Participatory Practices: from engagement to co-curation

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A little bit about me..

CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES
WHAT WE’LL DISCUSS

1. Participatory Practices as Research Methods
2. Participatory Practices in Museums
3. Museum Studies Theory
4. Practice-Based Research
5. Strategic Documents from the Sector
6. Case Studies
7. Questions
PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH METHODS

- Participatory Mapping
- Drama and Performances
- Participatory Photography
- Participatory Video Production
- Drawing
- Creative Writing
PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH METHODS

1. Pose questions of power by establishing a horizontal relationship between participants and researchers;
2. Engage participants in the co-production of knowledge as co-researchers;
3. Involve a relationship of trust between researchers/facilitators and communities;
4. Encompass open-ended processes that hold space for individual meaning-making and pluralistic narratives;
5. Engage participants in the co-production of knowledge as co-researchers.

Who's the expert?

REFERENCES

DISCUSSION:

WHAT IS PARTICIPATION?

PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES IN MUSEUMS

what language?
what values?
whose agency?
whose agenda?
Participatory practices in museums

Part 2

1. doing with, rather than doing to or for - horizontality!
2. community involvement in decision-making processes
3. a sense of ownership from both the community and the museum
4. open-ended processes that hold space for individual meaning-making but also risk of failure
5. trust, mutuality, respect, polivocality are at the core of these practices
A BIT OF THEORY FROM MUSEUM STUDIES

1. XIX CENTURY MUSEUM
   - Top-down approach
   - Educational mission
   - Bennett (1995)

2. NEW MUSEOLOGY
   - Problematisation of power dynamics
   - Vergo (1989)

3. POST-MODERN MUSEUM
   - Polyvocal knowledge
   - Audience-centred approach
   - Hooper-Greenhill (2000)

4. SOCIAL ACTIVISM
   - Agents of social change
   - Arenas of cultural democracy
   - Sandell (2002)
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# A Bit of Theory from Museum Studies

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Museums, Society, Inequality, 2002

'Museums are agents of social change and wellbeing. As such, they have a responsibility to represent all members of the audience (or try), offer a platform for critical discourse, challenge social exclusion by tearing down the barriers of access – be these physical or intellectual.'

Museums without borders, 2016

The four touchstones of community building are:
1. idealism, i.e. being socially responsive rather than just aware of community needs
2. intimacy, i.e. developing quality communication
3. depth
4. interconnectedness, i.e. building mutuality
The Art of Relevance, 2016

'The Art of Relevance, 2016

'Everybody starts at the front door. People need a reason to walk through the door the first time, and more likely than not, it will be based on something they already expect you to offer, something that fits the keychain the world handed them. But if you can go deeper, you can go further. If you can be relevant to how people define themselves in their hearts, you can open up more doors. You can reach people who weren’t societally selected into your room. You can build a bigger room. You can matter more to more people.'

The Participatory Museum, 2010

'I dream of a comparable future institution that is wholly participatory, one that uses participatory engagement as the vehicle for visitor experiences. [...] A place where people discuss the objects on display with friends and strangers, sharing diverse stories and interpretations. A place where people are invited on an ongoing basis to contribute, to collaborate, to co-create, and to co-opt the experiences and content in a designed, intentional environment. A place where communities and staff members measure impact together. A place that gets better the more people use it.'
APPROACHES TO PARTICIPATION

ACCESS 01

CONSULTATION 02
The museum gathers and listens to feedback to address specific needs

CONTRIBUTION 03
User generated content for institutionally controlled process

COLLABORATION 04
Open-ended collaborative activity

CO-CREATION 05
Collective output and shared ownership
BERNADETTE LYNCH

"Good for you but I don't care, 2017"

'Being included in what Frase memorably calls 'invited spaces' is no guarantee of participation as visitors are often beneficiaries rather than agents.'
LEARNING FROM FAILURES

Participatory projects are about both process and product.

- Define goals for participants, staff and non-participating audiences.
- Measure impact as you go.
- Evaluation can also be participatory.
- Quality over quantity.
Sector-relevant strategic documents
Hands-on Participatory Workshops

Museo Salvador Allende, Santiago, Chile
ARTIST-RUN PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS

Chiara Dell’Erba, *The Chimera Plantarium Project*, Edna G Olds Academy

in collaboration with Primary, Nottingham, UK

weareprimary.org/projects-archive/chimera-plantarium-project?rq=Plantarium
COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Museum of Art and History (MAH), Santa Cruz, USA
COMMUNITY-LED TOURS

Primary, Nottingham, UK
COMMUNITY SOURCING

Open Eye, Liverpool, UK

GET INVOLVED: THE STORY OF LIVERPOOL CITY REGION THROUGH ITS TREES

https://openeyestories.org.uk/treesproject
The COVID-19 Sound Map is a crowd-sourced project where the public was invited to consider everyday aural environments which had changed as a result of restrictions put in place around the world during...
CO-CURATION

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, The Past is now
COMMUNITY-LED EXHIBITIONS

Museo Salvador Allende, Santiago, Chile
COVID-19

Renegotiation of social space
Blended approach to engagement strategies
Digital divide vs accessibility
Localism vs globalism
Precariousness + wellbeing of museum workers
THE CHECKLIST

- Who is your community?
- What values?
- What are the resources available?
- What are the expectations?
- What are the mutual benefits?
- Is your goal measurable?
- Is it sustainable?
THANK YOU!

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