

# **Nordic Art Education's Hope Labor**

## **Reframing Neoliberal Logics**

**Nordic Master in Visual Studies and Art Education (NoVA)**

**Aalto University & Aalborg University**

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### **Abstract**

The topic of interest for this thesis, *Nordic Art Education's Hope Labor: Reframing Neoliberal Logics*, are art-based community practices against unpaid labor in a Nordic art and cultural context. The thesis topic was founded in participatory observations taken by the author during low and unpaid working positions in the Nordic region (Finland and Denmark) in cultural organizations. These roles were in organizations that communicated art education as a fundamental part of the working role. A primary observation was the lack of material and immaterial benefits from the organization to reward the worker. This initiated a visual intervention encouraging reflection from fellow workers on their experience in a working position that they identify as hope labor. The project was framed by design-based research (DBR), expands on the practices of diverse economies, and participatory action research (PAR), for designing a reflexive curatorial practice. The visual intervention's title became *Working Precariously*. It included an A3 printed zine exhibited and distributed in Copenhagen, Denmark and Imatra & Helsinki, Finland. It included 5 excerpts from 5 creatives based in Finland as well as a 6th collaborator that assisted in the layout. The zine was presented and distributed in an exhibition format in Imatra as a part of a group exhibition called *Välillä Väärässä*. As a second iteration of *Working Precariously*, the project included a workshop with a dozen participants resulting in two additional zines titled *Hope Zines*. Then, as a method of presentation and reflection a zine library was implemented at Helsinki Central Library Oodi, titled *We're Working Here!*. Coalescing into a curated library, the zine library exhibited 22 zines (with 65+ persons involved in their creation). The library created a commons where community members could contribute to the topic of working precariously. Altogether, the curated library format was a learning platform for fellow artists, creatives, as well as the general public on working conditions in the Nordic art and cultural industry. To answer my research question, the findings of this thesis concluded that multiple forms of design inquiry can be developed for reclamation of and reflexive learning on hope labor in Nordic art and culture.

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**Keywords** *Precarity, Nordic art education, zine-making, hope labor, participatory action research, design-based research, commons, design inquiry, alternative economics.*

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# Preface

This thesis includes reflections from youth from Finland (Ella Kaskikallio), Sweden (Clara Gausepohl, Sorrel Salb, Jagana Khasdorj, Niko Hendriksen), Iceland (Markus Haahr), Denmark, and the Faroe Islands.

(Based in Finland) Contributors for the first design iteration, *Working Precariously* zine, included Ni Lin, Moe Mustafa, Vilma Orvokki, Veronkia Vegesant, and two anonymous artists.

(Based in Finland) Contributors for the second iteration, *Hope Zines* included Albert Figurt, Paul Grandchamp, Hilka Hissa, Caitlin Long, Zeo Löwenhielm, Fernanda Ordorica, Inka Pallari, Richard Schmidt, Vienna Tan Si Rong, Alice Thirkell, and Johanna Weigel who helped facilitate the workshop.

(Based Primarily in Finland) The *We're Working Here!* Zine library includes 22 zines, altogether, the library assembles the creative labor and contributions from 65+ persons: Rikke Bank, Anna Schmidt Clausen, Paola Jalili, Emmi Jormalainen, Zeynep Kaynar (with Cici Liu, Diep Nguyen, Sayed Farhad Zandrazavi, Kanerva Kartano, Tatu Heikkila), *Kiila ry*, Polina Korchagina, Else Lagerspetz, Jussi Lautu, Saara Mahboub, Zina Marpegan, E. Rowan Mena (with Maggie Breen, Riika Haru & Reetta Ranta, rebeka lukošus & jurjis tatarkins, Petra Vallila), *Mustapiste*, Gabriella Presnal (with *Hope Zines* and *Working Precariously* contributors), Francesca Rose Bilancio Schøning, Jamie Smyth, Wusoul, & #FFFF00.

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# 1. Introduction

This thesis stems from my participatory experiences as an early career artist. Additionally, my position as someone in their youth experiencing hope labor impacts my perspective, so this thesis will shift into first-person to describe my context. The interest in work as art pedagogy is drawn from my position as a young artist within various organizations that engage with youth performing work as a form of informal art education. The investigation of hope labor was especially sparked by completing an academic internship. Hope labor describes a temporal position that layers the present and future wherein the hope laborer / worker performs labor in hopes of achieving further employment (Allan, 2019, p. 67). While the organization the hope laborer is hired at may not promise the worker exposure and employment per se (ex. “possibility for organizational mobility”), it is the function of that position to propel the hope laborer into a better circumstance where they are more experienced or more visible to be employed. The term hope labor is an umbrella term for unpaid or low paid positions that often include “learning by doing”. Which is performed by both students and non-students alike. Hope labor is perceived as being especially, but not solely, performed by young people. This thesis also expands on a history of personal interest in work performed as art education from early 2023.

The case studies I will reflect upon within this thesis include the Finlayson Art Area (FAA), an annual art festival held in Tampere, Finland (worked in 2022), PUBLICS, a curatorial agency based in Helsinki, Finland (worked in 2023-2024), as well as the Copenhagen Photo Festival (CPF) based in Copenhagen, Denmark (worked in 2024). FAA and PUBLICS function as field work examples founded in participatory observations as I performed a hope laborer role in all three of these organizations. The three are included as a way of understanding the phenomenon of hope labor in the art and cultural industry on a regional level. CPF is considered the main jumping point as the internship was conducted within this academic program, while the others were not (their start being prior to my masters studies). FAA fieldwork primarily reflects on my own memories of being a part of the volunteer team. CPF and PUBLICS fieldwork combines semi-formal interviews (all interviewees aware of my researcher role) and reflections of my experiences in their organizations.

From the observations taken during the working period at CPF, it was reflected that there is a need for an organizational turn to feminist or alternative models. These models would combine “both purposive and solidarity incentives” including “needs for affiliation, emotional support, and meaningful work” (Scott R. W., 2003b, p. 179 as cited in Simonsen, 2014, p.28). This thesis exploration is intended as a method of reclaiming hope labor when organizations have nothing left to offer. That is, other than the hope of finding future employment and any “social capital” achieved through the position’s inclusion on one’s CV.

The problem I identified was cultural organizations consistently depending on the hope labor produced by students and youth while not providing sufficient art education or extrinsic benefits. Work often went uncredited, making it difficult for hope laborers to extract extrinsic benefits. While the nonprofit organization and cultural industry overall is precarious, it was still a consensus with the other project coordinators (both Danish and Non-EU) that I had worked with that there should have been more done to recognize and remunerate the work we contributed. Especially to prevent feeling like an invisible intern. Furthermore, current welfare structures do not address inequality for non-EU interns.

However, this thesis does not focus on building feminist or alternatives within organizations. This thesis does not produce further creative labor for organizations that continue to depend on hope labor. What is explored on alternative systems is one outcome of this research, however, the primary aim was producing a tool and intervention within *post-hope labor* for the hope laborer, by the hope laborer. There are a variety of methods that organizations can implement within their systems to build solidarity initiatives, however, my research interest for this thesis has been what can we as hope laborers do? My position is not within an organization, nor do I have agency (decision making power) in these organizations to facilitate alternative models. Like many others facing precarity, what is in my relative control is my own artistic practice. Through iterative practices, my research question became: drawing upon artistic practice, what participatory methods can be developed for reclamation of and reflexive learning on hope labor in Nordic art and culture?

## 2. State of Art

The persons participating in hope labor have typically been identified as young people (18-29), mothers, and immigrants (Overgaard 2019; Kuehn and Corrigan, 2013). Visibility and networking in the working field is especially important for workers who may already have multiple years of experience in the field, but may need further network exposure to gain employability. Especially for immigrants in a new country where one may lack connections, community, and resources. My position is primarily as a young person and a Nordic immigrant in Denmark and English-speaking person in Finland while completing hope labor, so this becomes the framing for the positionality of this thesis. Additionally, my field work primarily consists of observing youth in unpaid or low paid positions of hope labor. While many times an immigrant background would overlap, youth was the most prominent characteristic amongst nearly all colleagues in all my conducted field work. As Narodowski discusses, youth has become an attractive culture to imitate in the form of language, aesthetics, and cultural expression (Lipovetsky 1991; Narodowski 2011a). With the absorption of youth culture in “adult” cultural expression, this can also extend into organization cultural expression. When youth may not have agency in an organization, their cultural labor is still utilized to export an organizational culture expressing youthful culture. Youth’s cultural labor as art education was of particular interest as it reveals an element of a classed labor as well as a form of sub-cultural labor exploited by those in the majority who then utilize unpaid labor. Hence, the target audience for this thesis is fellow youth in the Nordic art and cultural context who are similarly experiencing hope labor.

The investigation of hope labor builds a comparative study of the organizational cultures of Nordic art organizations working with youth and in some cases, dependent on hope labor. From participatory observations of hope labor at CPF, I reflected that there were limited methods for the organization to recognize their workers. In a Danish context, internships are often considered an educational activity (Piktaent, N/A). They are unpaid positions as Danish students can receive student subsidy support (Uddannelses- og Forskningsstyrelsen). Organizations can provide salary, but this then makes them ineligible for study support (Uddannelses- og Forskningsstyrelsen). Danish organizations can also provide a contribution fee to recognize their

workers (Uddannelses- og Forskningsstyrelsen). In Finland, one can be paid a salary for their internship. Like the Danes, in Finland there is an income cap and exceeding this cap results in taxed income. In both countries, EU-students can receive study support if working a certain amount of hours per week. For Finland, “an average of 10 hours or more per week for a period of at least 4 months” is necessary to receive subsidies (Kansaneläkelaitos). While in Denmark “a minimum of 10 – 12 hours each week while you study and receive SU” (Uddannelses- og Forskningsstyrelsen). If salary cannot be given (though a contribution fee is possible), one needs to ideate alternative remuneration for hope laborers.

To build alternative models, one must understand hope labor further. In the context of workshops for job seekers, Allan (2019, p.67, 70) describes these workshops teaching job seekers to imagine oneself as “a portfolio or a bundle of skills that indexes one’s employability” or viewing oneself in an entrepreneurial mindset such as “self as a business” (2019, p.70). As Allan (2019, p.81) discusses, hope labor relies on neoliberal logic that transforms the cultural signifiers associated with learning-as-doing into markers of self-investment and self as a business. Ultimately, the self-as-business mentality “individualizes unemployment and social inclusion” (2019, p.81). Social inclusion is individualized as dominant economic systems have an aversion to monetizing social and moral value as it cannot be measured within neoliberal logic (2019, p.80). The result is that non-profit, voluntary, trainee, intern, and learning-by-doing positions in the creative industry become precarious as the methods of measuring social impact are inadequate.

As noted by Kuehn and Corrigan, hope labor differentiates itself from venture labor as the latter is described as strategic to reduce one’s “exposure to risk”, and while hope labor may similarly apply strategies, ultimately it is distinguished by lack of agency in one’s future labor (2013, p.17). As discussed by Giomboni, J. R., by adopting the neoliberal values, individuals then “strategically invested in serial internships” to improve their employability (Giomboni, 2024, p.303). Ultimately sustaining the intern economy and according to Frederick, J. (1997), continuing to “reduce the value of everybody’s labor” as they become repeat-interns. Here, we see repeat interns continue to return to low-to-unpaid forms of labor, likely due to the cruel optimism that also seems inherent to hope labor. Cruel optimism, theorized by affect theorist Lauren Berlant, “is an attachment to compromised conditions of possibility: the escape from

precarious working and living conditions always seems just around the corner, but their resolution continuously escapes because cruel optimism keeps us locked into precarizing value practices” (Elzenbaumer, B., 2021, p.325).

The lines between voluntary work and intern work are blurry. To some, voluntary work is associated with non-profits while intern work is associated with for-profit organizations (2019, p.67) or voluntary work is simply a catch-all for any work that is freely given (Wilson, 2000, p. 215 as cited in Overgaard, 2019). A common distinction between employee work and work performed by an intern is that it should not replace an employee role or employee’s labor (paid work). That the intern should benefit equally or sometimes even more from the organization, compared to the organization primarily benefitting from intern work (Frederick, 1997). Voluntary work has also been previously and occasionally categorized as leisure or even serious leisure (Stebbins, 1996 as cited by Overgaard, 2019, p.132). It has not always been defined as a form of work, as it is combined with personal gratification, or, the transcendent values, achieved through volunteering (Merrell, 2000 as cited by Overgaard, 2019, p.132). As discussed by Pérez-López (cited in Lleó et al., 2019, p.127), the three main motives amongst employees are extrinsic (“salary, recognition fame”), intrinsic (learning, competences), and transcendent (service, caring, emotional or value-based reward). When applied to learning-by-doing positions, work is similarly positioned as oppositional to intrinsic values - learning, training, skills development, and observation (Fair Work Ombudsman, n.d., as cited by Overgaard, 2019, p.133). The understanding and exploration of voluntary labor (as well as intern labor) often leave out the overlap of work performed by both paid and unpaid employees (2019, p.131).

This overlap in labor between paid and unpaid workers highlights that there is a gross misunderstanding of the power dynamics of hope labor (2019, p.131). Such as the access to paid work, wherein, within precarious industries like art and culture, the access is competitive and limited. As Giomboni notes on new media workers, the increase in learning new skill sets while on the job within the creative field also shifts the working as it necessitates learning. So here, we have two workers, the hope laborer, who is positioned as “learning to work”. I.e. unpaid work in the present hoping to receive paid work in the future. While the employee is similarly learning to *continue* working. To remain employable and maintain the position they currently have within an

institution, they must continuously update their skillset. The lines of who is a hope laborer and who is not continue to blur when learning is integral to producing cultural work. As mentioned by Holm (2014), an internship and other creative labor is often indistinguishable as creative labor is typically performed for themselves. Then its application in an organizational, internship setting is also undervalued because it's the same type of labor, just institutional.

As noted by Federici (2012, as cited by Südkamp, C. M., & Dempsey, S. E., 2021, p.343), nonprofit organizations, which are saturated with hope laborers providing social services, often perform “feminized reproductive labor” focused on the caring of others, resulting in a high emphasis on meaningfulness and producing meaningful work. As meaningfulness and transcendent values are difficult to measure within neoliberal business models, this creates poor organizational models of rewarding the work performed by workers and hope laborers alike. Similarly, as this labor often has high amounts of transcendent value for hope laborers, the work is undervalued as they enjoy giving back to their community and helping others. As there is personal gratification involved, this means it may not be dignified to the title of employee or a form of labor despite the expertise, time, and energy the position may require. As noted by Overgaard (2019, p.139), feminist texts on care or what is socialized as “feminized reproductive labor” fundamentally feature altruism. The labor that is socially attributed as feminine based on its care (for society, for example) is expected to be provided without anything in return as care is considered innate. This is considered “compulsory altruism” (Land & Rose, 1985, as cited in Overgaard, 2019, p.139). Naturalizing labor then becomes more or less synonymous with taking it for granted (FQT-GSWS at Penn, 2021). When there is compulsory altruism, it is usually then argued that extrinsic values can overpower the transcendent (e.g. money drives out passion and love for society). Compulsory altruism would then argue against extrinsic motivations as then the cause for transcendence, ex., helping people, is no longer the first priority.

So, workers should remain content with what transcendent or intrinsic rewards they reap (Overgaard, 2019, p.139). Similarly to reproductive labor and care, volunteering, internship/trainee, and learn-by-doing are often naturalized or made inherent/reliable/constant without the need for employers and organizations to provide something in return. Like care, as brought up by Allan (2019, p.79), hope labor does not always “provide free labor and surplus value or profit for private companies, although they often do”. Like care and domestic labor,

culture can produce the conditions for growth and for workers to be better at work (readying for work, cooking, cleaning, nurturing, caring, producing the next generation of workers, etc) (FQT-GSWS at Penn, 2021). Care reproduces the characteristics necessary in sustaining life, but isn't considered valuable because there may not always be a surplus to profit off of. Similarly, value-based practices create the conditions necessary for society to exist, and yet are naturalized. Hence, necessitating compulsive altruism within the culture and art industries. If demands for extrinsic benefits within cultural and art industries are met with compulsory altruism, cultural labor and hope labor need to be balanced between the extrinsic, intrinsic, and transcendent.

Precarizing value practices also overlaps with hope labor's intersection with learning-by-doing, as it applies to how we socially value learning. When hope labor positions imbued with learning-by-doing are undervalued, learning follows this trend of being innate and hence, non-applicable for remuneration. Giomboni notes that this accelerated need to continuously learn new skill sets can become detrimental to creatives (specifically as professionals working in new media) as they are outpaced by technology (2024, p.294). Here, the constant learning-by-doing and cultural pedagogy applied to cultural industries can also become unsustainable. Leading them to find new ways of adding value or transforming aspects of their identity into an entrepreneurial or "self as a business" mindset. Within a meritocratic frame, if one does not hope labor 'hard enough', learn enough, and/or give in to a "self as a business" ontology, then one's circumstance is viewed as individualized failure rather than systemic (Kuehn and Corrigan, 2013, p.18).

Amidst precarity, organizations are often dependent on hope labor. Here, the labor of paid employees and hope laborers overlap or are the same, and/or hope laborers make up the majority of their organization. When advancement/organizational mobility and financial payment cannot be made, alternative solutions must be considered (Simonsen, 2014, p.28). To "[...] combine both purposive and solidarity incentives, giving attention to participants' needs for affiliation, emotional support, and meaningful work" (Scott R. W., 2003b, p. 179 cited in Simonsen, 2014, p.28). These organizations can shift their organizational typology to further benefit hope laborers. How can these organizations improve the assets they provide for their interns? In many cases, guidance or "emotional support" is an asset that organizations tend to advertise. They may

provide onboarding, checking in throughout the training period, and giving guidance sometimes multiple times throughout an assignment to guide the intern towards a more fruitful resolution for the organization (how to guide the hope laborer to mimic the cultural signifiers of the organization into the cultural work they produce). “Meaningful work” is also often a balancing act, as organizations may fear giving too much responsibility to their interns and, in turn, may exploit their interns' labor by abusing the power they have within the relationship of ‘employer’ and hope laborer/intern/trainee (Giomboni, 2024, p.300). On the other hand, too little meaningful work can translate to too little trust in the hope laborers' capabilities and may result in hope laborers leaving the organization as they may seek other opportunities that could provide more meaningful work. I.e., to balance the workload and the content so that it is not a waste of time for the hope laborer to be there. While simultaneously not overworking or giving “employee work” to the point where it becomes exploitative.

Then, the importance of “needs for affiliation” can also go undervalued. As I consider hope labor specifically in the realm of art and culture, affiliation is often a baseline of recognition and reward. Many creatives may perform hope labor especially for affiliation with an organization without the need for monetary, material, emotional support, or, similarly, professional guidance. The affiliation in itself may be rewarding enough to be recognized as “worthy” or “remarkable” by the organization. To undervalue needs for affiliation within art and cultural organizations, depending on hope labor, may be an oversight that can be easily corrected. Needs for affiliation are also especially relevant for hope labor as hope labor is particularly defined by its “promises that exposure and experience will possibly lead to employment in the future” (Allan, 2019, p.66). I.e., one of the extrinsic motivations to engage in hope labor is to be affiliated with an organization wherein you may find similar labor and employment with them or another organization in the future. To engage in hope labor is to hope that if you invest your time now providing free labor, you may be rewarded in the future. Many going into these positions then confront their role by adopting neoliberal, meritocratic values (Giomboni, 2024, p.298). The interest in hope labor is to reconfigure how hope laborers confront their roles as well as how organizations facilitate hope labor. Whilst still needing to engage in hope labor, how can we confront it without further enforcing neoliberal logics? What methods can be used to subvert the

norms of art and culture organizations? How do we confront capitalist ontologies in hope labor, and how can we transform our relationship with it?

While asking these questions, I am reminded that hope labor “is largely not experienced as exploitation or alienation, despite the commodification processes inherent to digital and cultural production” (Kuehn, K. and Corrigan, T. F. 2013, p.12). In hybrid organizations where there are both paid and unpaid members of the organization, it has been noted that the affective commitment, or in other words, emotional attachment, to the organization can be higher in volunteers and interns compared to paid members (van Vuuren et al., 2008, p.324). As unpaid members do not have any promises of extrinsic exchange or consequences if they leave the organization (no pay, material benefits), the main form of exchange between them and the organization then becomes a dialogue on transcendent and intrinsic values that are upheld by the organization (van Vuuren et al., 2008). Affiliation becomes an integral part of work as art pedagogy as affiliation is already applied within cultural production organizations as a motivator for creatives they work with (ex., exposure, visibility, communication of the artists, the program contents, partners).

As these values are the only assets within dialogue, it then becomes a psychological conversation on how loyal one is to the transcendent values the organization represents and implements. As mentioned by Lleo et al. (2018, p.127), it is easier to create a shared purpose, affective commitment, and loyalty with shared transcendent values compared to persons’ whose motives align primarily intrinsically or extrinsically. Hence, hope laborers, as well as the organizations they perform work for, may not all see the necessity for the way we engage and understand hope labor to be transformed as then it may feel as a call to transform the very foundation on which their transcendent values are based upon. It becomes a question, then, how to reintroduce the necessity for extrinsic benefits within the hope labor sector?

### 3. Research Design

## Process model for visual design

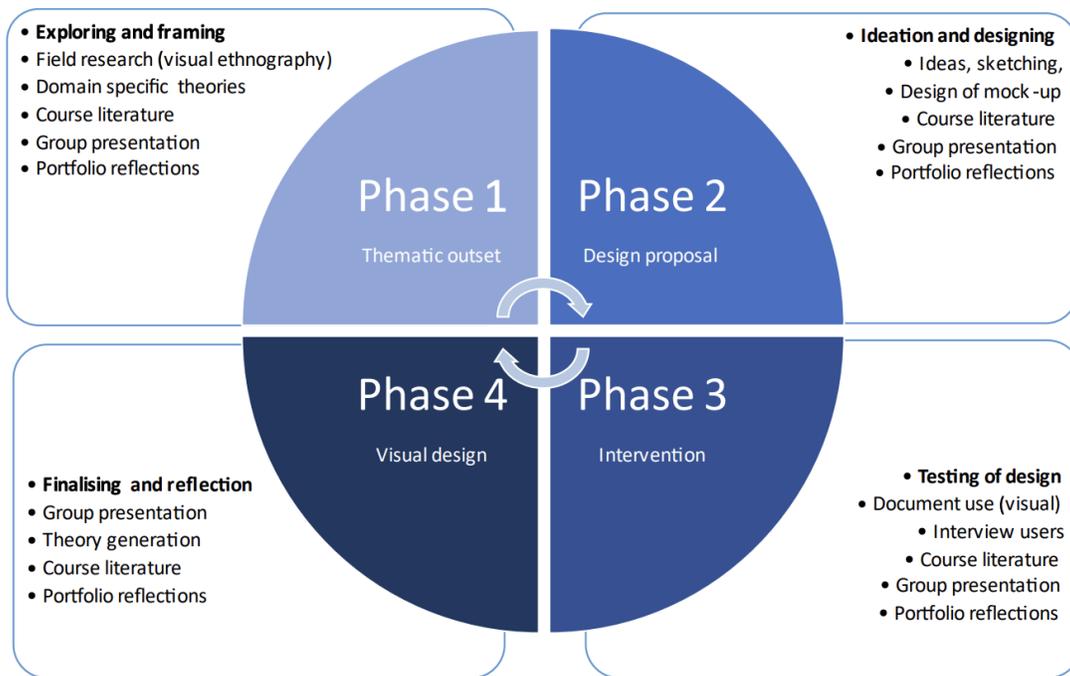


Figure 1. Process model for visual design, Buhl & Skov (2023, p.7).

The overarching method of practice is Buhl and Skov's (2024) Process Model for Visual Design and Design Based Research (DBR) as a guiding philosophy of science for designing interventions. This features four phases, phase one primarily includes fieldwork and reflecting on found research literature, phase two consists of design ideation, brainstorming, and a mock-up, while phase three comprises a designed and tested intervention. Phase four then functions as a conclusion and summary of the project as a whole. DBR has an interactive characteristic, especially when developing its second and third phases. Though, the process model for visual design (see Fig. 1) differentiates itself from DBR as instead of solving the problem, the model expands on the issue (Buhl & Skov, 2023, p.6).

The phases can be summarized as such:

### *Phase 1: Exploring and Framing*

- I participated in field work through hope labor positions in the art and cultural industry. This involves engaging in multiple informal learning environments. My core field work was my project coordinator position at the Copenhagen Photo Festival (CPF). I worked part-time (three days) for three months. In addition to the director of the festival, Maja Dyrehauge Gregersen, and the head of communications and public relations (PR), Stine Almlund, I worked alongside three other interns - all of us with position titles of Project Coordinators. From informal conversations and observations in the working team, fellow colleagues expressed desire for further remuneration from the organization. From these observations of my own experience as well as my colleagues, I wished to formulate alternative models for remuneration and recognition.
- Literary introductions to how hope labor could be expanded upon through artistic, curatorial, and collective practices which were then integrated into the research design.
- Reflections on previous hope labor positions in Nordic cultural organizations (FAA, PUBLICS). Informal conversations with Nordic youth during workshops facilitated by a youth civil organization.

### *Phase 2: Ideation and Designing*

- Practicing photogrammetry in a residency and studio space (self-testing).
- Ideation for residency structures to expand upon hope labor.
- Designing an open call and communications for a zine.
- Mapping needs based on field work and reflecting on memories.

### *Phase 3: Testing of the Design*

- Ideation and designing for zine-making as a form of collective reflexivity on hope labor. Back and forth on the layout with my contributors and gaining their feedback.

- Testing an iteration of zine-making through a physical workshop compared to an online zine-making process.

#### *Phase 4: Finalizing and Reflecting*

- The visual design for this thesis is characterized by the distribution and exhibition of the zine issues. The visual design is of high importance as one of the main aims for this thesis is exploring the production of a pedagogical *forschung*. With the German translation of research *forschung*, there is a scientific model of research in the form of thesis, laboratory, or proposition; with the French translation *recherché*, research findings are presented as facts. Compared to *forschung* as something to be explored, to be defined, and the uncertainties of the findings are to be unravelled (Sheikh, 2015, p.37). This *forschung* is produced through the spaces the zine inhabits and allows the nature of working precariously to seep into public situations. In all drop-points, reading points, and exhibitions, the space contributes to the knowledge production inherent to the zine. Exhibition-making was also a motivator for contributors and offered not only a product to reflect on but an entire learning process framed through exhibitions.

The philosophy of design is based in pragmatism where “beings are in a constant state of becoming and that their existence defines their actions as beings” (Ejsing-Duun & Skovbjerg, 2019, p.447). Ejsing-Duun & Skovbjerg introduce three modes of design inquiry (Fig. 2) that I found reflected in my own design process within this thesis. The first mode draws upon Schöns design inquiry process where they integrate one’s own design practice (Ejsing-Duun & Skovbjerg, 2019, p.448). The second mode is design-based research, characterized by research practice producing change and “fresh knowledge about the domain in question” (Ejsing-Duun & Skovbjerg, 2019, p.450). The third is critical design which “seeks to expose political issues or phenomena in society through both the design process and design itself” (Ejsing-Duun & Skovbjerg, 2019, p.451). The use of these modes of design inquiry will be expanded upon in the *Reflections* (6.4.) section of this thesis under *Visual Design* (6.).

**TABLE 1** Three modes of design inquiry

	<b>1. Mode: Process (Reflective practitioner)</b>	<b>2. Mode: Research (Design-Based Research)</b>	<b>3. Mode: Politics (Critical design)</b>
<b>Indeterminate situation</b> <i>What kinds of questions can be asked?</i>	<u>Starts with:</u> -Clients' problems -Users' practice -Designers' own practice	<u>Starts with</u> -Lack of knowledge on domain -Questions about domain	<u>Starts with:</u> -Designers identification of issue -Non-awareness of/carelessness about a political issue amongst citizens
<b>Controlled/directed transformation</b> <i>What does the inquiry aim to change?</i>	<u>Aims to:</u> -Solve issues for the target users -Solves the client's problem -Improve practice for the designer	<u>Aims to:</u> -Gain knowledge about domain -Solve issues for the users	<u>Aims to:</u> -Raise awareness of structures -Make the issue actionable -Look like a real design
<b>Assumptions/knowledge</b> <i>What does design build upon?</i>	<u>Assumptions are made based on:</u> -Experience -Empirical observations -and possibly theory	<u>Assumptions are made based on:</u> -Theories about the domain and empirical knowledge	<u>Assumptions are made based on:</u> -Research knowledge about (tech) development for the future -or Knowledge about consequences of past choices
<b>Methods applied</b> <i>How does design determine its constituents, distinctions and relations?</i>	<u>Approach to problem:</u> -Naming and framing -Generative metaphors	<u>Approach to problem:</u> -Iterative process going from knowledge of the domain to lab, to intervention, to reflection that leads to new insights about the domain	<u>Approach to problem:</u> -Tracing and projection tactics (both analytical and synthesising)
<b>The mode's objective</b> <i>What is regarded as a determinate/stable situation?</i>	<u>Goal:</u> -Designer solves the issue -...and become a better designer	<u>Goal:</u> -Design knowledge and principles are found and tested -The intervention is implemented	<u>Goal:</u> -Publics are raised in relation to the issue

Figure 2. Three Modes of Design Inquiry.

## 3.2. Feminist Post-Structuralist Economics

Feminist post-structuralism is a guiding philosophy embedded into methods such as studio-ing, participatory action research (PAR), and forschung. The process model (Fig. 1) is used as a planning framework for integrating these methodologies into a visual intervention. The feminist post-structuralist turn was informed by the desire to subvert neoliberal logics of hope labor and resist capitalocentrism. Coined by J.K. Gibson-Graham, capitalocentrism describes capitalism being endemic to economies and being the “ultimate determinant” of what happens in the world (Cameron, 2022, p.42). Similar to Fisher’s capitalist realism, which describes “the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it” (Fisher, 2009, p.6). As Fisher explains, ideology cannot succeed until it is naturalized, and “it cannot be naturalized while it is still thought of as a value rather than a fact” (Fisher, 2009, p.20). Business ontology has become a fact as capitalist realism cements itself within hope labor’s nature. In the case of work-as-art-pedagogy, this is notable in that business ontology is adopted by hope laborers through meritocracy. What is yet to be naturalized is that forms of cultural work providing social and cultural care are still regarded as solely values, not facts. On reclaiming hope labor, it falls under a wider question of how we can apply design thinking to cementing socialist realism? Resisting capitalocentrism means no longer privileging capitalist relationships and economic activity, and instead investing in diverse economies where capitalism is no longer the center around which our labor and consumption revolve. A diverse economy includes a “wide range of practices that make and support livelihoods, create and distribute wealth, marshal and steward resources, make infrastructures and shape futures” (Cameron and Gibson-Graham, 2022, p.1). A similar concept is producing the commons. The commons is an activity expressing relationships, a defined community, rules, and/or protocols to engage with resources (Cameron, 2024, p.1,5). Diverse economies and the commons are to be enacted through “infrastructure, subjects, ecologies, and theories” (Cameron and Gibson-Graham, 2022, p.2) as community is continuously an ecology of becoming (Nancy, 1991 as cited in Cameron and Gibson-Graham, 2022, p.10).

As noted by Elzenbaumer, some practical and conceptual tools that designers had already been introduced to or given through art education or hope labor, did not create empowering realizations (2021, p.322). In universities, Elzenbaumer notes the denial of precarity and the reinforcement of neoliberal, meritocratic values (2021, p.322). Hwang and McCarthy (2021, p.49) then suggest, as part of Participatory Action Research (PAR), that research can be conducted together with both researchers and participants learning together on how to create change. In PAR, rather than focusing on the problem, resulting in inability to act and lack of agency in building a solution, PAR focuses on “asset-based development” (2021, p.49) where ongoing assets are to be improved upon rather than a focus on what is absent and build solutions from ground up. This approach allows for agency and actionable strategies to emerge (Hwang and McCarthy, 2021, ). Similarly, organizers may not be interested in analysis, workshopping, thinking, or economies that continue dialogue focused on structural forms and how strong and impermeable they are, as capitalocentrism does not produce practices to resist capitalocentrism (Cameron, 2022, p.5). In the same vein as PAR, Desai (2020, p.20), discusses collective pedagogies highlighting the act of creating together, dialogue, and developing a “we” instead of an individualized “I” that is typically found in artist training (i.e. developing an isolated persona, brand, niche for becoming a creative/designer/artist). This approach echoes the need for interdependence between researchers, educators, and learners, such as between art educators and artists.

As Dewey describes it, “knowing is literally something which we do” (Dewey, 1916, p. 376 as cited in Stompf, 2022, p.3); similarly, carnal sociology presents a practice of using carnal knowledge, or embodied observations as integral to producing and knowing (Wacquant, 2015, p.5). As an ontological form of sociology (compared to an epistemological one), Wacquant describes carnal sociology as “diving into the stream”, compared to being an observer (viewing from the shore), or drowning (which is described as “subjectivity into ethnography”) (2015, p.5). The latter, “drowning”, is especially important to reflect on as a researcher, to reflect that one’s embodied bias or subjectivity does not automate an ethnographic study on a cultural phenomenon. This “drowning” will be resisted by integrating PAR into the research practice. Drawing upon autoethnography is used for “extending sociological understanding” (Sparkes, 2000, p.21 as cited in Smith, et al., 2017, p.198). While some argue that experience is not

analytical, this assumes that experience-based autoethnography is devoid of critical analysis (Delamont, 2007 as cited in Smith, et al., 2017, p.198). More importantly, as noted by Canagarajah (2012, as cited in Smith, et al., 2017, p.200), “those who experience marginalization may use autoethnography as a means of having a voice”. Furthermore, without the personal being political (Hanisch 1970), it can create a hegemony for knowledge production.

### 3.2.1. Studio-ing

Strategies brought up by Elzenbaumer (2021) in their text *Design(ers) against Precarity: Proposals for Everyday Actions* include lifestyle frugality (not buying the latest tech, for example), demanding universal basic incomes (UBI), pooling incomes with comrades, co-housing spaces, shared leisure spaces, and sharing building ownership. Building a commons can also be found at entry points of sharing intellectual, social, and material wealth. When designing a commons, or methods of pooling resources in attempts to resist capitalocentrism, what methodology is the best fit? How can we start to design it?

Important reflections from Hyland and Lewis have been the term “learnification”, which they refer to as the (capitalocentric) economization of learning that focuses on measuring outputs, success, failures, planning, calculation, and growth imperatives (positive growth rates) (Hyland and Lewis, 2022, p.3; Gordon and Rosenhal, 2003, p.25). What then emerges from learnification is a “life-long learner who must be continually entrepreneurial in order to reskill him or herself according to the needs of a quickly changing knowledge-based economy” (Hyland and Lewis, 2022, p.3). They especially reference virtual learning that shifts the site of the school to a virtual space and then creates a loop of improvement assessments, “feedback, prediction of success, and surveillance” (2022, p.6). Linking back to Gambioni’s text, learnification can also be found in the modern day worker’s role, like the new media creative, through the constant application of “self-as-business”, is found, taught, and performed from both hope laborer and the typical employee. As an alternative and method of resisting learnification, Hyland and Lewis introduce studioing and e-studioing that would reformulate transactional learning apparatuses away from learnification (2022, p.10). Studioing consists of “the space-time of the studio, the contemplation and experimentation of study, and the experimental writing of protocols”, (2022, p.11). Which bears similarities to the commons as both can be enacted within a space, can change depending

on the time of day (e.g. protocols during the day may be different at night, and similarly may be different people that occupy the space), and can contain a set of rules or protocols of principles or actions produced in the space. Studioing is, in other words, against the learnification or (capitalocentric) economization of a pedagogical commons. As academic internships especially focus on intrinsic values and transcendent values from contributing to the organization and their working culture, I wondered to what extent these transcendent and intrinsic values could be integrated and transformed into an artistic or design practice as an artist. This became a leading question of how can the precarious, or hope labor, performed as art pedagogy be utilized by artists?

With studioing, this offers a more concrete spatial and temporal image of what could be collaboratively designed as PAR for investigating hope labor. There are processes of applying neoliberal meritocracy and learnification upon oneself in the prior two, what is potentially exciting about studioing is the opportunity to undermine the application of learnification through introducing studioing as a necessary practice implemented by hope laborers as a part of pooling organizational as well as academic resources (simultaneously producing a commons).

### 3.2.2. Strategies & Forschung

Cultural research can be applied and designed to innovate working conditions modelled by managers/directors, as well as workers. As discussed by Martin (2001, p.6), managers and directors may look to cultural research to enlighten them on strategies of motivating their workers to become further committed to their role and organizational values. Translating into proactivity, which is “an attitude of wanting to contribute to the organization’s goals” wherein “employees feel a certain ownership, and also wish to contribute to advancing the shared purpose because they identify with it” (Lleó et al, 2019, p.123). Cultural research is applied not only to promote proactivity, but also to prevent negative associations and experiences within the organizational culture. For example, to prevent “members from feeling ‘not worth it or good enough to be remunerated adequately’” (Oliver, D., et al., 2016, *ibid.* as cited in Moxon et al, 2023, p.9).

Reflecting on Chou's text, *Applying design thinking method to social entrepreneurship project*, they emphasize human-centric design and being ideologically founded in the pursuit of bettering society and our quality of life (Chou, 2018, p.74). They then introduce seven characteristics of business models social enterprises and social innovators may develop. Including a cooperative which describes both for-profit and non-profit organizations that are owned by the members who use their services (Chou, 2018, p.75). A cooperative business model could offer an interesting baseline for diverse economies. However, in adopting entrepreneurial traits this may further cement self-as-business ontologies and/or meritocracy. Rehn (2006, p.4) then suggests that social innovation can be shifted into a form of entrepreneurial "identity sampling" where entrepreneurs pick and choose the identities capable of selling their entrepreneurial character. The description of social innovation has parallels with curatorial practices. As Martinon described, curatorial education is "taught in fragments borrowed from other disciplines" and "needs other disciplines in order to articulate and justify itself" (2017, p.12). The line between social-innovation and curatorial education then blurs. Applying the principles of the commons and a cooperative, I questioned what diverse economics could implement an extrinsic exchange for hope laborers' work and cement socialist realism.

Instead of applying business ontology to diverse economies, we could apply 'the curatorial' to instead find, not novelty, but sampling of economies of care. As Sheikh brings up, the curatorial is used as a reference to an expanding field of curating and processes (2015, p.33). It does not solely refer to a practice of producing spatial and temporal forms of exhibition-making but is positioned as a mode of research (2015, p.33). Reflecting back on Fisher, I questioned if *recherche* as an artistic model of research should be implemented instead of *forschung*. As it would be naturalized as fact (in *recherche*) compared to *forschung*. On the other hand, as brought up by Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2022, p.6), feminist post-structuralism's use of Derrida's deconstruction is to understand meaning as something continuously processual and incomplete, hence, in the same line as *forschung*. Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2022, p.6) highlight, like PAR, that deconstruction draws attention to "moments of contradiction and undecidability" rather than the verbiage of breaking down or directing thinking towards problems and systems. In this sense, *recherche*, or what they refer to as creating fixed meanings from one's findings,

could undermine diverse economies, PAR, and the importance of the processual nature of designing the commons.

For example, a fixed capitalocentric meaning of “an economy”, harms and undermines pre-existing diverse economies and their capacity for growth. When designing the commons wherein work-as-art-pedagogy / hope labor can be developed as a curatorial *forschung*, it is also important to note the collaborative and pedagogical capacities of curatorial research. As Stompf (2022, p.3) paraphrases Dewey, knowledge is produced when one knows how to engage in an evolving situation. The iterative process of this thesis then becomes a form of knowledge production as it evolves in varying curated and semi-curated places. It is an ethical responsibility from exhibition curators to facilitate actualizations, and within the actualization, the audience’s competencies are enhanced through the decoding of curatorial *forschung* (Manacorda, 2017, pp.8). Curatorial writing and exploration, rather than being a text drawn up for the public, “customers, clients, marketing segments”, and employers, it is a text wherein the public becomes a collaborator in a commons, designing ‘with’, in contrast to ‘for’ or ‘to’ (2017, pp.14). A curatorial commons is thus a *forschung* developed through the process of exhibition production as research. Ultimately, this has framed the research design of this thesis to produce methods for designing a *forschung* on hope labor through interactive zine and exhibition making.

## 4. Thematic Outset

A handful of semi-structured interviews were recorded and included for this thesis, totalling six persons. The questions were developed beforehand and then additional questions were brought up during the process. These interviews include the director and head of PR of the CPF interviewed in 2024 towards the end of my project coordinator role. Within my core field work I have described participatory observations from the academic internship with CPF as well as reflecting on the semi-structured interview. Within the peripheral field work, I included two interviews from October 2023 of youth board members on the work-as-art-pedagogy they were completing with a Swedish art organization, INDEX, based in Stockholm. Then in May 2024, I had previously interviewed the director and program head of PUBLICS that gave some insights to how youth producing work-as-art-pedagogy creates reflections and expressions within their organization. The relevance of this fieldwork is to reflect on how hope labor that is more geared to youth (PUBLICS) are structured compared to more generalized hope labor positions (FAA and CPF). For example, there are more structured (and financed) solidarity initiatives in PUBLICS compared to the FAA and CPF. Interviews have been individually thematically coded in order to induce further reflection. Semi-structured interviews as a method of investigation have not been the primary method of gathering field research in this thesis, however, it has been the interview with CPF as well as my own participatory observations in CPF and PUBLICS that have instigated this thesis, making their inclusion integral.

Additionally, as a part of this thesis' peripheral field work, I attended two workshops conducted by The Youth League of the Finnish Norden Association (Pohjola-Nordenin Nuorisoliitto / PNN in Finnish or Pohjola-Nordens Ungdomsförbund / PNU in Swedish, further referred to as PNU). These were workshops focused on youth civic participation hosted in Copenhagen and Helsinki and included participants from Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Faroe Islands, and Greenland. One interest area was solidarity initiatives and remuneration for youth participating in civil society and volunteer positions, which cemented that this is a shared interest from youth across the Nordics. As I am not a member of PNU or Index, these are regarded as peripheral field

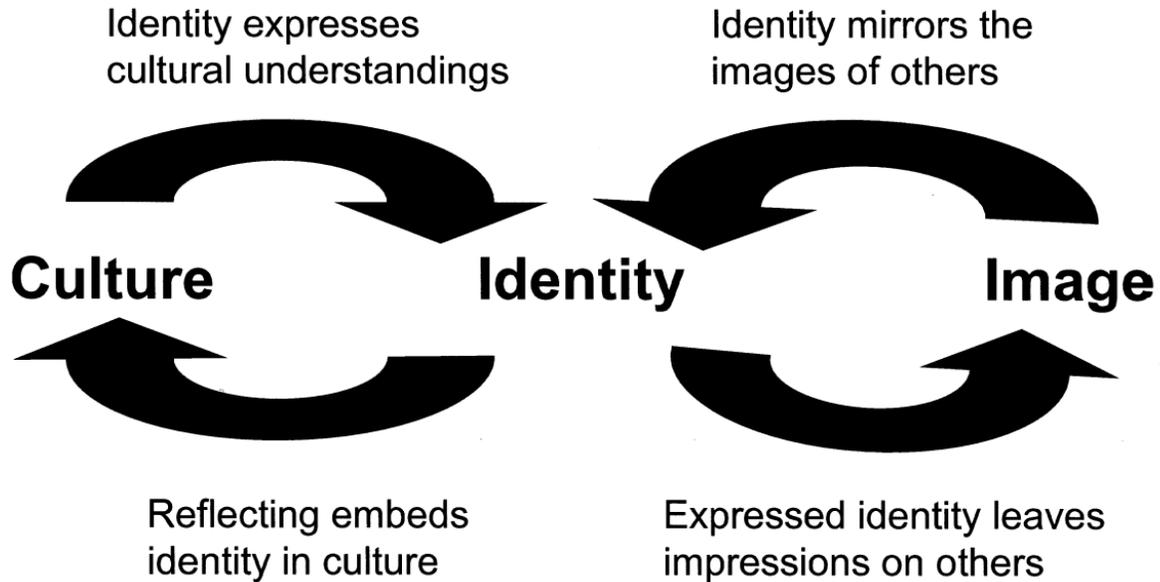
work examples informing the Nordic context of hope labor and work being conducted as art education.

## 4.1. Core Field Work

As brought up by Giomboni, “early career professionals negotiate self-conceptions through interactions at the work site, experimenting with ‘provisional professional identities’ based on feedback with colleagues about the individual’s attitudes and behaviours elicited in their new role” (Ibarra 1999 cited in Giomboni, 2024, p.298). Ibarra describes the action of workers mirroring the professional identities of their colleagues in order to create provisional professional identities (Ibarra 1999 cited in Giomboni, 2024, p.298). The provisional identity then leaves an impression upon others when engaging in the working culture or when participating in an external image of the organization. My position overlapped with an ‘opportunistic’ complete membership role wherein my role was a form of autoethnography (Adler and Adler, 1987, p.4). The role would be described as ‘opportunistic’ by Adler and Adler as the role is used to apply a “sociological optic upon it” (1987, p.4). A research role was found through participatory observations, questions and observations as a part of a researcher role also contributed to reflecting within the organizational culture. For instance, when conducting a semi-formal interview with my core field work case study, CPF - the director, Maja, and head of PR and communications, Stine, allowed things that were unconscious to them to reach to the surface (see Appendix 1). For example, the use of “full member” was unconscious wording (Presnal, 2024). As this was an observed phrase used more than once during the working period, this also informed my perceptions of the organization and my own actions as a member of their organization (Presnal, 2024).

To reflect on organizational culture, Hatch and Schultz’ *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* (Fig. 3), presents how organizational identity is interdependent with their image and culture (2002, p.991). Likewise, worker or researcher identity is reflected in the culture and image reproduced by the worker within the organization. The dynamics model describes four processes, mirroring, reflecting, expressing, and impressing (2002, p.991). Mirroring and impressing (leaving an impression upon others) have been expanded upon previously, for example, it is extensively used through constructivist thought. Hatch and Schultz then expand on the subject by

highlighting the verbiage of reflecting and expressing “(the process by which culture makes itself known through identity claims)” in organizational culture production (2002, p.991).



**Figure 1** The Organizational Identity Dynamics Model

Figure 3. Hatch and Schultz’ *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model*.

Expanding on Mead’s texts, an “I” describes the response to the attitudes of others, and a “me” delineates the attitudes others ascribed to myself (Hatch, 2002, p.992). The “I” of the worker, such as my autoethnographic role as a project coordinator, impacts the expressed organization culture that I interact with through direct (word of mouth) and indirect (copywriting) communications. The organizational identity is formed even through unintentional signifiers (Rindova and Fombrun, 1998, cited in Hatch and Schultz, 2002, p.1003) as both intentional and unintentional signifiers inform the culture. For example, hesitation with the use of “we” in informal communications. What was impressed externally was “me”, the intern role and provisional professional identity ascribed to me, but internally, what was reflected in my speech was questioning to what extent I could participate (and benefit) from this organization.

Starting from the context of the Copenhagen Photo Festival, it was founded in 2010 by two Danish photographers aiming to bring recognition to the Danish photography scene. Early

curation was limited (if you applied, you automatically got in) and mainly focused on Danish and Copenhagen-based photographers. Once the current festival director, Maja, began 9 years ago, curation was developed further and became more international. As listed on their website, the organization's values are: creating communities, transforming Copenhagen into a Scandic photographic haven, sustainability, professional springboarding, and, of course, highlighting the "power of photography" (Copenhagen Photo Festival, N/A). They have multiple programs, for example, as a part of a larger EU photography project - FUTURE's Nordic Talents. Being the only Nordic FUTURES member means representing the entire Nordics within this stage. So, they focus on curating emerging Nordic photographers. Additionally, they partner with multiple Nordic universities with photography programs that curate exhibitions of their own students' works. CPF receives the most applicants (900-1k per year) for their open call for solo artists. Typically, they have around 10 selected artists and from this pool of ten, they select a handful to have a physical exhibition while the remaining six (selectees) have works exhibited through screens (photo reel). The (all Danish) jury presents a varied approach to photographic methods (journalism, fine arts, etc). The curation primarily consists of emerging artists who may have an extensive history of practice in their own country's context, but may still be breaking through on a regional or international level. In addition to the programs the CPF curate themselves (FUTURES Nordic Talents, Solo Artists & Selectees, Highlight: Martin Parr) they have "satellite partners" that are promoted by the festival via web communications and social media. The festival centre uses a structure built of multiple shipping containers called Frame located in Refshaleøen, Copenhagen. As the visitor numbers have largely plateaued in the last few years, for 2025 the festival centre was moved to the Danish Royal Theatre and they introduced a highlight artist, Martin Parr (internationally-known). The draw was to expand the festival to make it more attractive for funding bodies. The Danish Royal Theatre is a nationally and regionally known theatre especially known for its baroque interior in the center of Kongen's Nytorv next to Nyhavn (one of the most tourist populated areas in Copenhagen with high foot traffic).

Other than Maja (director) and Stine (head of PR & communications), the working team consisted of unpaid project coordinators / interns for the entirety of the festival working period. They typically had 3-4 interns in the autumn, and 6-9 interns in the spring and the working

period can be anywhere between 2-7 months. The majority of the unpaid working team do not come from Danish backgrounds. During my working period, the project coordinators were Sofie, Muhib, and Gaitana. Under the communications team (working more with Stine) there was Sofie, a Danish digital media student at Københavns Erhvervsakademi - KEA, and Muhib is a Bangladeshi tourism master's student at Aalborg University (Presnal, 2024). Sofie and Muhib both joined CPF to receive study credits from their universities. Under the curatorial team (working more with Maja) was myself and Gaitana, who is an American-Colombian-Swiss student studying a master's in Communications and Cognitive Science at Copenhagen University. She joined as a project coordinator on a volunteer basis (less than part-time as she did not join for study credits). Additionally, I met 3-4 of the project coordinators who were working in the spring as a follow-up/catch-up. Project coordinators often became a part of the festival to get study credits, on a volunteer basis (no study credits), and others supported by the unemployment office.

Only through further inquiry (semi-formal interview) of their organizational structure was their precarious situation further revealed, though this was not transparent for the majority of the working period. For Danish nonprofits, it is necessary that their budgets are used within 12 months and their budget essentially rounds to zero by the end of the year. Due to this structure, there also becomes no method of saving up (for paid roles, for example) (Appendix 1; Presnal, 2024). If there is excess budget, then it must be paid back to the grant funding bodies or the municipality. While implied at the beginning of the role, they also expanded on the head of PR & communications circumstance as she is on a part-time, four day salary and is funded by the money raised through the festival while the director is salaried through the municipality. They also noted its unsustainability as it creates a majority of unpaid roles within their organization (Presnal, 2024). There are no present opportunities for organizational mobility within the festival. The managing team (Maja and Stine) considers project coordinators “full members” within the organization as this is the only role you can presume when entering the organization (Appendix 1).

Two of the main values expressed by the Copenhagen Photo Festival were sustainability and experimental curation (Copenhagen Photo Festival, 2024). I found that their image did not

translate into the working experience as the festival would not function without unpaid project coordinators, and yet I felt that there was little done to recognize or remunerate project coordinator's work. Oftentimes, it felt we were not only completing learning tasks, but also completing work "essential for the daily operations of the organization" (Holm, 2014, p.58). Such as project proposals for commissioned projects (not a part of festival production) (Presnal, 2024). I questioned how they currently move beyond "typical" practices of undervaluing interns into alternative organizational models. They could similarly "take some creative leaps and envision what might be" (Liedtka, 2014, p.40) or integrate speculative design (Dunne and Raby, 2013, p.2) to improve the working experience of their coordinators. Credits on the website were also scarce. After being a project coordinator for 3 months, I only observed one previous project coordinator's name credited in the website (Presnal, 2024). The managing team expanded that more effort had not been put in as most project coordinators are international and not staying in Copenhagen making it difficult to provide further opportunities (however, this was not applicable for all project coordinators during my working period as they all lived and studied in Copenhagen long-term and the majority in the spring internship as well). While noted that most interns come from a curatorial or visual studies background (see Appendix 1), it may make it additionally difficult to provide further opportunities if the needs for project coordinators differ. For example, the needs for someone from a graphic design or visual studies background may differ for someone from a tourism or cognitive science background. Despite these factors, it was a conclusion with coordinator colleagues (both Danish and non-EU backgrounds) that there could be more standardized recognition and remuneration for festival coordinators.

When asked about the internal forms of recognition, motivation, participatory/collaborative opportunities with project coordinators, Maja and Stine referenced the Danish welfare system. Here, the Danish standard for internships and unpaid labor has been thought as assumptions members are "expected to adopt as the price of admission to the group" (Schein and Schein, 2016, p.8). This price of admission implies that any other forms of opportunities outside of being able to work there then become a "favor" rather than a baseline of exchange for the unpaid labor youth provide (Presnal, 2024). They also noted that further directing the working period as a form of art education, even to the extent of some "program" (said jokingly) (Appendix 1). So, it is clear they believe art education could have a stronger role in facilitating a better experience for

project coordinators. As a possible solution, a form of archive or online community was brought up. One concern if they were to turn further towards art education would be that, instead of emphasizing further remuneration, this may instead further cement the expectation to work without pay to be standardized within their organizational culture (Frederick, 1997), as well as continue to normalize it as an industry standard. However, a community, community archives, or community spaces, are not a “cure-all” for improving the political, social, and economic standards of the community as discussed by Poole (2019, p.4; Presnal, 2024). While they can create spaces for reflexivity, transparency, respect, accountability, as well as a learning tool for project coordinators to reflect on throughout their working experience (learn from the reflections of others) (Poole, 2019, p.28), it would be a worry if this is where their solidarity initiatives end. While in an online community, this could produce a pedagogy of care where “learning encounters are conceived and constructed by” workers, (Atkinson, 2022, p.19), the primary benefits would then be drawn from previous project coordinators instead of the organization itself, and thus putting the responsibility of maintaining the community upon the project coordinators (which would encourage further unpaid labor). From my experiences as a project coordinator at CPF, I developed questions of how to improve and communicate these experiences of unpaid and low paid labor in the art and cultural field that doesn’t continue to excuse this cycle of unpaid labor under the guise of art education.

From the internship at CPF, as well as work-as-art-education positions with PUBLICS and FAA, I reflected that the lack of extrinsic motivators or solidarity initiatives reduced motivation to produce this provisional professional identity. The more precarious the extrinsic benefits were, the more it felt as “pretending to be a colleague” (Adler and Adler, 1987, p.19). It became a performative title because a title was all they considered to offer for a position of hope labor. While the current project coordinator role is the only role to have within the organization, it would limit the organization to see unpaid positions as “full members” as then it cuts the expectation for the organization to create those roles. While in the current structure, project coordinators are “full members” and should be recognized for the amount of labor they contribute; if looking at the organization speculatively, these positions may not necessarily be considered “full members”. After the semi-formal interview, the director noted that members do not need to “devote their whole lives to CPF” in their role. While true, it seems this came to

mind especially following my questioning of the labor dynamics within their organization. From this remark, it seemed that their perception of “me” shifted from the observations I gave. By highlighting the lack of recognition for project coordinators, they believed I was less committed to the organization than they had previously perceived. This remark became interesting as it highlighted an unconscious form of compulsory altruism as, especially in the context of nonprofits, it is often normalized that “money drives out love”, or in other words, a false dichotomy of extrinsic motivations driving out the transcendent (Overgaard, 2019, p.139). In other words, by bringing up extrinsic motivations, they then assumed less of my transcendent motivations.

Danish background of the festival informs basic assumptions from the organization (e.g. unpaid workers) that build the organizational cultural understandings.

Expectations of “worker” role in CPF built on a lack of knowledge of what prior coordinators have produced as their stories are not present within CPF’s “image”. by not seeing my role or “myself” in the “image” this affects one’s impression of one’s role and how it is valued.

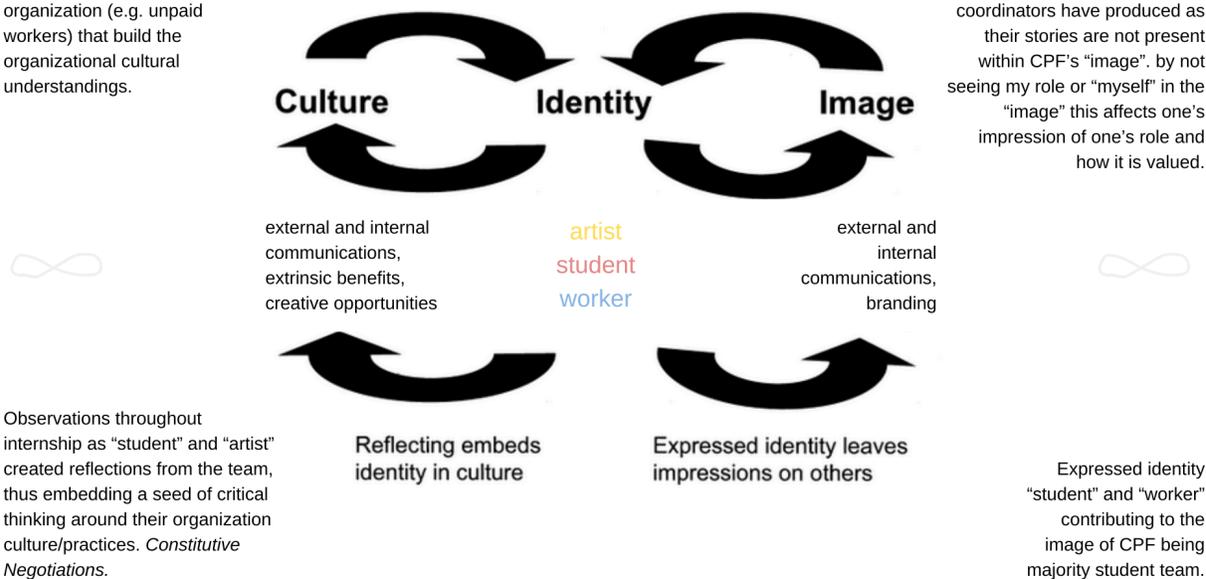


Figure 4. CPF identity trifurcation.

Expanding on Hatch’s model of reflecting on organizational cultures as well as worker identity, I noted different forms of expressing, reflecting, mirroring, and impressing within the organizational culture (Fig. 4). By reflecting on the bifurcation of my worker and researcher roles (Adler and Adler, 1987, p. 9-10), my interest was the overall lack of inclusion of artistic practice into worker and student roles, forming a trifurcation. Furthermore, this trifurcation of roles also prevented the role from becoming converted, or where I would see myself as a “full

member” of the organization. There was a student researcher and a worker role that we were encouraged to reflect upon, however, my role as an artist felt underutilized (Fig 5).

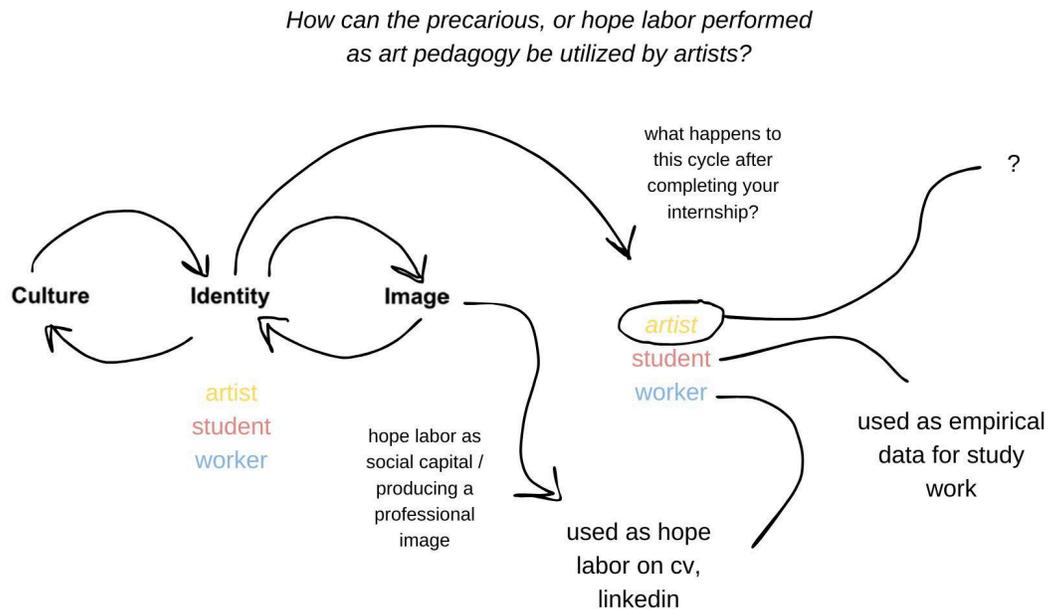


Figure 5. *How can the precarious, or hope labor performed as art pedagogy be utilized by artists?*

For example, in a student researcher role, the internship was utilized as empirical data for studies in the form of a 15 page report. While in a worker - hope laborer role, it is utilized further by being able to use it on my professional CV (hope labor as social capital / producing a professional image) and gain further work experience in the industry. While the characteristics between the three blur and my artistic background was somewhat relevant (and verbally communicated as being so by the director), this third role was distinguished by the practice and rewards for this role. The artistic practitioner role was isolated to the solo artists & selectees, the FUTURES Nordic talents, and other photographers they collaborate with, and the incentives for them did not mirror the incentives or rewards for project coordinators.

## 4.2. Peripheral Field Work

For a peripheral case study in the field work, I have included the FAA. This field work informs the research interest as it aligns with work-as-art-pedagogy conducted for an art festival in precarious working conditions. The Finlayson Art Area (FAA) is an annual art festival organized and curated by the Himmelblau Gallery in Tampere, Finland hosted in a historical area now urbanized in the center of Tampere. It is a well-known and celebrated art festival exhibiting primarily well-established Finnish artists as well as international and emerging artists based in Tampere and Finland as a whole. I worked during the 2022 edition for 7 weeks full time and received study credits. The working team consists primarily of unpaid volunteers/interns as well as some paid workers. Some of the paid team are at Himmelblau year-round and some are hired specifically for the festival as a part of the managing team. The working team is primarily Finnish and the volunteers/interns primarily come from fine arts backgrounds and study bachelors programs at local universities (TAMK - Tampere University of Applied Sciences & SAMK - Satakunta University of Applied Sciences) with some exceptions (marketing students from Turku)). Like CPF, the internship at FAA was implemented as a form of art education where students sign a contract with the organization to be utilized for ECTs alongside a reflective study report on the working experience. Similarly, interns also consist of volunteers and/or persons from the unemployment office. If ever, paid roles in the organization were facilitated after volunteering for multiple years of the festival and were not facilitated through open call for an open position. Interning for the FAA also informed how solidarity initiatives could evolve in art festivals. on hope labor. For example, Himmelblau invites interns to exhibit work in an annual group exhibition from December to January (Presnal, 2024). While the context between FAA and CPF is different, it still felt important to compare the solidarity initiatives offered by FAA compared to CPF. For example, in addition to the group exhibition, some workers are also able to design street murals, facilitate art-based workshops, and there is at least some opportunity for organizational mobility. Though, this is seemingly limited, only after multiple years of unpaid labor (which after the first time, you may not be receiving ECTs), and usually only reserved for Finnish cultural workers.

Then, between 2023 - 2024, I was a part of PUBLICS' Youth Advisory Board (PY) which is work-based art education for young people based in the Helsinki area interested in art and curatorial practices. The main interest in including advisory boards and these work-as-art-education roles as a form of field work and case study within this thesis is to show a multitude of examples of how work-as-art-education is being implemented within the Nordic region performed by youth (18-29 persons that seemingly consistently perform work-as-art-education and hope labor positions). The project is a contract position and youth board members are paid a participation fee for each (3-4h) session (60-90euros) they attend.

“I learn more from the PUBLICS Youth than I learn from the board [compiled of mid to late career professionals]. ... Nobody [society] wants to pay young people to do anything, but they want to see young people doing things. But they think that it doesn't need to cost anything.” Paul O’Neill, 2024, semi-formal interview conducted with Anni Alanen and Noreen Ali.

Some important reflections from Paul and Annabelle was just how much advisory boards can take up organizational work. For example, for PUBLICS, having 3 part time to full time working positions (themselves included) management for the youth board still occupy up to “40%” of their time, plus one youth coordinator that the work occupies 100% of their working time (see Appendix 2). So, for Nordic cultural organizations to work with young people, it could require a vast amount of working time. Time that organizations, like CPF, may not have. However, even with sympathy for the precarious nature of organizations like CPF, it can still be said that they use young people to produce cultural labor without pay or other solidarity structures in place. E.g. “They think that it doesn't need to cost anything” to bring young people to work into their organization. With PY, they have two parallel partnered organizations PRAKSIS, based in Oslo, Norway, and Index, based in Stockholm, Sweden. I interviewed participants from Index on their experiences to reflect on work being conducted as art education. They primarily noted the speculative nature of the boards (see Appendix 3). As well as their focus on imagining alternative futures for institutions developed through intergenerational dialogue (see Appendix 4). As well as the emphasis on their agency and voices as young people.

Then, as an overview of hope labor conducted by youth, I found it important to discuss with youth based in the Nordics and hear their perspectives. This provided reflection on hope labor on a broader, cross-industry, and regional level which allowed me to understand hope laborers' needs further. In November 2024 and May 2025 I attended conferences for Nordic youth focused on youth participation in civil society coordinated by Pohjola-Nordenin Nuorisoliitto / Pohjola-Nordens Ungdomsförbund (PNU) focused on co-ideating initiatives for Nordic decision makers to create with or for youth. The conferences included participants from Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands. In a group of 5, I discussed with fellow young people from the Nordics on issues young people are dealing with, what initiatives are currently in place, and what could be done.

## Aligned motives: incentivising youth to take part in civil organizations through extrinsic benefits and validation

- **Where/Who:** schools, universities, internships (both inside and outside university), cultural and civil organizations
- **Why:** to break down barriers for youth to take part in (youth) organizations through giving an exchange and make it more accessible to join these organizations (where one must give time, labour, money etc.); create a culture that values volunteering and civil engagement more
- **What:** e.g. **More concrete exchange/justification for youth to participate in civil society outside of emotional/transcendent motivation/loyalty.**
  - earning credits for university by volunteering (recorded as "transcript", certificate, on study.fi)
  - volunteering week at school (built into curriculum)
  - money/stipend to reduce inequalities (especially non-Nordic & non-EU citizens)
    - Ex. *Helsinki City Summer Job Voucher* (youth), city pays employers 350 to take in youth employees (paid minimum 500euros as salary, so organization pays 150eu minimum).
    - Ex. Grants to apply to fund yourself through internships and volunteering.
    - Ex. Funded youth projects should consider **salary for youth participants**.
  - more positions where youth have agency and can influence decision making
  - addresses **needs for affiliation** (resume, visible credit for the work you produced)
  - recognition of youth leaders through awards and personal positive feedback, recommendation letters.
  - Unpaid workers/volunteers/interns gaining a percentage of the profits proportional to the work they produced.

Figure 6. *Extrinsic Benefits and Recognition for Youth Workers* (May, 2025) produced by Gabriella Presnal (Finnish-American, based in Denmark & Finland), Clara Gausepohl (German, based in Sweden), Markus Haahr (Danish-Icelandic, based in Iceland), Ella Kaskikallio (Finnish, based in Finland), and Sorrel Salb (German-British, based in Sweden).

Amongst other ideas, the group I discussed with also shared sentiments around how to incentivize and motivate youth to take part in civil organizations (Fig. 6). The discussion focused on youth participation including cultural production. They highlighted the need for forms of

records like transcripts, certificates, recommendation letters, visible credits, awards, etc. They also emphasized more positions of agency, consultancies, advisory boards, as well as more material benefits like fee-based stipends, vouchers, and grants to remove barriers (inequity) for youth to participate in civil society and volunteering (Fig. 6).

Similarly, in two other groups (each of 4-6 youth based in the Nordics), they also echoed expanding incentives to enhance youth participation. They emphasized possible solutions like providing tax credit, school credits, discounts on public services and student loans (see Appendix 5). In a third group, they also brought up having some sort of system to reward people who volunteer. They mentioned smaller rewards like movie tickets, ice cream, or discounted festival tickets and how companies could sponsor these programs (see Appendix 6).

This showed that for the majority of the groups, they all discussed enhancing material benefits for youth participating in low or unpaid labor in value practices like in civil and cultural society. Alongside participatory observations conducted during my working periods with CPF, FAA, and PUBLICS, this further affirmed the precariousness for value-based work being conducted primarily by youth in a Nordic context and the need for extrinsic benefits for youth to continue working in these positions. However, one critical aspect is that many noted that credits could suffice (when receiving credits is not structurally organized during studies, e.g. can you get credits from a local university even if you are not an attending student) or smaller rewards like coupons. The extrinsic motivators may vary depending on the length and intensity of the labor. So, these may have been in mind for short-term positions.

### 4.3. Summary

By reviewing solidarity initiatives on a broader, value-based, Nordic level, my interest was also to understand the motivations hope laborers have when engaging in their positions. PUBLICS is very direct in coordinating work-based art education for youth (18-21 years old), while FAA and CPF are organizations depending on hope labor for their festivals to come into fruition. While for FAA and CPF, the majority are youth, it is not a necessity to be youth to be a hope laborer in their organization, unlike PUBLICS. While with some shortcomings in PUBLICS, such as little organizational mobility and limited advisory capacity, for example, not advising or shaping

every-day programming, moreover a handful of events. The advisory boards as a (paid) working position and art education could provide models for other work-as-art-education positions to be implemented by other organizations reliant on low or unpaid hope labor within their organizational practices, like CPF. Advisory boards were also echoed within the PNU workshops as youth wished for expanded positions of agency.

## 5. From Design Ideation to Intervention

The full process of the thesis takes place for the full year of 2025. This section of the thesis expands into phases 2 and 3 of DBR, design ideation and intervention respectively. For mock-ups 1 and 2, they remained at the design ideation stage, while mock-up 3 was taken to the final stages and an iterative version was completed. This section is thus divided into four sections: Mock-up 1: *Photogrammetric Virtual Landscape*, Mock-up 2: *Intern Residency*, Mock-up 3: *Working Precariously Zine*, and then a second iteration in a workshop format resulted in *Hope Zines*. Each section details the project as well as analysis of its limitations. Mock-up Design 1 was created in January and February of 2025. The Photogrammetric Samples were created in March 2025 during an artistic residency at *Beast* residency in Bornholm, Denmark. Then, the analysis of the photogrammetric samples was created in April 2025, followed by Mock-up Design 2: residency-based artistic internship was then ideated, applied, and received feedback in May 2025. Mock-up Design 3: *Working Precariously Zine* was then created and launched in June 2025 and implemented during June, July, and August as a working period in Copenhagen, Denmark, Helsinki & Imatra, Finland. In Imatra, the zines were presented in an exhibition, *Vällilä Väärissä*, hosted in an abandoned hotel and mall alongside artists from the Aalto University Department of Art and Media in late August. After having completed the first issue of the *Working Precariously* zine, I initiated a second iteration of the project in September by hosting a workshop on the topic, loosely titled *Hope Zines*, hosted in a student-led community space, Space21, at Aalto University. The *Hope Zines* model functions as an expansion of Mock up 3 and Mock up 2. As many participants of the *Hope Zines* workshop were Aalto students, the *Hope Zines* as well as *Working Precariously* were then exhibited at Aalto University's Väre lobby in October. Finally, as an iteration of the visual design process, the zines were presented in Helsinki's Central Library Oodi in December 2025 as a part of a zine library, *We're Working Here!* curated by myself. It was a part of a larger group exhibition, *Mitä Jää / What Remains*, alongside artists previously contributing to the *Vällilä Väärissä* exhibition. The project iterations and their visual design concluded in December 2025.

## 5.1. Photogrammetric Virtual Landscape

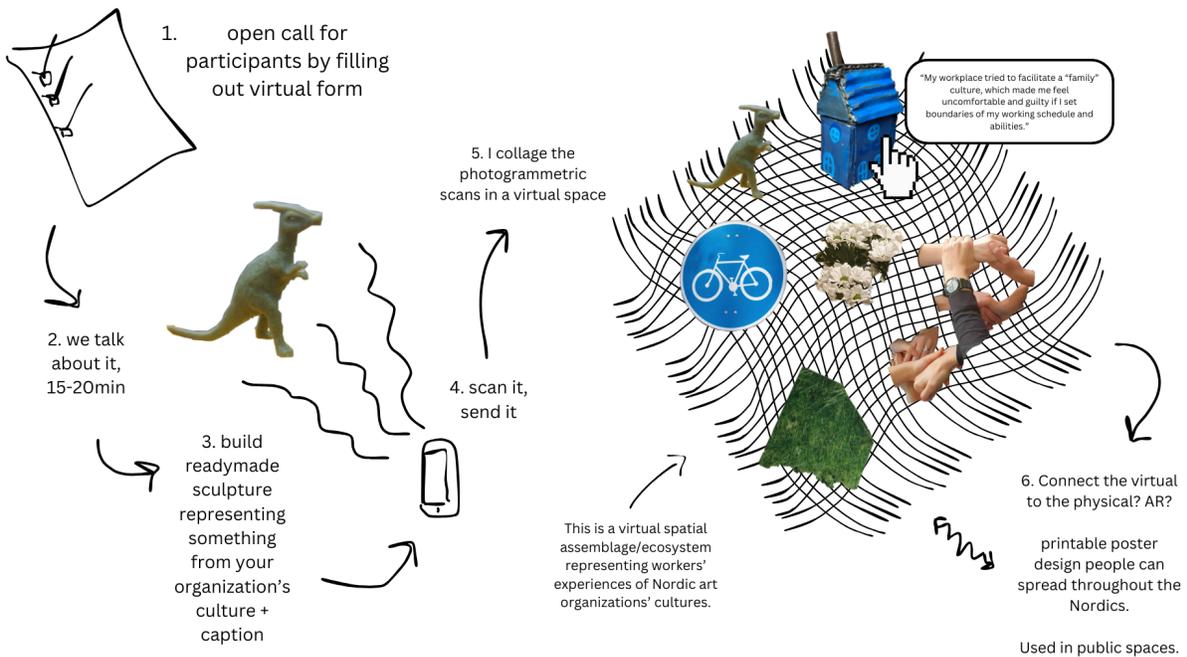


Figure 7. Mock-up 1 Sketch.

My first mock-up design was a photogrammetric testimonial-based virtual platform (Fig. 7). The design ideation was inspired by cultural probes. As described by (Gaver et al., 1999, p.21), cultural probes are “a strategy of pursuing experimental design in a responsive way”. Like astronomical probes, these designed assemblages are left with their users, inspiring an interaction, and returned with data (1999, p.21). The idea was for a photogrammetric probe. It would have a basic outline of how to do a photogrammetric scan and would be encouraged to experiment and create a ready-made sculpture, document it via photogrammetry, and then create a caption describing their work and how it relates to their experiences with hope labor. They would then send that photogrammetric scan and caption to me. I would have then compiled the multiple scans together in a virtual space using, creating an interactive virtual spatial assemblage/ecosystem representing workers experiences of Nordic cultural organizations.

The reasoning for using photogrammetric methods were various. One was to explore hope labor through speculative photography. This was to integrate art education learned through hope labor

conducted at CPF. The speculative nature is also reflective of Feminist post-structuralism and hope labor itself where the workers are continuously speculating one's future. The medium was also to expand on my prior artistic experience (photogrammetry, ready-mades) as I wished to reflect how to move the learnings into an artistic practice. For ready-mades, I referenced my bachelor's thesis in brainstorming (Fig. 8); "Readymades are works made up of manufactured objects, originally coined by Marcel Duchamp. Transforming commodities into art where they no longer function for commodification and become like all art 'an uncommitted crime' (Martinique, E. 2016), or, in other words, subversive." (Tate. N/d. and Martinique, 2016 cited in Presnal, 2023, p.10). Like ready-mades, artistic practice could reclaim hope labor to become art.

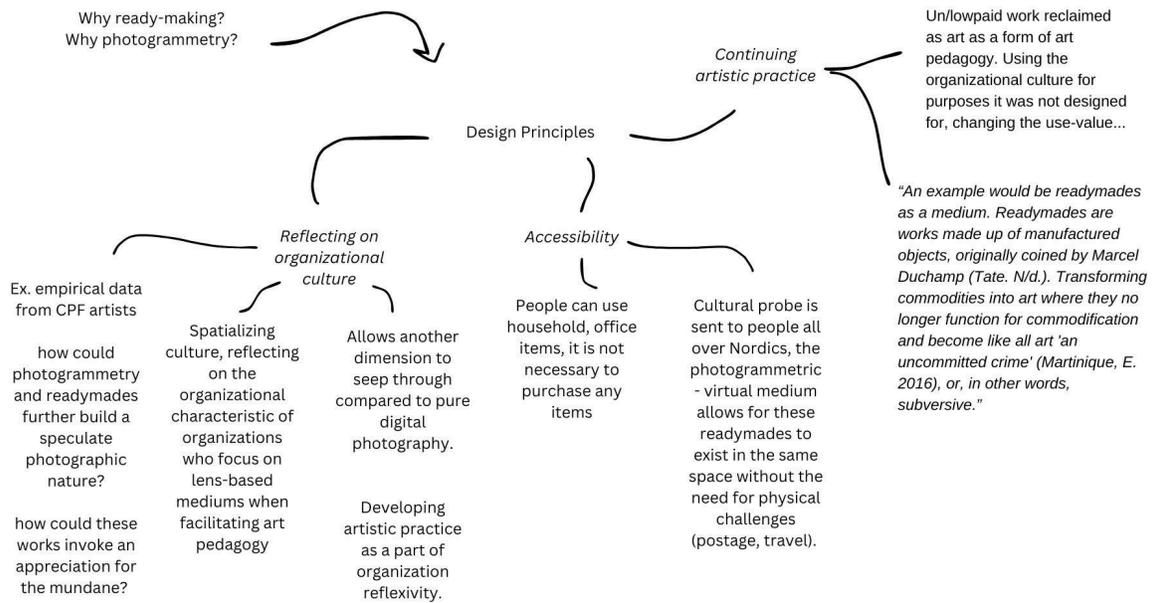


Figure 8. Brainstorming “Why ready-making?”, “Why photogrammetry?”.

The use of photogrammetry was influenced by my fieldwork with CPF as well as previous experience with the medium. I felt a parallel photographic method would draw further connections between the hope labor I did for them and then a project further expanding on hope labor. One of the working tasks worked on during the internship at CPF (autumn 2024) was feature articles of the 2025 solo artists (4 persons) and selectees (6 persons). Each feature article involved a preliminary interview 20-30min with the director of the festival, Maja, as well as a

more thorough interview (45-60min) with my co-writer and fellow project coordinator, Gaitana Jaramillo. Gaitana and I developed questions for each artist. A particularly impactful interview was with Elizabeth Penidotti-Haynes (CPF 2025 solo artist).

## Reimagining the fork

One of the main symbols in her work, the fork, is used to exemplify the malleable use-value of our everyday objects. It's a tool for keeping us clean and polite, but it can also turn into a weapon, capable of great violence. The fork becomes an approach to confront our animalistic nature amidst domestic and social pressures.

According to Pedinotti Haynes, by subverting the function of our everyday objects, we are able to recognize our own agency in how we can play with the linearity of our lives and turn to new modes of self-discovery. This carries over into our relationships where it becomes a dialogue for mistakes, forgiveness, learning, playfulness, unknowing, and trying.

Pedinotti Haynes' works rearrange the subjects' order to explore what new connections and understandings can emerge when the expectation of the subject is lifted. For example, what under first impression might be a Dutch still life, becomes surreal when confronted by a baby face in a plum. The baby is no longer a baby, and the core of the plum is no longer plum, the still life no longer still.



Figure 9. *Nourishment, Forks, and Cut-outs*. CPF Artist 2025 Archive. Elizabeth Penidotti-Haynes // *Family Table*. Interview & Text · Gabriella Presnal and Gaitana Jaramillo · Proof & Edit · Hanna Tokaj and Christine Almlund.

Her works use a combination of collage, ready-making, and photography. She uses detritus or discard from mundane moments and assembles them together to create a tableau reflecting on

how consumerism, cultural conditioning, and fear are embedded in even daily moments with our families, especially in the American context she is situated within (Jaramillo and Presnal, 2025, see Fig. 9). Within our interview and feature article, she expanded on how her works represent an assemblage of different times and spatializes a myriad of memories. Depicting memories in the form of ready-made and cut-outs allows the memories to be turned over and over again, finding new unanswered questions, and creating a messy timeline of what's real and imagined, and “transformed into an imaginative space” (Presnal and Jaramillo, 2025). Penidotti-Haynes’ works explored a mix of times, from past, present, and future, and muddled their order. Allowing for speculation to enter around the feelings, experiences, or underlying conditioning within these moments.

In Mock-Up Design 1 for a photogrammetric virtual platform, the medium also adds a speculative and spatial realm to it as it can document a space, objects, or both. Originally used more for documentative purposes, this can capture a site or object further than typical documentary photography by transforming it into a 3D object you can rotate and view from 360. The speculative factor discussed by Penidotti-Haynes also translates further to a spatial photogrammetric realm when it is warped using transparent materials like glass (samples in next section). A potential workshop audience may also be more interested to engage with a more unconventional photographic method compared to other more typical methods like drawing or typical digital photography. Photogrammetry would also not have required any money to produce (using Kiri Engine, Blender, both free programs), which I felt was also an important element to consider in terms of accessibility. E.g. not needing to spend money or use one’s own resources to produce something for the project.

### 5.1.1. Photogrammetric Tests



Figure 10. "Office"

Here are two photogrammetric samples conducted in *Beast Residency* in Bornholm, Denmark in March 2025. Before starting the cultural probe, I felt it would be important to provide samples for the participants so they have a level of expectation. I also wanted to simulate the practice myself, see what feelings emerged, and how feasible asking people to do this as a virtual cultural probe would be.

The works are very abstract as they utilize glass objects which often become obscured through photogrammetry (it has issues with depth perception of the reflection I suspect). This, however, played further into the speculative photographic method of the project, so the obscuring was preferred. "Office" (Fig. 10) is a French press with three carrots, an avocado, and an apple inside. The objects represented the different co-workers in CPF during my time (for the majority of time there were five of us total). The three carrots representing the Danish members (Maja, Stine, and Sofie), the avocado myself, and the apple representing Muhib. The carrots were more intentional as it reflected an everyday occurrence in the office, the Danish habit of eating straight-up raw carrots. The apple and avocado were less symbolic and meant more to differentiate themselves

from the carrots. In retrospect, I wish I had not grouped in Sofie with Maja and Stine as she was a fellow project coordinator like Muhib and myself and shared similar sentiments around doing unpaid work for the festival. The differentiation and grouping was perhaps reflective of the support one had while conducting work at CPF, e.g. Maja and Stine were employed by the municipality and the Festival, respectively, while Sofie had Danish study support (SU). These were viewed as the higher forms of support and grouped as “carrots”, compared to myself who had Finnish support subsidy (roughly the equivalent of half of the Danish study support), and Muhib, who was not eligible for SU as he has a non-EU background and additionally worked 1-2 part time jobs during the three month internship period. The obscuration of the vegetables and fruits in the French press also represented the erasure of project coordinator / intern labor in the festival, as they were largely pooled under “CPF Team” and not individually recognized externally in any valuable way for the project coordinators. What largely remains known and consistent is Maja and Stine, which parallels this work as the carrots became the most visible through the glass.

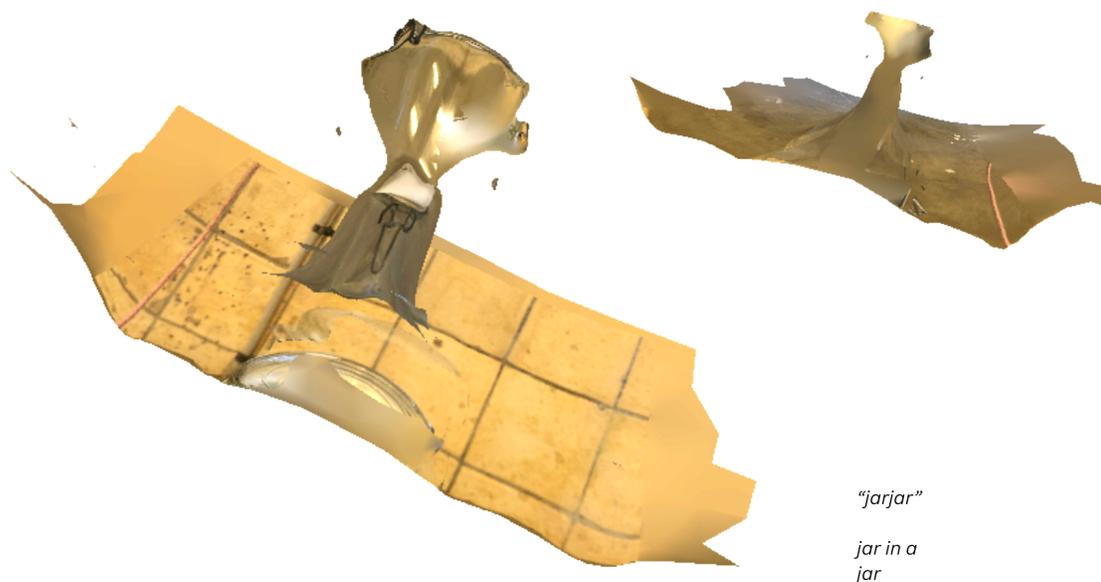


Figure 11. “Jarjar”

The second was “jarjar” (Fig. 11) which was a small jar enclosed within a larger jar. Here, the jars merged together to seem like one, or you can see glimpses of the small jar within. The jar

within a jar is representative of having copywrote emails, feedback, and other responses on Maja's behalf. Including portfolio feedback for previous interns. The jar in a jar, "jarjar", then represented having felt like this identity of director was compiled, of course, by Maja herself, but in addition to fragments of unpaid interns producing for the festival, like through copywrote emails, curatorial statements, project plans, etc. It is not to dismiss the great work being done by Maja and Stine, but it is also to recognize the work being done by interns and the ways it is (and isn't) recognized by the organization externally and internally. It also represents perhaps the fragile, precarious nature of the festival itself, as again, the festival would not happen without these unpaid interns.

### 5.1.2. Analysis: Design 1

The purpose of Mock-up Design 1 was to frame the neoliberal worker role or self-as-business ontology the hope laborer may have been forced to adopt into an artist role.

After completing "office" and "jarjar", I had a few frustrations about the project. As I was essentially making artwork about an organization and my experiences in it, I felt I was continuing to produce creative labor thinking about this organization when there were no extrinsic benefits of doing so. There is nothing further to be gained from this organization and it is not being asked to be done by this organization. Additionally, I had no support from the organization or either university, so it did not make sense to further produce creative labor wherein no extrinsic benefits or support have been facilitated by any party other than myself. I questioned, why would I want to use my own resources (art residency, time, energy) to creatively produce more for a hope labor position I can no longer extract any benefits or knowledge from? I then questioned, why would I want to replicate these conditions for other people through this cultural probe? If I felt silly making work about 'my' organization, wouldn't they as well? Is it a silly ask to ask people to think further about their organizations in an artistic manner?

Following the residency, I further reflected on the main functions and limitations of the mock-up if it was both feasible and interesting to continue in this format. The main functions were transparency of hope laborer practices to see "am I alone in feeling like this?". Resulting in an affective virtual space for confronting neoliberal hope laborer positions. It could also be used to communicate to outsiders of the art and cultural industries the realities of precarious working

positions. Finally, as a tool for Nordic cultural organizations to better facilitate work as art pedagogy. The limitations I then faced that determined if I could move forward with the project were also dictated by resources and tools available to me (e.g. mainly the lack of computer labs, software, or financial incentive for participation). I also reflected on to what extent the medium of photogrammetry and ready-mades would reflect the participants own practices. They may be specific to my own research interests and hope labor position, but might not do as well to reflect another person's experience, artistic practice, and the organization they're reflecting on. I also reflected on the model of a virtual cultural probe. Not only to create a sense of community and share one's experiences, but also to introduce further the photogrammetric method. While it is very easy, it might take an extra mental step to initiate it without in-person guidance, and without it, I imagined low participation rates.

Ultimately, I decided to move on to another mock-up as it was not technically feasible to move on to phase 3 where I would send out the probe or be able to complete the project. In addition to getting possible project participants without some participation fee (ex. 50euros for 3 photogrammetric scans), the technology for the project was also limited. I did not wish to facilitate a project on hope labor where there was little to nothing received in exchange for the participants work and participation using an unconventional medium (wherein the workshop itself could then function as another form of hope labor committed by the creative laborer). The use of Blender and Unity was planned to stitch the scans together, however, due to low computing / storage capacity of my own personal computer, it was not feasible without Aalto University's tools.

If I would continue with this model, I would create it using a workshop format where I would introduce the conceptual ideas behind the project alongside photogrammetric apps and methods of working and then assemble the scans and captions together following the workshop. I feel this would create a sense of community, mutual listening, solidarity, and a method of artistically exploring hope labor and precarity.

## 5.2. Intern Residency

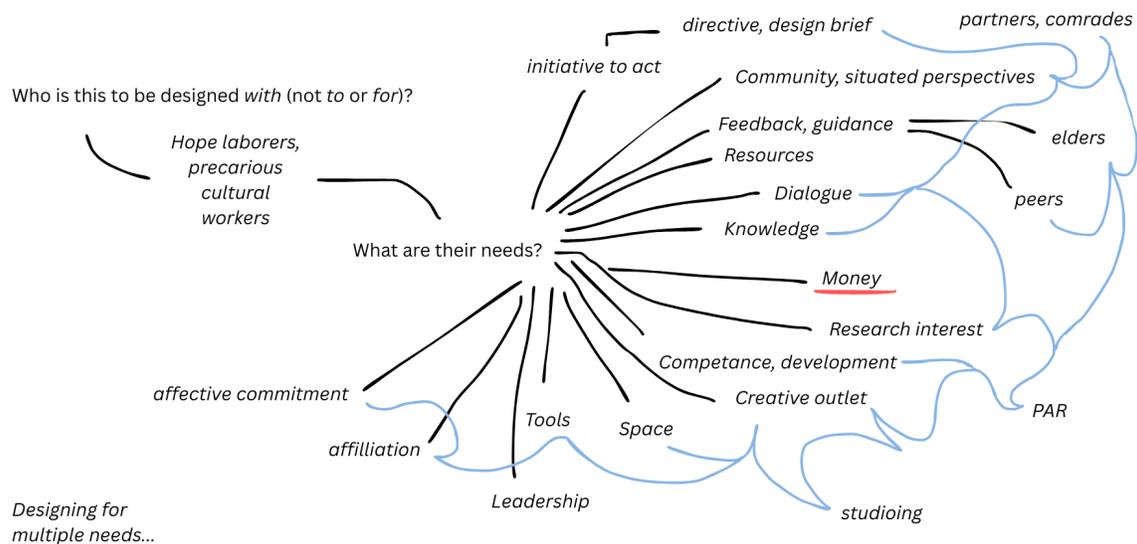


Figure 12. *Who is this to be designed with?*

As I had found a virtual probe and then the method of distribution may not fulfill these needs, I further expanded my design proposal. I attempted to map needs, rewards, motivators, and design characteristics my design could attend to based on my participatory observations during my field work (Fig. 12). While it is difficult to attend to all, I aimed to map how the design proposal could contribute to the needs of hope laborers as well as how the different needs would reflect my research material (studioing and PAR). The limitations of Mock-up Design 1 then lead me to create Mock-up Design 2, a residency-based artistic internship project titled *Intern*. The project functions to reimagine internships to be more creatively rewarding and progressive for creative practitioners' skills in a residency format. A residency format is typically a space reserved for creative working. Many residencies support practitioners through a studio space or other space that can support their creative work. Residencies can also be coupled with support for living, working, and materials, though this is not all residencies. Many residencies may simply support the artist with low-cost accommodation the artist may or may not have to pay for (or seek support for, through working grants for example).

The title also allows flexibility as they can use it for artistic purposes as well as on a professional CV (again, another form of hope labor by participating). I applied for 4900 euros from the

*Sustainability Action Booster* from Aalto University. My application emphasized the importance of the funding as the creative format of "internship" is funded via the material budget, in contrast to study credits or simply "exposure" via website, social media, etc, that we might receive otherwise from internships. Here, the creative practitioner would have a budget at their disposal for tools to equip them better for their future creative practice. The material budget was also the chosen format due to the grant's limitations in that it cannot be used as a fee or salary. The use of a material budget would be encouraged to purchase tools with long lives that they currently do not have access to or will not have access to in the foreseeable future (for example, after graduation). For this residency, the aim was to provide a shared studio space for producing interventions. Alongside individual, duo, or collective interventions produced during the residency, there would be a shared task of a zine documenting the working process and reflections. This would form a processual diary and curatorial summary for the projects once exhibited and/or presented. Ultimately, I did not receive the grant, which I will delve into further in the next section under analysis.

Compared to Mock-up 1, the format of the project is in the form of an in-person workshop & residency to emphasize a collaborative element of new knowledge that is found through discussion and collaborative creative thinking. The workshop topics would have uncovered what our experiences in Nordic hope labor positions have been, what have we concretely gotten in exchange for our work, was the exchange proportionate to what we produced, and feelings related to our work. The residency was not intended as a "hack" to produce ways for organizations to improve. While if that is the result, it would have been welcomed, but moreover, it was about creating transparency of unpaid and low paid positions in the cultural field, how creatives concretely benefit from them, and trying to empower young creatives in precarious working conditions. The hope was that the role of "intern" could be reimagined where one combines elements of artistic residency, public art, community building, and skills sharing that develop their practices in pursuit of a larger theme. In this case being the investigation of "hope labor" and feelings amidst precarity.

The main benefits for participating in the project would have been A) 400-500 euros material budget, B) shared studio space at Space 21 (shared space on Aalto University's campus), C)

Exhibition, D) Photographic Documentation, E) Marketing of the exhibition, and F) Knowledge sharing through workshop format. The produced works the participants would have created did not necessarily need to be a final product, but take the elements practiced during an "art residency". As the project was surrounding precarity in art and culture, it was necessary that the person has conducted work as art pedagogy/hope labor in a Nordic creative organization and can produce a creative project related to the theme. It would have been a low-threshold of artistic production experience, and for example, participants who do not have creative background could contribute (ex. Background in tourism, sciences, etc).

The aims for the project were to improve A) reflections on hope labor and internships, B) improvement on collective and collaborative creative thinking on working conditions and precarity within Nordic creative industries, C), improve participants project management skills, group working capabilities, curatorial skills when implementing the exhibition, creative communication skills when describing their art works/processes, D) create a community conversation on precarity and contribute to new ways of producing together.

Mock-up Design 2 addressed some of the limitations of Mock-up 1. For example, making the practices developed in the studio practice more multidisciplinary and reflective of the participants' own interests. As well as the project being more aligned with PAR wherein the outcomes of the collectively conducted artistic research in the form of a studio-based residency internship, they would essentially artistically produce research on the topic of hope labor and precarity. As the participants would be working in the same space, this could allow new knowledge to emerge compared to a virtual cultural probe.

### 5.2.1. Analysis: Design 2

As said, I did not receive the grant. After receiving the response back from the Sustainability Action Booster (SAB), I also inquired further to get some feedback on my application and what design characteristics could have been improved or better communicated. According to their feedback, the limitations were as follows;

1. A perceived niche/narrow target group (perceived to be solely in the scope of those interested in art pedagogy).
2. Unclear structure for dissemination of knowledge to a broader community.
3. The grant would primarily be used for material budget and artistic work which they feel they cannot fund (grant not intended for artistic works) and feel “shifting the focus towards making the issue visible to wider audiences” would have a higher impact (see Appendix 7).

Despite it being described as being open for all students and practitioners (including those outside of the university structure) with experience of hope labor, it seems to have been perceived as being targeting solely those with art pedagogy backgrounds. While Mock-up Design 1 was quite specific, Mock-up Design 2 was then too open, too vague, inconcise. While a zine was described as a method of disseminating knowledge produced in the workshop, it was not the primary emphasis of the project proposal by any means. E.g. The structure for knowledge sharing and dissemination became more fragmented as I wanted to leave it malleable for the participants to shape. However, for a funding body like SAB, experimental artistic structures aren't ideal, it seems. Then the third, as the project budget was mainly composed of material budget that would be built by the participants, this was also too experimental and unclear of what that could mean exactly as it is essentially “to be determined”. They later admitted “they completely missed the mark”, however, their misunderstanding likely just had to do with how the project was communicated in the first place. Similar to mock-up design 1, both mock-up 1 and mock-up 2 did not want to be completed without some support systems. Though, if attempted, it would simulate the precarious working conditions cultural workers are under. However, I did not want to replicate the working conditions hope laborers have had to endure in other positions and working projects. For a project to be unpaid and offer little to no resources, the threshold and extent of the project then must be brought down to an extreme degree. This could be scaled down to a large amount by simply being a 1-2 hour workshop resulting in a zine, for example.

### 5.3. Working Precariously



At vero eos et accusamus et iusto odio dignissimos ducimus qui blanditiis praesentium voluptatum deleniti atque corrupti quos dolores et quas molestias excepturi sint occaecati cupiditate non provident, similique sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollitia animi, id est laborum et dolorum fuga. Et harum quidem rerum facilis est et expedita distinctio. Nam libero tempore, cum soluta nobis est eligendi optio cumque nihil impedit quo minus id quod maxime placeat facere possimus, omnis voluptas assumenda est, omnis dolor repellendus. Temporibus autem quibusdam et aut officiis debitis aut rerum necessitatibus saepe eveniet ut et voluptates repudiandae sint et molestiae non recusandae. Itaque earum rerum hic tenetur a sapiente delectus, ut aut reiciendis voluptatibus maiores alias consequatur aut perferendis doloribus asperiores repellat.

Gabriella Presnal, Finland & Denmark, 2001

Figure 13. *Working Precariously* Open Call. Left - Open call Poster. Right - Open Call example (in online submission form).

Finally, I landed on Mock-Up Design 3: *Working Precariously* Zine. Without technical support like in mock-up design 1, or financial support like both mock-up designs 1 and 2, and after receiving feedback from SAB, I then decided to focus solely on this idea of a zine. *Working Precariously* was created through an online survey and open call where none of the participants met each other, or the facilitator (myself), during the process.

A zine is a short format (most often) self-published magazine popularized in the early 1970s emerging from more accessible print technology and punk political philosophy (Quinn, et al.,

2011, p.180). They are traced to the 1930s in the U.S. from fanzines expressing fandom through stories in these DIY magazines (Duncombe 2008 as cited by Smith, et al., 2017, p.198).

The methods of communicating the open call included wheat pasting posters in Copenhagen (Fig. 13) in the Amagerbro and Christianshavn area (location chosen as it was walking-distance and near Christiania, the art residency Fabriken, Copenhagen University, Royal Academy of Arts). As well as posters at Aalto University and online communications.

The open call was coupled with a survey in order to collect information and motivations of hope laborers. The google form survey inquired the contributor's positionality (age, name, cultural & educational background), their "work-as-art-pedagogy" where they gave an example with an organization they've worked with in the past, and their experiences. Such as obstacles when completing the role, motivators, ways the organization rewarded them for their labor, feelings, and opinions of what resources/tools could have helped them work better within the position. The survey, while quite detailed (taking 10-15min), was primarily using check boxes, with opportunities to expand further if they wanted to. The survey was used as a way of introducing the topic of hope labor and cruel optimism (definitions included) and encouraging reflection on their experiences. Similar to mock-up design 1, it is based on a survey format and coupled with a text and image upload point where people can contribute an excerpt and visual representing their feelings and experiences with precarity and hope labor in Nordic art and cultural organizations. They were free to experiment with textual methods. The mediums also expanded beyond photogrammetry and they were free to upload any visual made by them describing their experience. Similar to mock-up design 2, the focus was on knowledge sharing between people who have experienced hope labor in the cultural field and those who have not. The zine then becomes a form of propaganda informed by community input. The method of the zine was also primarily due to precarity where at the beginning of the project I had no funding, no materials, workshops, or support spaces for project production. A zine then emerged due to the precarious conditions where only university printer points were available.

The participants of *Working Precariously* reflected on solutions that could have helped them learn better on an academic and/or professional level as well as the affective environment they faced in their hope labor role, their positionality, and the Nordic context they contributed to.

*Working Precariously* aimed to create a space of commons where cultural workers can contribute textual and visual contributions both anonymously and credited on the topic of precarity and hope labor. It creates a forum for transparency and propaganda against cuts in the cultural industries. It also hoped to create a feedback form for organizations, cities, etc to receive informal feedback on their organization's working culture that they've built partially via low and unpaid creative labor. Additionally, for *Working Precariously*, the intention was to frame the work further in the direction of art wherein previously it may have felt useless or wasteful (of time and labor) by the worker. By utilizing the creative worker's observations of the cultural organizations and turning it into an artwork, the sometimes negative, insufficient, or unsatisfactory experiences they've had are then subverted to become art.

The zine open call has been communicated as collecting "testimonials, advice, resources, solutions, complaints, wishes, dreams, for the creative industries. Including demands to our bosses, funding bodies, universities, governments, the unemployment office, and other institutions", and "a collective imagining for an alternative future of our industry". To inspire contributions, the key interests for the zine were described as "precarity, cruel optimism, alternative economies, community economies, diverse economies, Nordic art education, collective action, mutual aid, learning-by-doing, subverting neoliberal logics, community building, skills sharing, public art, collaborative practices... +".

In order to incentivize people to contribute, it was planned for the issue/s to be distributed in Copenhagen in early August and distributed in Helsinki and Imatra in late August. The zine was exhibited in Helsinki at Aalto University's Väre (art and design building) and Imatra as a part of the *Välillä Väärässä* ("Sometimes Wrong") exhibition project. The latter is supported by the City of Imatra and Aalto University and had lecturers, doctoral students, as well as master students like myself from Aalto's Media and Art department who contributed to the exhibition. I also planned to take well-documented images to share amongst the participants if they wished to use it for their own purposes (such as including it on their artist resume and portfolio). The exhibition production as a concluding presentation also gave further direction for the zine to be curated in a larger context of *Välillä Väärässä*.

### 5.3.1. Analysis & Intervention: Design 3

The in-person interaction was extremely limited in its current form as the survey and submission is conducted online in the comfort of one's home. This is also due to my own movement, network, and connections during the creation of the project. I.e., not having a community or organization to reach out to in order to potentially host a workshop in Copenhagen, not being back in Helsinki until August, and then the installation and residency for *Välillä Väärässä* starting as soon as I got back, and not having a network in Imatra. If I were to do a second iteration, I may start the project with a workshop to introduce the topics, build a community, and then work together to create something primarily in-person compared to virtually.

Due to illness, the posters in Copenhagen were only up for a short duration before the zine deadline, while the posters in Helsinki the QR codes had some issues (which was then improved upon in the second iteration of posters). So, even in simple wheat pasting posters, there were technical obstacles. Another issue was the use of university printer points and the relatively isolated sites where the posters were pasted. As there are limited university printer points, it then later impacted the amount of A3 zine issues I could print and distribute. Furthermore, while in a relatively large area, and with 70-80 A4 posters, the outreach still felt limited and I would have wished to print more posters in hopes of receiving Danish submissions.

With the survey, in retrospect, some parts were a bit too lengthy, or not as relevant (such as asking how many people were within the organization), which may have become a barrier for people to submit to the project. In further projects, instead of a survey, I could consider a form of "design brief", open call information packet, or cultural probe explaining the topic and including inspirational images or previous examples that may help guide the contributors. However, for the purpose of an academic thesis, I found the survey results also echoing the literature findings which I would not have found as strikingly without the survey. For example, one anonymous reflection submitted in the survey section was "... Intern positions are taken not only by students (who might sustain themselves with part time job or family support) but also internships are taken by immigrants who try to enter a working life in another country and face closed doors all the time and try to open at least some with this possibility. But at the same time they have kids to feed (I am talking not only about my situation but others too where mothers with small kids are

oppressed with no job situation and at the same time get abused with internships that lead nowhere)” (see Appendix 8). It may have also been through the survey design that elicited more negative associations with hope labor. One participant reached out while filling out which also gave real-time feedback of the emotions participants may be going through (Fig. 14).

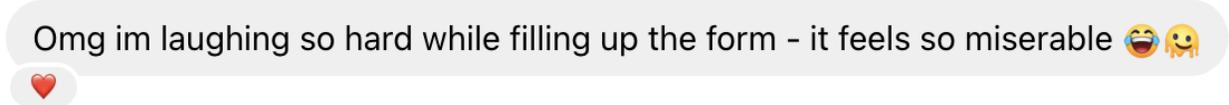


Figure 14. While filling the form.

In retrospect, the survey incites a more critical view of hope labor and precarity in the art and cultural field at the intersection of art education. I.e. - the participants may already be critical of hope labor and the zine did not collect positive experiences with hope labor, which then skews the zine to only represent a handful of critical perspectives on the topic. Like said, the zine also only presents a handful of contributions and is not representative of an entire demographic. This comment (fig.) also outlines the cruel optimism when reflecting on hope labor which participants may or may not have been realizing beforehand. It is also a critical point, is feeling miserable when reflecting on hope labor the aim? Should it not instead feel emancipatory and liberating? The focus could then have been too much on the problem and capitalocentrism within hope labor, when instead it could have focused more on asset-based development and reclamatory practices.

After the open call was complete, I received 6 submissions. Some contributions were sent directly to me without the coupled survey, however, ultimately the priority was given the zine contribution, not the survey, so submissions informally submitted were also accepted. I received 2 submissions without the coupled survey, 4 submissions with the survey/submitted through the form, and then I requested from 1 person to share their text via the zine. Ultimately, 5 submissions were included, 4 from the survey and 1 submitted informally via email. Two were excluded (1 that was requested but didn't end up sending their text (screenshots). Then one that only shared images and didn't reply upon follow up for captions or information related to permissions). Multiple persons also expressed interest in submitting to the zine, while they

ultimately didn't, it still affirmed that this is a topic of interest and relevance amongst artists, creatives, and art educators.

All zine submissions were from Finland (two from Helsinki, one from Rovaniemi, one from Tampere, and one from Espoo) and were completed with organizations primarily working with contemporary art and art education. The working period ranged between a few months to 2 years and ranged from nonprofit organizations, universities, and city services. The organizations particularly emphasized sustainability, multiculturalism, communities, and experimental thinking. All of the survey respondents said that the work they contributed was a form of hope labor, not all felt their position was a form of work-as-art-pedagogy even though the majority did complete their position for university credits.

A fellow creative, Moe Mustafa, a Palestinian-Jordanian artist who has connections to Imatra, Tampere, & Helsinki, also volunteered to co-edit the graphic layout of the zine which added another layer of PAR to the project. Not only have the illustrations and text been contributed by Nordic cultural workers, but even the layout has become collaborative. Before any printing or sending to Moe, I created a basic layout to work off of that Moe could take some creative liberty with (see Appendix 9). He then followed up with some alterations. As the layout collaboration was unpaid, I emphasized that he is open to contribute as little or as much as he'd like. It resulted in 2-3 versions being sent between Moe and I, as well as a final version being sent to the zine contributors as well for their final say. The others had no to minimal changes, but all positive feedback on the design process.



Figure 15. First printed copies of *Working Precariously* zine.

Without technical or financial support, the quality was rather limited. Resulting in using solely university printer points for the first 17 of copies in Copenhagen (Fig. 15). The design and layout were also continuous, as in later editions (after 110 copies), one anonymous contributor no longer wanted to remain anonymous as they no longer had ties to their hope laborer position they were critical of. So, from that point forward it came to include Vilma Orvokki as well. The zine created an important outlet for expressing these more negative emotions related to hope labor. One of the contributors, Orvokki, reflected that the zine created a more intentional reflection (compared to other journaling practices, for example) (see Appendix 10). It also seems to have empowered Orvokki to continue working with these themes in their own practice.



Figure 16. 1/2 of Working Precariously.

Vegecent, based in Helsinki, Finland.

It's just as much about learning to position yourself in the world, to communicate your value, and to build systems that support your creativity sustainably. I needed that knowledge just as much as I needed life drawing or color theory.

Art skills and business skills must grow together. If art school pushed you to create, then seek out someone who can push you to share, promote, and sell. It could be a mentor, a business-savvy friend, or even an online course that teaches you how to pitch your work, set prices, speak about your practice with confidence, or apply for funding.

Making beautiful work is only half the journey. The other half is making it visible, accessible, and sustainable.

I had a call with an employment specialist just a few days ago.

They were genuinely impressed by my 14 years of formal training in the arts. Fourteen years of disciplined practice, scholarships, degrees, and endless hours honing my creative voice. On paper, it sounds like a dream path. Then came the question I didn't want to answer: "And what's your current monthly income from your art?"; I hesitated. The truth?

Zero.

At 35, I'm still struggling to convert all that knowledge, experience, and passion into financial stability. That conversation stayed with me. Looking back, I wish someone had told me earlier that being an artist isn't only about mastering technique or building a portfolio.

In Finland, with the current labor market situation, low or unpaid positions like internships are taken not only by students (who might sustain themselves with a part time job or family support) but are also occupied by immigrants who are trying to enter a working life in another country and face closed doors all the time.

At the same time, they may have kids to feed, so then mothers with small kids are oppressed with the poor job situation, and at the same time, get taken advantage of through internships leading nowhere.

morning cry.  
small steps follow.  
you say goodbye.  
you come back to your blue screen lines.  
after myriads "unfortunately" you continue new lines.

you need help but you help others.  
they want more and you felt their pain as it is your own.  
rushing out - there they are.

small steps home to your routines.  
evening cry.  
quiet home.

your blue screen calls - what if few more hours will bring you what you most desire.

orders in dms from strangers  
- hey, you there!



- is it me? you respond  
and soak in complaints.  
pulsing cheeks - eyes filled with darkness.  
night flies fast and here it comes...  
morning cry...

Anonymous, based in Helsinki, Finland.

The cultural field as it is does not exist without unpaid labor. I've done unpaid internships for organizations that are prominent figures in the industry - celebrated, even.

I've done unpaid work for a city that boasts with its events, culture; even subcultures it has no right to claim, as it does little to aid them.

"Tampere's superpower is creativity, and we dare to think big. - This is a home of creative people."

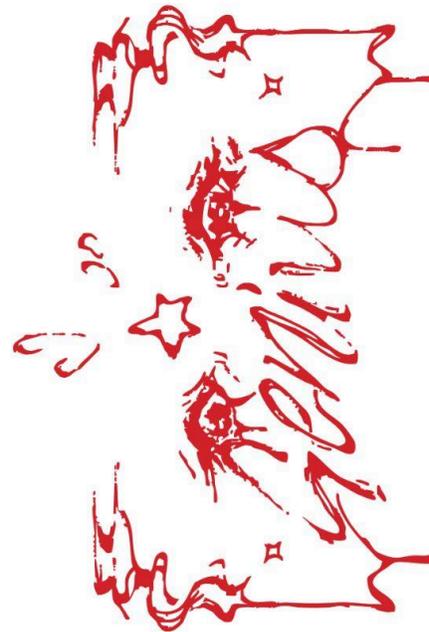
This is a direct quote from the city's website. This superpower? Just from me personally, hundreds of hours of unpaid labor. Years after my graduation, I still struggle to find paid work. Let alone paid work that pays in correlation with the professional skill and labor of the artist, as well as respects them as an individual.

Emotionally tied, that's something that resonated with me. I am very emotionally, culturally, socially tied, helping others, contributing to culture, and people barely even recognize that.

There are more cases than not where artistic work is seen as "something you do as a hobby" and "surely, getting paid is too much, this is your passion, after all." - and simultaneously, "please do this work for us, we are a lost identity in a crowd of thousands, and we do not know what we would do without you".

I've done jobs where I was belittled and contracts were not followed. I don't consider myself a genius, but I am skilled and passionate. So, I will do a good job, and even get praised for it.

Vilma Orvokki, based in Tampere, Finland.



Working Precariously Issue 1, August 2025. Written by Ni Lin, Vilma Orvokki, Veronika Vegecent, and two Anonymous Artists. Images by Ni Lin, Vilma Orvokki, and two Anonymous Artists. Designed by Moe Mustafa and Gabriella Presnal. Idea by Gabriella Presnal.

Figure 17. 2/2 of *Working Precariously*.

### 5.3.2. Iteration 2: *Hope Zines*

Further reflection of the limitations of Mock-up 3: *Working Precariously* zine, such as its limited engagement with the contributors outside of digital means as well as its skewed or biased nature on hope labor then prompted another iteration. An in-person zine-making workshop on the topic of working precariously and producing ‘hope zines’ reflecting on hope labor. *Working Precariously* did have some asset-based development, such as the emphasis on integrating further entrepreneurial education within art education as well as further reflection on solidarity initiatives. However, I hoped a workshop format could further emphasize a studio-ing practice, dialogue, community, and bringing the contributors further into the process as co-producers for the research. Thematically, the *Hope Zines* workshop expanded a bit broader than *Working Precariously* as it also accepted participants working outside of the art and cultural industries. The hope for including a broader set of contributors was to understand how to address working precariously in the cultural industry using skillsets from a larger pool-set.

A co-collaborator for this project became Johanna Weigel, an Aalto student who received a sum (920€) from SAB to co-organize “hands-on sessions proposed by Aalto students from diverse backgrounds, each contributing their skills and perspectives; from creative crafts and technical know-how to sustainability and alternative living” (Weigel, 2025). The *Hope Zines* workshop became the fourth in September 2025. The aim by partnering with another student with SAB funding was to utilize the community SAB has collected through their multiple years of sustainability efforts. However, as they have an audience already, this means the audience is largely already framed. I.e. students between 18-30 years old in the Espoo & Helsinki area, many of whom already have a vested interest in sustainability.

The initial workshop design was aimed at producing similar analogue to digital zines like the *Working Precariously* zine. Analogue to digital meaning the participants produce analogue assets, such as drawings and text, etc, and then compiling their thoughts digitally in one double sided A3 zine. The methods of digitalizing included Photoshop and Indesign using university computer labs or personal computers, or alternatively using Canva as a free alternative. Feedback from Johanna Weigel then shaped the workshop format. For example, she questioned “can people decide if they want to do the zine analogue or digital?” (see Appendix 11). This opened

up the choice of how to produce the zine and likely made it more accessible to those without layouting and visual design experience. The workshop then shifted from being primarily digital to primarily analogue.



Figure 18. Overview of possible mediums to experiment with for the zine. Samples produced during the Beast Residency, PUBLICS Youth Board, and the PNU workshops.

To present a variety of options, I prepared this slide (Fig. 18) of elements I've made to give inspiration and additionally presented the *Working Precariously* zine to show a potential format (two fold). The workshop collage materials were not curated and were sourced from common spaces in the university (Aalto art education shared materials) and left-over from past projects (ex. from a community-based collage project I implemented in 2021 in the Helsinki Central Library Oodi). The paper used for producing the zines (and later for printing as well) was leftover from the *Vällilä Väärissä* project, so the material budget of 70€ became stretched over multiple projects.

The workshop lasted 3.5 hours and was during the evening. The funding from the *Planetary Practices* SAB project covered vegan pizzas for the entire group, which also helped facilitate a welcoming environment and offer something in exchange for their participation.

### 5.3.3. Analysis & Intervention: *Hope Zines*



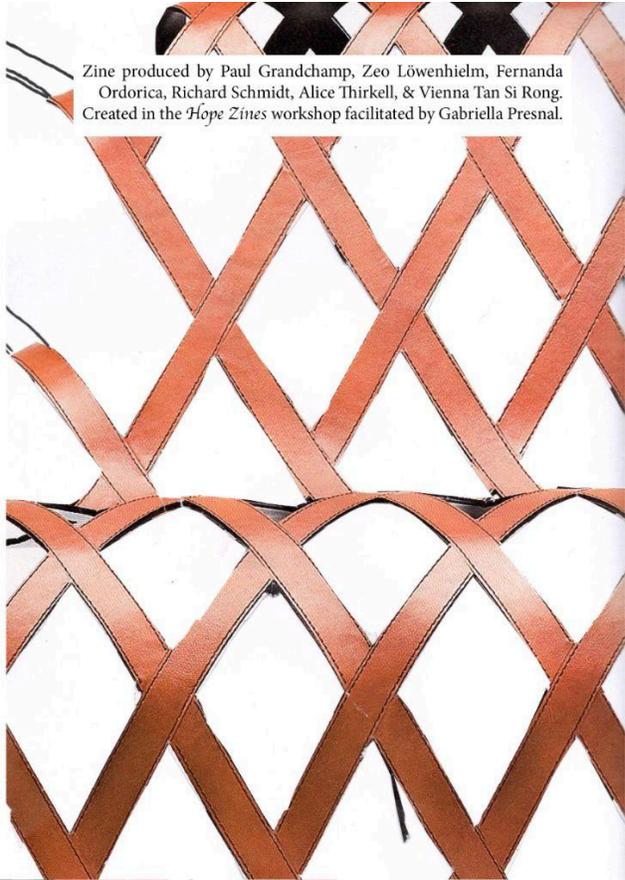
Figure 19. *Hope Zines* Workshop. 19.9.25.

Between 12-15 persons attended and all but one were current Aalto University students (Fig. 19). They were primarily studying in the Art and Design department, for example, architecture, creative sustainability, art education, and a few from visual communication studies. The workshop model allowed more time for hope labor to be described resulting in more questions on the application of the term. Some reflections overheard and expressed to me included “I didn’t realize that what I have been doing could be considered as hope labor”, on the workshop topic, “it feels very radical” (expressed in a positive tone), as well as questions such as “would hope labor be applicable if you are working in a soup kitchen or homeless shelter?”. While in the

moment, I felt a bit unsure, however, I reflected on Overgaard's text on volunteer caretakers within the health industry. Similarly, they have an overlap of positions where they may be hoping for future employment or organizational mobility, but may not have the capacity for full time work due to needing to care for children at home as well, for example. As well as tasks overlapping between "employee" and "hope laborer" or volunteer or intern. Similarly, like volunteers in caretaking which is very transcendent based, those working in homeless shelters or food kitchens could also be considered hope laborers. I reminded myself of Allen's text, that hope laborers may not acknowledge their experiences as being hope labor because they don't view themselves as being exploited. However, from this question, it brings attention to the motivations of hope labor. I.e. Is it considered hope labor if you *do not* hope for future employment or any future benefits to be received from the position? A participant brought up working for student associations as an example. They did not hope to achieve future employment, but solely wish to contribute to their community. This questions if hope labor is hope labor if the motivations are solely transcendent. Perhaps a follow up would be to question if any work is purely transcendent. Even with the examples of very transcendent-based work, like volunteering in student associations or other volunteer positions, it is still likely that people use those positions to support and build a portfolio assembling a professional identity. For example, inclusion on LinkedIn, CVs, and/or relevant motivational letters to employers remarking one's leadership skills, dedication to community building, and/or sustainability ethics. Likewise, we can also question the "transcendence purity" of artistic practice. For example, artists may participate in an exhibition because it is personally rewarding to exhibit one's work, however, there may also the underlying motivations of A), a potential buyer seeing one's work, B), a line in one's artistic resume, which translates into C), hopes of gaining professionalism in the art industry through exhibition production.

win win  
win win

Zine produced by Paul Grandchamp, Zeo Löwenhielm, Fernanda Ordorica, Richard Schmidt, Alice Thirkell, & Vienna Tan Si Rong. Created in the *Hope Zines* workshop facilitated by Gabriella Presnal.



the harmony of purpose

with fewer euros?



We produced **285**

Almost **16%**

We offer **53,000**

**80%** of our students are considering starting

Ranked **#3** and we made **15** operate on campus.

Dreams allow you to realise that it's the journey that matters, not the destination. I follow this principle. I can't pursue a goal only for the sake of achieving it; what matters to me is the journey itself, lessons learned every step of the way, everything that happens in the meantime. It's great if I achieve the goal in the process, but if I choose between the goal and the dream – and I often juxtapose these two – I'd rather go for the dream. Well, a dream can be a goal, too. Dreams give you the courage to take risks, while goals are, in my opinion, limited in their definite character. I'm talking about life now, not acting. When you're building a character, you need a goal. You need to determine the goals of your character in a given scene – in argument or love; to ask yourself a few questions, which will lead you to the truth. It's nothing new; nothing I've discovered myself and feel so smart about it. I learned that at school and along the way, outside school. I love meeting people, sometimes even too much – it happens that I don't want to leave a party!

Figure 20. Finished zine (½). Produced by Paul Grandchamp, Zeo Löwenhielm, Fernanda Ordorica, Richard Schmidt, Alice Thirkell, & Vienna Tan Si Rong.

Another sentiment that manifested in the workshop as well as the zine was “the harmony of purpose with fewer euros” and emphasis on how “it’s the journey that matters, not the destination” (Fig. 20). This echoed my questioning when I was researching alternative economies and hope labor. Another sentiment expressed during the workshop by Zeo Löwenhielm was questioning if we emphasize extrinsic benefits from hope labor, does that further lean into hope labor’s neoliberal logic? I.e. Does expecting an exchange from our labor make us locked in neoliberalism? From this participant, it was a good reminder to consider to what extent their knowledge was being integrated in this design model. I did encourage them to question the use of hope labor and emphasize on differing opinions, which translated well into this group zine (Fig. 20). This was a reminder to question if the participants are “co-authors defining problems and subsequent designs” or simply “test subjects” (Buhl et al., 2022, p.207). In this workshop model, the explanation of hope labor was far more extensive compared to *Working Precariously*. In this manner, the problem and method (zine) were largely pre-defined while allowing participants to question the problem (is this a problem for them?, what do they think about this problem?, what are solutions to this problem?) and experiment with the method. Put bluntly, working precariously could either not be a problem for them specifically (due to positionality where they may have an abundance of opportunity, for example). Or alternatively (and more commonly), there is a lot of pride within being able to work precariously. To be able to produce out of nothing and without the support of institutions - whom your community may not fully agree with in the first place due to bureaucracy and/or other troubling institutional practices. This perhaps is where hope labor requires further contextualization, i.e. is working precariously ‘desired’ in all instances? Even when completing an unpaid internship?

A different participant, Richard Schmidt, brought up that perhaps the term should be shifted from hope labor to hope work. While they didn’t go into further detail, I expect it is referencing a dialectical materialist differentiation between work and labor. Paraphrasing Battistoni (FQT-GSWS at Penn, 2021), work builds a lasting human world. Work interrupts and even destroys life processes to produce lasting artifacts that can stabilize human place in the world

against these unending cycles of nature. For example, cutting down a tree to build a house is work because it's interrupting the growth, i.e. the labor of the tree (FQT-GSWS at Penn, 2021). Labor describes the more than human activities necessary to sustain life and produces nothing but life (FQT-GSWS at Penn, 2021). Perhaps what is implied from the distinction from hope labor or hope work is labor would perhaps include “feminized reproductive labor”. Like cooking in food kitchens, while work differentiates itself from the break or pause in labor. Work and labor have been used interchangeably for this thesis, in further research, the relationship could be defined further.

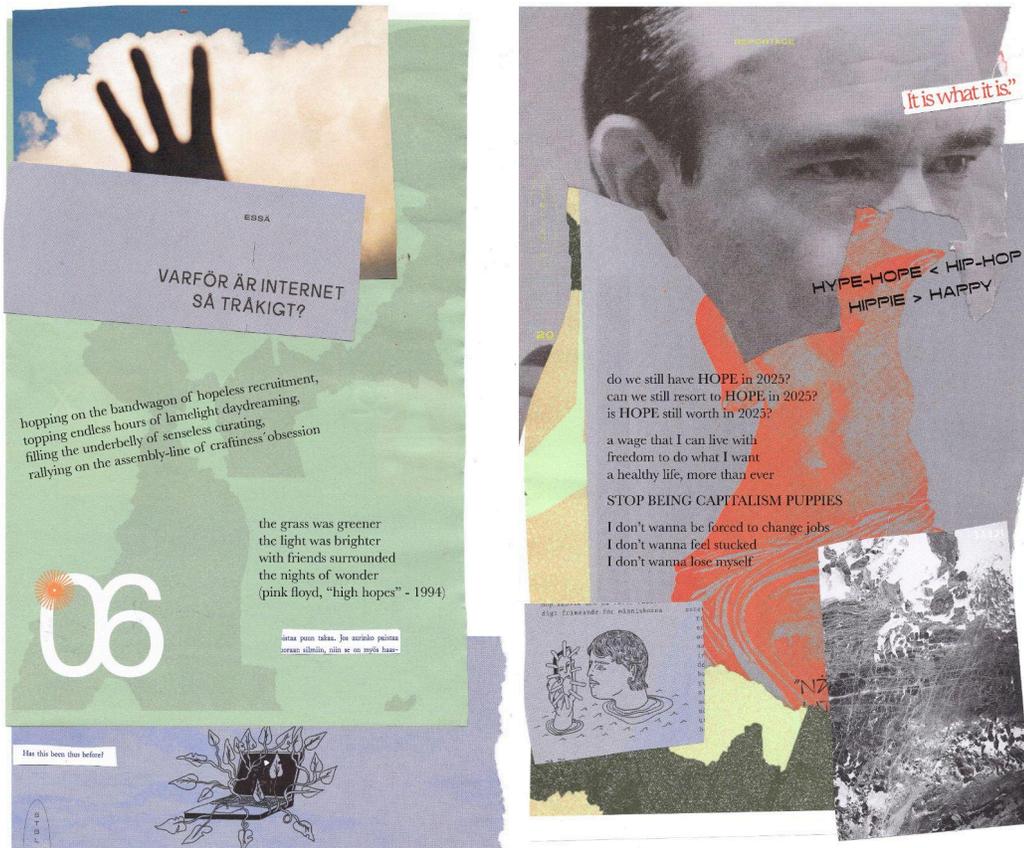
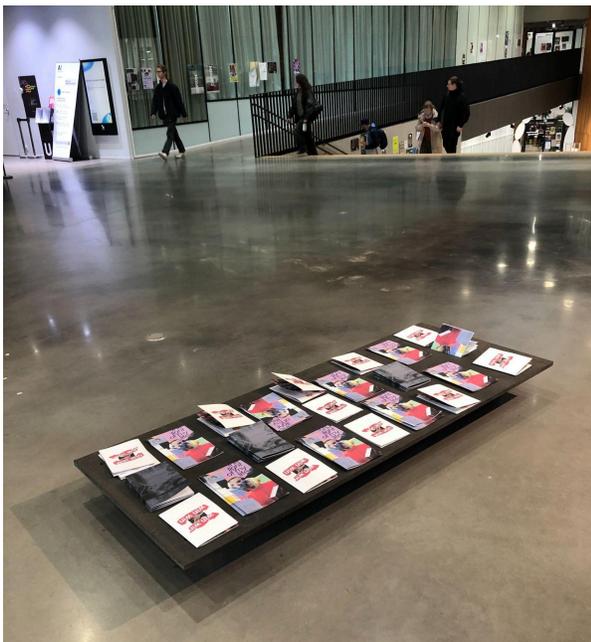


Figure 21. (½) PDF finished zine produced by Albert Figurt, Hilkka Hissa, Caitlin Long, and Inka Pallari.

In the second group, they used scanning, collage, and then digitally added text. Some excerpts include “STOP BEING CAPATALISM PUPPIES”, “a wage that I can live with”, “It is what it

is”, “hopping on the bandwagon of hopeless recruitment”, and “do we still have HOPE in 2025?” (Fig. 21).

There are two to three stakeholders to consider in hope labor: the organization and how it facilitates and organizes hope labor, the hope laborer who confronts the hope labor they perform, as well as the educational institute that may encourage, and in some cases, necessitates hope labor. For the latter, *Hope Zines* involves the university more directly compared to *Working Precariously*. As described by Schwartz and Robertson in *Punk Pedagogies* (2017, p.185), “the zine, the album and the live show all feature pedagogical moments that teach verbal and non-verbal literacies”. Contrasting the school environment that may have a narrow toolkit and strict “pedagogic authority” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p.19 cited in Smith, et al., 2017, p.185) between the student and educator. A critical point of facilitating a zine workshop for university students in close proximity to the university would be potential co-option from university systems using zine-making, “a subversive act”, within “the broader authoritarian



context” (Senechal, 2011, p.182). Additionally, zine-making “because your teacher told you to” may create a paradox as it may create a pedagogic authority contrasting to the subversive, non-hierarchical history of zine-making (Senechal, 2011, p.182). However, as Senechal brings up, it may be that subversive acts like zine-making are fitting for university structures due to their *need* for subversion. Similarly, suitable for their distribution in university spaces (Fig. 22).

Figure 22. Drop-point in Aalto's Väre's Lobby.

Zine-making offers a break from university's standard academic practices (Congdon and Blandy 2003 as cited in Smith, et al, 2011, p.202). It is also noted that the workshop was facilitated in a

more informal university space, Space21, that emerged from students needing third spaces (for studioing) that didn't exist in the university structure. Secondly, the workshop model expanded on zine-making and the medium itself very little. The workshop design focused solely on describing and thinking about hope labor. While it could be considered giving myself more position of authority on hope labor, however, the communication in the zine was largely up to the participants. Additionally, there weren't guidelines to how much text or image they should produce, or a certain aim for the zine, ex. a recipe, essay, campaign, etc. In this sense, zine-making remained malleable to the participant. As the final zines were entirely created by the participants, it is my hope that the teaching model of the final product reflects an anarchist pedagogy where learners become the educators (Shantz, 2012 as cited in Smith, et al., 2011, p.202). However, a point of critique could be that they did not necessarily have the opportunity for deciding what information to use and where to source it from - to curate knowledge on hope labor. Though, as the workshop was rather short, it leaves very little time for the participants to produce their own research. A longer working period would have produced deeper knowledge and a participatory curation of the learning (wherein learners bring their own research into the knowledge pool). Similarly as to what was envisioned for the *Intern* residency.

## 6. Visual Design

The visual design section is thus divided according to each location type. Firstly being *Folketshus* in Copenhagen. Secondly, *Välillä Väärässä* in Imatra is a form of purkutaidetalo. Lastly, at Helsinki Central Library Oodi. *Vällila Väärissa* in Imatra and *Mitä Jää / What Remains* in Oodi are situations in which the zines have been in the context of a group exhibition. Meaning, there is more intention in how the space is used and there may be a more extensive design process for how the zines exist in the space and how it correlates to the site itself.

### 6.1. Folketshus



Figure 23. *Folketshus*' Zine Library. Regular-Printer copy of *Working Precariously* can be seen on the bottom string.

*Folkets hus* is a squatter-owned community space established in 1971. Squatting in the house began alongside protests to protect the Folkets Park and was a part of the September Offensive - a series of squatting offensives across the city of Copenhagen. The house had a long history of disputes with the municipality in the 70-80s as the city wished to turn the plot into a parking lot. In the 90s, *Folkets Hus* received the legal status of an autonomous culture house upkept by volunteers as has remained so up to the present (Folkets Hus, N/A). The house offers a variety of community events and spaces. Such as a cafe, zine library, and an event space where workshops are held. Examples of initiatives include degrowth cafes, abolitionist workshops, bike repairs, fundraising events, and more. In this context, the zine *Working Precariously* follows a common historical path fitting for *Folkets Hus*. As seen in Fig. X, accompanying zines include topics such as queer marxism, ecological insurrections, critical views on class systems, and more.

Choosing *Folkets Hus* as the site for zine distribution was considering:

- A. The site was somewhat familiar to me and did not hold barriers to the quality of the zine, i.e. printer paper, wherein it may not be suitable in most galleries.
- B. Zines are already common practice in Folkets Hus and familiar to the people passing through the space (Fig. 23).
- C. It is not a space that focuses on art-based practices.

Distribution at *Folkets Hus* has its limitations, however, it partially served its function. One of the functions of offering distribution and exhibition as a whole was to try and provide some exhibition opportunity to the contributors that they could use within an artistic resume, if they wished. However, in terms of the function of the zine and introducing the issue of hope labor to a general audience, this may not have been the most suitable distribution site. Considering the site regularly hosts workshops and events, the site already consists of people who are working in solidarity with those in precarious positions due to capitalism. However, as the zine ended up entirely of Finnish contributors, it may help to spread education surrounding working conditions in the Nordic cultural field outside of Denmark which the audience at *Folkets Hus* may be less familiar with. Additionally, as the site does not work closely with artists and creatives (compared to an exhibition space, for example), the distribution can still help create transparency around the issue to people who do not regularly engage with the creative industry. Another limitation was

the amount of printed editions due to limited (nonexistent) budget, it only resulted in 17 printer paper A3 copies, which also limits the reach quite drastically. Another limitation of solely distributing zines is not being able to receive audience / user feedback like their reactions to the zine.

## 6.2. Purkutaidetalo



Figure 24. *Working Precariously* Installation room.

The *Vällilä Väärissä* exhibition was a project where the city of Imatra invited Aalto's department of art and media (DAM) to produce artworks and installations using the abandoned hotel and mall Väärätalo, in the center of Imatra. The building was very large, containing dozens upon dozens of hotel rooms, a bar, kitchen, as well as an emptied shopping center. The exhibition took place in the hotel area as the shopping center had worse air quality and difficulty with electricity. In the end, 20 persons from DAM participated as well as under a handful of persons from the University of Helsinki's fine art academy. For the *Working Precariously* zine, it was installed in an old hotel room. Upon arrival, it was like any other hotel room. Two twin beds, a desk, and otherwise rather empty. In a few days in late August, I then hand-painted a green accent wall, a

space heater in yellow, and collected dozens of blue transported boxes from around the hotel (Fig. 24). Additionally, picture frames from the building were used to display the different faces of the zines for viewing. Referencing to the material conditions of cultural workers, technical equipment was scattered in the room as well, such as a radio, cash register, and card readers.

One of the concerns from exhibition artists was how much the local audience would relate to the exhibition as a whole as the contributing artists are (all but one) outsiders to Imatra. I wondered how this would apply in my case as well, how much would the general audience of the exhibition relate and understand the struggles artists are confessing to in the zine? One of the zine contributions, Ni Lin's, also addresses artists directly, so the audience of artists may have been rather limited when considering the exhibition received over 1000 visitors. While the majority may not have been working in the cultural industry, some were working for the city services which one of the zine contributors called out directly. However, later it was revealed that Väärätalo is now being considered to host a welfare center, so the thematics of *Working Precariously* turned out to be very relevant for the site. While it was likely in discussions prior to August, the zine somehow gets to be a part of this speculative dialogue of how the space can be transformed for the community.

Another barrier was the language of the zine. For the context of Imatra, it could have been better if there had been translated Finnish editions as well so that the audience could understand and connect to the issue better. As the audience primarily consisted of elderly, some middle aged persons, some families, and a limited number of young people, producing the edition in Finnish would have broken down a barrier when distributing the zine. Similarly, translations of definitions of hope labor and cruel optimism (that were written on the wall) would have been ideal.



Figure 25. Exhibition tour. Image by Pia Euro.

However, this site does somewhat succeed in distributing to and creating art education surrounding hope labor for a general public, though difficult to know how it has been received (Fig. 25). Some audience members noted that they felt they could connect with the artists' contributions even without coming from an artistic or cultural industry background. It was noted by fellow exhibiting artists that the content of the zine was particularly relevant for this project as the working conditions are by definition precarious by working in an abandoned building with mold. Additionally, the use of the transport boxes added to the installation as it symbolized A) the work creatives may have to do outside of their creative jobs in order to sustain themselves. As well as B) the precarious nature of creative work where social sustainability may go unseen and undervalued, like service industry jobs.

While this project has received funding from the city of Imatra, Kone Foundation, as well as Aalto University, it offers no artist fees / contribution fees. There was a 70€ material budget, accommodation, and travel expenses covered. Due to likely low budgets, instead of the city

commissioning or enlisting artists, creative labor has been asked of students (and department lecturers). Similar exhibitions in Finnish demolition projects adopt a cooperative method where they curate artists, charge a reasonable ticket fee, and then distribute the profits to the artists and producers of the exhibition after it has been completed. Though, had the same been done in Imatra, I wonder if the reception from the general audience for an exhibition like this may not attract the same numbers in more major cities like Tampere and Helsinki (where some previous demolition projects have been produced, some receiving 20k+ visitors over a three month duration). It is also the case that this exhibition is unlike other demolition projects, or purkutaidetalos, as other purkutaidetalos may be more “Instagramable” (as noted by a colleague apart of the exhibition) compared to this project which resulted in multiple research-based site-specific works inspired by the building and local area itself. Though, some colleagues did note that it seemed like some of the audience were expecting a similar kind of purkutaidetalo and even one woman noted that they expected higher quality from Aalto students and staff. Here, even in projects working in precarious buildings to be demolished, the artist is expected to create high quality works at no charge. Even in demolition projects where they do charge tickets, the artist is still hoping to profit, but it may be the situation that no certain sum is guaranteed. The phenomenon of purkutaidetalos highlights the value artists can bring to abandoned sites like Väärätalo and more as artists are enlisted to reengage with spaces in disarray. The exhibition itself also differentiates from other purkutaidetalos as the artists were very free in what they were producing and the works became situated to the time and space. In contrast to producing “Instagramable” works that don’t find the site of the work having any relevance to the installation itself. While commercialized purkutaidetalos have produced a form of commons - a cooperative - wherein the profits are shared following the exhibition, *Vällilä Väärissä* produces a curatorial commons wherein members are allowed to freely choose their space, forage abandoned materials from the site, and be influenced by each other during the creation process (similar to a group residency or studioing). What the *Working Precariously* zine may highlight in this context is the precarious and fragile nature of artists’ contemporary role in bringing spaces to life. As well as the dependence of cities on art education as the project is compiled of majority student art works and is facilitated by art educators at Aalto Art & Media and Uniarts.

*Vällilä Väärissä* has higher resemblance to a curatorial commons and studio-ing practice as a form of art education. As the exhibition, unlike other purkutaidetalos, does not emphasize profit, this could also be an argument that it builds a critical space against the learnification or the economization of art educational and curatorial practices. Had it been like other purkutaidetalos with commercialization, perhaps learnification would have been applied further. However, I am critical of this thought as I feel it bends into the “money drives out love” neoliberal foundation for value based labor like exhibition production.

### 6.3. Keskustakirjasto

As noted from contributor Orvokki, the exhibition sites (see Appendix 10) were important as otherwise the zines may have been difficult to find and introduce the issue to people outside of our art and cultural bubble who already know the precarity we face.



Figure 26. *We're Working Here!* Zine Library Installation.

*We're Working Here!* Zine library at Oodi shifted the curatorial strategy compared to *Välillä Väärässä* and previous drop-points. Through an open call, a curated library was produced (Fig. 26), allowing zine, small booklet, and short publication-makers to present their work under the theme of *We're Working Here!* in a common space of a public library. This iteration was especially inspired by Albert Figurt's remarks during the *Hope Zine* workshop where he mentioned zine exchanges. The exhibition at Oodi included a zine exchange at the opening. Here, previous iterations of knowledge production (workshops and curated zines) are challenged as it allows "others to fully participate in the learning process" and in the learning curation (Quinn, et al., 2011, p.170). Through a zine-library, this creates an opportunity where contributors co-produce a curatorial *forschung* through sampling their learning material (zines). The curated library being installed within a public library creates a pocket where, unlike the city's library, people are active in library-making or producing knowledge-based commons. This could be interpreted as subverting a pedagogic authority otherwise present in library spaces. Similarly, as libraries usually consist of books gone through official publication channels, this offers a crack in the city's commons for artists to emerge. The zine library forms a reclamation "of power to those for whom the sanctioned forms of publication do not speak" (Senechal, 2011, p.182). Like *Välillä Väärässä*, as the zine library was situated within a group exhibition. The library is informed by neighbouring artworks and the studioing practice that emerged from the curation of the exhibition. For example, others had a similar focus on dreaming, which further intensified the speculative nature of the exhibition and library in itself. Following a feminist post-structuralist design, the library might not offer concrete solutions, but can reflect a curated participatory method encouraging reflexivity on working precariously. Additionally, the library open call also prompted communities and art educators to make zines specifically for this library installation (See Appendix 12). The *Tampere Intercultural Art* community was inspired by the open call and integrated it within their *Hervanta Stories* workshop programming. They invited their community to gather and make a collective zine. These iterations of presentation also reflected an ongoing curatorial project where others could pick up and curate a zine in their own means. In the end, 22 zines were included that comprised the creative work of over 65 persons.

The thesis produced multiple situations where agencies of hope laborers could emerge. In previous editions, there were no curatorial statements guiding the audience. The library reflects

an artistic and curatorial practice building on the reflections of participants and co-producers. The intervention shifted from creating a singular, “finite, portable”, object to then an ongoing process with “an unclear beginning and end” (Bishop, 2015, p.2). As Bishop expands, this shift can “place pressure on conventional modes of artistic production and consumption under capitalism” (2015, p.2). The viewers of the exhibitions and library were invited to become co-producers in the library by exchanging zines in the library (marked for exchange) for ones they’ve self-produced in a take-one-leave-one nature. The function of the library activates the audience to engage with the installation through a curatorial *forschung* (see Appendix 13).

## 6.4. Reflections

As mentioned within the research design section, this thesis integrated three modes of design inquiry. Mock-up 1 and 2 could be interpreted as being within Schön’s mode of design inquiry emphasizing knowledge production in one’s own practice for the users. Which ultimately was the largest issue preventing further development. While the zine format is also familiar within my artistic practice, design 3 / *Working Precariously* and *Hope Zines* develop more closely from DBR. Especially *Hope Zines* which helped produce new knowledge on the use of hope labor more so compared to its first iteration *Working Precariously*. The designed product of the zine of *Working Precariously* functions better as the third form of critical design. *Hope Zines* reflects the process of being introduced to this knowledge and then the participants introducing new thinking to the domain. *Working Precariously* functions well (and better compared to *Hope Zines*) as a form of testimonial, bringing awareness to working conditions and hope labor in the Nordic cultural industry.

While exhibition production in *Välillä Väärässä* and *We’re Working Here!* could be interpreted as a part of Schön’s mode of design inquiry as it would expand upon my own practice of exhibition making, it is more suitable within design-based research. This is for a number of reasons. Firstly, as seen from art educators responding to the library open call, it reflects an adaptive implementation where stakeholders can produce this design process in their own communities (Henriksen & Ejsing-Duun, 2022, p. 243). This can be identified as having produced more *design knowledge* compared to a guideline for *design principles*. Principles are described as “specific and context-bound”, while knowledge is characterized by knowledge

sharing “that can influence the development of innovative products” (Ejsing-Duun & Skovbjerg, 2019, p. 450). *Välillä Väärässä* and *We’re Working Here!* were prompted as a form of motivation / remuneration for zine contributors as well as a form of visual design where the designed product (zines) become situated to the site they inhabit. Capable of informing new and various contexts. This final stage of the process model differentiates itself from critical design and Schön’s practice-based inquiry as it requires further reflection. It is at the intersection of all three modes of design inquiry where this thesis has produced all aims of pragmatic design inquiry. I.e. becoming a better designer, “Design knowledge and principles are found and tested”, “The intervention is implemented”, and “Publics are raised in relation to the issue” (Ejsing-Duun & Skovbjerg, 2019, p.453). Furthermore, it is through this exhibition making, or the visual design of this process, that studio-ing was also embedded as the exhibition process was developed alongside members of the *Mitä Jää / What Remains* exhibition.

For next steps, Orvokki reflected that the zine feels like a first step (see Appendix 10). They noted from their experience with city services that systems don’t often respond well to emotion-based testimonials. Orvokki brought up possible panel discussions on the issue and to create a longer, structured project to emphasize that this isn’t just a handful of people going through this, this is systemic.



creating dialogue surrounding hope labor and the working conditions of artists. Models including more contact with the contributors, like *Hope Zines*, was more successful in producing new thoughts surrounding hope labor compared to virtual models. Further participatory methods could combine these different modes of design inquiry to further address asset-based development on hope labor in the Nordic cultural and art industries. The current models are a good dose of critical design, but somewhat repeating knowledge of our conditions. While hope labor was reclaimed through zine-making, there could have been further emancipatory and asset-based development design models. A topic area that would need development is differentiation in learning models within hope labor. Mock-up 1, the photogrammetric testimonial-based landscape, could be developed to create a tool box for organizations, art educators, curators, and collectives for producing better guidelines while working precariously. A reflection has been the extent that experiences of my hope labor were integrated into the design process. The design process reflects the wishes for experimental, and sustainable curation from CPF. It reflects library practices, perhaps subconsciously inspired by PUBLICS, as well as exhibition-making practices as a motivator reflecting off of FAA. So, this thesis and the resulting design inquiry in itself also reflects a reclamation of my past hope labor. Another conclusion of this thesis is also to reflect just what I am able to do as an individual. If I can do this, we can then start to speculate further on what could be possible if organizations started to approach their hope labor from a curatorial perspective.

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