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Towards Self-Determination

Limits and Chances of Resource Oriented Approaches for the Support of Dis/Abled Artists in Switzerland

Contribution for the Summer University at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, July 2017

« Valuing Strengths and Respecting Diversity in Social Work:
Policy, Practice, Education and Research »

Research project: Artists in situations of dis/abilities : practices, challenges and perspectives linked to their support

Research group: Francis Loser, Sonia Perego, Sophia Voelksen, Barbara Waldis, HETS GE / VS HES-SO
Ethnographic research in art-studios in Switzerland for visual artists with dis/abilities (2014-2016)

Sample: Four studios of roughly 10-20 independant visual art studios existing in Switzerland

Studios in social institutions

- Only partially oriented towards visual art as profession
- Integrated artistic activities with an entire group

Independant studios

- Focused on professional promotion of visual artists
- Financially independant and more precarious

=> two art studios in institutions, two independant – the two in the institution did not want to continue research – I present results of two independant studios

Limits and chances of selfdetermination

Resource-oriented approaches for the support of dis/abled artists in Switzerland



Hong Kong 2017

Two of four art studios

Project
Freakshow
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Flammèches
en Volutes
Leonard Périès
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Context and scope of the presentation

Idea for today's talk: frame shift & consequences: art – not social work

Focus for today's talk:

How do the artist-coaches manage to support and promote the artists with dis/abilities? What is usable for social work?

Reason for defending this position:

“You don't really know, what they (Pascal and Guy, two artists with cognitive dis/abilities) think (...) but I find, they are extremely happy by their exhibition. (...) If you see their pleasure while working, you just want to continue... in terms of identity, it is so important to them. If I look at Mariam (who has worked as an artist for 20 years), it is evident. (...) Pascal and Guy have also changed a lot (...), when they entered the institution, they became different men. First of all, they became slim, in terms of body transformation, before they were overweight.” (Michel)



Pascal Vonlanthen, Visionäres Museum, Zürich, 2016
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Steps in research and analysis - structure of the talk

- **Multi-sited ethnography**
- **Shifting frames of interpretation from social work to art**
- **Resource orientation, empowerment and participation**
- **Network perspective of “art-worlds”**
- **Different tasks of the artist-coaches**
- **Vulnerability of the human being as resource**
- **Social work and resource orientation**

Multi-sited ethnography (2014-2016)

- **The four visual art-studios in Western Switzerland:**
goals, exhibitions, size, differences, context
- **Four research questions:**
 - everyday life in the studio;
 - professional support, activities and career;
 - self-conception; artwork and its circulation on the art market
 - challenges for the artist-coaches in supporting the artists



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Multi-sited ethnography (2014-2016)

- **Methods used:**
- Participant observation in studios, in galleries, during exhibitions, documents on internet, in the press, analysis with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2014)
- Go alongs with the artists (Julien-Gauthier 2009; Kusenbach, 2003; Perego, Völksen 2017)
- Interviews and focus group discussion with the artists coaches



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Shifting frames of interpretation from social work to art

Interactionist argument:

Frame analysis: What is going on in a social situation? Why focus on dis/ability? (Goffman 1980)

Artification / doing art: When does art function? (Heinich, Shapiro 2012)

Doing gender: Produced in social situations (West, Fenstermaker 1997)

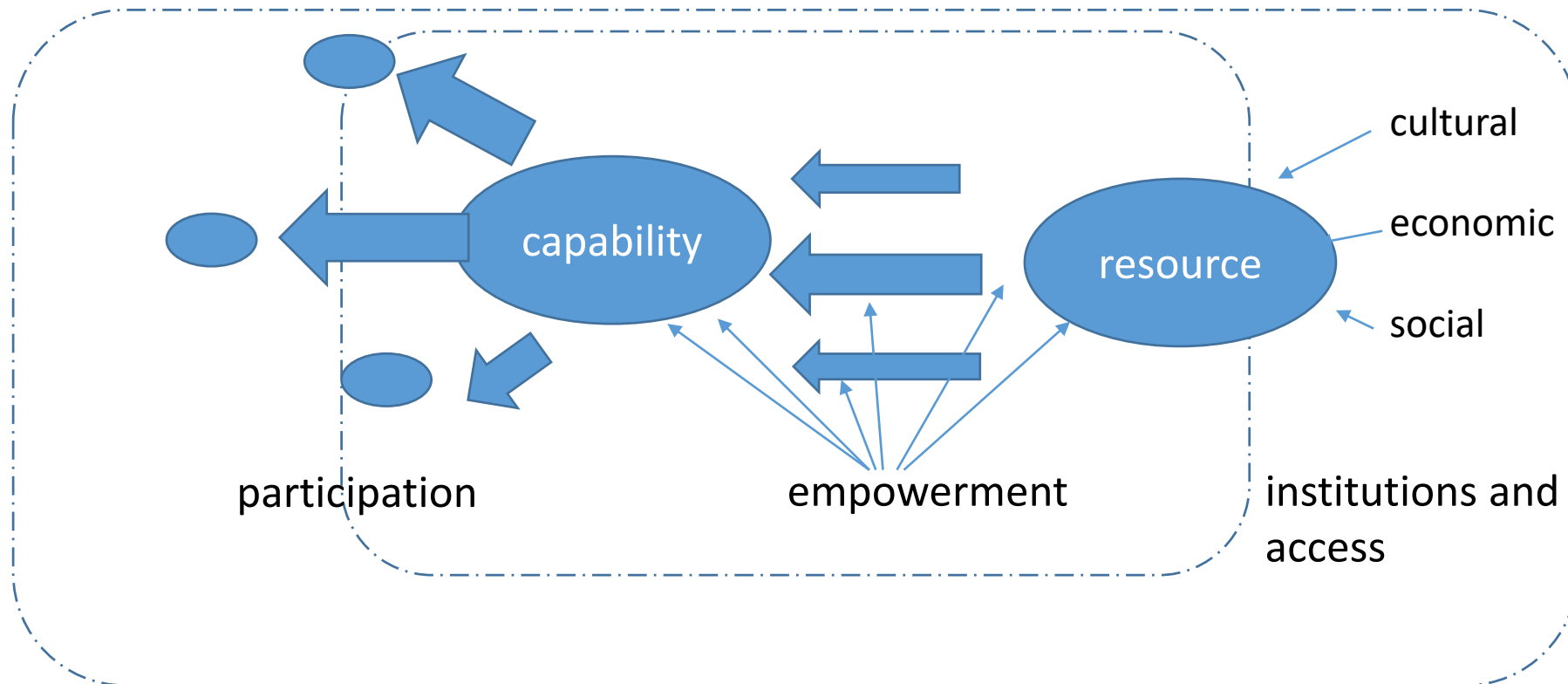
Doing dis/ability: Salience? (Brewer et al. 2012; Fougeyrollas 1998; Kastl 2010; Ruer 2012)

Silvia von Niederhäusern
Exhibition, Ferme de la chapelle, Genève, 2016
Prix cérébral, 2017, 6 May, Berne
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Resource orientation, empowerment, and self-determined participation

Capability is a free choice, consists of resource transformation into participation. Empowerment is a strategy to detect and transform resources. Resources are different types of capitals, increases with sufficient access to institutions and sufficient support.



Bonvin et al. 2008;
Julhe 2017;
Kardoff 2014;
Karsz 2008;
Nussbaum 2011;
Parazelli 2017;
Sen 1985.

Resource



Dix sur dix Genève, 2015

© dix-sur-six

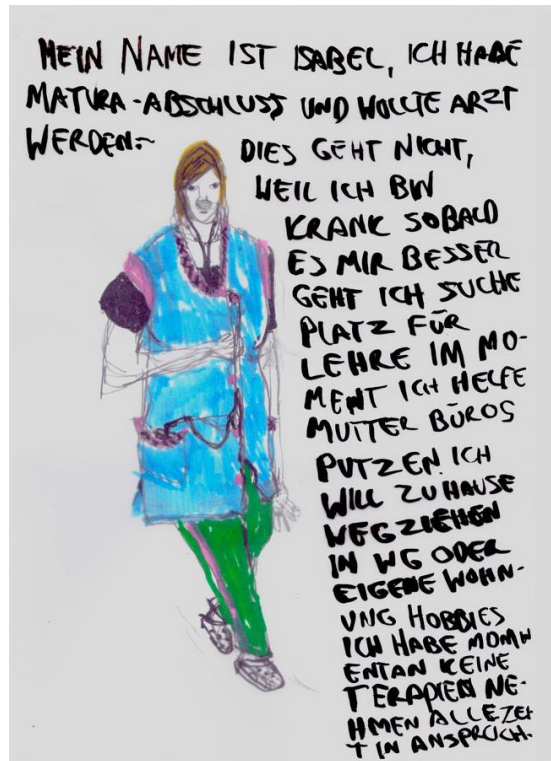
Hong Kong 2017

The term resource is a means and empty of specific content, it can in fact be anything useful to achieve any goal. Before a resource is useful, one must perceive something as a resource.

A resource is something socially recognized as valuable, institutionally supported and used as such.

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Empowerment

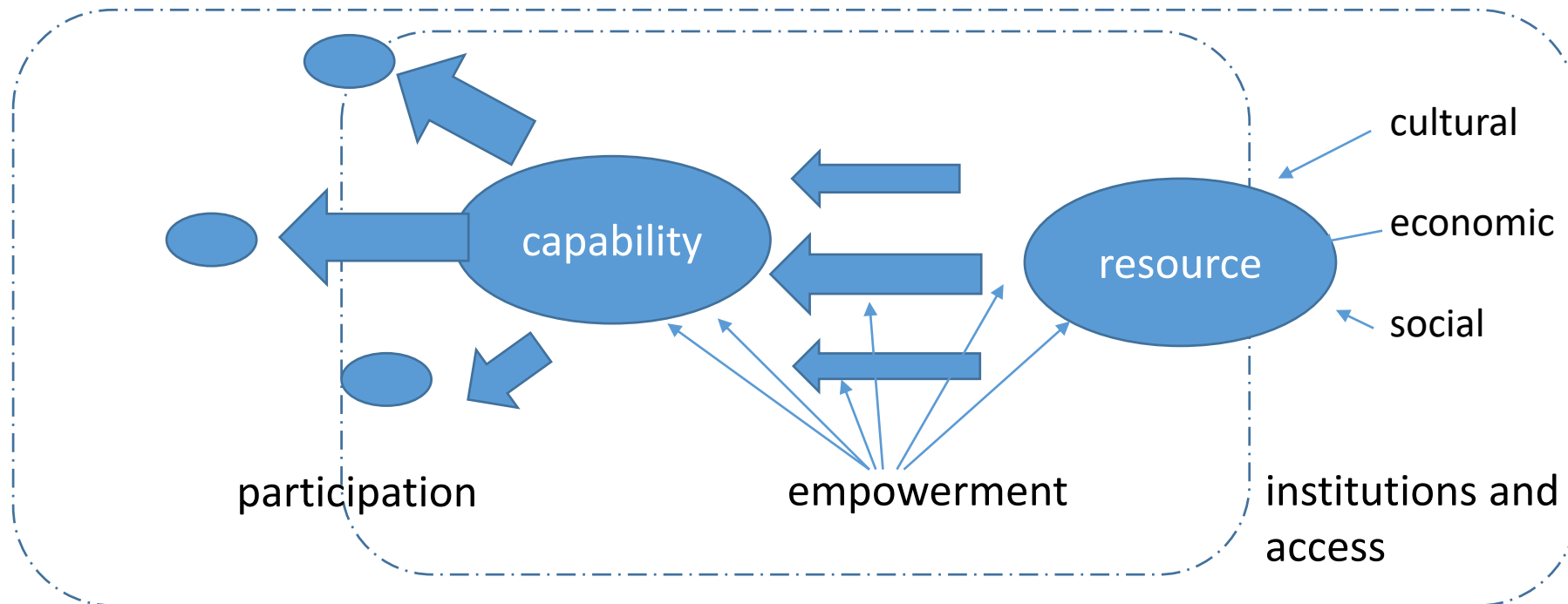


Clemens Wild, Working class, 2014
© Rohling Bern

Empowerment enhances individually, socially and institutionally the capacity of using discovered resources to increase autonomy and self-determined participation.

Resource orientation, empowerment, and self-determined participation

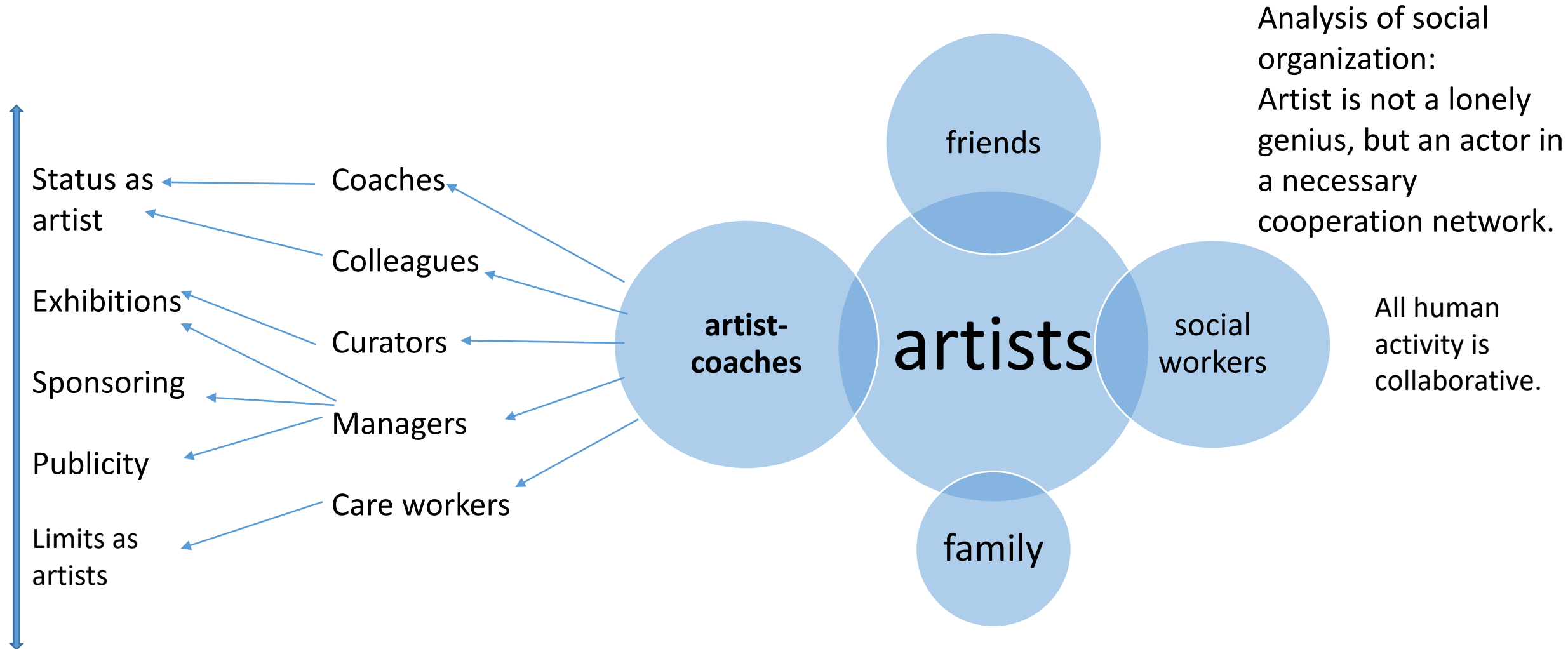
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Network perspective of «art-world» as life-world (Becker 1982), simplified scheme



The different tasks of the artist-coaches: aiming at a professional status for the artists

« We give them a status, we have exposed Rosalina, I mean her artwork (...) after the first exhibition, they are artists » (Gion).

« The more they exhibit, the more they sell, the more they want to go out. Heinz' objective is that his work is bought by the museum » (Sophie).

« It is important to sign the work, to be author. The work does belongs to the artist, not to the art studio, every artist has a portfolio » (Sophie).

« It is important to pay the artists that work with our artists at the studio, it is a sign of recognition » (Sophie).

Professional identification – self-esteem – social
& professional recognition – with limits



Pascal Vonlanthen, Rosalina Aleixo © Creahm Fribourg



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The different tasks of the artist-coaches: organizing an inspiring working place for the artists

« You look what they do and you go in this direction, you try to keep their originality.» (Gion)

Laurence sees an evolution in « themes, techniques », she « liberates colors, writings » of the artists.

«To say we help is too much: guide, point at, we motor, show technique; there is also a double coaching, psychological and artistic, but there is no dissection of our work into caring after a crisis of epilepsy and art. The objective is set: let them do beauty that lasts!» (Laurence)

« Coaching needs to be challenging and promote competences » (Laurence, Michel, Ivo).

« You say it when you don't like a thing, you are not an art therapist. We are not in psychiatric hospital, not in an art therapy. » (Laurence, Gion, Sophie).

« It is hard, when you have to create exhibitions and you have no money » (Laurence).

Core task of the artist-coaches – institutional limits



Heinz Lauener, Clemens Wild, David Jacot
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The different tasks of the artist-coaches: being professional colleagues

« I am not a professor, I am also artist, it is an exchange between colleagues, it is to understand other possibilities of painting.» (Sophie)

«We learn from the artists (...) and the artists learn from each other » (Laurence).

« You also have to know your limits in the collaboration, you have to test them » (Ivo).

« It is always a question, what do you show of yourself, how do you show yourself » (Gion).

« We are a collective of persons with different capacities so that we can work together, it's a family, we live together » (Diego).

Equality as professional colleagues and sometimes friends.



Heinz Lauener, Sophie Brunner
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The different tasks of the artist-coaches: using their own professional network to promote the artists of the studio

« You need to know about different things like: (...) being an administrator, do the marketing, document the portfolio, seek places for exhibitions, do the hanging-up for the exhibition, write the newsletter for the members, choose the artwork as curator, and create flyers for publicity» (Ivo).

« It's a work like at an art school: the art-work has to function, it's not like the art work that the artist paint at home with their parents and sell by themselves » (Michel, Ivo, Laurence).

« The first thing an art studio must do is to make exhibitions, to create new connections » (Diego).

« We are a collective of persons who wants to sell, but also present and be known » (Sophie).

Every project is a stepping stone in artification, creating new network connections, e.g. to New York, work with everybody.



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The different tasks of the artist-coaches: evaluating the limits for artists with dis/abilities through the question of “art brut”

« They are provoked autodidacts, the difference between art brut and their art is: they know what they do » (Laurence, Gion).

« It is questionable whether a dramatic biography leads to an interesting art work » (Sophie).

« We do not try to understand or compare with their biography, it is a surprise to us how new ideas are transformed » (Laurence).

« These artists are exotic, they are excluded from society, in everyday life, there is not a lot that is done to include them » (Sophie).

Unresolved, evolving art label and social and professional positioning in society.

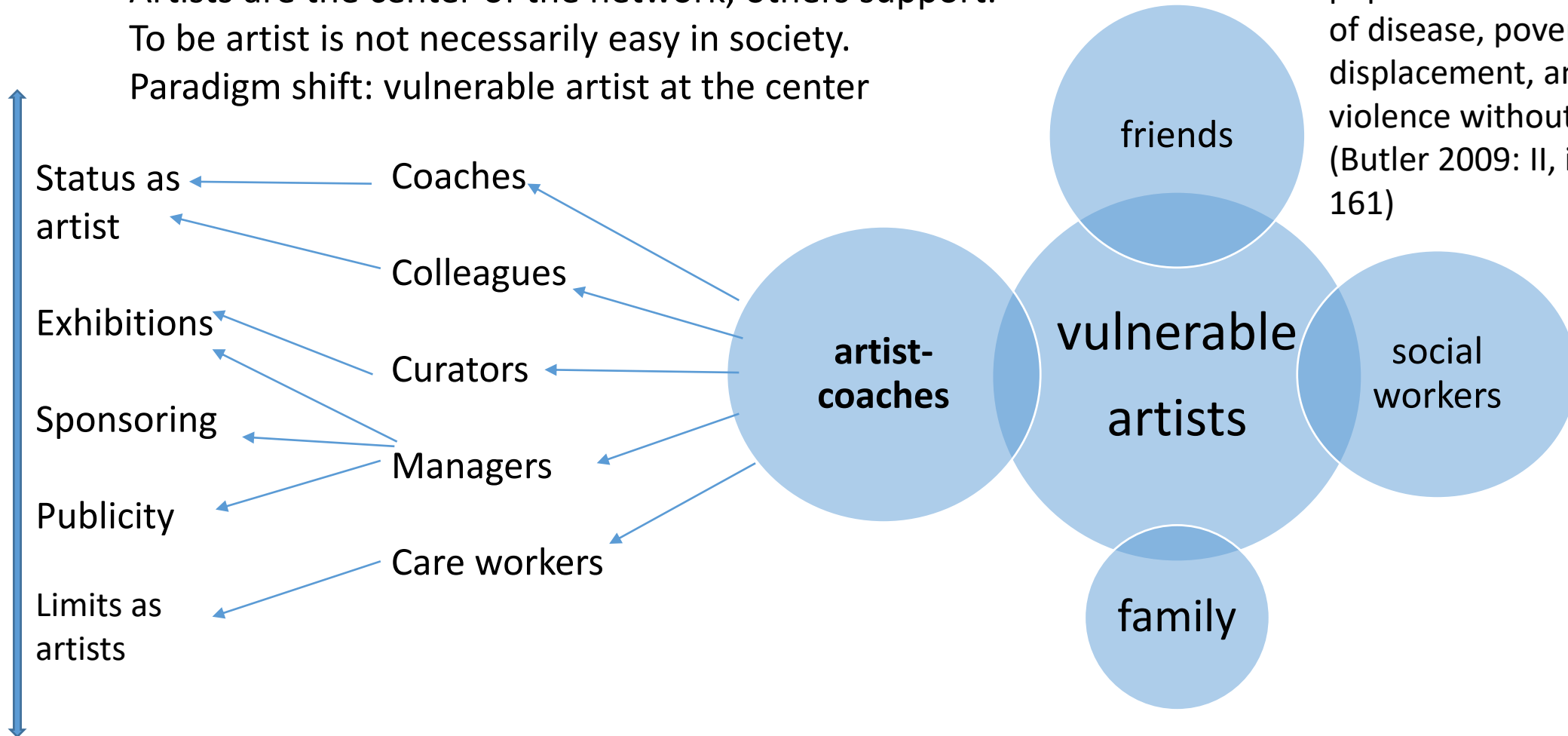


Clemens Wild, David Jacot, Heinz Lauener
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Vulnerability of the human being as resource

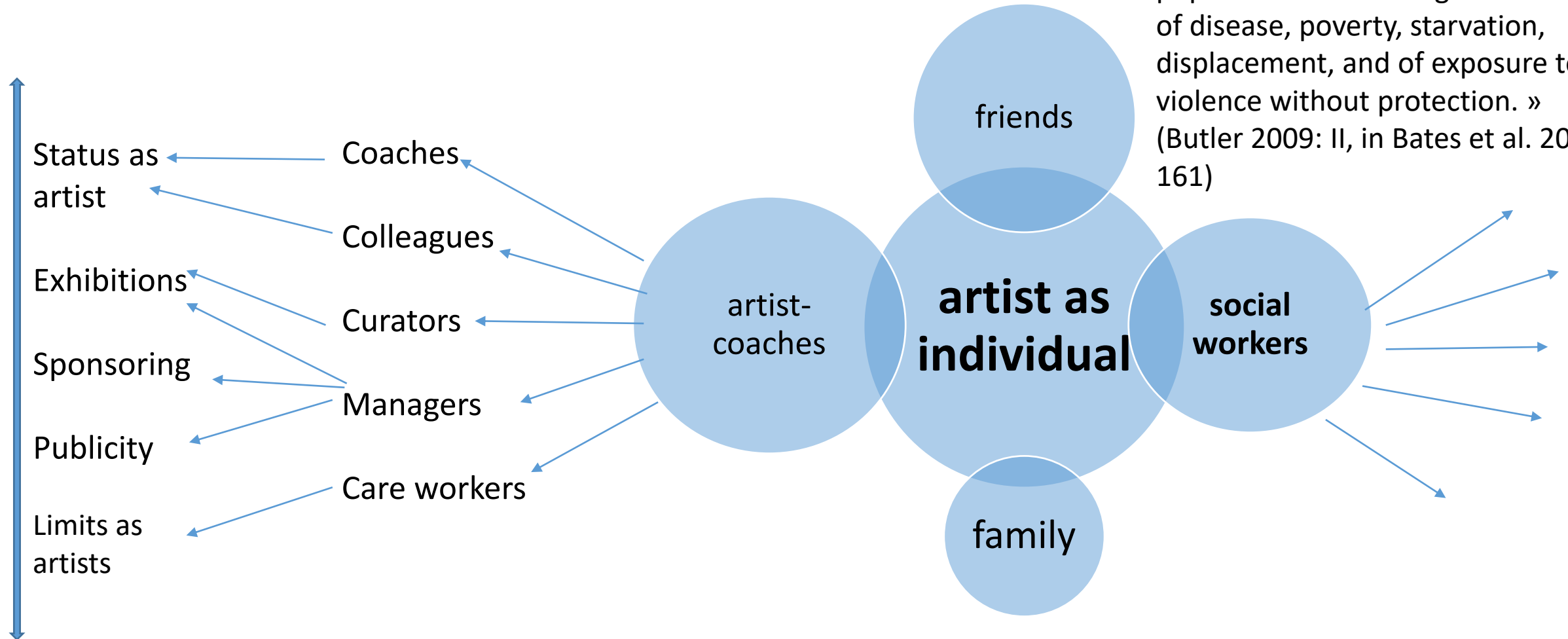
Artists are the center of the network, others support.
To be artist is not necessarily easy in society.
Paradigm shift: vulnerable artist at the center

« ... certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. Such populations are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection. »
(Butler 2009: II, in Bates et al. 2017: 161)



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Conclusion: social work and resource orientation

- The collaboration in the art-studios is a political project for more inclusion, similar to the political dimension of social work (tension of mainstream and outsider art).
- Empowerment is a transversal professional tool, recognizing resources that lead to the enhancement of self-determined participation. The latter is always gradual, evolving and never complete (as shows the vulnerable situation of the artists).
- Empowerment in social work means a resource orientation in the relation to the everyday life of a person including all individual, social and institutional aspects (Can social worker adopt the attitudes of artist-coaches? Should they be artists?).

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