

## CHAPTER 12

# Towards a Crippling of Research Practices – Peeling off Ableist Structures in an Arts, Culture and Disability Researcher and Commissioner Collaboration in Norway

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**Abstract:** This chapter offers a critical look at how five disabled and non-disabled researchers, and two commissioners experienced working with the project *Artist – an accessible profession? A research project about artists with disabilities in Norway*. Understanding the project as a collaborative learning process, they generated research material for a post-project study through writing reflective notes prompted by the two questions: *What surprised me? Were there specific learning moments in the project?* Dialoguing with theory from co-design research in critical disability studies, they scrutinize their own narrated experience and arrive at insights about: how *embodied knowing* and nuances of *crip time* – articulated as *slow time and timing, sustainable time, and time as a site of care* – could challenge ableist structures of *theoretical knowing, efficient time and timing, competitive time, and time as something to control*. Without conscious action, such ableist structures risk reproducing themselves not only in arts, culture, and society, but also in research projects that critically examine precisely these ableist structures.

**Keywords:** ableist structures, co-design, collaborative learning, crip time, shifting power in research

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This chapter is a critical inquiry into the collaboration between the researchers and commissioners behind a research project initiated by Arts and Culture Norway, titled *Artist – an accessible profession? A research project about artists with disabilities in Norway* (Østern et al., 2023). This was the first commissioned research project on disabled artists with a required participatory method by Arts and Culture Norway,<sup>1</sup> and as such it indicates a shift in the focus of the authorities funding professional arts in Norway, from which disabled artists have been largely ignored and excluded. In the project, interviews with disabled artists, as well as with leaders of arts and culture institutions, were the main research material generated and analyzed with the aim of revealing barriers and enablers for disabled artists in Norway (Østern et al., 2023). In this chapter, we scrutinize the collaboration in the project between the five researchers and two commissioners, who, in different capacities, worked towards identifying barriers and enablers for becoming and working as a disabled artist in Norway.

The five researchers who carried out the original research (Tone Pernille Østern, Terje Olsen, Elen Øyen, Lise Lien, and Lene Christin Holum) and the two senior advisers who managed the project on behalf of Arts and Culture Norway (Anne Ogundipe and Kaja Tvedten Jorem) have written this chapter together. In the original research project, the research team worked independently, and in accordance with established principles of academic freedom. Thus, the research team was responsible for choosing relevant theoretical perspectives and methodologies, and for carrying out the research. The arguments and findings in the resulting report (Østern et al., 2023) are entirely their own. Throughout the process, however, there was ongoing critical and constructive dialogue between the researchers and the commissioners, and both parties worked collectively so that the research project might produce as much insight as possible on the barriers to and enablement of becoming and working as a disabled artist in Norway. In this post-project study, we look back critically on our process, and ask: What insights on structural barriers for co-designed research can be learned from a collaborative process between disabled and non-disabled researchers, and commissioners in a research project about arts, culture, and disability in Norway?

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1 <https://www.kulturdirektoratet.no/english>

We will first present a background for and summary of the original research project. Next, we present the backgrounds and experiences that we brought into the team. Then, we move on to the theoretical perspectives we dialogue with (Fraser-Barbour et al., 2023; Goodley et al., 2019), as well as a short methodological description of how we conducted this post-project study. Finally, we analyze and theorize from our collaborative process, offering insights that might be of interest to other collaborative teams researching arts, culture, and disability.

## **The geo-political context of Norway, and a short summary of the research project**

The original research project is situated in the geopolitical context of Norway, a country with 5.4 million inhabitants in Northern Europe. While equal opportunity for all is a stated sociopolitical goal in Norway, through laws like the Working Environment Act and the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, reports and research indicate that equity is not fulfilled for people with disabilities. Statistics from Bufdir (The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs)<sup>2</sup> (2023) reveal that people with disabilities are marginalized and underrepresented in several areas of Norwegian society. For example, only 41% of people with disabilities are employed, and 30% of those not employed wish to work (Bufdir, 2023). Bufdir's statistics further reveal that disabled students, to a clearly lower degree, continue on to higher education compared to non-disabled students (Bufdir, 2023). A survey on Norwegian cultural institutions and diversity from 2021 showed that only 36% of the surveyed institutions focus on disability (Rambøll, 2022). Our own research (Østern et al., 2023) uncovers similar structural ableism and discrimination in the arts and culture field in Norway. Our research correlates with similar European reports, which all point in the same direction: there are massive barriers in the arts and culture field, and in higher arts education for people with disabilities to become artists and work professionally as artists (Arts Council England & EW Group, 2017; Floch & Portoles, 2021).

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2 <https://www.bufdir.no/om/>

The original research (Østern et al., 2023) utilized a qualitative design, using semi-structured interviews to generate research material, which consists of interviews with 45 leaders from the arts and culture field, including higher arts education, and 19 disabled artists. In the analysis the researchers activated system critical and critical disability theories to understand how arts and cultural institutions exist within a social and material field characterized by ableist norms, values, power structures, and organizational forms (Kuppers, 2001; Mark, 2006; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Vassenden & Bergsgard, 2011). Summarized, the research found that the barriers for artists with disabilities in Norway are deeply rooted, multifaceted, and systemic. The two strongest barriers from the disabled artists' perspectives were identified as lack of access to higher arts education, and weak finances arising from a lack of collaboration between artist grants and disability benefits from NAV, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Østern et al., 2023). Other barriers that the research identified, based on the artists' perspectives, were (Østern et al., 2023): the majority has the defining power; closed artistic networks; the Arts Council Norway and other funding authorities as gatekeepers; lack of interest in disabled artists by institutions that produce and present art; low representation in influential organs and positions; weak audience interest; stereotypical roles in film and theatre; artistic production and touring characterized by a demanding work culture on the majority population's terms; patronizing attitudes and low expectations; and weak universal design of workplaces, educational institutions, and webpages. The barriers often occur in clusters, where one leads to another.

The research resulted in 10 recommendations for long-term efforts with targeted measures, combined with more general sectoral change (Østern et al., 2023). One recommended field of action motivates this post-process study:

**Field of action 9**

Collaboration in artistic processes, as well as in research, should be developed as a guiding principle across the arts and culture field, educational institutions, and academia. The whole field should transform from *about* to *with*. Artists with disabilities should be given a clear voice in the creation of practices and storytelling in the field. (Østern et al., 2023, p. 22)

## The backdrop for the research, and our trajectories into this team

In 2020, the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality assigned the Arts Council Norway, now Arts and Culture Norway, the role as national coordinator for increased diversity, inclusion, and participation in the arts and culture sector (Ministry of Culture and Equality, 2020). Arts and Culture Norway is

the main governmental operator for the implementation of Norwegian cultural policy. Arts and Culture Norway functions as an advisory body to the central government and public sector on cultural affairs. Arts and Culture Norway is fully financed by the Ministry of Culture and Equality. (Arts and Culture Norway, n.d.)

Arts and Culture Norway thus wields a lot of power in the arts and culture field in Norway, and our research (Østern et al., 2023) reveals that they have previously functioned as a barrier to the development of the arts as a field available to disabled artists. Their new role as national coordinator for increased diversity, inclusion, and participation in the arts and culture sector led to a considerable shift towards a clearer focus on diversity and inclusion for Arts and Culture Norway, which supported the cultural political goal of a relevant, representative, and accessible arts and culture field (Ministry of Culture, 2018). Arts and Culture Norway, in their new role as national coordinator, promptly initiated a pilot project, which resulted in a report arguing in favor of knowledge-based, long-term diversity work (Ogundipe et al., 2020). This report was co-authored by one of the senior advisors, who acted as a representative of the commissioner for the original research and co-author of this chapter, Anne Ogundipe. The report reveals considerable gaps in knowledge about deaf and disabled artists, and a need for targeted efforts to remedy these gaps.

In addition to the report, a comprehensive dialogue between Arts and Culture Norway and relevant actors in the sector was led by the other senior advisor, who acted as a representative of the commissioner for the original research and co-author of this chapter, Kaja Tvedten Jorem. In a reflective article about what she calls “the ‘disability revolution’ in the Norwegian arts sector,” she writes, “Speaking to hundreds of artists, colleagues, activists, and institutions to inform our role, we had to acknowledge that we had

very limited understanding of people with disabilities as artists, cultural workers, and changemakers in the sector” (Jorem, 2023, unpaginated).

The report co-authored by Ogundipe, as well as extensive dialogue with the field led by Jorem, formed the background for initiating the research project *Artist – an accessible profession? A research project about artists with disabilities in Norway* (Østern et al., 2023). The call to apply for leading the research project was announced through an open competition in 2021 (Arts Council Norway). A requirement for applications was that the disability movement philosophy, “nothing about us, without us” (Charlton, 2000), would guide the research. This caught the original researcher group’s attention, as this was something radically new in arts and culture research commissioned in Norway – indeed a long wished for ‘disability revolution’ in this country.

The Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research, in partnership with the Department for Teacher Education at NTNU Norwegian University for Science and Technology, applied for, and were assigned, the research project by Arts and Culture Norway. Fafo is an independent social science research foundation, which develops knowledge on the conditions for participation in worklife, organizational life, society and politics, the relationship between politics and living conditions, as well as on democracy, development, and value creation. Three researchers from Fafo participated in the project. Terje Olsen has been working with disability and participation for many years, with a special focus on hate speech towards and exclusion from the labor market of disabled people. Lise Lien has previously researched exclusion based in racism in the film industry in Norway. Lene Christin Holum, a psychologist, has researched inclusion and exclusion mechanisms in the labor market.<sup>3</sup> Two researchers from the Department of Teacher Education at NTNU also participated. Tone Pernille Østern and Elen Øyen have a long history of working together as artists, researchers, and teachers in the fields of dance, performing arts, and education (19 years as this chapter is written). Through their collaborative work they challenge ableist normative ideas about dance, bodies, and education, and aim at expanding and changing arts, education, and society towards more equitable practices. They have critically scrutinized their own collaboration, and the dis/privileges they face in their work as disabled

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3 Lien and Holum have since then moved to other workplaces.

and non-disabled partners (Østern & Øyen, 2014a, 2014b, 2015). Øyen has spina bifida and uses a wheelchair. Østern has a permanent position at the university, whereas Øyen was employed in a part time position at the department for 13 months, through the funding received for the original research project. As this chapter is written, Øyen is employed in a position as dancer and producer at DansiT Choreographic Center, whereas Østern continues at the university.

Thus, a research team consisting of five co-researchers with and without disabilities, and different routes into the field of critical disability research, took on the task of the original project. Representatives from Arts and Culture Norway – the commissioners– were involved in the process to support and have critical conversations about the emerging report throughout the whole duration of the research project from December 2021 to the launch of the report in April 2023. In this sense, we became a collaborative team and thus, as all collaborative teams, needed to work with the ableist structures that also occurred within our collaboration.

## **Understanding our research as a collaborative learning process**

We think of our co-designed research as collaborative learning (CL), a learning process that implies groups of actors working together on learning and understanding in small groups. These are social processes, which involve joint intellectual efforts from smaller group projects as part of cooperative learning. CL has been applied in disability studies for at least a couple of decades, in a rather diverse manner. One part of the literature in this area describes a multitude of participatory action research, aiming to bring persons with disabilities actively into developing new knowledge and understanding in areas such as living conditions, welfare services or well-being (see Kninckel et al., 2019; Pollard et al., 2004). Another part of the literature in this area is focused upon developing new understanding, better services or improved schooling and educational resources, and emphasizes the situation for persons with intellectual disabilities and severe impairments (Aristizábal et al., 2017; Ashman & Gillies, 2013). A third part of the literature is technology-oriented, aiming to develop new and better technology, or utilizing already existing technology in new and better ways (see Adeleye et al., 2024; Jimenez et al., 2017; Ramos et al., 2022). These three variants obviously overlap in different ways, and our variant of CL

has a sort of kinship with all three mentioned above, aiming to develop new knowledge on the working conditions for artists with disabilities, as well as information about people's experiences with the education and admission requirements in academia, public welfare, and welfare administration routines.

We define CL in line with what Marjan Laal and Mozhgan Laal (2012) point out as five fundamental elements associated with the concept: 1) *Positive interdependence between the participants*. What you develop together is greater than the sum of what each individual would achieve alone; 2) *Individual and group accountability*. This implies that members have a shared responsibility to each other to understand and achieve; 3) *Interpersonal and small group skills*. This implies the ability and willingness to work together; 4) *Face-to-face promotive interaction*. This may be either direct face-to-face collaboration through physical meetings or by interaction in media such as Zoom or Teams; 5) *Group processing*. Participants contribute to the group's joint learning based on respective competences, such as bodily experiences, academic skills, and know-how.

We have all taken part in these collaborative learning processes from our different positions as performing artists, as persons with and without disabilities, as employees in public administration, universities, and the research sector. We participated in the processes from different positions and roles, and we brought our respective perspectives into the collaborative learning. Although we had not originally thought of our work in terms of CL, we have come to realize – in our post-project reflection – that such an understanding enables critical learning and peeling off ableist structures in our collaboration.

## **Theoretical perspectives: Crippling institutions and time**

For this post-project study, we dialogue with two specific articles, which we have found helpful in generating insights from our own reflection on our process. In “Shifting power to people with disability in co-designed research,” Ellen Fraser-Barbour et al. (2023) explore tensions navigated by researchers and project leaders when involving people with disabilities in core teams of co-designed research in commissioned research. Co-design, originating from the design and technology sectors (Fraser-Barbour et al.,



2023, p. 3), is a way of conducting research, which is increasingly utilized in social as well as educational research (Bakker, 2018). Fraser-Barbour et al. (2023, p. 3) explain how “co-design enables social issues to be examined in collaboration with communities affected by these issues in an ethical way.” The value “nothing about us, without us” (Charlton, 2000), as in our project, gears research clearly towards methodologies of co-design. At the core of co-design research is the acknowledgement of lived experience and diverse ways of knowing, and to research “with” instead of “on” community (Fraser-Barbour, 2023, p. 3). However, as the co-design of research with disabled and non-disabled researchers in the core team inevitably takes place in institutionalized ableist structures, the working structures of the research and relationships themselves need to be worked on constantly (see Østern & Øyen, 2014b). The crucial insight that Fraser-Barbour et al. (2023) arrived at is how power shifts to the disabled participants are easily undermined by institutionalized norms that disrespect the co-design of the project. We are drawn towards *time* as a crucial aspect that turned up in different ways as a barrier in Fraser-Barbour et al.’s project, since the necessity to challenge ableist time and timing is also central in what we become aware of as we look back on our own process. Fraser-Barbour et al. point out how, when commissioners ask for research to be conducted quickly, which often is the case, this puts stress on the real co-design of co-designed research. In other words, “nothing about us, without us” might become tokenistic, in that disabled participants are there, but cannot have a real impact on the research. Fraser-Barbour et al. (2023, p. 18) conclude that “researchers should be working to ‘crip’ institutions and research practices.” In short, with *cripping* as a verb, we mean the resistance of ableist normativity from the perspective of disability. Carrie Sandahl describes *cripping* as something that “spins mainstream representations or practices to reveal able-bodied assumptions and exclusionary effects,” thus “bearing witness to past and present injustice” (Sandahl, 2003, p. 28; here in Karlsson & Rydström, 2023, p. 401). Further, Fraser-Barbour et al. note that:

Generating change through co-design demands more of us to acknowledge ableist norms and structures and build structural change that supports the empowerment of researched communities through co-design processes that lend credibility as a legitimate and emancipatory way to perform research and evaluation. (Fraser-Barbour et al., 2023, pp. 19–20)

The other article we dialogue with is “Provocations for critical disability studies” by Dan Goodley et al. (2019). Goodley and colleagues (2019, p. 984) advocate for how bodies become materialized, in other words made “active, lived, felt, thought and enacted” through complex material/discursive entities. Goodley et al. (2019, p. 986) argue that ability is a less well-developed idea than disability, but that the notion of ability still feeds our institutions, such as schools and workplaces (Goodley et al., 2019, p. 985), and, we add, research projects, universities, and research institutions, as the most valued of human capacities. Goodley et al. (2019) offer a table, which shows the disability complex, and which we later in this chapter wish to add to with themes we discovered in our post-project study:

**Table 1.** The dis/ability complex by Goodley et al. (2019, p. 987).

Disability	Ability
Emotional	Rational
Mad	Sane
Dependent	Autonomous
Intermeshed	Atomistic
Sitting	Standing
Collective packs	Lone wolves
Crippling	Norming
Entangled	Alone
Many others	The same
Environment	Man
Nature	Civilization
Non-human	Human
Animal	Anthropos
Cosmology	Science
Sustainability	Growth
Bodies	Minds

Looking at this table, we join in Goodley et al’s question: “What do we want to keep of ability?” (Goodley et al., 2019, p. 987), and their statement that disability offers an opportunity, we add, for a world caught up in modernism and ableism. As Goodley et al. (2019, p. 988) argue, disability has the potential to shake up pedagogy, and is an affirmative phenomenon: “a chance to pause, re-jig and reorient education.” We add: and a possibility to cripp and reorient research and research institutions towards more real, co-designed, and sustainable research.

## A word on methodology

For this post-project, critical self-reflective study, the researchers and the commissioners joined in looking back at the research process. Immediately after handing in the final report for publication, we jointly articulated two questions to inspire personal, individual reflective writing: *What surprised me? Were there specific learning moments in the project?* We set a one page per person limit, gave ourselves a deadline, and shared our pages with each other by email. As the narrated experiences kept arriving in our inboxes, we read the others' experiences. A collaborative "undergoing" (Dewey, 1934), through the opportunity to write and reflect, arose among us. From our narrated experiences, we could, inspired by thematic narrative analysis as described by Vera Caine et al. (2022), start to carve out themes of interest for critical inquiry. As we started the post-project, we had with us critical system theory and critical disability theories used in the original research (see Kupperts, 2001; Mark, 2006; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Vassenden & Bergsgard, 2011). However, in this post-project study we were led towards theory focusing more on the work in co-design processes themselves. The work by Fraser-Barbour et al. (2023) and Goodley et al. (2019), as already described, became especially pivotal for our critical thinking.

## Peeling off nuances of ableism, with a specific focus on embodied knowing, time, and timing

In this section, we scrutinize our own narrated experiences. We seek to carve out themes showing how navigation in the dis/ability complex (Goodley et al., 2019) occurred in our team.

### Embodied knowing vs theoretical knowing

The first theme we wish to draw attention to is that of *embodied knowing vs theoretical knowing*. To enter this research project with embodied knowing based in lived experience as a disabled person, implied an affirmative experience through the project. The project affirms what Elen, the disabled researcher, already knows from her own life. For the non-disabled researchers and commissioners, it is different. Their knowing is theoretical, not

embodied, and thus they experience surprise where Elen does not. Elen (researcher) in her reflections wrote:

I participated in this project with many different hats. Dance artist. Disabled woman. Co-researcher. Living as a disabled woman for 43 years, you get used to all kinds of discrimination mechanisms. Interviewing the artists in this project, it became clear early on that these artists had experienced many of the same discrimination mechanisms as I have. Prejudice. Infantilization. The welfare system's total rejection and lack of support for disabled people's desire to live as professional artists. That rejection started already in primary school for many of the participants in the project. So that did not surprise me at all. Reflecting on this project makes me realize how unsurprised I am about the level of discrimination the participants experience. I have been discriminated against throughout my whole life. So, I think non-disabled people are more surprised by the results of this project than I am.

All of the non-disabled researchers and commissioners, despite their extensive theoretical knowledge about dis/ability, write about how they were surprised by both the extent of the discrimination, as well as the severe consequences of it. Anne (commissioner) was struck by how the discriminatory barriers identified in arts and culture are entangled with barriers in related sectors, like education and welfare. Anne wrote:

An insight that I find particularly striking and somewhat surprising, is that the barriers professional artists with disabilities face, do not solely stem from the arts and culture sector itself ... The interplay and cooperation between the arts and culture sector and other sectors – such as the broader educational sector, as well as the welfare sector – will be of great importance when working towards more equitable paths to becoming a professional artist. It has been both surprising and disheartening to learn that people with disabilities so commonly have their artistic aspirations shut down from a very young age.

Kaja (commissioner) experienced similar surprise as she reflected:

Reading the full report of the research a year and a half later, the biggest surprise is the extent of inequity mechanisms at all levels of our sector. These artists become artists despite, and not because of, a system that doesn't know the extent of talent that is overlooked. The fact that education and the welfare system are such central barriers was an eye-opener with regard to the institutional mechanisms of inclusion or exclusion, and this challenges us to collaborate in new ways for systemic change to happen.

Lene (researcher), in her reflections, was surprised by how few disabled artists there seem to be in Norway, and connected this with how barriers start to emerge very early on the road towards becoming an artist, already in educational institutions. Lise (researcher) was surprised that many representatives in the field had problems giving an example of an artist with a disability, pointing to the same problem with exclusion starting very early on in life for aspiring disabled artists. She wrote:

It became very clear that the process of exclusion starts at an early age and requires early and knowledge-based efforts.

Lise was also surprised at how little attention arts and culture institutions in Norway seem to give to disability, which Terje also wrote about in his reflections:

Although I have worked extensively with research on the situation for disabled people, I was surprised how little attention issues about disability seem to have in this field, even in the national institutions. Disability seems barely to be on the agenda. It has become more and more clear to me through our project that the structural features of the culture field are strong. Partly, this applies to the material aspects, and partly it applies to expectations and norms about who belongs and fits in.

Tone, having worked extensively as a practitioner in the field of dance and disability for many years, with a 19-year long history of working together with Elen, was still surprised to realize:

How weak the economy is for most of the artists with disabilities, and how disability benefits are the most important source of income for most of them. It became very clear that we are talking about a group, which is really marginalized from the privileges and positions that the adult majority population in Norway would expect to reach by a certain age. The average age of the artists interviewed in the study is around 40, and at that age a person belonging to the majority population in Norway would expect to have a somewhat secure and stable income. Financial stability gives freedom and possibilities to, for example, get a bank loan so you can buy your own apartment, have a rich social life, and travel. That moment released a deep understanding in me for the everyday, material, and real-life consequences of discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. I experienced the shame of belonging to and having the privileges of the majority.

Our post-project critical reflection reveals that Elen, the disabled researcher in our team, is not at all surprised at the serious level and expanse of

discrimination and exclusion the interviewed disabled artists talk about. Their experiences are merely confirmations of her own experiences of discrimination. All the non-disabled researchers and commissioners, on the other hand, are surprised by this level and expanse of ableism into different sectors of society. This reveals that although these researchers and commissioners have theoretical insights into the ongoing discriminating ableist structures, they are unmarked by disability, and do not have the lived experiences of what this means in everyday life. As a theme learned in our research process, we would like to add to Goodley et al.'s (2019, p. 987) dis/ability complex the themes of embodied knowing and theoretical knowing, arguing that embodied knowing is crucial to fully realize the knowledge contributions of a research project.

**Table 2.** Adding to the dis/ability complex by Goodley et al. (2019, p. 987) with embodied knowing and theoretical knowing of disability.

Disability	Ability
Embodied knowing	Theoretical knowing

### Nuances of time and timing

Time and timing are not part of Goodley et al.'s (2019) dis/ability complex, and we want to add them as themes relating to *crip time* (Berg, 2023; Wälivaara, 2022). Through our post-study self-reflective study, we have found time and timing to be at the core of the ableist structures at work in our project. Elen wrote:

The fact that I am a disabled co-researcher, was really an advantage in this project. One important thing I have learned from this project, is to be very clear to non-disabled people about time. The time frame of disabled and non-disabled people could be very different. When I told them [the non-disabled researchers and commissioners] about how disabled people often need more time than non-disabled people, it actually felt like I have taught them something. The whole society today is built around the time frame of non-disabled people, and that makes the pressure to do a good job more intense for disabled people: for me, as well as for the disabled artists being interviewed in this project.

In our post-project, we found time and timing to be at play as ableist norms in: 1) the ways the project was commissioned within tight time frames; 2) fast processes between the researchers; 3) how efficient time negatively

influenced the possibility to recruit disabled interview persons; 4) how time was organized in the working relationships between Tone and Elen at the university; and 4) how time was managed in the meetings between the researchers and commissioners.

Regarding the ways the project was commissioned within tight time frames, Kaja wrote:

Articulating the commission and seeing the response, I learned a great deal about the power and responsibility that lies with Arts and Culture Norway enabling and disseminating knowledge. However, despite genuine efforts to ensure an inclusive process for all involved, the fact that we still had the same deadlines and budgets as other similar projects, showed that we are also very much part of a fast-moving system that is based on the premise of non-disabled majorities.

The time frame of the project again influenced the timing of the workflow between the researchers, which was easier to cope with for the non-disabled researchers, who are socialized into fast and efficient time and timing, and difficult to cope with for Elen, whose timing is different. In the original research, the researchers also think of this fast and efficient time frame as a barrier in their own efforts to recruit disabled artists for interviews. They wrote:

In the recruitment of interviewees via organisations (artists' organisations and organisations working for various types of disabilities), the project was occasionally met with scepticism from some organisations that felt obliged to protect the interviewees in question. They justified this with previous negative experiences with researchers and research projects. The argument is based on the fact that research projects often take place on the research's terms, and that not enough time is taken to build relationships, create trust, and conduct interviews on the interviewees' terms. We see this criticism as both relevant and justified, also in relation to this project. One of the biggest challenges to creating more space for artists with disabilities, as a minority in particular, and artists from marginalised groups in general, is the structural aspect, that both art production and dissemination, education, research, and administration are permeated by majority discourse. This project also faced such structural challenges. Fast and efficient use of time, for example, is something that characterises the majority's way of dealing with working life, but it is not necessarily something that suits people with disabilities. We also found it difficult to find time within our set time frames for the slow relationship building we believe would have strengthened recruitment to the project. (Østern et al., 2023, pp. 117–118, translated from Norwegian to English)

Navigating time and timing also became an important part of Tone's and Elen's working relationship at the university. Tone in her post-project reflections wrote:

Elen and I were a close team from the university NTNU during the whole project. With Elen's and my collaboration at NTNU as a base, I have often been able to connect what the disabled artists talk about in the interviews, with obstacles that have kept presenting resistance for Elen as an employee at NTNU. The continuous comparison of the project and Elen's experiences as an employee at a large institution like NTNU, gave me theoretical as well as embodied knowledge which together created insights on how deep the structural discrimination is. I realized it will take determination and clear leadership to manage to change established structures into real inclusive ones.

Tone contemplated how she herself, as a senior researcher in a permanent and thus powerful position at a university, has a crucial role in changing the ableist time and timing from within the institution itself. It matters directly how she behaves in concrete micro situations, and in daily interactions between her and Elen, and it also matters what she demands from the university administration. For Tone, the days with Elen, who worked part-time at the university campus during the 13 months, implied more sustainable and healthy days than the days without Elen. Tone lowered her work tempo, took proper time to have morning meetings, not only to organize the day, but to say hello and show interest for how we both were doing, took enough time to have lunch, allow time to rest, and be satisfied for what we managed to do today.

Regularly during the project, there were online meetings between the commissioners and researchers. In these meetings, ableist, fast, and efficient time and timing proved to be a hurdle, which needed to be challenged. We usually had an hour reserved, and a lot of topics to talk through during the meetings. If not actively resisting the ableist timing, the meetings risked reproducing a fast pace, which the non-disabled researchers and commissioners were more socialized in. In fast and efficient meetings, the non-disabled researchers and commissioners were more used to claiming time and space for their arguments to be heard. The ableist timing of the meetings were never quite addressed or settled during the project, and not properly understood until this post-project study. However, Tone and Elen often talked about time, timing, order of talking, who gets to contribute and not, after the meetings. They found out that the meetings worked better if they



were together in the same room during the meetings, sitting physically next to one another, rather than in different, individual zoom rooms.

Based in our scrutinizing of how time and timing turned up as an ableist structure in several ways in our project, we wish to add to Goodley et al.'s dis/ability complex through several nuances of time and timing.

**Table 3.** Adding to the dis/ability complex by Goodley et al. (2019, p. 987) with several nuances of time and timing.

Disability	Ability
Slow time and timing	Efficient time and timing
Sustainable time	Competitive time
Time as a site for care	Time as something to control

Viewing our co-design research process through a dis/ability complex (Goodley et al., 2019), our post-project reflections reveal how ableist time and timing presented challenges for research organization and collaboration. In hindsight, the research project was not sufficiently attentive to *crip time*, a concept that addresses how time, as organized in society, is normative (Wälivaara, 2022), and that disabled people may live in profoundly different temporalities. Compared to normative time, which we could also call ableist time, which emphasizes speed and efficiency, crip time is slower, because disabled bodies embody and live time non-normatively. Eva Karlin Berg (2023, p. 11), referring to Wälivaara (2022), notes that “living in crip time but being expected to bend and fit into normative time can leave marks and trauma.” As the rest of the team did not have embodied knowing of crip time, Elen had to constantly remind us that slower time and timing was needed. The commissioners had not originally allowed longer than usual time for deliveries, however, they did so after discussing time as an ableist barrier.

## Concluding insights from our co-design research as a collaborative learning process

The five researchers and two commissioners behind the research project *Artist – an accessible profession? A research project about artists with disabilities in Norway* (Østern et al., 2023) all have different trajectories into the project, and further into this post-project study. Only one of us, Elen, has embodied knowing with ableist discrimination and inequity mechanisms

at play in society and education, replicated in the arts and culture field. Our post-project study showed that she was not particularly surprised at the amount of discrimination taking place in the arts and culture field in Norway, and its nuances. While those of us who lack such embodied knowing were certainly aware of some of the challenges disabled people face – either through previous research, or through previous involvement in diversity work in the arts and culture field – we nonetheless underwent deep learning processes about the *extent* and *systemic nature* of ableist mechanisms. We thus, through this study, add to the dis/ability complex articulated by Goodley et al. (2019), the difference between *embodied knowing* and *theoretical knowing* of ableist structures. We argue that embodied knowing is a necessity for critical insights to become possible, and that the gap between what disabled and non-disabled participants experience, is a specifically rich space to dwell in. This supports the importance of doing research led by the motto “nothing about us, without us” (Charlton, 2000).

Elen’s embodied knowing as a core researcher in the original research (Østern et al., 2023) has been crucial in order to uncover the consequences of what it means to live with and without able-bodied privilege, not only in the arts, culture, and education field, but also in research, and at research institutions. Nuances of time and timing as ableist structures, reproducing themselves in the research project, have been possible to see and articulate through her participation. Her insisting on timing and organization that were not uncritically based in ableist norms and power structures, led us as a team to discover, appreciate, and to some extent, adjust to different timing. However, this was not fully understood until the post-project study undertaken in this chapter. In dialogue with Goodley et al.’s (2019) dis/ability complex, we have been able to carve out and argue for slow time and timing, sustainable time, and time as a site of care, as nuances of *crip time*, which could and should challenge ableist structures of efficient time and timing, competitive time, and time as something to control.

Fraser-Barbour et al. (2023) argue that power shifts to the disabled participants are easily undermined by institutionalized norms that disrespect co-design projects. We have found this to be true, and that institutionalized, ableist norms need to be recognized, acknowledged to be there, and then challenged from within the very research project itself, as the process is ongoing. Crippling research structures must be part of research projects trying to *crip* society, arts and culture. Co-design research under the ethos

“nothing about us, without us” is necessary to break through the blind spots, which are created through structural exclusion and discrimination, entrenched in arts, culture, education, and society. However, it is equally important to break through the same blind spots in research institutions and projects themselves. In a team consisting of researchers and commissioners, a critical approach and real listening to those with embodied knowing of ableist discrimination is necessary. Otherwise, the ableist system might repeat itself within the research, because the system is self-preserving (Kuppers, 2001; Mark, 2006; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Vassenden & Bergsgard, 2011).

Finally, we want to stress the importance and difficulties of challenging time and timing in research, institutions, education, arts, culture, and society. We dare to say that if we challenge time and timing on a structural level, the whole modernist and ableist neoliberal project becomes challenged. This might enable the possibility for a more sound, healthy, sustainable, and caring society, beneficial to all, and which might produce more thorough knowledge contributions. We argue that attention to embodied knowing, and nuances of crip time and timing, has the potential to, in powerful ways, crip institutions and research projects towards more sustainable structures.

## Author biographies

**Tone Pernille Østern** has a Dr. of Arts in Dance with a focus on dance and disability from the Theatre Academy (now University of the Arts Helsinki). She is Professor in Arts Education at the Department for Teacher Education, NTNU Norwegian University for Science and Technology, and Visiting Professor in Dance Education at Stockholm University of the Arts. She is active as artist/researcher/teacher with a special interest in inclusive and critical pedagogies, participatory arts, choreographic processes, and the performativity of research, learning and teaching. She co-authored *Artist – an available profession? A research project about artists with disabilities in Norway* (2023) commissioned by Arts and Culture Norway and co-leads the research group *How to do things with disabilities*. She is Editor-in-Chief of the peer-reviewed journal *Dance Articulated*.

**Terje Olsen** is Research Director at Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research in Oslo, Norway. He holds a PhD in Sociology from Uppsala university, Sweden. His research interests include welfare state issues, disability

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**Elen Øyen** is a dance artist, and dancer in the Dance Laboratory, employed at DansiT Choreographic Center in Trondheim, Norway. Elen was born with Spina Bifida and uses a wheelchair. She has lectured in different conferences, seminars, festivals in Norway and abroad, often together with Tone Pernille Østern. She has been co-teaching dance classes and lectures for students in higher education, and extensively lectured and published about her life experience as a disabled woman and artist. She has a BA in child welfare work and has further education as legal office worker, and she has work experience as an office employee.

**Lise Lien** is a sociologist and today works at the Norwegian Church City Mission. Previously, she has been a researcher at Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research, where she used to work with research on inclusion and exclusion in working life. Her research interests have been on people on sick leave, groups with weak or no connection to ordinary working life, such as young people without completed upper secondary education, people with disabilities, convicts, and people with substance abuse problems.

**Lene Holum** is a Clinical and Organisational Psychologist with a PhD in Health Care. She has extensive experience working with youth and young adults, particularly in areas such as psychosis, substance abuse, and with minority groups. Her expertise also extends to forensic psychiatry. In addition to her clinical work, Lene is a researcher and project leader. She has been involved in various studies aimed at improving mental health care services, both in Oslo University Hospital and now at Sunnaas Rehabilitation Hospital, where she works as an Organisational Psychologist. Recently she has been involved in research at Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research.

**Anne Ogunidipe** (PhD) is a Senior Advisor in the Department of Cultural Analysis at Arts and Culture Norway. She works with a range of projects

involving analysis of and research on the arts and culture sector, including knowledge production tied to questions of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Ogundipe co-authored the report *Et kunnskapsbasert og langsiktig mangfoldsarbeid (A knowledge-based, Long-term Diversity Effort, 2020)*, and was project leader for Arts Council Norway and the Danish Arts Foundation's joint research program on art and social community (2021–2023). She has recently co-edited the book *Felleskap, konflikt og politikk (Community, Conflict and Politics, 2024)*.

**Kaja Tvedten Jorem** is a senior advisor at Arts and Culture Norway, developing their role as a National Coordinator for Diversity in the Arts. Tvedten Jorem has 15 years of experience from working with creative industries, diversity and international work in Europe, Africa and North America. She holds a Master of Business and Development Studies from Copenhagen Business School and a graduate diploma in Arts Management from HEC Montreal. Her research interests include creative industries in the global South and North, diversity and inclusion, and business development. She hopes to learn and challenge her views continuously through art and community.

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