

# Vocal attunement of vulnerable relations

*How art can contribute to learning environments*

Heidi Fast

Doctoral researcher, Aalto University, Helsinki, Finland

[Heidi.fast@aalto.fi](mailto:Heidi.fast@aalto.fi)

29.9.2021

# ”Human voice and the ability of attunement”

- Using the process of artistic research to develop a method of non-verbal encountering when verbal communication breaks down
- ”Vocal work” from ”artwork” as a verb
  - What art can do to facilitate conditions for connection and care
- Research in co-operation with Helsinki University Central Hospital of Psychiatry
  - 1. phase with 25 inpatients and nurses – non-recurring participatory concert
  - 2. phase with 8 outpatients and psychiatric nurse – 15 meetings
- Research question: *How vocal work changes the experience of connection between participants?*

# Outcomes of the research

- *Hospital Symphonies* –series
  - *Vocal Nest* (2015), vocal installation to the corridor of HUCH Psychiatry Center
  - *Hospital Symphonies* (2018), concert installation in Helsinki Music Hall
  - *Sairaalasinfonya 3.0* (2019), radioessey for YLE Radio in Finland
- Shared vocalizing created strong sense of togetherness
- Widened the spectrum of becoming heard
- Developed strong interoceptive experiences that vitalized the connections to oneself and others
- Destabilized the structures of ordinary interaction and showed psychiatric environment in a new light
- In non-verbal resonance sphere social cohesion can be experienced in the sensorial level without functional and institutional roles
  - Enhances social recognition and human dignity

# Facilitating vocal attunement

- Ethical questions inseparable from sensorial skill
- Basic elements of sensorial attunement:
  - Ability to non-verbally attune to the vitality, rhythms, silences and vocalisations of participants and answer to them with own voice
  - Creating emotional safety no 1. requirement
  - Ability to sensitize the interaction to the level of interoceptive sensing
  - Constant attunement between ethical position of subjectivity and affective position of shared vocalizing
  - Also emotional skills, and understanding of the facilitator's own pain and ways of interacting are demanded
  - Attunement does not always happen and can never be total

Thank you!