

## Experimenting with the virtual writers' room and the democratic diamond

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Panel 18 – PEDAGOGY

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### Abstract

The Virtual Writers' Room is an EU-funded project for young screenwriters who want to learn how to work in professional environment and create modern television series. The main questions that have arisen from the project are: Is it necessary for every writers' room to have a head writer, who is usually considered the author of the series? Or is it possible to construct a democratic writers' room, where a team of screenwriters makes decisions and therefore becomes the author?

My paper is a case study of the Virtual Writers' Room -project. In the paper, I will define the concepts of the writers' room and the virtual writers' room and consider the similarities and differences thereof. The paper describes in detail my own research concept, the democratic diamond, which is a team of four screenwriters without a designated leader. The democratic diamond is the primary working model in the Virtual Writers' Room -project. The paper reveals the preliminary results of the project: How did the screenwriters feel about working with the democratic diamond -model? Was it possible to make decisions without a head writer? How did they feel about working in the virtual writers' room? In what conditions did they reach a group flow state in the virtual writers' room?

I will explain the timeline of the Virtual Writers' Room -project and the co-operation with the Drama Department of the Finnish Broadcasting Company. I will recount how the Virtual Writers' Room -method was invented, piloted and executed. On a broader level, I will reflect on the practical points of building a pedagogical framework for a highly collaborative working environment for film schools and e.g. production companies.

**Keywords** – writers' room, collaboration, pedagogy, creativity

**Timo Lehti** (Aalto University, Helsinki, Finland) is a Doctoral Candidate in Aalto University and his research focuses in the creative conditions of the writers' room. Timo works as a Senior Lecturer in Metropolia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki Finland. He teaches screenwriting and dramaturgy. He is also the project manager of the Virtual Writers' Room -project, which he created with his colleagues Teppo Nuutinen and Miira Karhula.

Timo has written several screenplays for short films: The Sand Pit Dictators, Verenperintö, 30 Minutes of Silence, Puhdas Elämä and Ristiaallokossa. He has also worked as a writer for the Finnish soap opera Salatut Elämät and as the head writer for the miniseries Kadonnut: Joulupukki. He has worked in collaboration with other writers in several feature film and television series projects. Recently Timo has written an article for UAS-journal about Artificial Intelligence and Screenwriting.

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