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Insights From Participatory Art

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Document Version
Final published version

Published in:
Culture and Organization

DOI:
10.1080/14759551.2024.2361154

Publication date:
2024

License
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Citation for published version (APA):
Neusiedler, A. (2024). Engaging With the Voice of the Other Through Echoing: Insights From Participatory Art. *Culture and Organization*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2024.2361154

Culture and Organization

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/gsco20

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To cite this article: A. Neusiedler (30 May 2024): Engaging with the voice of the other through echoing: insights from participatory art, Culture and Organization, DOI: 10.1080/14759551.2024.2361154

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2024.2361154

CULTURE AND ORGANIZATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2024.2361154

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Engaging with the voice of the other through echoing: insights from participatory art

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ABSTRACT

Involving the voice of others is a major concern for organisations. However, these attempts have often focused on giving voice without attending to different abilities to speak or internal power dynamics. Consequently, integrating others' voices constantly risks appropriation. While some approaches have focused on individual motivations to ethically engage, post-individualist studies on inclusion have argued for considering embodied modes of relating. I contribute to this literature by offering the concept of echoing to analyse practices of engaging with the Other's voice. Echoing interlinks three dimensions: post-individualism, corporeal generosity and the shared world. With the empirical case of participatory art projects, which produce artworks based on the Other's stories, I will demonstrate how ethical encounters build on (a) disrupted transmission of the voice, integrating multiple actors and taking on the form of a response, as well as (b) practices of world-making, which continuously co-produce the shared world of this encounter.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 14 October 2022
Accepted 24 May 2024

KEYWORDS
Voice; corporeal generosity; world-making; post-individualism; participatory art

Introduction

> To speak nearby, is a great challenge. Because actually, this is not just a technique or a statement to be made verbally. It is an attitude in life, a way of positioning oneself in relation to the world. (Trinh T. Minh-ha, interview 1992)
>
> In the Alpes. Echo is a sound reflection, answering back to the shouting. On its way to and back, the voice transforms in the answer, affected in both ways by their surroundings – rough rocks, or a brook, for example. Something happens in the voice's travel, reflecting the initial voice of the shouter. But what if we don't stand next to the speaker? The reflection lets us hear this person, who is otherwise too far. But we also have an image of that person that we cannot see or really hear. (AN)

Involving the voices of other, less powerful actors in organisations has become a matter of growing concern for inclusion. Paying attention to voices of the Other can contribute to organisations' long-term survival (Hirschmann 1970) by preventing 'psychological withdrawal, performance issues and turnover' (Kougiannou 2019), strengthening performance (Harley 2014) and innovation (Kundu and Munjal 2016) through integrating more diverse perspectives, and last but not least contributing to social justice and solidarity. However, inclusion research shows that inequality is deeply rooted in organisations (Lampe 2002) and that the possibility of articulating one's voice differs according to discursive conditions (Simpson and Lewis 2005). Initiatives to provide more inclusive conditions

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for Others to articulate their voices often pay little attention to their own normative ideas of the Other (Priola et al. 2018), which can lead to subtle discrimination (Laer and Janssens 2011), the reinforcement of prior power dynamics (Rogers 2017) or even increase the invisibility of minorities by only including particular Others (Swan 2010). For engaging with the voice of others, these studies show that those who listen to the voice of the Other and try to speak for them project their own – explicit and implicit – expectations of this Other onto them. Thus, these initiatives are always at risk of appropriating, that is, misrepresent or instrumentalise, the voices of the Other, which they try to listen to.

While the understanding that engaging with the Other always relates to normative and discursive ideas of the Other (Swan 2010; Simpson and Lewis 2005) is undervalued in both conceptualisations and practices aimed at amplifying marginalised voices in organisations, embodiment research has extensively examined the co-construction of the Other within inclusion initiatives. These studies have explored implicit mechanisms of inclusions, such as how differences can contribute to norm-critical actions (Muhr 2008), by scrutinising the criteria used for differentiation upon which processes of othering are built (Wettermark 2023) and the practices of boundary drawing within inclusion strategies (Eck, Dobusch, and van den Brink 2023). Within this body of literature, Steyaert and Janssens (2023) have shown how inclusive atmospheres can foster sites of diversifying (2020), which make inclusive practices more likely to occur because ethical encounters involve bodily modes of opening up to the Other (Pullen and Vachhani 2021; Pullen and Rhodes 2010). Therefore, moving beyond mere cognitive reflection on one's biases (Steyaert and Janssens 2023) and recognising the Self and the Other as integral components of organisations (Priola et al. 2018), I turn in this study to embodied practices within organisations that shape differences (Muhr 2008). I explore the question: *How do practices of engaging with the voice of the Other draw upon and (co-)produce the Self and the Other in attempts to avoid appropriation?*

In this paper I offer the concept of echoing to analyse the engagement with the Other's voice. Drawing upon the image of an echo, I adopt a post-individualistic perspective – employing particularly the concepts of corporeal generosity (Diprose 2002) and world (Butler 2022) – to reconceptualise engaging with the Other's voice beyond a solid boundary between the Self and the Other (Pors 2019) as a practice of speaking nearby, as proposed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (Chen and Minh-ha 1992). I illustrate the potential of the concept of echoing and expand upon it by providing a nuanced analysis of embodied practices of engaging with the voice of the Other, using participatory art as a case for organisations that aim to tell the story of marginalised people. As organisations 'outside the firm' (Janssens and Zanoni 2021, para. 15), participatory art projects are promising examples of engaging with other voices in attempts to avoid appropriation. Not only is the inclusion of marginalised people the primary objective of their artworks (Jackson 2011; Miwon 2002), but they also actively display their inclusive modes of collaboration to their audience. Through the lens of echoing, I will demonstrate how engaging with the voice of the Other builds on (a) disrupted transmission of the Other's voice, integrating multiple actors and collective practices of response, and (b) world-making practices, wherein actors inscribe themselves into the shared world where encounters with the Other take place.

From giving voice to embodied relations between the self and the other

Including the voices of others has long been approached as a matter of giving them a voice. Voice, understood as 'interest articulation' (Hirschmann 1970, 30), has been regarded as an entity that must be brought to the surface (Rank 2009; Bell et al. 2006) as a means of changing existing exclusions within firms, organisations and the state (Hirschmann 1970). Defined as 'any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs' (Hirschmann 1970, 30), voice encompasses more than mere verbal expression. Indeed, it is a way of voicing dissent and thus a strategy that motivates people to continue being part of an organisation rather than withdrawing from or exiting it. Since '[v]oice has the function of alerting a firm or organization to its failings'

(Hirschmann 1970, 33), it can be a productive element for organisations. In terms of the work process, the inclusion of different voices in organisations can reduce conflict and turnover (Holvino, Ferdman, and Merrill-Sands 2004; Kougiannou 2019), positively impact performance (Harley 2014) and foster (social) innovation (Kundu and Munjal 2016). This perspective on voice builds on the assumption that the voice of the Other, a less powerful or marginalised person, can be brought to the surface if personal or organisational motivations support this, and thus emphasises the individual and its cognitive reflection as the main agent for change.

However, research shows that inclusion attempts are always at risk of leading to exclusion when they reproduce existing ideas of the Other. Because inequality, such as which voice can be heard, is a societal phenomenon too deeply rooted in organisations to be overcome through 'quick fix answers' (Lampe 2002, 140), possibilities for articulating one's voice differ according to discursive conditions (Simpson and Lewis 2005). Yet, 'efforts to 'include' are often grounded on normative principles' (Priola et al. 2018, 734), which can lead to more implicit, subtle discrimination (Laer and Janssens 2011). As inclusion initiatives operate with particular ideas of the Other, they are at risk of producing new invisibilities for alternating versions of the Other (Swan 2010). For instance, Rogers (2017) shows in a study on volunteers in homeless shelters that although volunteers had good intentions, they simultaneously reinforced their superior class positions as the ones who were able to give to the poor, while the Others, in turn, were reduced to the role of receiver, while their other roles became invisible. Whereas in some inclusion initiatives the voice of the Other therefore remains unheard, giving voice to a particular Other can also lead to extreme visibility, which itself may lead to challenges for marginalised people. One example of this form of 'over-inclusion' (Tyler and Vachhani 2021) is when employees of colour are expected to invest additional effort to educate other colleagues. While learning how to engage with the Other's voice, these examples show that the Other is placed under different conditions for the articulation of their voice, characterised by the normative ideas of the Self. Hence, a 'mere representation does not equal 'real' organization-wide inclusion' (Jammaers 2023, 333), but rather, such an illusion of sameness is at risk of appropriating the voices of others, even when organizations want to integrate them.

Embodied perspectives of engaging with the voice of the other

Acknowledging these critiques, inclusion scholars call for abandoning the linear narrative of inclusion (van Eck, Dobusch, and van den Brink 2023, 256) and have turned to differences as an inherent aspect of organisations (Muhr 2008; Pullen and Rhodes 2010). Instead of focusing on cognitive dimensions in organisational inclusion strategies, such as changing people's bias (Steyaert and Janssens 2023), embodied perspectives on engaging with the Other (Pullen and Vachhani 2021; Tyler 2019; Vachhani and Pullen 2019; Pullen and Rhodes 2010) have shown how care can foster emerging acts of solidarity with marginalised positions that go beyond organisational ethical goals such as allyship (Johansson and Wickström 2022). Moreover, this line of research explores how compassionate alliances exceed competition by sharing access to resources (Alacovska 2020) and how atmospheres can foster inclusion in collaborative processes (Steyaert and Janssens 2023). For instance, Janssens and Steyaert (2020) have investigated a participatory dance organisation and found that instead of simply including the Other, this organisation created sites of diversifying, which introduced an organisational setting that nurtured later inclusive practices.

Along this line of thinking, the Self, a person or an organisation is viewed as constituted in relation to the Other (Priola et al. 2018), with these distinctions continually shaped through everyday embodied actions (Muhr 2008). By highlighting the relational dynamics of inclusion (Janssens and Steyaert 2020), this strand of literature brings to the fore inquiries into the formative dynamics of differences, such as differentiation criteria – on which othering is based (Wettermark 2023) – and boundary work within inclusion strategies (van Eck, Dobusch, and van den Brink 2023). Through the empirical case of participatory art projects, I aim to contribute to this debate in two ways. First, I provide a nuanced analysis of practices of engaging with the voice of the Other in organisational contexts, which try to

avoid appropriating them. While acknowledging the inherent risks in such endeavours, understanding the complex dynamics is essential for navigating inclusion attempts. Second, I offer echoing as an analytical perspective which highlights the mutual construction of the Self and the Other. This lens allows us to delve into the complexities of engaging with the Other's voice while recognising the influence of normative assumptions.

Post-individualist forms of engaging with the voice of the other through echoing

Drawing on the image of an echo, which travels through the mountains until it is heard, echoing as a new analytical concept draws together three angles of how current theory has dealt with the relationship between the Self and the Other. I consider these the main dimensions of the concept of echoing, on which I will elaborate in this section: (1) a post-individualist conceptualisation of actors; (2) a mode of relating to the Other through corporeal generosity; and (3) the emphasis of the world as a shared space and environment in which the encounter of the Self and the Other takes place. Together, these perspectives give me the analytical components to study attempts to engage with the voice of the Other without appropriating it.

Post-individualist dimension of echoing

First, echoing draws on post-individualist ideas of the Self and the Other. A post-individualist perspective leaves behind the 'foundational fantasy of a solid boundary between the self and the other' (Pors 2019, 25). The Self and the Other are not considered fully separated, but their positions in the world depend on each other. As Butler (2015, 108) notes:

> [T]he life of the other, the life that is not our own, is also our life, since whatever sense 'our' life has is derived precisely from this sociality, this being already, and from the start, dependent on a world of others, constituted in and by a social world.

By emphasising the 'sociality' of (ethical) encounters, which are necessarily part of a shared social world, Butler points out the co-construction of the Self and the Other in a symbolic order. That is, the Self is formed in relation to the Other, and the other way around. Therefore, it needs the Other to be a Self. As part of a 'system of intercorporeality' (Pullen and Rhodes 2014), actors are not singularised but give something of themselves into the shared ethical encounter.

According to the Australian philosopher Diprose (2002), the Self is constantly constituted through difference to the Other. Leaning on Derrida's concept of différance, they argue that differences between the Self and the Other are not dissolved but remain essential components of ethical encounters. This also questions the clear distinction between the Self with a voice and the voiceless Other. That is not to say that all voices are equally heard. Much research has shown that this is not the case. However, from a post-individualist perspective, it becomes evident that engaging with the voice of the Other always also influences the position of the more powerful Self, who attempts to give voice to the unheard Other. For echoing, engaging with the voice of the Other is not merely based on the individual agency of the speaker, nor can one actor simply give voice to another. Moreover, a post-individualist dimension emphasises that ethical encounters are a shared process, which entails pre-reflexive modes of engaging with the Other (Pullen and Rhodes 2014), instead of focusing solely on the moral – and reason-driven ideals of a single individual – similar to the echo, which depends on the world the voice has travelled through, but also on the position of the listener and the speaker of this voice.

Corporeal generosity as embodied dimension of relating to the other

Second, echoing draws on corporeal generosity (Diprose 2002; 2013; 2019) to conceptualise the ethical encounter between the Self and the Other. Instead of understanding giving voice to the

Other as a one-directional, linear act with a clear division of those who can give and those who can only receive, generosity can be understood as a form of giving that 'is not reducible to an economy of exchange between sovereign individuals. Rather, it is an openness to others that not only precedes and establishes communal relations but constitutes the self as open to otherness' (Diprose 2002, 4f).

Embodiment also means that our previous experiences become sedimented in and shape our bodies 'through repeated and habitual actions' (Butler 2022, 70) in the form of implicit, bodily knowledge, which we insert in the encounter with the Other. Nevertheless, although we listen to the voice of the Other through our own previous experiences, which are inscribed in our bodies, in a corporeal generous manner we are also impacted by the Other in the shared ethical encounter. Generosity, according to Diprose, 'operates at the level of sensibility (carnal perception and affectivity)' (Diprose 2002, 9). For engaging with Others, this means that only when we bodily open ourselves to the Other can we genuinely engage with them, because then

> [w]e cannot help but respond to the other in a matter that overflows any perceived integrity of the self. And, as in this response our self-possession is given over to the other, we cannot help our generosity. (Diprose 2002, 191)

Consequently, engaging with the Other's voice is not built on individual reflections, moral values or compassion and empathy as personal traits. Moreover, ethical encounters are pre-reflexive (ibid.) and are believed to derive from bodily experiencing the Other as related to oneself. In other words, the giving Self acknowledges that they are also affected, or even hurt, in an ethical encounter. For instance, letting go of some of the (prereflective) ideas of the Other one had before also made one experience oneself differently. The relationship between the giver and the receiver is thus characterised by a shared openness to the Other, which is consequential for both. Hence, generosity provides an 'ambiguity, it also renders us open to new possibilities for existence' (Diprose 2013, 185).

Relating to a shared world as dimension of echoing

Third, and related to the former, echoing entails relating to the world. When we engage with the Other through our bodies, we do not float in empty space but meet in a shared world which we continuously co-produce. According to Judith Butler, ethical encounters are not just isolated meetings between people but are situated practices which influence and are influenced by the very world they meet in. Thus, just like we are moved through our bodies in engaging with the Other, the space in which we encounter the Other is then similarly not an object but rather a necessarily relational situation (Butler 2022, 69). Indeed, '[t]he world is not just out there as the backdrop for human action or the field for human intervention; on a daily basis, bits of the world are incorporated into the body itself, suggesting a vital connection between body and world' (Butler 2022, 11). That is, the world and the actor are not separated entities, but influence each other. The world is then a symbolic and material scene for their encounter, which co-defines the very character of their encounter and is at the same time formed by being acted in.

While we share a world, bodily relating to the Other does not dissolve inequalities. This is essential for echoing because it shows that although embodied encounters are collective, it is not the same that is at stake for different people. Actors have different possibilities for participation and means at hand to contribute, and face different potential consequences in situations of ethical encounters. For instance, participating in a public demonstration might have different consequences for actors who risk deportation if arrested. Other actors might be unable to join at all because they must care for children or because the space is only built for abled bodies. In this sense, the shared world entails multiple realities, and we could rather speak of shared 'worlds' (Butler 2022, 6). While 'our mutual, inter-corporeal dependency means that we are all vulnerable, […] in a hierarchically organized society, some people are clearly much more vulnerable than others' (Tyler 2020, 169). When hearing Others' voices, the 'asymmetrical evaluation of different bodies' (Diprose 2002, 9) means that some voices might grow louder. In contrast, others remain silenced, depending on the world

in which they speak. In other words, although the world is shared and we share the experience of the world, the shares of the world are not equally distributed.

The case of participatory art projects

Art participation has gained new momentum (Virolainen 2016; COM/2018/267 2018). Participatory art projects are here understood as art practices that integrate non-artists in the production phase of the artwork and lean on social elements (Jackson 2011) for their artistic strategy. Participatory projects comprise norm-critical representations, for example of older people in dance, as well as socially engaged projects that involve marginalised social groups, such as homeless people or adolescents. Indeed, hope is placed in these projects to foster the inclusion of marginalised people (Sørensen, Brandrup Kortbek, and Thobo-Carlsen 2016; Symons 2018) in the art world as well as other social fields.

Despite the generally critical goals of participatory art projects, their artistic production process is characterised by the same power differences found in other organisations (Johansson and Sol 2022; Coulangeon 2015). Artists often take on leadership roles, such as defining goals, membership and resources (Johansson and Sol 2022) and, most importantly, initiate the projects with a particular artistic vision. Participants enter an art project by invitation from artists and art institutions or through open calls. The artists bring in their artistic experience, while participants' involvement is based on their prior life experiences, which become part of the artwork. Consequently, there is much to be learned from these projects 'outside the firm' (Janssens and Zanoni 2021) for engaging with Others' stories.

As a case of organisations that try to include marginalised people, participatory art projects aim to tell the story of others, such as the non-represented body in dance. Participatory art projects (Jackson 2011) as work environments 'outside the firm' (Janssens and Zanoni 2021) are good examples of alternative practices of engaging with other voices. Firstly, their primary objective is to tell the stories of others, with the inclusion of marginalised people as a core characteristic of their artwork (Jackson 2011; Miwon 2002). Moreover, these projects actively display their inclusive modes of collaboration to their audience. Consequently, they explicitly maintain the differences among involved people; for instance, it is central to the artwork that participants do not merely mimic established artistic practices but retain their own voices. Secondly, like other artworks, participatory art projects rely on embodied dimensions to create inclusive spaces for future encounters (Janssens and Steyaert 2020) and, therefore, provide explicit insights into embodied modes of engaging with the Other. Thirdly, practitioners and researchers in the art field, concerned with dilemmas similar to those of scholars interested in ethical encounters, have long confronted the issue of appropriation. Art projects have faced criticism (Bishop 2012) for misrepresenting and exploiting their participants (Bishop 2012; Kester 2011; Minh-Ha 1989; Steyerl 2018; Kravagna 1999). While this does not imply that they never appropriate, participatory art projects are evaluated for potential appropriation, making them good cases for identifying practices of engaging with the voice of the Other.

Method

Analytical strategy

As researchers, our observations are inherently influenced by the perspectives we adopt (Lury et al. 2018). Remaining with my primary interest in how we can approach the voices of Others without appropriating them and being attentive to the risk of misrepresentation (Pullen and Rhodes 2014; Tyler 2019; Vachhani and Pullen 2019), I have paid attention to my own expectations. I turned to easily overlooked, unexpected and more silent practices, which includes practices that may not be immediately recognised as artistic expression, resistance, withdrawal, etc. Specifically, I turned to narrated affects and the lack thereof. For instance, I asked for any happy or uncanny experiences

and memories of smells and light. I find valuable insights in narrative-inherent silences, pauses, failures, non-responses and imaginaries of both the artists and the participants. Practically, this entails attention to non-verbal cues, such as laughter, speech rhythm, tempo and pauses as indicators of meaning. For analysing participatory processes, I explored accounts of opening oneself up to the Other. This includes reflections on personal experiences beyond the project and expectations of the Other and the shared project.

Data collection and analysis

I base my analysis on 12 open, in-depth interviews with artists (n = 8) and participants (n = 4) taking part in various participatory art projects in Northern (n = 3), Western (n = 5) and Eastern Europe (n = 2), with each informant having been selected according to a criterion of 'minimal and maximal contrast' (Nohl 2010, 198) from an initial mapping of 145 projects. The conversations followed the interviewees' leads, covering such topics as their perceptions regarding the start of the project, collaboration processes, experiences of the rehearsals and the performance space. Interviewees also offered their personal reflections on their involvement in the projects. The interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes. They were conducted online and in person in English and German, with English also used as a lingua franca among non-native speakers. Several of the interviews took place in multiple languages. This mix of language and the associated translation processes were thus analytical considerations, especially concerning evaluating informants' choices of notions and idioms. The artists interviewed were personally contacted, whereas access to participants was predominantly mediated through the artists. Not all artists agreed to forward interview requests, thus the artist and participant informants had not always experienced the same projects.

I transcribed the interviews verbatim and analysed them using the Documentary Method (Bohnsack 2013). The method is based on Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge and aims to reconstruct narrated 'patterns of orientation' (Bohnsack, Pfaff, and Weller 2010, 20), understood as modi operandi, which is to say a shared meaning believed to guide action, as a potentiality of future action. While there is some debate regarding the stability of these patterns, I draw on Butler (1997) who describes meaning as re-produced by being iterated, which always alters the meaning at play. I thus understand patterns of meaning as a potentiality for future action. Accordingly, I was less interested in how the informants explicitly evaluated their relations to others than in their 'implicit knowledge that underlies everyday practice' (Bohnsack, Pfaff, and Weller 2010, 20), which is thought to be transposed through their narrations as well as their doings.

To analyse the interviews, I reconstructed which different themes occurred throughout the interview, paying attention to the dramaturgy and rhythm of telling their story, that is, the 'organization of discourse' (Bohnsack 2013, 11). I sorted the text genres that my informants used and identified narrative passages. I particularly acknowledged contradictions, ambivalences and silences in telling their story. Through this strategy I became aware of narrations of engaging with others and the work process. I followed these narrations within the first interview and analysed patterns of meaning associated with them. Using cross-case comparison, I then linked these first, case-specific interpretations to other cases. Last, I linked these practices through the analytical lens of echoing to further unpack how the relationship between the Self and the Other unfolded in an attempt to engage with the voice of the Other without appropriating it.

My research interest in how to represent the voices of others has also informed how I present my results. Like scholars of ethics and aesthetics, I search for ways of speaking nearby. Informed by inclusion scholars' critique of a disproportional focus on managers and their inclusion strategies, I pay particular attention to participants' practices. This is not to say that I assume groups of artists or participants to be homogenous. On the contrary, I hope this contrast emphasises the different practices of engaging with the Other by fleshing out heterogeneousness and ambivalence within the practices of engaging with the Other. Thus, I aim to shed light on participants' practices as an example of less powerful actors and the often invisible side of (art) collaboration.

Analysis

In the example of participatory art, a field that specialises in these encounters, I show how people engage with others' voices in practice.

Embodied practices of engaging with the other

During the interviews, interviewees told me about their embodied strategies to relate to others and thus produce a shared artwork. Marc, an artist, created an artwork entailing a long-term music project with military members in which he inquired into the experiences and trauma they lived through in war zones. Marc later told me that he saw all of society as responsible for war. He also explained his strategies for building trust with the participants and how they developed their music together:

> I would listen to some of the stuff that they said and […] not trying to document what they had, but rather trying to react *with* what they said. Then, of course, that positioned my body in a position where I had to produce something from that encounter. And then, of course, it is difficult to reflect what I did. But, of course, that was to use my own emotions and to use my own questions about masculinity, about community or about language, or (.) like in expressed feelings. I had to use my own mind and background. And then that was super strange for me to then be like, well, this is coming through me. But it's also not fully me and it's not fully them. And it's just somewhere in between.[1] (Marc, visual artist and musician)

In this excerpt, Marc describes how the boundaries between himself and the participants blurred while finding a shared voice for the artwork. He also describes how he 'uses his own emotions', 'feelings' and his 'mind and background'. He engaged with the participants' voices through bodily relations during this process. The artist's body, in this example, became a vehicle through which the story of the Other resonated in the process of a collective artwork. The excerpt further shows that embodied reactions are an artistic strategy for producing an artwork and that artists can exploit them for their work. The objective is not to document what participants say but to create a new artwork based on what they shared. The artwork emerges beyond a clear distinction between the Self and the Other. However, as the artwork draws on the participants' trauma, embodied relations also become a tool for attaining solidarity and a means of installing a shared position. In collectively forming a shared artwork, the voice of the other affectively resonated in the body as a mode of corporeal generosity (Diprose 2002). This shared position is necessary for the artist and participants to speak together as a shared artwork because they can 'react with' what the others experienced and explore ways of speaking nearby (Chen and Minh-ha 1992).

My cases further show that engaging with the story of the Other not only builds on positive feelings such as empathy for the story of the Other. Instead, I found a general acknowledgement of the other's body, which does not always take on pleasant forms. Listening to how my interviewees talked about engaging with others, I became aware of feelings of feeling at home and close to others and of feelings of disgust and exclusion. I asked participants for their sensory perceptions, and in response they talked about light, temperature and smells. I asked Cloe how she felt about meeting the other participants in the rehearsal process. What could she remember? Cloe had participated in a dance production for six weeks and first met the other participants at the rehearsal. I asked her if she could remember how it smelled, being there for the first time.

> There were a few rehearsals where I nearly couldn't bear it. […] The smell of sweat is not always nice, but one knows it. But intimate smells (.) that are something one usually doesn't smell. And I nearly couldn't bear it. One had the feeling some just didn't wash properly. And there [laughs] […] This is where I wondered […] did anyone give any rules for how that should happen? 'Everyone washes themselves, showers before.' Don't know. Probably not. (Cloe, dancer and participant, my translation)

Cloe describes how she reacted to the different smells of the others, which she encountered when dancing with other participants. Dancing is intense exercise, and people would become wet with

sweat. In this bodily challenging practice, she expected the smell of sweat, with which she is familiar due to her former practice as a dancer. However, she was not expecting unfamiliar intimate odours. These smells caught her off guard – she 'nearly couldn't bear it'. Nevertheless, while the unfamiliar smells overwhelmed her, this bodily reaction also allowed her to relate to other participants. In solidarising with other participants, Cloe critiqued the artist's management. While other participants smelled bad, she was angry that the artist has not set personal hygiene rules.

Here, embodied relations enabled Cloe to position herself in the work process and articulate her voice and expectations. Although other participants' bodies negatively affected Cloe, this embodied relation enabled her to caringly acknowledge their newness to dance and engage with their other experiences in a mode of corporeal generosity. Cloe related to other participants as non-artists with non-disciplined bodies – a central part of the artist's theme for the project, the 'collectivity of other bodies'. Thus, this affective response was not only an internal process but also productive for the shared artwork because it blurred the boundaries between her and the other participants in opposition to the artists. Simultaneously, it also strengthened her inclusion in the shared project. The engagement with the Other, in this case the involved participants, played out in a distributed manner – she became angry with them, not at them. The anger, therefore, had a collectivising function for the art project.

Embodied relations build on personal feelings and individual bodies, but are also collective, as they foster integration in the shared process. In my data, I found that not finding a response to one's affects can lead to an experience of exclusion. When I asked Marie, who participated in the same project as Cloe, how she felt when entering the rehearsal space, Marie could not remember. 'I can't recall,' she repeated. I remember my frustration and insecurity in these interview moments when my attempts to motivate narrations related to the rehearsal space simply did not work out as I had imagined. I expected her to tell me about her excitement for the new experience of participating in an art project or about her interactions with the artist or other participants. But she did not. I had apparently asked the wrong questions. For her, the art project was not about a collective practice. Instead, she told me about her involvement in other dance and self-discovery practices and how she liked doing 'these things'.

This example illustrates how entering an art project does not necessarily lead to a feeling of being with the Other, thus a bodily response of being touched (Diprose 2002). Marie described participating in this project as an individual practice rather than a shared project. Later, Marie also told me that she missed not getting to know others in the project and that she had expected the artist to plan a time to talk, which there had not been. Hence, the non-existence of sensibilities towards the collaboration is also a narration of detachment and being left out. For Cloe, ascribing accountability to the organising artists was a way of relating to others, but not for Marie. She found nothing in this art production to answer her expectations about the shared work process as a shared space for self-discovery. Thus, the engagement with the others remained without response. This example hints at what can be spoken of and what remains silenced. Marie could articulate how the experience did not meet her expectations. However, it isolated her from other participants and made her feel unrelated. In this nothing, the non-narration, Marie's other voice is expressed – as a lack of response, thus a non-inclusion of her voice.

My empirical examples suggest that actors involve themselves in a shared art project through embodied practices. I showed how, in practice, actors gain positions to articulate their voices by being touched by the Other in a mode of corporeal generosity (Diprose 2002).

I elaborated on how actors become part of a shared project through a collective process. However, the examples also show that attempts to engage with the Other, or from the position of the Other, do not always work out. Examples where the responses were lacking show that embodied modes of engaging with others are collective endeavours, because the voice of one needs a response in the practices of the other. However, if these embodied spaces are collective, how do actors build this shared world where they can approach others' voices?

Engaging with the voice of other through abstracting

I found that my interviewees not only bodily engaged with the Other but also actively participated in forming the shared world they found themselves in. My findings indicate that actors translate the story of the Other, which they are confronted with in their encounter, into a more abstract and general level to which they then affectively relate. These abstractions are not just any associations but dimensions of active world-making. Indeed, they have a practical relevance, defining entry points through which actors can inscribe themselves into a project. Rooted in socio-material practices (Gherardi 2017), such abstractions relate to what has been there in actors' bodies and become mediated through and inscribed into the space in which the project occurs.

Relating to one's personal past to inscribe oneself in the unfamiliar space

Actors use abstractions to define the shared world as one in which they can speak. In a dance project that aimed to introduce non-normative bodies to a dance stage, participants found themselves in spaces they would not usually enter. Asked about the experience of first setting foot in the later performance space, Clara recounted her past as a gym teacher spending time in similar spaces:

> I: … Can you remember the first time we entered [the performance space] for rehearsal, how was that for you?
>
> P: In the hall itself?
>
> I: U = h.
>
> P: Yes, you know, I was a gym teacher myself. For me, it was @just a giant gym@, yes? It wasn't yet like on a stage. But she [the artist] doesn't intend it like on stage anyway, like we are on stage. So it was for me (.) also as we have been so many people, I didn't feel lost there. On the contrary. We did know that audience will also come.
>
> I: Yes, yes. But because you said you didn't feel lost, did it feel, did you like the space, or would you have preferred (.)
>
> P: I did have a (.) neutral attitude. Because you had a neutral space it depends on what you make out of it.
>
> I: Yes, yes, totally.
>
> P: And I totally trust [the artist]. (Clara, participant, my translation)

By recalling her past time spent in gyms, Clara inscribed the space of the later performance into her everyday life. The place reminded her of a gym, a familiar place for her as a gym teacher, and a mundane setting, not a stage, which is an extraordinary place for a non-professional. The gym is a space Clara knows and feels at home in. By abstracting the particular experience of being in the rehearsal space, Clara translated the exceptional situation for a non-artist into a known, mundane setting. This mode of abstracting to a homely place is embodied because it recalls bodily memories of known spaces, such as sports practices. Clara describes the place as crowded and how the presence of others made her feel 'not lost', despite the size of the place. The place became an intelligible, playable scene from which she knew what to expect (the audience will come) and also one that she could form (it 'depends on what you make of it'). The active practice of abstracting translated the place into something she could affectively relate to by feeling at home.

Actors define shared space as one in which they can speak by recalling personal, embodied knowledge and abstracting the particular voice of the Other to what they knew before. Although not necessarily conscious, this form of abstraction enables actors to inscribe their personal stories into the shared work process. Inscribing herself into the space by recalling her bodily knowledge of how to act in a gym, Clara found her position in the shared artwork by altering the artist's voice – manifested in a first artistic vision. She could 'trust the artist' in 'making something out of the space' because she had already found her previous experiences echoing therein and therefore a potentiality to articulate her voice as a non-dancer with her other body. Through echoing, one's past experiences become introduced and resonate with the shared world one finds.

Relating to general social narratives

Through abstracting, actors not only inscribe their prior personal experiences into the new shared world but also generalise to broader societal narratives. For instance, the artist of a post-Yugoslavian critical history project about a women's prison abstracted the individual experiences of the Other to the broader narrative of patriarchy and oppression of women. Together with a historian and a psychotherapist, Ana initiated conversations with former prisoners of a Yugoslavian women's prison – whose existence until then had been broadly ignored – and their female descendants. Drawing on these conversations, she built a space of remembrance on the island where this prison once stood. Asked about the first time she entered the space where the project would later be conducted, Ana described her affective reaction to the place:

> I: Can you remember when you went there for the first time?
>
> A: I [clicks tongue]. I have to say I'm rarely, rarely angry, almost never. (.) @because I'm very soft.@ I mean, I do all these socially engaged works.
>
> I:[laughs] Yeah.
>
> A: Trouble, trouble, you know, people in trouble. And so I'm really soft. But I was (.) I get so angry. Because we went to [location] and there was a plaque. On the side, the locality, and we went to the plate to read. You know, I thought it would be this is a camp for women, blah, blah, blah. And the only thing that was written on this plate was that this was a hunting area for deer. […] I was so miserable. I really was so = o desperate. I mean (.) I mean, this is so cynical. And they really did that. So they in [location] in the 80s and first of all they, they robbed everything that was possible. Like wooden parts or whatever […] they took it. I mean they just took it […] everything that was possible and then (.) Not the same people, of course, but then in some other phase of this [location] they put deer there. Because the deer are not autochthon there. And then they were hunting the deer. And I mean for me, it was really (…) it's just, you know, it's really like the men @and the women (.) the hunter and the deer@. Yeah. I mean, I was like: 'No.' like. 'No'. [laughs] I can't look at [the plate]. Oh, no. And then for three weeks, I think we went there and put the [information] plate and there was a deer. He was looking at us. And then we were approaching the site. And it was, I mean, I think all of us were really touched by this site. And of course, the hunters (.) but the deer! So, that was my first meeting with the place. And then I went back a couple of times. […]. So I brought [artists] to the [location] and they did a performance video based on my concept, based on this effect […] and what happened [with the prison location], you know, and it worked out. (Ana, visual artist)

In this sequence, the artist describes her perception of the participants' experiences as embodied by the location. The way the theme of the shared project was treated made them feel 'angry', 'desperate' and 'miserable', whereas the place had been treated as 'cynical'. Here, the artist describes her sense of injustice and an observed wrong, referring to an incident of seeing a deer, a non-native animal introduced to the place. For her, the deer became an abstracted narrative of the patriarchal order and thus a metaphor for broader inequalities. In this way, the project came to address women's treatment more generally: the image of the deer became an entry point for the artist into the other's (imagined) experience of oppression through patriarchy, which the artist – as a woman – personally related to. This framing not only relates to narratives in female prison abolition activism but also enables the artists to affectively relate to the theme through their own experiences as women in patriarchal structures. Through abstracting to the narrative of patriarchy, an experience the female artist shares with the participants, Ana became close to the participants by personally and bodily relating to them while also remaining distanced, as she acknowledged the participants' different other experiences. Although the artist does not share the prisoners' experiences, she could affectively respond to the abstraction of patriarchy when interacting with the site of the participants' prior experience. This example shows how actors co-form the shared world of the project they relate to, thereby forming a world in which one can hear the voice of the Other by being touched.

In attempts to help articulate the voice of the Other, the Other's story is abstracted to a more general shared world, whether artists and participants share some experiences or not. Instead of

building on similarities, this practice reinstalls difference to the Other. In a theatre project about queer youth experiences, artists did share some of the participants' experiences. Leaning on the abstracted narrative of 'queer family', members of the artistic team described how they developed the text for their theatre play with the adolescent participants, dealing with the challenge of how much to share in the process:

> Some stories of ours, or we do talk about our own experiences as well, but when we give them an exercise, 'hey, write a blog entry, which contains something about you or some information about you' or, 'write about specific things'. Then we don't do the exercise as well because we, I don't know, we haven't even talked about it. But for me, it feels like it would be intimidating if we did it as well because we have so much experience with it. […] Well, I, I don't feel so much harm anymore to do that because I've done it so many times, and I feel more secure because I have my friends with me and, um, I'm older than them. So, I, that's why I feel like it would be weird to do it as well because I would like for them to just share in their group […]. But when we talk, we share love, and […] I think we answer everything they ask about us. Also personal. And it's also nice moments when I feel like they really are interested in our life somehow, and not from a voyeuristic point of view, but more from the point of view of everyone. Like 'they are like 10 years older than us'. 'It's interesting to see how they live their lives.' And I can so relate to this because I always craved somehow a bit older people I could relate to and see how my life might also go. I enjoy those moments a lot because I know how important they can be. (Group discussion with theatre group)

In this excerpt, the theatre collective unpacks how they applied the strategy of jointly developing a play based on sharing personal experiences. Although this is an artistic technique (Lehmann 2006), the artists and the 'young performers' – the participants – shared the potential harm of telling queer stories outside the theatre space. Drawing a generational line and evoking the narrative of queer family, the artists related to the others in a mode of proximity, not sameness. Given the project's thematic orientation, this practice of engaging with the Other seems to go beyond work-related practices to pick up the narrative of a feminist and/or queer generational line between the participants and the feminist and/or queer artists. The involved actors agreed on a basic work form (personal experience as the basis for a play) and a value perspective (queer/feminist). Based on those actions, the project not only fostered the visibility of marginalised positions but also acted in solidarity with the artists' own community by caring – to re-evoke the generational image – for the offspring.

The shared story was based on an imagined shared but different experience rooted in similar marginalised positions (queerness). The artists were careful not to be 'intimidating', as they 'are older' and wanted the participants to 'just share within their group'. The artists also acknowledged the participants' interest in their lives as they remembered their own former experiences with older people and that 'it's interesting to see how they live their lives'. With this mode of relating, the artists distanced themselves from the participants' experiences, stating their position as similar but not identical. Consequently, this mode of abstraction also opened up spaces for other practices of silence as a form of articulating a voice. For instance, the artists held back from telling their stories as loudly as the participants, thus taking into account their different position in the shared project – an insight that relates to considerations around the narrative of queer families.

These examples show that through practices of abstracting, actors create a shared world in which they engage with the other voice. Abstracting is not only an individual strategy for getting to the unsharable experiences of the participants but also a practice of familiarisation through distance to the particular. In these examples of abstracting actors introduce their own histories, both relatable personal prior experiences as well as abstract societal narratives, into the process of world-making. Because the actors themselves know about patriarchy, queer family or the gym, they can then relate to the given abstracted story through their personal experience and thus inscribe themselves into the shared world.

Discussion

Current practical and theoretical debates on inclusion raise awareness that giving voice to minoritised Others is a rather risky endeavour because it might appropriate their voice (Tyler and Vachhani

2021; Muhr 2008; Laer and Janssens 2011; Priola et al. 2018). That is, thinking about voice as individual interest articulation (Hirschmann 1970) in the form of an unambiguous, linear transmission of a voice between a clearly defined sender and receiver is at risk of overlooking how engaging with the voice of the Other is always related to particular normative ideas of this voice, and thus at risk of appropriating them (Swan 2010; Simpson and Lewis 2005).

The main suggestion in this study is that the concept of echoing can forward our understanding of engaging with the voice of the Other by providing an analytical lens for analysing how to best engage with the voice of the Other as a practice of speaking nearby (Chen and Minh-ha 1992). Echoing draws on post-individualist perspectives, particularly the concepts of corporeal generosity (Diprose 2002) and world (Butler 2022). With the image of the echo, we can think of practices of engaging with the voice of the Other as reflections and disturbed transmissions when the voice touches, for instance, a tree, which interrupts the distribution of the sound, or a rock face, which changes the tone of the original voice, but also contributes to make the voice travel further through the world.

In this section I will, through the lens of echoing, unpack further how the Self and the Other are produced in a shared practice of engaging with the voice of the Other. I argue (1) that the voice is necessarily disturbed and altered by the multiple involved actors, and engaging with the voice of the Other is a collective practice that takes on the form of a response. I further show (2) how engaging with the voice of the Other draws on practices of world-making, that is, practices of continuously co-producing the very space where the ethical encounter of listening as becoming touched by the Other occurs.

Distributed transmission of voice

Post-individualist perspectives on inclusion show that in ethical encounters, such as engaging with the voices of the Other, both the Self and the Other are constantly (re-)produced in relation to one another. Moreover, the Other becomes part of a 'system of intercorporeality' (Pullen and Rhodes 2014) where ethical encounters derive from bodily experiencing the Other on a level of sensibility (Pullen and Vachhani 2021). My data adds nuance to this body of literature by showing how voice is distributed between multiple actors who contribute to the shared artwork. I also see evidence of embodied relations as drivers for engaging with the voice of the Other. My informants refer to love and hominess but also pain and disgust to describe how they involve themselves in a shared project. However, my findings suggest that this mode of giving is not only rooted in a personal ability for empathy (Pullen and Vachhani 2021) nor simply an individual practice of opening up to the Other. Instead, the voice is distributed between different actors. For instance, I showed that Cloe's negative reactions to the bad smell of the Other – unshowered non-dancers – did not lead to a detachment from them. Cloe's felt disgust, although it was other participants who smelled badly, contributed to alliances between participants.

Diprose (2002, 4f) argues that ethical encounters build on embodied experiences of perceiving the Other in a shared world, which 'constitutes the self as open to otherness', and is thus consequential for both the giver and the receiver. We therefore understand the Other through our bodies by being – literally or symbolically – *with* the Other. These rather permeable boundaries between participants who engaged in the collaborative art project as the Other allowed them to articulate their voices by critiquing the artist's integration of the Other's voice into the artwork – in this case in the form of their non-dancer movements, which did not entail professional shower practices. Consequently, engaging with the voice of the Other is not a one-directional process where one speaks and the other neutrally listens – for instance, through simply evaluating the smell of the Other as bad. Instead, Cloe can perceive the smelliness of the Other differently, as non-dancer's different habits, and build her critique of the artist on this different mode of listening to the other body of participants.

Janssens and Steyaert (2020) describe in their analysis of a participatory dance project how the project established collective practices of inclusion that became inscribed in the shared space. As

sites of diversalising this space fosters inclusion practices for the future. I also find that actors produce a collective atmosphere, which provides the ground for a shared – deeply embodied – art production. However, in my case, it is not just any collective practice, but a particular quality, a mode of relating to the Other, which takes on the form of a response that resonates in the shared process. That is, the voice of the Other revokes 'their own questions', as Marc put it. In engaging with participants through embodied relations he opened up to the Other. His 'questions about masculinity, about community or about language' were evoked, and giving a part from him – his questions – enabled a response in the form of proximity, not sameness. In the image of an echo, the voice of the Other has to resonate in and be transmitted by the mountains, which carry on the sound, for the voice to become heard.

I also showed that when an embodied engagement of one actor with the shared endeavour does not lead to an answer, it can lead to opposite, exclusive effects. Marie, for instance, remained symbolically excluded from the shared dance project. While she articulated her idea of self-discovery practices, which she searched for in the shared project, other actors understood the artwork as a project about creating an Otherworld, inhabited by the Others' bodies. As her voice did not find a response in the shared project, it remained unheard. Thus, this opening up to Others, which echoing builds on, does not always work. From the speaker's perspective, one can attempt to open as much as one wants; if it is not answered, the voice does not lead anywhere but fades away.

Engaging with the voice of the Other is a collective embodied engagement, where all involved parties are vulnerable to pain or failure (Butler 2016) because they become at risk of not finding a response in the Other. Nevertheless, their encounter can lead to shared 'new possibilities of existence' (Diprose 2013, 185) as a collective opening up to the Other, which makes the voice necessarily distributed.

World-making practices of engaging with the voice of the other

My empirical case suggests a second dimension of engaging with the voice of the Other, which I call world-making. Borrowing the notion from Butler (2022), who conceptualises the situatedness and performativity of ethical encounters, I develop the notion of world-making further to describe the easily overlooked ongoing processes of co-producing – the making – of the very situation and taken-for-granted world through which one encounters the Other. For echoing, the dimension of world-making then describes the active practices of creating a shared world in which the ethical encounter of engaging with the Other's voice occurs by inscribing oneself into the shared space.

According to Butler (2022), ethical encounters build on recognising the Other as part of a shared world we inhabit together. This shared world is not only a 'backdrop' but a central part of opening up to the Other because the world is – just like our bodies – formed by actors who inhabit it through a bodily openness to the Other. When we perceive the Other through being confronted with their bodies in the same world, this world provides a condition for corporeal generosity (Diprose 2002). Echoing builds on this embodied understanding of engaging with the voice of the Other not only in but through a shared world. The voice travels through this shared world until it reaches the Self that listens in a mode of bodily opening up to the Other. Taking this travel of the voice seriously, with echoing we need to ask, in Butler's formulation, 'What world is this?'(Butler 2022) in which we engage with the voice of the Other?

Eck, Dobusch, and van den Brink (2023) argue that analysing inclusion requires the acknowledgement of its non-linear mechanisms. In my empirical study, I similarly demonstrate that inclusion processes are based on continuous practices of all involved actors of forming the very conditions for inclusion attempts. I further show how the outcomes of these world-making practices, manifested as a shared world, establish conditions for ongoing and future engagements. They continuously co-produce the world in which they encounter the Other. I showed how actors abstracted the particular story of the Other to both personal experiences and general societal narratives, for example the patriarchy or queer family.

For instance, Clara felt at home in and could express herself through dance movements. This familiarity enabled her to articulate her voice, as she could translate her embodied movement practices from the familiar gym to her new artistic environment. These practices of world-making enable actors to inscribe themselves in the shared space. Thus, actors understand the voice of the Other through a world that they already inhabit and, therefore, comprehend. Through their personal experiences – of an individual or more general scope – they can open up and respond to the voice of the Other because this voice becomes part of their world. That is, they not only make sense of the situation they find themselves in, but in the process of understanding the voice of the Other actors also contribute to this world with their own experiences. Instead of understanding these abstractions simply as other versions of the story of the Other – and thereby appropriate it – with echoing, we can think of recalling additional own experiences, which provide proximity, not sameness. Thus, engaging with the voice of the Other is not a passive process in which a voice splashes over us, but is an active practice of listening.

As a dimension of echoing, world-making reintroduces reflexive processes into embodied modes of engaging with the Other. However, this reflection does not revert to mere cognitive processes, as has been criticised regarding inclusion initiatives (Steyaert and Janssens 2023). Often, reflectivity is framed as a conscious moral judgment, establishing similarities as a fundamental condition for ethical encounters. Yet, this approach risks misrepresentation by drawing on normative notions of the Other (Pullen and Vachhani 2021; Tyler 2019), thus ethical encounters 'cannot be determined by managerial will, fiat or program' (Pullen and Rhodes 2014, 785). In my study, however, leveraging prior personal and more general abstractions of the voice of the Other provided a pathway to engage in the corporeal openness of giving to and being touched by the Other, which is a primary condition of ethical encounters (Diprose 2002). In this context, world-making denotes a reflective process of embedding oneself into the shared practice of listening to the Other. Thus, my findings suggest that embodied and reflective dimensions of engaging with the Other, though often viewed separately in theory, are interrelated in the process of engaging with the voice of the Other. To remain with the image of the echo, the world the voice travels through and is reflected by is also not just there but continuously co-constructed in the process of engaging with the voice of others.

While I look at the practices of both artists and participants, that is, actors with different power positions, and acknowledge their contributions to producing a shared world, I see – in accordance with other embodiment scholars – that the world is not the same for all, and that means for world-making, as in articulating one's voice, differ. However, although corporeal generosity 'may not guarantee social justice, it is a necessary move in that direction'; the political potential for this kind of ethical encounter lies in its potential for 'disrupting the taken for granted means through which moral judgment is imposed' (Pullen and Rhodes 2014, 788). Thinking about engaging with the voices of others through echoing directs our attention to the alternatives to normative narratives and the silences that accompany them. While I showed the dynamics of (re-)producing the Self and the Other in ethical encounters, future studies which draw on echoing as a way to analyse engaging with the voice of the Other might more systematically investigate the relationships between different Others in this process.

Conclusion

This paper offers echoing as a new analytical concept for better understanding practices of engaging with the voice of the Other. Echoing builds on post-individualist theory, particularly the concepts of corporeal generosity (Diprose 2002) and world (Butler 2022), to rethink the relationship between the Self and the Other as relational and embodied. I illustrate and further develop the concept of echoing by drawing on the empirical case of participatory art as an example of inclusion initiatives, which also displays their particular collaboration processes and are also evaluated thereby. With the lens of echoing, I showed (1) that the voice of the Other is never a pure tone but is transmitted in a

disturbed process and in the form of a collective response; and (2) that actors apply world-making practices through abstracting the story of the Other to prior personal experiences and general societal narratives, which continuously co-produce the shared world and allow actors to inscribe themselves into the shared process.

Research has demonstrated that attempts to give voice to others draw on normative and discursive concepts, which (re-)produce particular ideas of the Other or even new invisibilities (Tyler and Vachhani 2021; Priola et al. 2018; Swan 2010) and which favour the more powerful. Inclusion initiatives are therefore at risk of appropriating the voice of the Other. Rather than striving for sameness, echoing acknowledges the differences in positions from which one speaks and engages with the Other and their voice. Echoing suggests considering engagement with the voices of Others as an endeavour towards proximity, an attempt to speak nearby. In engaging with the Other, their voice transforms on its way from being spoken to being heard – like an echo reflected by the world it passes.

Note

1. The following excerpts are based on verbatim transcriptions of the interviews I conducted. For readability, anonymity and respect reasons, the language was corrected and expressions such as 'like', 'of course', 'm = h', etc. were removed from the vignettes, and grammar was corrected. However, these expressions, together with pauses, emphasis, rhythm, laughter, etc., were considered in the analysis.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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