

# The Role of Mediators in Enabling the Learning Process of New Entrants to Art Field

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## 1. Introduction

In this study we focus on the role of mediators in the learning process of new entrants to art field. Most of the previous studies have concentrated on studying learning as outcomes. We, however, put the emphasis on the practices, the different activities by which mediators help the actors to learn. The aim is thus to discover how new entrants to art field learn and what is the role and what are the means of mediators to ensure their learning. We will concentrate on a specific context of an EU-funded EQUAL project acting as a mediator to help marginal artists (immigrant and disabled artists) to enter the art field.

The paper will proceed by first introducing briefly the context of the study, the EU EQUAL - project, called TARU. Then, we proceed to present the research design and the theoretical background of our analysis. The results of the study will be presented and discussed in chapters four and five. We conclude by discussing the knowledge creation in the TARU-

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project through a managerial type of a framework (chapter six), and in the last chapter we discuss the key managerial insights and the questions arising from our analysis.

*TARU-project: Arts and diversity*

TARU-project is part of a larger EU EQUAL -program funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The EU EQUAL -program tests new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and those looking for a job. The target group of TARU is minority group artists; primary target group consists of immigrant artists representing minority cultures as well as disabled artists. Those belonging to the target group work as freelancers in free artist groups but seldom receive their whole income from art. TARU-project brings artists' work to the attention of the larger public by making use of the various media, for example, television, the Internet, mobile services and digital printing. The project also offers guidance in producing art, and organizes training for artists belonging to the target group. It endeavours, in this way, to augment the sale of cultural products and to promote the employment of artists. The project also works on changing the attitudes of authorities, potential employers, etc.<sup>2</sup>

The national partners in Finland are Lasipalatsi Media Centre Ltd. (responsible of the coordination and financial management of the project), YLE Finnish Broadcasting Company (broadcasts TARU -tv-shows as a part of a morning program), Finnish Theatre Information Centre (responsible for training and education in this project), and Försti-Filmi Ltd., a privately-owned production company (responsible for TARU -tv-programs). The project management group consists of the representatives of each partner, and two representatives of the disabled artists associations. The chairman of the group represents the city of Helsinki.

TARU-program has included so far training (seminars, i.e. lectures given by authorities and experts in the Finnish art field), a regular tv-show (10 minutes each, 31 shows by the end of March 2003), drawing a list of those artists who have joined the project in the TARU web pages (about 170 persons), linking home pages of artists (most of them created by the project) to the TARU web pages. In addition, six exhibitions in the art gallery of Lasipalatsi Media Centre have been shown, and two books by the TARU-artists have been published.

The TARU-project was accepted to the EQUAL-program in May 2002. The project is intended to run until the end of 2004.

## **2. Research Design**

The research approach of the study is qualitative, the aim is to comprehend, understand and illuminate the studied phenomenon through re-description and analysis. By description we don't mean its common use but a deeper meaning relating to realistic or constructivist rather than positivistic epistemologies (Easton 1995). Hence, we aim to "explain" by description, explaining is here understood in the sense of clarifying existing generating mechanisms rather than discovering causal relationships (e.g. Easton 1995, Tsoukas 1989).

In order to catch the learning processes of the actors and to understand those processes in the specific context of the TARU-project we have to try to be very sensitive to the context of the phenomenon. Thus, a qualitative research approach, more specifically a qualitative case study, was chosen as the method of the study. Our case, the TARU-project, is intrinsic in its nature, as we had an intrinsic interest in this particular case (Stake 1995: 3). This case was not selected because it represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because, in its all particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest (Stake 2000).

In addition, our understanding of the nature of knowledge and the theoretical discussion behind our analysis goes along the ideas of qualitative approach. In this study the process of analyzing is not a separate function but occurs throughout the study as we reflect on our pre-understanding and theoretical background throughout the whole research process; in gathering the data and writing the results and finally ending up with conclusions (Coffey & Atkinson 1996: 6).

The data builds on two sets of personal interviews. The first set was conducted among disabled or immigrant artists who have joined the TARU-project. The second set consists of the interviews of the TARU-partners and the employees of the partner organizations, i.e. persons who are acting as mediators to help the artists to enter both the art field and the art business market. Also additional data such as information letters and other material sent to

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://EQUAL.cec.eu.int/EQUAL/jsp/dpComplete.jsp?cip=FI&national=24>, and [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/EQUAL/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/EQUAL/index_en.html) and [www.taru.info/](http://www.taru.info/)

artists from TARU-organization, TARU- and EU EQUAL –projects’ web pages, the contract papers and some reports made by TARU-organization, were used to familiarize us with the TARU-project and gain insight into it.

The artist interviews were conducted by students from two art management courses in Helsinki School of Economics and in Helsinki University. The artists were chosen based on the recommendations from TARU -Project Manager, and based on the lists of participants in TARU-activities. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed by the students as part of the class exercise. These analyses gave us insights into the field of the study and widened our pre-understanding of the phenomenon. In this study the transcribed interviews were used as data and were analyzed by the authors. Altogether 18 artists’ interviews were used as data, nine of them were disabled artists and nine immigrant artists. We conducted ourselves the interviews of TARU-partners and other mediators; altogether eight interviews were conducted.

We first carried out a content analysis on the artists’ interviews, concentrating on the themes of artists’ own learning expectations and experiences within TARU-project. The analysis of the mediators’ interviews went along the similar lines. Before we move to the results of the analysis, we will present our theoretical assumptions that guided the whole study.

### **3. Our assumptions on learning and knowledge in the context of the TARU-project**

According to a dictionary (Hornby 1974: 487), the verb ‘to learn’ means ‘to gain knowledge of or skill in, by study, practise or being taught’. This kind of definition of learning seems to comprise two meanings: first, the acquisition of skill or know-how and second, how a learner conceptually understands and applies that learning, i.e. know-why (Kim 1993). Yet, we find the above-mentioned definition too static: it puts an emphasis on the outcomes. Therefore, in this study we have adopted the following understanding about learning: ”Learning is the process of creating knowledge”. In addition to the process nature of learning we emphasise the contextual and experiential nature of learning. Thus we follow the insights presented in entrepreneurship and small business management literature (e.g. Dalley & Hamilton 2000, Deakins & Freel 1998, Gibb 1997, Johannisson 1996, Szarka 1990). The experiential learning cycle<sup>3</sup> developed by Kolb (1984) has also influenced on our assumptions on learning.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Kolb’s (1984) model, the most effective learning requires four different learning abilities: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation.

We regard learning as an ongoing, dynamic, social process, which can occur intentionally or unintentionally, in everyday activities, too (see e.g. Araujo 1998, Gherardi 1999, also Leonard & Sensiper 1998: implicit learning -concept). To be able to understand the learning process, we must understand the nature of knowledge. In the following we will shortly discuss our assumptions on knowledge.

In the context of organisational and inter-organisational learning, and learning in networks two major views on the nature of knowledge are often presented. The “cognitivist perspective” maintains knowledge to be representations of the world that consist of a number of objects or events. To the cognitivist, knowledge is universal: two learners should achieve the same representations of the same object or event (von Krogh 1998). In other words: from the explicit pieces of knowledge, from the objectively defined concepts and facts that are easily transferred from one person to another, learners should be able to gather the very same jigsaw picture (Swan et al. 1999). The “constructionist perspective” is very different from the cognitivist perspective as it views cognition not as an act of representation, but an act of construction or creation (von Krogh, 1998).

Our assumptions on knowledge follow the constructionist view. We believe that knowledge is socially constructed and based on experience. We maintain that knowledge is not universal; on the contrary it is subjective, context-specific and relational. Knowledge is also dynamic, as it is continuously re-created and re-constituted in social interactions. (e.g. Nonaka et al. 2001, Swan et al. 1999, von Krogh 1998, Tsoukas 1996) Swan et al. (1999) suggest the fascinating metaphor of the kaleidoscope for knowledge creation based on constructivist epistemologies as it is sometimes hard to predict what kind of a world or worlds are produced in creative interactive processes between individuals.

All knowledge has two dimensions, explicit and tacit (Polanyi 1966: 20). These dimensions are not different types of knowledge; rather they are ends of the spectrum because tacit element is the necessary component in all knowledge (Brown & Dujoid 2001, Leonard & Sensiper 1998, Tsoukas 1996, Polanyi 1966: 20). Tacit element of all knowledge is deeply rooted in an individual’s actions and experience, as well as in the ideals, values and emotions he or she embraces (Nonaka et al. 2001, Takeuchi 2001). Therefore knowledge always

involves the knower, the individual who knows. “Knowing is a human act”, as McDermott (1999: 105) put it.

Furthermore, knowing is also shaping the future (von Krogh & Roos 1996). Especially in the context of our case project, TARU, it is important to highlight that learning involves acquiring identities (Brown & Duguid 2001); it involves becoming an “insider” (Brown & Duguid 1991). Learning therefore involves acquiring identities that reflect both how a learner sees the world and how the world sees the learner. Thus, it is not enough to claim to be a professional artist – people, particularly other actors in the art field have to recognise you as such (Brown & Duguid 2001, Jyrämä 1999).

Next we will put forth the learning-related expectations and other goals of artists and the representatives of TARU-partners.

#### **4. The expectations of the artists and mediators of knowledge creation in TARU**

In the interviews with artists and TARU-partners we discussed about expectations of TARU-project. Artists expressed their own hopes, visions, and goals concerning their career as an artist in Finland. The interviewed TARU-partners, however, answered the question about their personal expectations in broader terms: they rather talked about the official objectives of the whole project. Yet, some insights on one’s own knowledge creation were put into words by some of the partners as well.

The expectations of the artists concentrated on two themes: first, contacts, i.e. networking and second, pragmatic help to build one’s own career in the Finnish art field. When TARU-artists joined the project they were looking for chances to interact with other disabled or immigrant artists to share one’s experiences, values, and beliefs - to share tacit knowledge. Discussions with peers were considered the source of strength. Networking among artists was expected to create new opportunities for collaboration: artists were looking for potential partners in their productions, and an opportunity to create a joint production under “the TARU -umbrella brand”. Artists were also looking for contacts to such individuals or institutions that are able to help to develop a career, e.g. agents. In other words, artists were looking for new knowledge for “becoming”, for acquiring a socially-legitimised artist

identity: “...if the TARU-project would sort of increase my profile and make me more interesting to say agencies”, as one of the interviewed artists put it.

Also especially those mediators who had earlier had fewer contacts with disabled or immigrant artists were looking for personal interaction with them. They were anxious to help these artists to expose their work, and they felt that this kind of work has an important meaning to oneself and the whole society.

Artists expected practical help in marketing-related issues, e.g. how to organise a concert, how to take contact to publishers, gallery owners, agents. The words “practical help” refers to learning by doing together. Most of the interviewed artists seemed to assume that TARU-organisers would give individual guidance, tailor-made advice and hints for contact persons. TARU-organisers were anticipated to be masters, to have wide experience on art business. Only a few talked about marketing or advertising training on a more general level. Information on grants was also looked for, and in the similar vein, individual guidance was expected in drawing the applications and choosing the fund. In addition, training and information on how to be a cultural professional in the Finnish art field was expected. Some of the artists maintained that the TARU-project itself should employ artists as sub-project managers or organisers of different kind of joint productions in order to learn to run their own productions later on. These findings seem to indicate that artists put a strong emphasis on learning by doing; they seem to share the constructionist view of knowledge and prefer the experiential learning process.

Some of the interviewed artists expected that the TARU-project would do the selling for themselves, for example to act as an agent organising gigs or would do all the marketing communication measures for themselves, for example draw web pages and press releases. Only a few interviewed artists were looking for courses on art or on art training.

As one of the main goals of the project is to improve disabled and immigrant artists’ chances to make a living on one’s artistic talents, all the interviewed mediators referred to this aspect. Compared to the above-mentioned expectations of artists, the mediators talked about more indirect means of achieving the very same goal. They wish that TARU-activities, especially morning-tv-shows would change the atmosphere more positive towards disabled and immigrant artists and their work; the tolerance of the general public will increase. The same

change in one's stand is expected to take place among the actors of the art field (for example gallery-owners, directors in theatres, art festival organisers, art universities and other vocational institutions, artists' own associations), and among those who make decisions on grants (for example foundations, ministry of education). All in all, the target group is expected to integrate in the Finnish art field. Mediators seem to believe that by giving information both to artists and the other actors of the field, the integration will slowly take place.

On the other hand, mediators would like to give tailor-made help to individual artists as well but they realise that it is impossible: the number of artists in the project is so huge, and the group is extremely heterogeneous as to the cultural background and to the level of professionalism. Therefore they expect artists to be active and utilise the information given in seminars, web pages, tv-shows, and, more recently, in smaller groups led by experts.

Mediators emphasise that during the TARU-project some important processes related to producing (e.g. how to organise a tour of concerts or exhibitions) and marketing art (e.g. how to draw a CV or a portfolio) should be "modelled". In other words best practices should be identified and documented in the web pages, and later utilised by artists or groups of artists. Mediators seem to expect that best practices from other EQUAL-projects, both abroad and in Finland should be identified and documented in the similar vein.

Some of the interviewed mediators expressed more personal learning goals. Running an EU-funded project was expected to improve one's skills and capabilities on project work. An EU-funded project was also considered one of the few chances to develop innovative practices in the art field as public funding from the state is decreasing. Mediators also expected to learn more about disabled and immigrant artists and thus to be able to better enhance their career in the future. For their own personal learning the mediators expected that learning would occur from personal experiences, similarly to the artists, for example, the mediators expected to learn how to run an EU project through practical experience in TARU.

## **5. The experiences of artists' and mediators' learning processes**



In this chapter we will highlight some of the learning processes that could be identified from TARU operations. Yet, it needs to be kept in mind that TARU is an ongoing process and, hence learning and new knowledge creation occurs continuously.

The learning process of mediators came strongly out from the data, how they learn from their own and others' experiences. The learning took place while the mediators reflected their own personal experiences with the target group artists; the embarrassing moments, or the surprises of discovering, for example, the artistic quality of a blind painter or sculptor. Moreover, the joint discussions of experiences and feedback both in the employee group and the project management group were mentioned as places of learning and of creating new knowledge. For example, the mediators almost all stated how they had personally grown and deepened their understanding and changed their worldview just by working with disabled and immigrants. One mediator said: "*you learn from the target group all the time, and learn things that you feel should have been done differently from the beginning*". On the other hand, these kinds of comments related to the learning outcomes show that the target group's special needs were not understood at the beginning of the project, as many artists complaint.

In knowledge creation learning to share language is vital. Among TARU mediators the process of learning to speak the same language was emphasized, not only meaning the lack of common mother language with immigrants, but also that the mediators assumed that the target group would share the same language: understanding the official or business expressions – a mediator described: "*.. if I had been a fly in the wall, I would have thought what do these people understand of our own slang, even a word like 'application' can be a question mark for some... and then there is someone explaining that we do have these 'special funds of Finnish Cultural Foundation' ...after explaining the grants the state may provide and all...*".

The artists expected learning to occur by doing together and by networking. Yet, little time was allocated for the creation of a context to network, to create communities – for example an artist said: "*..it is really a pity that we are all in the same project but we do not have contacts between each others. And I do believe that these people (artists) are the best teachers...*".

Hence, the learning process expected by the artists did not have room in the plans although it was implicitly acknowledged in the aims and in the minds of the mediators. Thus, those artists who had actively searched for face-to-face contacts and practical help seem most satisfied

with TARU. Their expectations had been met –even though through unplanned ways. As one artist put it: “ .. *it is easy to tell your own need and take contact (to TARU), I have called several times myself and asked, now that I had this exhibition, and asked for help and other things and I got exactly what I wanted*”.

The key aspect here is to create a context for knowledge sharing and creation; time and space for interaction between the mediators and the artists, and the artists to interact among themselves. Artists felt that just by talking with each other and exchanging experiences they had learnt a lot. Some also aimed to use TARU as a source of future collaborative relationships. Others felt that just meeting the people and hearing so many interesting stories was a benefit.

The main streams of learning opportunities in TARU seem to have been offered in the form of passing or receiving explicit knowledge. In many occasion this is the best way – for example, the creation of the register of the artists to market them, or giving access and information on foundations. The information on various TARU-seminars and other activities was also perceived as efficient. The main conflict seems to be in how to learn practices: can they be taught or only learnt by participating as expected by the artists.

Now we will proceed to elaborate the findings in a managerial-type of a framework.

## **6. How to enable knowledge creation in the TARU-project?**

In this chapter we will discuss and reflect the findings and our understanding of the learning processes of the TARU-actors using the framework of the five “enablers” that von Krogh and his colleagues (2000) propose for companies to enable knowledge creation. Even though TARU is non-permanent and non-profit by its nature, the ideas presented by von Krogh et al. (2000) can be adopted to analyse the knowledge creation in the TARU-project since it does have specific goals and a strategy how to get there – similarly to any company. The TARU - project management group is here regarded as “the managers”. In this framework the artists can be viewed as employees. We will proceed by discussing each enabler, first we present its content and then reflect how these ideas could work in the context of TARU.

### *Enabler 1: Instill a Knowledge Vision*

The knowledge vision includes not only the ideas on the future but also reflection and continuous reinvestigation on the current beliefs. In practice the knowledge vision is often in the form of an aim or a mission statement (von Krogh et al. 2000: 103-104). Thus the TARU aims can be viewed as a past and current knowledge vision. However, to be also the future vision they need to be consciously analyzed and reflected based on the experiences gained.

Von Krogh et al. (2000: 103) propose that a knowledge vision gives a mental map of three related domains: (1) the world the company lives in or we live in, (2) the world we ought to live in, and (3) the knowledge we should seek and create. The first two parts of the knowledge vision provide images of the present and future, and third indicates how to move from the present to the future.

First we will analyse the TARU -knowledge vision from the viewpoint of the artists, in respect how TARU acts as a mediator, helping them to learn and create knowledge.

The artists all feel belonging to a minority and being or wanting to be an artist, since they participate in the TARU-program. This might be the only shared view of the target group prior to TARU. Nor do they seem to have any shared view on the future. Yet, they all have very strong ideas and views on how to move towards the future, a road map on how to proceed. They share an understanding that knowledge creation, learning, occurs by doing, by participating and by networking.

There seems to be a conflict between the knowledge vision of the TARU-mediators and the artists, where the artists seem to see knowledge creation as an activity, doing together, whereas the mediators have implicitly adopted a more traditional view on knowledge creation, perceiving it as a transfer, transferring explicit expertise by the means of teaching, educating, and informing. They don't seem to question the view that the expert knowledge can be transferred as such to the artists. These differing visions might have caused some disappointments among the artists towards the activities of TARU.

However, the TARU itself in its project management and co-ordination activities act according to a different knowledge vision, they emphasize meetings and face-to-face contact – hence sharing tacit knowledge, too. They reflect regularly together, thus they create and

reinvestigate their joint knowledge vision – even though this might not be consciously done. Moreover, by this reflection on their experiences they have changed the ways of operating; creating tutor groups and engaging people to the face-to-face contact and being available to the artists to work and learn together.

Thus they may have created a new knowledge vision - or a different kind of a vision on how to achieve the aims, which have not changed. Whether this is done by reaction to demands and experiences, or has there been a deeper analysis or change in the understanding on knowledge creation, remains unanswered.

### *Enabler 2: Manage conversations*

The best way of creating and sharing knowledge is through conversations. Good conversations are the cradle of social knowledge in any organisation. Through extended discussions and expositions of ideas, individual knowledge is turned into themes available to others. Each participant can explore new ideas and reflect on other people's viewpoints – hence share also tacit knowledge. The purpose is for participants to establish not only new knowledge but a new reality. (von Krogh et al. 2000: 125)

Von Krogh et al. (2000: 132-140) present the principles of good conversations: (1) actively encourage participation, (2) establish conversational etiquette, (3) edit conversations appropriately, and (4) foster innovative language. Or, as Kolb (1984) proposes that learning can only occur through reflection and reflecting and discussing the experiences with others – by conversation. The mediator plays a crucial role by providing an “enlightened ear” to the discussion and learning process (Jyrämä & Äyväre 2002).

Next we will analyse how conversations were managed in the TARU-project. The artists expected conversations both among themselves and with the mediators. The active artists did manage to engage in such conversations even though no place or resources were allocated for them. The TARU mediators all stated that the number of the close relationships and direct engagement with these active artists was a surprise for them and took time “from their real work”. Only in the first seminar there was time allocated for discussion and even this was monitored and guided by the mediators. The plans did not have any place or time for free social discussion, which was highly demanded by the artists – and a necessity for sharing tacit knowledge.

During the project the mediators did realize the artists' needs, and hence, new personnel was engaged to "manage the conversations". However, it can be questioned whether it does encourage participation and provides a forum for sharing tacit knowledge. Yet, no place for the artists to create new knowledge together has been established so far. But, an opening of a café or a club is planned order to provide a space for free social conversation.

The questions of language have come up among the mediators, they assumed, as said before, that the expertise knowledge could be transferred as such – yet they soon realized that the language and means of communication (e.g. using web or e-mail) were not necessarily accessible to the artists. They did not share the same language as the mediators –hence the mediators are currently reflecting on how to communicate and achieve a common language and also how to establish the etiquette – and hence avoid the confrontational conversations in a wrong time and place. Yet, they seem to aim for "simple language" rather than "innovative language".

### *Enabler 3: Mobilize Knowledge Activists*

To ensure and catalyze social processes of knowledge creation an organization needs someone or some group that takes on the responsibility for energizing and coordinating knowledge creation effort. The knowledge activist actively creates space and context for knowledge creation (von Krogh et al. 1997). There are three possible roles for knowledge activists: the catalysts of knowledge creation, coordinators of knowledge-creation initiatives, and merchants of foresight – or all three (von Krogh et al. 2000: 149).

Von Krogh and al. (1997, 2000) present three concepts, such as microcommunities of knowledge, imagined communities, and shared maps of cooperation that help the knowledge activist to connect knowledge creation initiatives. A microcommunity is a small core group of participants that engage in sharing of tacit knowledge and knowledge creation. Its own rituals, languages, practices, norms, and values characterize it. The concept of imagined communities refers to the sense of community, the feeling of belonging and oneness with for example, a group, an organization, or a nation. The shared maps of cooperation show how the various microcommunities and the various knowledge creation processes throughout the organization are related. As a merchant of foresight, the knowledge activist finally provides overall direction to the knowledge creation that takes place in various microcommunities.

In the context of TARU-project we can identify two knowledge activists – two groups. First, the project management group that aims to create knowledge among the TARU-mediators and also among the artists. They act in all three roles of knowledge activist – by their meetings and reflections upon the experiences they guide and create new vision for knowledge and aim to find new ways of operating. The project management group also joins the different partners of TARU into a shared vision. Moreover different ideas and discoveries are discussed in this context. Also the choices of ways of operating and changes in practices are made here. However, it can be questioned how well this knowledge creation process is passed on or rather shared with the artists. Yet, one needs to add that artists are also represented in this group.

There are now new attempts to create new microcommunities by the creation of tutor groups – however, there seems to be a view that the tutors will transfer their knowledge to the artists rather than that they would jointly create new knowledge.

The mediators and employees of the TARU-organization have also established a procedure to meet regularly in order to exchange experiences and discuss future plans. This group can also be regarded as a knowledge activist especially since it aims to create knowledge, not really with the artists, but taking into consideration the experiences with artists and feedback received from them. The artists themselves are not part of this group.

All in all it seems that the mediators don't see the artists themselves as sources or partners in knowledge creation but rather as distant clients, and even the most successful artists are considered good examples or role models, not as co-creators.

#### *Enabler 4: Create the right context*

Von Krogh and al (2000) emphasize that new knowledge creation begins with individual tacit knowledge. However, to achieve the sharing of individual knowledge one needs to establish the right context that allows it. The fourth enabler, the creation of the right context, involves organizational structures that foster solid relationships and effective collaboration. In fact, the whole process of knowledge creation depends on sensitive and aware managers who encourage a social setting in which knowledge continues to grow.

Von Krogh and al. (2000: 178), then move on to discuss the enabling context through the concept of ba. The concept of ba refers to the right context for knowledge creation. Ba is essentially a shared place that serves a foundation for knowledge creation, one that is often defined by a network of interactions. The concept ba unifies the physical spaces, virtual spaces, and mental spaces in knowledge creation (Nonaka & Konno 1998, Nonaka et al. 1998, Von Krogh et al. 2000: 178).

Next we will reflect upon TARU applying the grid presented in the table 1: Four types of ba in the TARU project. According to Nonaka et al. (2001: 19-21) there are four types of ba: originating, dialoguing, systematizing, and exercising. Originating ba is the world where individuals share feelings, emotions, experiences, and mental models. In TARU, the discussions that have taken place at the offices of TARU-partners between the most active artists and the mediators can be classified as originating ba. Dialoguing ba is more consciously constructed than originating ba. Selecting people with the right mix of specific knowledge and capabilities for a group or team is critical. Through dialogue (between peers), individuals' mental models and skills are converted to common terms and concepts. This kind of dialogue has been going on in the TARU -project management group but so far there has been very little space for dialogue between the artists themselves.

The third type of ba, the systematizing ba is a place of interaction in a virtual world instead of sharing of space and time in reality. New explicit information is combined with existing information and knowledge. Nonaka et al. (2001: 21) argue that the combination of explicit knowledge is most efficiently supported in collaborative environments utilizing information technology. In TARU, seminars, web pages and information letters sent to artists are examples of explicit information that has been available. It is also possible to give feedback to the TARU-partners through web pages.

Exercising ba supports internalization by facilitating the conversion of explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge. Exercising ba synthesizes the transcendence and reflection through action, while dialoguing ba achieves this through thought (Nonaka et al. 2001: 21). As the interviews with the artists were carried out already in November 2002, our data tells only a few examples of exercising ba.

In the table 1, the contexts or different kinds of bas created by TARU by the time of the data collection are typed with the normal font style and the *new* ones, those already planned to be implemented are typed *in italics*.

Face-to-face	<p><b>ORIGINATING BA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face-to-face discussions between the most active artists and mediators at their offices</li> <li>• <i>Newly employed producers for personal interaction with artists</i></li> <li>• <i>The Club or Café to be opened</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>DIALOGUING BA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Small groups (by the type of art) led by the tutor</i></li> <li>• <i>Time and space allocated for personal interaction in seminars and other kind of gatherings</i></li> <li>• <i>The Club or Café to be opened</i></li> </ul>	Peer-to-peer
On-the-site	<p><b>EXERCISING BA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing applications to funds</li> <li>• Utilising the advice received in face-to-face discussions when organising one's own concert or exhibition</li> <li>• Utilising the contacts received after the tv-programs have been shown; new gigs etc.</li> <li>• <i>Utilising the information given in the web pages; e.g. looking for potential partners in joint art productions</i></li> <li>• <i>Testing and applying the models and other best practices shown in web pages and tv-shows</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>SYSTEMATIZING BA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web pages</li> <li>• Lectures and other information given in seminars</li> <li>• Reports on seminars on web pages</li> <li>• Information letters, E-mails sent by the TARU-organizers</li> <li>• Feedback through web pages</li> <li>• <i>Best practices and models on web pages, also from EQUAL-partners</i></li> </ul>	Col-laboration

Table 1. Four types of ba in the TARU-project (modified from Nonaka et al. 2001: 20)

The role of the mediators in enabling the construction or creating the possibilities for the construction of different types of ba is crucial in the TARU-project. The table indicates that the TARU has reflected upon its experiences and the feedback received and changed its activities to include also contexts for creating and sharing tacit knowledge, originating and dialoguing, which were lacking previously.



### *Enabler 5: Globalize Local Knowledge*

The fifth enabler refers to the company's ability to acquire and create knowledge on multinational level (von Krogh 2000: 207). TARU aims to create and share knowledge by developing best practices and models with the international and national EQUAL partners. But at the moment, the international and national co-operation between the EQUAL partners is still at a very early stage, and therefore we will not elaborate more on the fifth enabler in this paper. Next we will move on to discuss some insights and questions arisen from the study.

## **7. Concluding discussion**

To conclude we want to point out that the above-presented framework of the enablers of knowledge creation will give new insights for anyone organizing and planning any similar project. It calls for reflection on different ways on learning and how to enable them. Therefore it in a way forces the project managers to reflect on how they see learning and knowledge creation and what could be all the various means to ensure that the learning process does take place.

During our analysis of TARU we have reflected on the nature of different learning expectations and knowledge creation processes in this particular project. For example, we strongly feel that for example, practices are best learnt by doing, by taking part in the practices aimed to learn (see e.g. Jyrämä and Äyväri 2002, Jyrämä 1999). Moreover, building an identity as a professional and becoming an "insider" includes, as said previously, acquiring an identity of a professional or insider not only in one's own eyes but in the eyes of the others. In the case of TARU, the artists aim to enter the art field, and hence they need to interact with the field's actors and thus build their own identities. Therefore the artists' wishes to meet potential agents, gallery managers, publishers etc. seem to be justified. Yet, many learning processes can take place through virtual or collective spaces, for example learning to apply for a scholarship or to write a presentation of oneself. However, in order to internalize documented explicit knowledge, one needs to reflect upon it and even more - use it in a context, e.g. apply for a scholarship or write a c.v.

However, using a strict knowledge creation framework, such as von Krogh et al. (2000) present, or any other ways to model the knowledge creation process implicitly contradicts our

understanding of the nature of knowledge. For example, in constructionist view knowledge is considered subjective, therefore aims to create one and only knowledge vision will most likely fail –as we all will interpret any vision differently. If we return to the metaphor presented by Swan et al. (1999) no one jigsaw picture can be aimed at as we will always end up in a completely new unimaginable view in a kaleidoscope.

The analysis of TARU project does give us some managerial advice, yet it leaves us with many questions for further research, especially in relation to the nature of knowledge and how can this be modified into a managerial frame. The question: “Can we actually manage knowledge?” is worthy of reinvestigation. Von Krogh et al. (2000: vii) point out that they themselves do not believe in knowledge management and emphasize the building of a context. Yet, the five enablers somewhat implicitly do imply also managing and controlling knowledge creation processes.

Moreover, when trying to reflect on the nature of knowledge, we need to question should we try to differentiate the tacit from explicit knowledge – as the tacit is always present. As said earlier, we believe that tacit and explicit are ends of a spectrum and not different types of knowledge (Brown & Duguid 2001, Leonard & Sensiper 1998, Tsoukas 1996, Polanyi 1966: 20). The ontological questions are extremely intriguing, and they offer a borderless field to be studied.

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