



Università  
Ca' Foscari  
Venezia



# Participatory Practices: from engagement to co-curation

Lucrezia Gigante (University of Leicester)

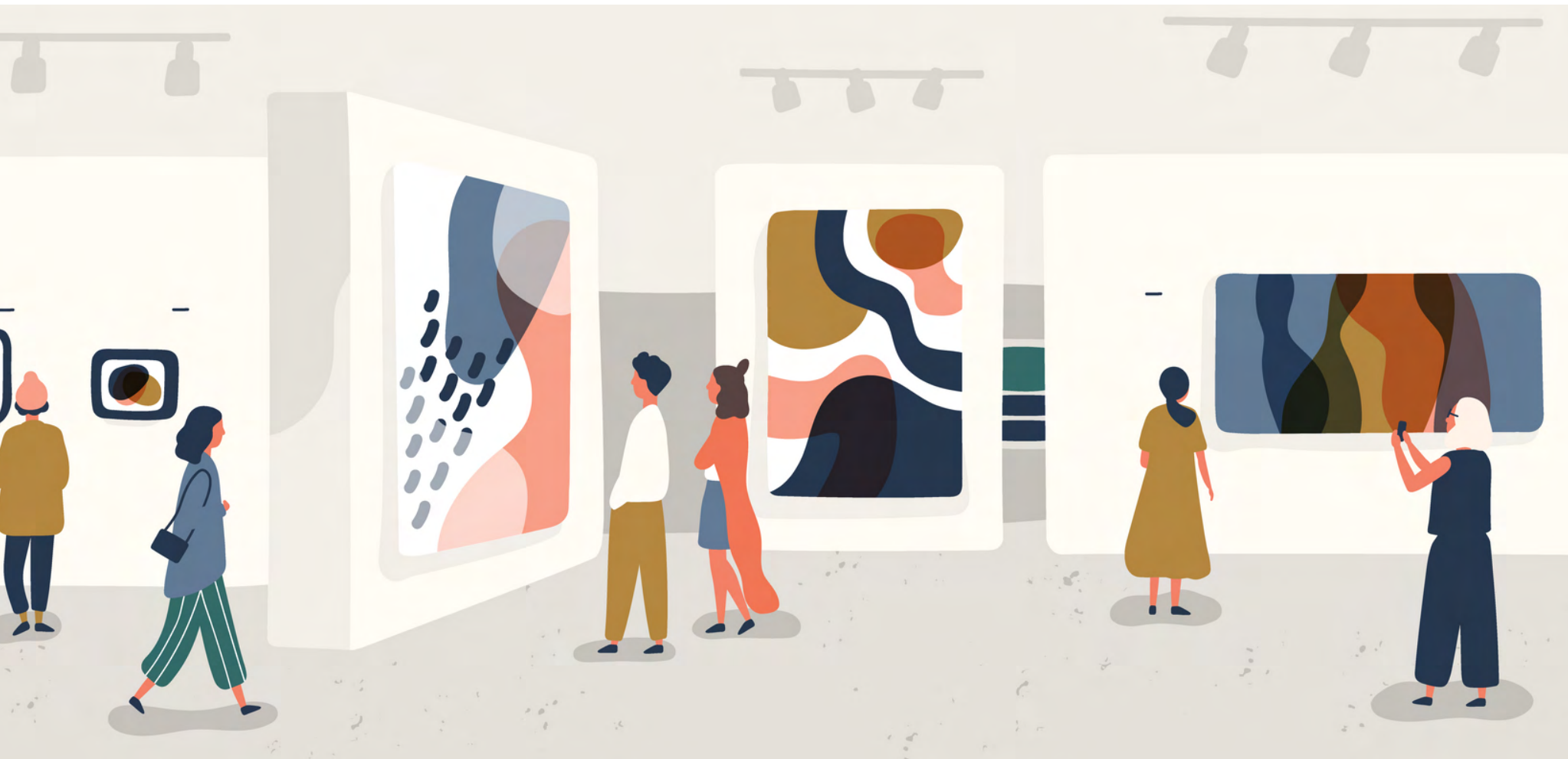
UNESCO Chair | Water, Heritage and Sustainable Development

**BEYOND  
MUSEUMS**

Tools for Promoting the Natural  
and Cultural Water Heritage

*19/11/2021*

A little bit about me..



# CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES



# WHAT WE'LL DISCUSS

- 1 PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES AS RESEARCH METHODS

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- 2 PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES IN MUSEUMS

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- 3 MUSEUM STUDIES THEORY

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- 4 PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH

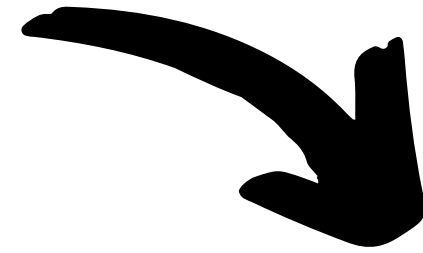
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- 5 STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS FROM THE SECTOR

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- 6 CASE STUDIES

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- 7 QUESTIONS

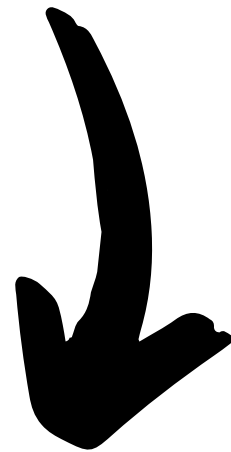
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# PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH METHODS



PARTICIPATORY MAPPING  
DRAMA AND PERFORMANCES  
PARTICIPATORY PHOTOGRAPHY  
PARTICIPATORY VIDEO PRODUCTION  
DRAWING  
CREATIVE WRITING

# PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH METHODS



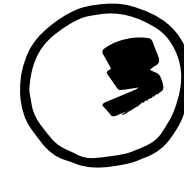
Who's the expert?



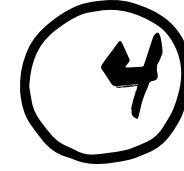
pose questions of power by establishing a horizontal relationship between participants and researchers;



invite participants to shape outcomes and be heard



involve a relationship of trust between researchers/facilitators and communities



encompass open-ended processes that hold space for individual meaning-making and pluralistic narratives



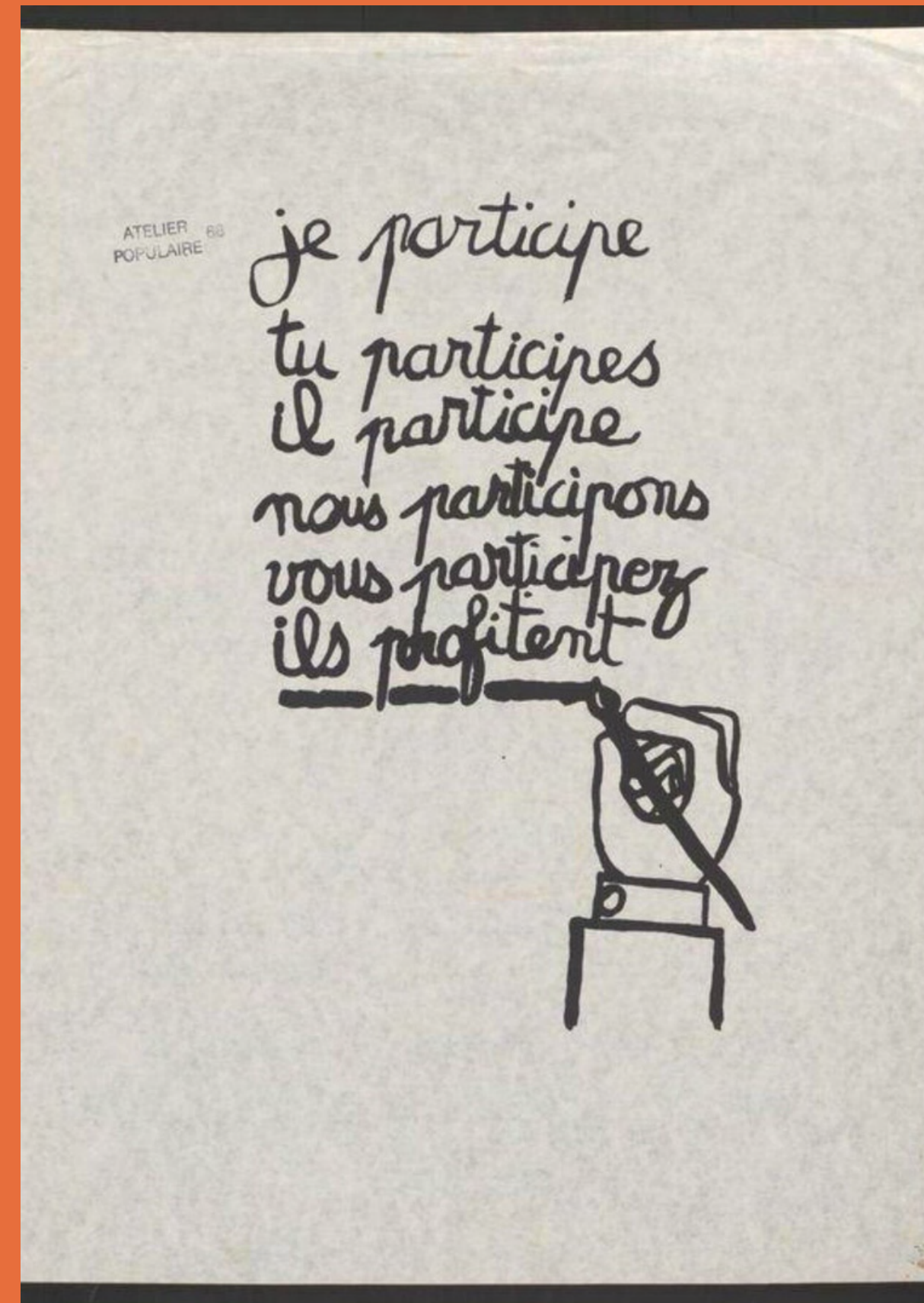
engage participants in the co-production of knowledge as co-researchers

## REFERENCES

Kindon, Sara, Rachel Pain, and Mike Kesby, eds. *Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods*. London-New York: Routledge, 2007.  
Reason, Peter, and Hilary Bradbury, eds. *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE, 2008.

DISCUSSION:

# WHAT IS PARTICIPATION?



*Je participe...*, Atelier Populaire, 1968. On display at V&A, London.

# PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES IN MUSEUMS

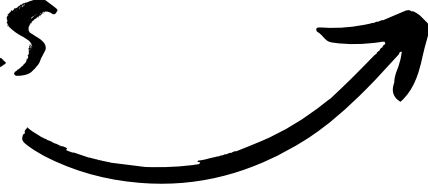


what language?  
what values?  
whose agency?  
whose agenda?

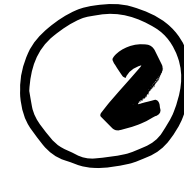


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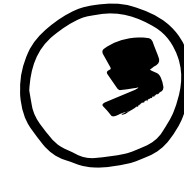
KEY POINTS &  
PRINCIPLES



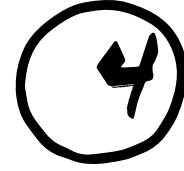
doing with, rather than doing to or for - horizontality!



community involvement in decision-making processes



a sense of ownership from both the community and the museum



open-ended processes that hold space for individual meaning-making but also risk of failure



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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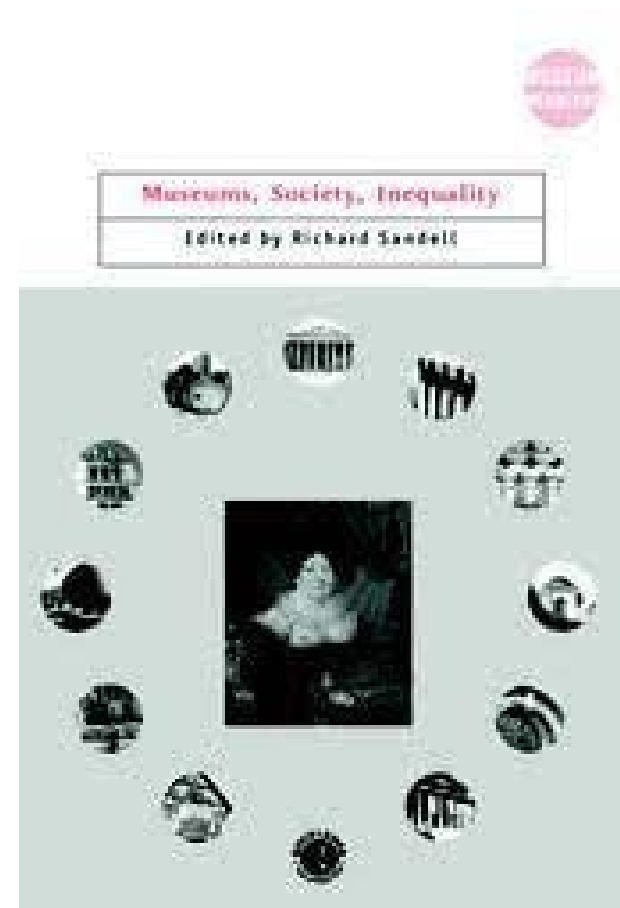
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Agents of social change  
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democracy

Sandell (2002)

# RICHARD

# SANDELL



## *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:

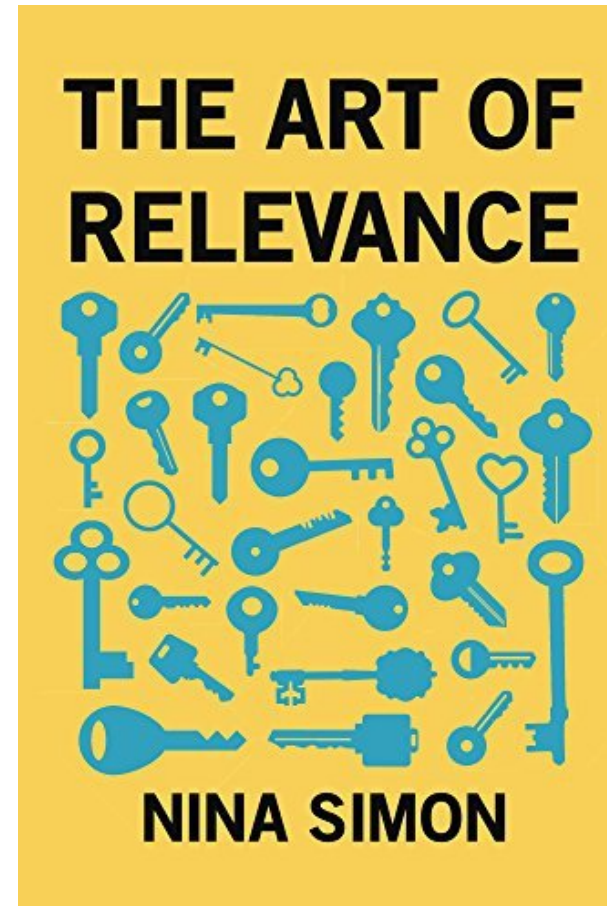
1. idealism, i.e. being socially responsive rather than just aware of community needs
2. intimacy, i.e. developing quality communication
3. depth
4. interconnectedness, i.e. building mutuality



# ROBERT R.

# JANES

# NINA SIMON



## *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

The museum gathers and listens to feedback to address specific needs

02



CONTRIBUTION

User-generated content for institutionally controlled process

03



COLLABORATION

Open-ended collaborative activity

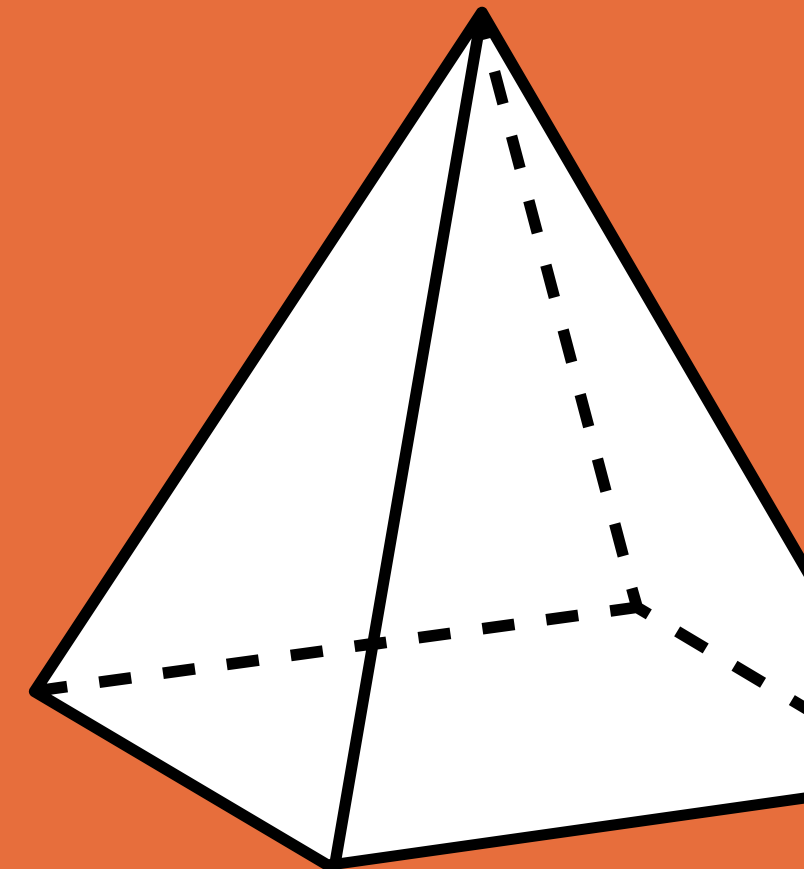
04



CO-CREATION

Collective output and shared ownership

05



# BERNADETTE

# LYNCH

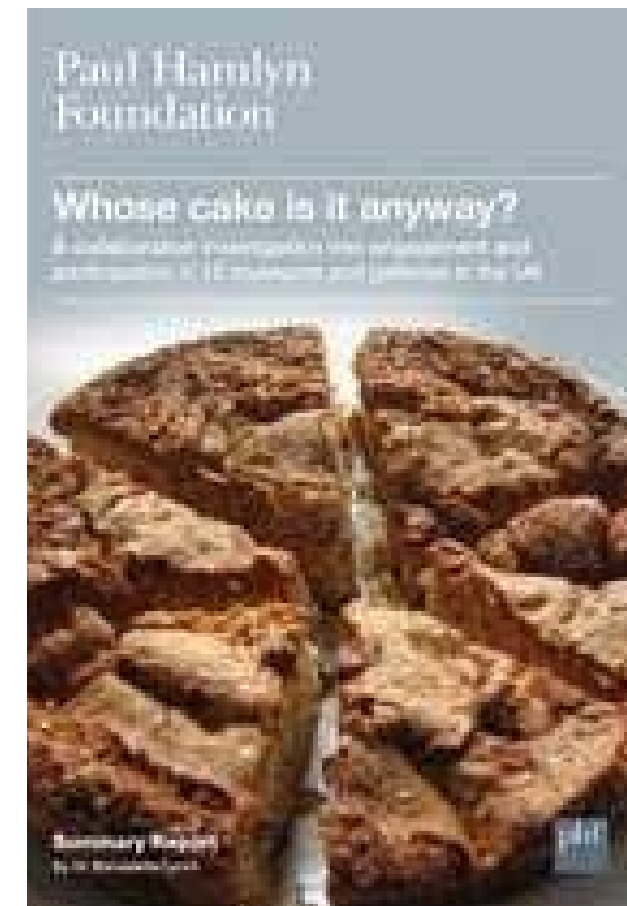


*Whose cake is it anyway?, 2011*



*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

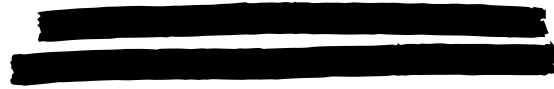


# American Alliance of Museums

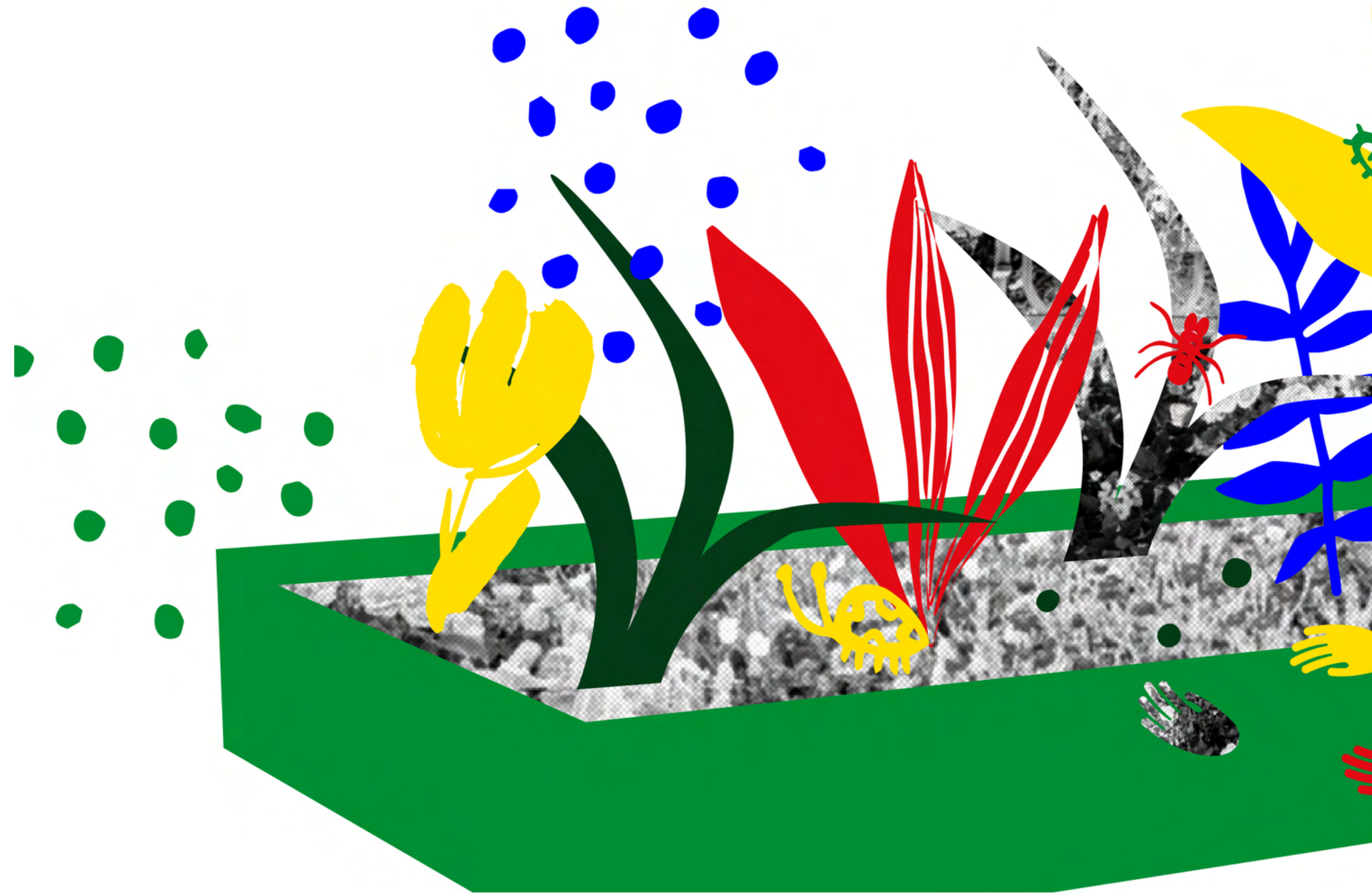


Sector-relevant strategic documents

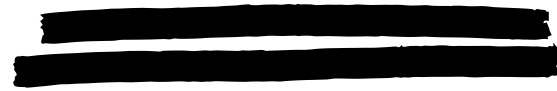
# HANDS-ON PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS



Museo Salvador Allende, Santiago, Chile



# ARTIST-RUN PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS

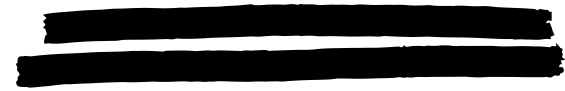


Chiara Dell'Erba, *The Chimera Plantarium Project*,  
Edna G Olds Academy

in collaboration with Primary, Nottingham, UK



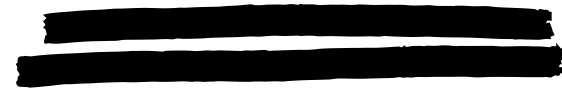
# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS



Museum of Art and History (MAH), Santa Cruz, USA



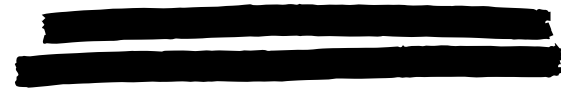
# COMMUNITY-LED TOURS



Primary, Nottingham, UK



# COMMUNITY SOURCING



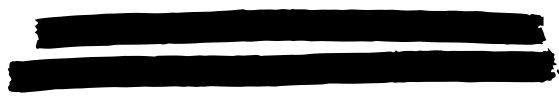
Open Eye, Liverpool, UK



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

<https://openeyestories.org.uk/treesproject>

# COMMUNITY SOURCING



Sound, Aberdeen, UK





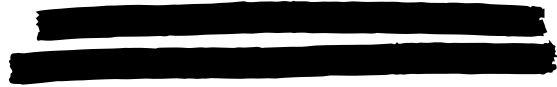
# CO-CURATION



Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, The Past is now

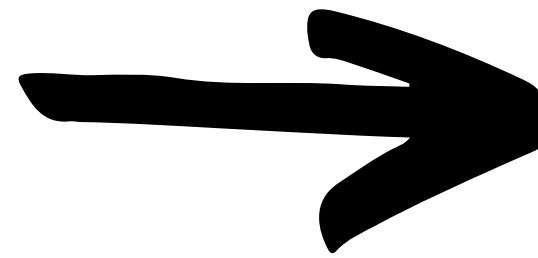


# COMMUNITY- LED EXHIBITIONS



Museo Salvador Allende, Santiago, Chile





# COVID-19



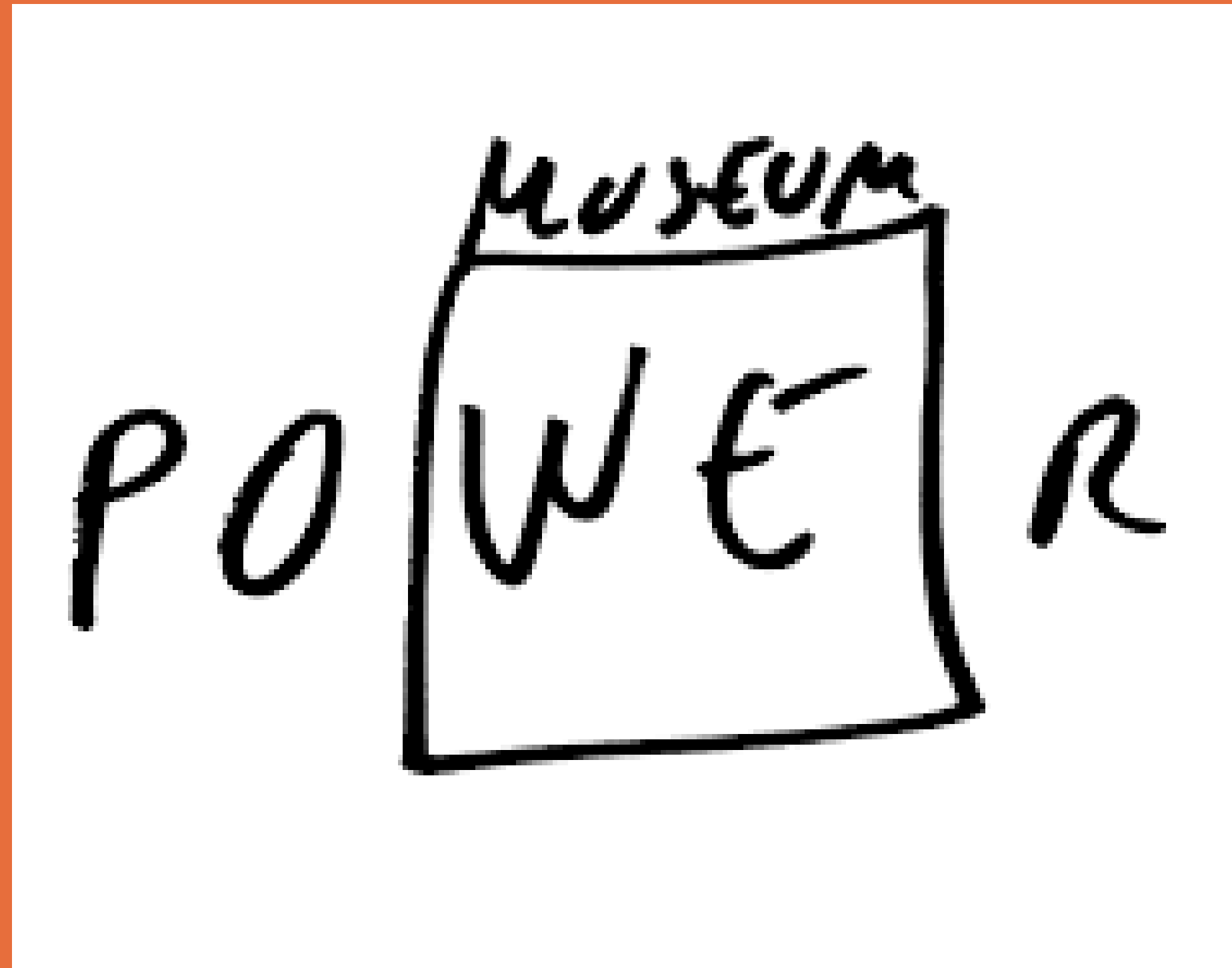
- Renegotiation of social space
- Blended approach to engagement strategies
- Digital divide vs accessibility
- Localism vs globalism
- Precariousness + wellbeing of museum workers



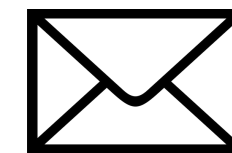
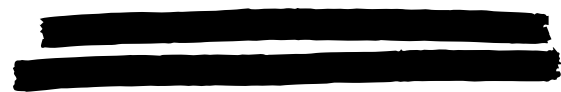
PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES:

# 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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