seeing things from their point of view is a very important skill that you can understand your main purpose, new ways to solve problems or discover new ones at that moment while.

Everyone who was involved with Upcoart project were designing the whole process from designing outfits and choreography. Except one part of co-design phase remained unco-designed. Then problem was lack of resources and that single handedly effected on everything specially on members participating. Because every participant put, they main job at priority and it's understandable to not risk everything for a project that the only payment is new experiences.

Picture 6. Upcoart projects co-design path



Another problem was co-directing the video on the main location. We had an agreement with the filming location owners that our video shooting will take only four hours. Our videography

artists had that worry that for co-designing a fashion video we should be able to be at that location separated for one day or more.

In general, we were satisfied with the progress, result, and ourselves. Because we get to know more each other as artists and created that kind of relationship that we could work again in the near future.

But the main achievement was us, ourselves that how good we can be if we are able to trust team members and not acting on our own. Also, when you are co-designing with other artists you should respect, their art and skills and even something is unclear to you and you don't have the knowledge about a specific term you should dare to ask, that shows you're really interested and really appreciating their effort.

Giving space to each other is also another important thing that I should add. When you realize that your coworker is struggling to process you should give them some time to recover. It's also nice to ask if you can help to seek a solution for the matter. Co-design with other artists is not all about working together and make the job done, it's all about emotions, living in the moment, deepen your creativity and sharing your positive feelings to become a better artist.

Picture 7. Upcoart collections ending results



## 5 Reflection

We can start by taking some time out to reflect upon the processes we take for making decisions, giving careful thought to each step, and considering the information we include habitually. Trying out some new approaches to making choices and seeing what happens can help us become more aware of habits, particularly if we pay attention to when it feels difficult to change. Such moments signpost where we have got stuck in a pattern. (Gatenby & Cantore, 2018, p.29)

Seeing co-design as a tool to practice curiosity and inner knowledge to question the norms with other people who are sharing the same interests from designers, artists to no designers and specially with people who don't have that deep knowledge about art. It can create strong bonds and understanding between people who wants to talk about their needs and problems with designer by co-designing, new solutions for their needs with working together as a team to test and rectify answers.

Co-designing might be a huge challenge if you don't have any experiences about and it's going to feels like that you are deep diving into a bottomless ocean, but co-design with artists is very extemporaneous. Imagining every co-design project with different artists around the world. It can't be the same and having the same results even if the questioning area is the same, some co-design projects might even create more question to answer. That aside you can find new collages that you can trust and create a strong bond through co-design projects. Also, in the future you can again having them in your project, because you know that is worth it and they put you in a huge advantage if your seeking creativity and colorfulness.

In the process of co-design, we can get quite wrapped up in ideas and design. Conversing brings us back to the reality of our own physical presence in a world that we share with others. Speaking and listening require physical effort and a physical presence. Technology can split the voice from the physical presence. Conversing face to face reunites the voice with the person. We hear and learn much more from the physical presence of a person than we ever can via other mediums. (Cantore, 2018)

Personally, I prefer to talking and having conversations in person, it's really feels different than having that virtual meeting through laptops camera lenses. In my opinion the best part about co-design with artists is that artists are very sensitive that how they work. When you want to explain something from artist to another you need that physical eye contact and even

if can't explain yourself by words you show it by drawing it immediately on paper or with the tools that you have in your workshop.

Co-designs positive list aside, it has two big down fall or two negative sides. Those are time and resources. Those two together can change the projects main course to that point that you are not even satisfied with the ending result. When the definitions path is not clear to co-designer artists and some participants can be slower than the others, they need more time to react to challenges during a co-design project.

You should include that how every participant is going to benefit from project and does the project financially able to support them if they part of the co-design project. Keeping that in your mind that every participant is having equal values, and they should get paid equally. Somehow the quality of ending result might be affected by lacking budgets and special tools for the project specially if you are student.

KNOWING WHEN TO stop, when to continue, how to bring your work to completion without losing your creative energy – these are challenges all artists face, and how you deal with them will determine much about the quality of your work and the way you feel about what you have accomplished. (Nerburn, 2020, p.133)

Sometimes as a group of artists you struggle with a problem and can't find a solution for it. That problem making you frustrate to that point that you and your teammates wants to quit, but that time is the project managers rule is to step in. A person who can always coordinate the project by reminding the basics for example, break times that as group of artists you don't get overwhelmed by working more than you should. It's also, effectful that from the beginning of the project to set a clear schedule. That gives a balance to the whole project even if things are not going into that direction that everyone is trying.

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## **Appendix 1. Thesis data management plan**

### **1 Management and storage of research data**

Used photo is from my collection and its stored in my personal laptop. All of the informations that I collected from interviews are wroten on paper and all of the papers related to thesis are in my personal shelf that I have access to it.

### **2 Processing of personal data and sensitive data**

No personal data has been used during thesis. There is no confidential information in thesis.

### **3 Ownership of thesis data**

The thesis and its results are entirely owned by the author.

### **4 Further use of thesis data after the work is completed**

The utilization and subsequent rights to use the research material remain with the author. Utilization rights are not permitted without the written consent of the author. The author of the thesis will store the materials used in the thesis for at least one year following the approval of the thesis.

