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Conducting
Participatory Arts Projects:
A Practical Toolkit

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AMASS
acting on the margins, arts as social sculpture

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PREFACE

This toolkit is intended to help artists and arts researchers to plan, organise, document and evaluate participatory arts projects in different contexts. Its publication evolved in the context of a Europe-wide research project funded by the EU Research and Innovation programme Horizon 2020. This research project – Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture (AMASS) – is an arts-based three-year project (2020-2023) that aims to bring people based in different European contexts together with artists to work collaboratively on creative and experimental research. Through participatory approaches conducted in new artistic productions and research projects, AMASS explores and analyses the role of the arts in engaging with societal challenges and evaluating the societal impact of the arts. It also addresses the marginalisation of certain groups in society by analysing power imbalances and exploring artistic, pedagogical and other ways of promoting inclusive strategies and sharing the benefits of innovation and service solutions. The many strategies adopted by different AMASS partners call for the involvement of various stakeholders like NGOs, artists, regional arts advocates, community members and others in decision-making tactics and forum group discussions revolving around social needs and constraints. Strongly embedded in the value of alternative knowledge systems and the belief that the arts can initiate significant transformations in policy and perceptions, AMASS is intended as a catalyst for change in various contexts, and multi-disciplinary results emerging from an evaluation of its testbed will contribute towards policy recommendations at local, regional and international levels. This toolkit shares many of the challenges and enthusiasm for the arts that characterise AMASS and its activities.

INTRODUCTION

Raphael Vella

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide artists and others planning to work in participatory or socially engaged arts projects with a set of practical resources related to different stages, questions and stakeholders involved in productions of this kind. 'Resources' are not 'instructions'; they are not intended to be followed obediently to achieve predicted results, but are more like ideas, values and methodologies that can be tapped into and adapted to specific situations. The toolkit makes use of a questioning approach that intends to be open-ended and invites different responses. It includes numerous practical examples of artistic projects that illustrate various modes of social engagement. The resources in this toolkit chart the various stages that artists and others typically experience when they work with different participants in artistic productions. Below is a summary of these stages.

• First of all, the toolkit explores approaches to the *contexts* that participatory artistic projects operate within. The social, cultural and political environments of an artistic action that involves the participation of various members of a community are an intrinsic part of projects of this kind, and an understanding of these environments supports artists in their research and ethical relations with others.

• Different individuals, groups of people or *communities* inhabit any specific context. Artists working in specific communities need to get to grips with shared as well as contested ideas, issues related to cultural, sexual, religious and other identities, and basic needs that different groups may feel they lack in relation to accessibility, the labour market, use of public resources such as health care and education, and so on.

• The *methodologies* selected for use in participatory or socially engaged projects often rely on research conducted within contexts and communities but are also influenced by an artist's distinctive way of collaborating with others. Methodologies refer to artists' roles in relation to participants, participants' roles in relation to artists, other participants and stakeholders (such as cultural entities) and general decisions about the duration of specific projects. Methodologies can make use of experimental design in conjunction with practice-based and other research tools to study creative work in natural settings or more controlled environments.

• The selection of specific contexts, communities and methodologies leads to the *recruitment* of participants for arts projects. Sometimes, advice about suitable participants may need to be sought from individuals

like counsellors, social workers, group leaders or NGOs. Often, the involvement of specific authorities or 'gatekeepers' in recruitment is necessitated by ethical requirements in research projects.

• Once participants are recruited, specific *participatory strategies* are selected that will help to develop good working relations between different members of a group and artists. Physical, online and other team building activities can introduce participants informally to important topics, help to build trust and also help artists understand challenges that they may need to engage with in the following days, weeks or months. In this toolkit, specific strategies are highlighted, including Photovoice and various options available for digital participation in online platforms.

• The development of interpersonal relations through participation in group projects often includes an *educational component*. Participants and even artists sometimes learn new skills, including soft skills related to leadership, teamwork and time management. Occasionally, educational processes used in art aim for inclusion or social transformation.

• The concern with inclusion that is typical of participatory arts projects does not only manifest itself in community members' participation, but also in the involvement of different *stakeholders* that researchers might come across or actively request information from during initial research. Support from stakeholders like galleries and museums, NGOs, professional associations and individuals and funding bodies, amongst others, helps to improve a project's knowledge base and strengthen the project's relevance within a wider context.

• Meetings between artists, participants, academics and other stakeholders do not occur in a vacuum, but use particular *venues*. The social significance of places of encounter and exhibition need to be considered well when planning participatory arts projects because their relevance in a particular community may seriously impact the project's success and research validity.

• The toolkit also looks at ways of engaging participants on equal terms and developing *sustainable connections* between co-creators. The sustainability of an arts project is important because long-term benefits like increased autonomy and self-confidence help to break down stigmatising attitudes towards some types of social groups.

• A project's sustainability is often associated with its *legacy,* though the two are not identical. Artists researching and planning participatory arts projects may want to think about aspects of their processes and products that will survive the project's conclusion, how a community may be transformed as a result of the research and artistic work, or the impacts of the research being carried out.

• It would be hard to think of a project's legacy if one didn't also plan in detail that project's *documentation*. In the final chapter, the toolkit gives an overview of the various forms that a project's documentation may take. Documentation can capture important data through video and photography, text like field notes and audio files. A well-planned archive of images and texts helps to reconstruct artistic processes and experiences from different perspectives: the artists', the participants' as well as those of the public.

1. Exploring the Context

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Community in context

Arts projects in the community generally operate within that community's particular context. The meaning of 'context' includes where the project's participants live, the community's particular history, age-group or socio-economic situation. Most often it is a combination of all of these elements. The circumstances of the artist also come into play - was the project a direct commission, or did it come about because of the artist's links with the community?

Exploring a community's and a project's context means looking at all the elements of a project, to see how all these elements work together successfully. Understanding the

context often means that artists and others, including members of communities, feel the need to engage with problems they perceive in that context. For this reason, a 'successful' marriage of different elements in a specific context is not necessarily a harmonious relationship; at times, it is deliberately provocative or aims for significant change.

Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar worked with the community of Skoghall in 2000. In response to the community's lack of a cultural space, he erected a temporary paper museum (with material from the local paper mill) to emphasise the importance of having access to a cultural space. Once the space was completed and used for a period of time, it was intentionally burnt down, to cause the residents to reflect on the new absence of the cultural space.
www.alfredojaar.net/projects/2000/ the-skoghall-konsthall

Sometimes an artist will research and choose to work with a particular community; other times, the connection may be made by someone else. Sometimes the artist's own family and family history can create a link with a local community.

In the Handa Gote project Mraky (Clouds) *(2011 - 2014), artist Veronika Švábová worked with her own personal archives to sift through the history of her family, and relate the archive, compiled from photos, diaries, videos and a recipe, to the wider community.*
www.handagote.com/en/portfolio/mraky

Whatever the case, research on the context of the community where the project is being carried out represents an important stage in any project and should be grounded in context-specific questions posed by artists and other stakeholders, like:

• Why should one choose this particular context for an artistic project?

• Who inhabits this context?

• How is public space negotiated in it?

• How do people entertain themselves and interact with each other in this place?

• What kinds of labour relations exist in this place?

• How do people express themselves, their needs and concerns?

• Which buildings or areas represent communal spaces?

• What do different individuals feel is lacking in this context?

• What sources of knowledge and memories exist?

• What rituals do people use to define themselves?

Histories and community memories can provide a common subject from where a project

can be developed. At other times, a particular element of pride or a particular challenge within the community can give rise to a collaborative project. Researching the community will also allow the artist to identify available 'tools' – maybe the community's particular talents and traditions can feed into the project, or maybe some individuals within the community will contribute particularly strongly to the project.

The long-term project Arrevuoto (2006 - present) works with children from Naples and its suburbs for six months of every year, bringing together young people, schools, organisations and neighbourhoods. Thus, a community has been constructed, made up of people - in particular thousands of young participants - from different parts of the city and from different backgrounds.
www.arrevuoto.org

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They can relate to well-being, skills-transfer or changing perceptions, or can address issues such as infrastructure in a town, or local policy relating to a particular community.

The community project Nimxu Mixja *(Let's Take a Walk), (2018 – 2019,) worked with schoolchildren in Malta to engage directly and creatively with the urban environment, allowing the children to express their desire for less traffic and construction and more open spaces. The project is also part of a wider initiative, putting pressure on local authorities to take account of pedestrians' needs in a heavily urbanised area.*
www.gabrielcaruanafoundation.org/events/1009

A project's aims can also be developed with the community members themselves, and can be discussed in the context of broader questions, such as the importance of creativity to that community. Some examples of the aims of socially-engaged projects are:

• **Trust-building -** this could be between different groups that host a conflict between them (ethnic, ideological, migrational), or within a particular community;

• **Challenging stereotypes -** that is, showing participants or an audience the value and worth of a culture or group of people, or allowing a community to 'rewrite' how it is seen on its own terms;

• **Working through emotional challenges -** for example, working with people who have expe-

rienced trauma, or simply working with teenagers going through changes in their lives;

• **Skills-based** - passing on certain skills which will empower community members, and allowing them to continue using these skills in the future;

• **Autonomy -** allowing a community more control over its environment through work with urban planning or local planning authorities, or by empowering participants to make their voices heard by authorities;

• **Educational** - promoting education and career development among children, as well as other members of the community;

• **Motivational -** working with young people to fulfil their ambitions, possibly reducing early school leaving, and keeping teens away from negative environments;

• **Lobbying -** influencing people in power to take certain decisions relating to a community - in this case, documentation and suitable communication is vital.

'Context' can mean different things, depending on research aims and participants. An understanding of demographic data, cultural interests, organisational structures and other contexts permits researchers to delve deeper into their area of focus, select appropriate research methods and analyse data more effectively.

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Knowing the project's aims

The project's aims will be its guiding principle throughout its development and implementation. When the practical, conceptual and emotional aspects of a project's implementation come into play, clear aims will allow the artist to continue working towards a definite goal, by asking if decisions made will contribute to the project's aims.

A project's aims can be diverse and can address more than one challenge in the community; for example, a project could aim to empower participants, but also influence policy-making or funding for similar projects in the area. A project's aims can address small groups of participants or entire communities.

2. Communities and participants

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Defining Communities

There are many different types of communities. Usually, however, a community is made up of a specific group of people that share something between themselves (Cohen, 1985). Communities can be formed by people over time through working together, sharing interests, or living in the same neighbourhood; alternatively, they can be formed through long-term generational bonds or an imagined common nationhood (Anderson, 1983). Different communities can be based on diverse types of connections, with relationships at personal or group level and a varying level of commitment among community members (Douglas, 2010). Communities can involve complex relationships, hierarchies and inter-

dependencies, but can often be much simpler and temporary. Usually, they are somewhere in between. Often, the very elements that hold them together will also serve to distinguish them from others (Mitchell, 2012).

We refer to many social groups using the name 'community' even though these groups may have very different characteristics. For example, people who live in a tiny agrarian village are called a community, but so are the citizens of a modern town (Elias, 2012). And while communities are often defined through their formal, informal or geographic structures, it may be more useful in a creative context to look at what commonalities exist between individuals that can define them as communities.

Generally, people are drawn together through circumstances or interest, broadly as can be seen below:

• Common interest-related;
• Common culture;
• Common circumstance;
• Common geographical location;
• Common generation;
• Common profession.

When looking at communities from the point of view of creating a socially-engaged arts project, other characteristics also come into play. The real-life, day-to-day situations of a community are important - for example, their well-being in general, need for creative projects or economic situation.

The Autonómia Foundation project Eltáv – Megnyílik a bánya (Departure - The mine opens) (2015 - present) works with Roma communities of Szúcs-Bagoly-lyuk in Northern Hungary, and shares skills in financial planning and management through theatre projects and training. Thus, the context in which the community lives, with a high unemployment rate and social stigmas, is given skills which can be used in daily life, and the opportunity to work with greater social cohesion through a common capital scheme.
www.autonomia.hu/en/programok/ eltav-megnyilik-a-banya

Also to be taken into account is the fact that communities are not static organisations. A community may be in a state of flux for a variety of reasons - for example, through the gentrification of a particular area, or the influx of a large number of people coming to live in a town. People making up a community may be in different circumstances over time - they may have moved, have different interests or other commitments. This will affect how a project works with participants over time, and who may choose to take part in a creative project.

The University of Local Knowledge (2000 – present), a Bristol-based project by Suzanne Lacy takes, as its starting point, the forms of knowledge existing differently in diverse communities, and through the metaphor of the university seeks to support community esteem. The project team recorded 1,000 short video pieces, revealing the bodies of information stored in the daily lives of residents.

These videotaped "texts" were assembled into categories, or "courses,"; thus the "university" is produced through the knowledge of its residents: rabbit hunting (animal husbandry), raising children as a teen mom (adolescent psychology), growing organic vegetables (agricultural studies) and maintaining classic cars (mechanical engineering).
www.suzannelacy.com/university-of-local-knowledge

Small communities exist within wider communities, and an artist may choose to work only with that specific group within a broader community, for example, older women, or a group within an LGBTQI community.

The project Ser Mulher, Aqui (Being a Woman, Here) (2012), was conducted with a small group of women in the municipality of Sintra, Portugal. The project used theatre practices to work towards its objectives, one of which was the development of the women's assertiveness within social interactions.

Even within what may look like a close community, some groups can be isolated, and have very little agency, even if they are living physically in a supportive community.

The Maltese project Collective Memories (2015 - 2016) worked specifically with a number of elderly Maltese living in care homes, and with adult Filipino communities, who work mainly as carers. Through multidisciplinary activities and participatory actions, the project offered an exchange of cultural understanding which may not have taken place without the

project, and increased the value of memories and story-telling within the small group.
www.criticalinstitute.org/collectivememories

A socially-engaged project can, itself, create its own community by building connections between people.

Roma Mentor Projekt (2015 - 2016) drew its participants (Roma children) and its mentors and artists from the same community, thus building a network within a larger community, while also keeping a familiar and safe atmosphere for the participants. The following can be included as an example: from the same community – artists, older or successful people can mentor or work with younger people, while keeping the familiar and safe atmosphere. At the same time, since the project's role models came from that community, their achievements were something that the children themselves could aspire to.
www.rmp.bhimrao.hu

A community can also be created through a project linking those who do not necessarily live close to each other.

The pan-European Theatre Festival Crossing the Line (2014 - present) brings together artists with intellectual disabilities from across Europe. The project forms a community through the process of performing for one another, critically evaluating each other's work, and participating in the festival as colleagues. Thus, the 'community' which existed in locations around Europe was created as one collaborative

group through the project.
www.crossingtheline.eu/the-festival

Identity(ies) in a community

When working with communities and individuals, it quickly becomes apparent that a person's 'community' does not define them entirely - people are not 'single-identity' holders. Identity and a sense of belonging can be intersectional - people can belong to different communities, either at the same time, or as their circumstances change. This open and inclusive approach is especially relevant to projects with a strong pedagogical basis. Discussions about gender, race, class and sexuality and their 'intersections' are not only important in relation to local participants or students but also to artists and other educators or programme leaders (Hatton, 2019).

Identity politics refers to a political approach that typically aims to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-politics). Those with shared identity politics can form a community with common philosophies and aims, within their broader communities.

Hierarchies, connections and different relationships exist within a community, adding to the different dynamics within which an artist works. In recent times, new communities and networks have also come to exist through internet technologies, creating networks and social movements – that would not have been possible a few years ago (Castells, 2012). This intensity of relationships and hierarchies may mean that certain groups within a community may not feel comfortable with other groups, or may feel less ready to share personal or emotional information when other sections of that community are present. An artist entering a community will need to:

• get to know its different individuals and personalities, being sensitive to the dynamics within the group;

• identify those who direct or lead the community. This may not be easy, possibly because of the complex web of connections and the changing nature and dedication of local leaders that make up a community (Charlton, 2013);

• understand conflicting or contradictory views held by different members of a community, and possibly the contexts in which they exist;

• avoid making presumptions about a community, and therefore risking alienating possible participants, and causing tensions in the artist-community relationship, particularly at the beginning of a project.

Often, local 'leaders' or NGOs can help out with understanding power relationships and variability within a community and can also assist in selecting community-based control and treatment groups in projects making use of experimental design.

Which community to work with?

An artist or researcher may choose to work with a particular community for many different reasons, personal or otherwise. Below are some links which may exist between an artist and a community which may prompt the collaboration.

• **Personal connection** - an artist may have a particular link with that community or local area;

• **Institutional connection** - an organisation may commission the artist to create a project with a particular community;

• **Socially-led** - an on-the-ground organisation may already work with a particular community, and may bring the artist in to work there through a project or an artist-in-residence;

• **Community-led** - the community itself may recognise the need to engage with the arts, and may set up the project through a grass-roots initiative;

• **Site-specific** - the artist may consider locational identity, and how it relates to the artistic choices within the project (Kwon, 2004);

• An interest in subcultures and subculture groups, like skateboarders, tattoo enthusiasts or specific fashion groups;

• **Open-door policy** - a project can also be very open and invite anyone who is interested in taking part.

The Italian project Arte Migrante *has formed open, weekly meetings, welcoming students, migrants, homeless people, workers, the unemployed, young people and elders, and promotes inclusion through art. During these meetings, a meal is first eaten together, then participants have the opportunity to share their performance(s) with those present, sometimes in small groups.*
www.artemigrante.eu

First approaches to a community will usually involve getting to know their circumstances, their localities, and speaking to people in the community. Some communities may be familiar with arts projects, and may be open to working with an artist. Others may not be

used to social engagement through the arts, and may be less willing to participate.

The artist's approach to the community should always be made on an equal footing - without a hierarchical imbalance (Wright, 2018). While an artist may have skills to impart (e.g. specific skills such as drawing or dancing), it's important that the knowledge and skills of the community are acknowledged, and, where relevant, brought into play during the project. Addressing the specificities of alternative systems of knowledge does not only value and communicate to others this knowledge; it can also challenge prevailing hierarchies and paradigms.

The artist group WochenKlausur worked with a group of unemployed women in an area of high deprivation in Glasgow called to create a Women-led Workers´ Cooperative (2012 - 2013). Following research and conversations with local organisations, the project was set up to encourage the women - an under-represented group among entrepreneurs - to start a cooperative and, by doing so, establish their own employment in the neighbourhood. Possible business structures as well as business ideas were discussed, as well as needs within the community. The women's business idea was to sell 'meal bags': bags with the exact portions of fresh vegetables and ingredients according to simple recipes – so that healthy cooking at home is made easier. Training and community support were provided, along with continuous on-site support to assist in the process.
www.wochenklausur.at/projekt.php?lang=en&id=41

Identifying a community's needs

Some communities may come with very specific needs and challenges. Several techniques and conversations may allow the artist to understand a community and to begin to identify that community's needs.

• **First conversations** - preliminary conversations with community leaders will provide an overview and some first impressions of local contexts;

• **Casual conversations** - informal introductions and exchanges with local people and potential participants will give a more on-the-ground feel for the community;

• **Workshops** - bringing some groups together to discuss what is needed and brainstorm ideas may also provide information;

• **In-depth** - some individuals in the community may be able to provide more nuanced and sensitive information through deeper conversations;

• **Community-led** - allowing participants to lead the discussion may turn up unexpected thoughts and insights. Identifying a community's needs alongside them can serve to build a stronger trust between artist and participant, and allow the community to have ownership of the project.

Communities may also have more immediate, practical needs, like some of the below.

• **Translation** - if participants don't speak the same language;

• **Cultural mediation** - if participants come from very different cultures;

• **Transport** - if participants can't easily get to the project's venue;

• **Child-care** - if participants don't have someone to look after their children;

• **Other assistance** - depending on the needs of participants.

-**Ask:** Can the project offer some kind of income? Can transport be provided? Can future income streams come from the skills learnt in the project?

• Suspicion of the arts: individuals may be unsure of what will be asked of them, and may see the artist as someone 'strange' who will ask too much from them.
-**Ask:** Can more information be given? Can a trial activity be offered? Can the fear of the arts be lessened? Can a previous participant talk about their experience?

• Past experiences: negative, or unfulfilling past experiences with arts projects may make individuals reluctant to risk their time again;
-**Ask:** Can the artist find out what made the past experiences negative? Can a more positive activity be offered?

• Suspicion of outsiders: a community may be reluctant to open up to people from outside their group;
-**Ask:** Can the artist spend more time with that community? Can a sense of trust be built over time? Can a participant take part anonymously?

• Cultural: participants may not feel that they fit into a group that is predominantly made up of people they perceive as 'different' from them;
-**Ask:** Can the participants become more familiar with each other? Can activities be arranged so that everyone feels comfortable?

The project NSFW (2020 – 2021) interviewed people living with HIV in Malta. Because of the

Challenges in socially-engaged art

A project may not always go exactly as planned, and participants may not be able to give as much commitment to a project as the artist had hoped. While there are no ready-made solutions to a reluctance to participate, at times certain suggestions can be made to encourage individuals to take part. While some people can be encouraged to take part, individuals' wishes should be respected, if they genuinely don't want to be involved.

• Practical reasons: participants may be short of time or money, or may not have access to transport.

stigma still surrounding the condition, participants may not have been willing to take part in an open context. Therefore, interviews were carried out anonymously either online or over the phone, with care taken to protect participants' identities.

Challenges might also arise once a project has already started. Depending on the group, conflicts or trust issues may surface, or participants may remain engaged in the project. Some very specific projects may involve communities that have gone through extreme trauma, and the artist may need additional support for themselves and for the participants. While it is difficult to predict what may develop, an artist can seek help from other community members, stakeholders, mentors, or colleagues if a project runs into difficulties. In some kinds of research projects, especially projects carried out within an academic framework, often such stakeholders or gatekeepers are already included as part of the project from the initial stages.

Columbian artist Doris Salcedo created a site-specific work in response to the vote to reject a peace deal between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia in 2019. The 7,000 metres of white fabric across the public plaza bore the names of victims lost in the country's 52 years of civil war. Sumando Ausencias (Adding Absences) invited volunteers to inscribe the names of over 2,000 war victims in ash on individual pieces of rectangular fabric, which were hand-stitched together over the course of a day to form a massive, stark shroud.

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3. Methodologies

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is scope for experimental methods in artistic and socially engaged research, on various levels. For instance, at a technological level, experiments in digital media arts can be compared favourably to experimental methods in science (Barker, 2013). Artists can also look beyond technical or medium-related concerns towards more processual issues, recognising the possibility of experimentation in participatory artistic strategies and radical pedagogies. Experimentation here retains its open-ended and experiential nature, but tends to revolve more around innovative dialogues and forms of democratic participation and citizenship rather than innovative uses of specific media and materials.

Experimental methods in arts research

Artistic practitioners working with communities or groups of people are sometimes faced with the challenge of integrating their experimental or provocative strategies into participatory contexts. Some participants may not appreciate the level of experimentation that artists envision for their projects. Alternatively, artists may focus on aesthetic or conceptual dimensions that they fail to explain adequately to participants. Other factors like funding criteria, ethical requirements and partners' objectives can also be perceived as rigid institutional or bureaucratic measures that suppress creativity. Nevertheless, there

In the field of research, however, experimental design borrows various concepts and criteria from scientific research and aims to produce knowledge for practical application (Sørensen, Mattsson, & Sundbo, 2010). Scientific experiments aim at producing predictive and universalisable knowledge (Bakhshi, Schneider, & Walker, 2008). Experiments can also be applied in other modes of knowledge production, such as research or practice-based humanistic modes that are "interpretive, explicit, analytical, intuitive and adaptive" (Bakhshi et al., 2008, p. 16).

Open-ended experiments seek to explore new ideas, activities or methods. The thorough analysis of experiments, considering and illuminating all the uncontrolled variables of the experiments, is central to such open-ended experiments. Sørensen et al. (2010, p. 313)

approach experiment as a 'particular analytical approach which includes an array of methods and data collection techniques' instead of a 'positivist laboratory experiment'. Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p. 223) understand experiment as the best method for indicating cause-and-effect relationships and in such a design, the 'researcher considers many possible factors that might cause or influence a particular condition or phenomenon'.

The types of experiments that are most suited to the research and practice-based modes may be varied, yet, as Sørensen et al. (2010, p. 313) admit, 'soft' approaches to experimentation continue to borrow from scientific experiments. Such softer approaches to experiment design are defined by the aforementioned authors as 'different types of experiments, qualitative and quantitative; carried out inside or outside laboratories, they can have different potentials in different circumstances … and can include a continuum of data collection and analysis techniques' (p. 315). This softer approach opens up avenues for researchers to select more appropriate and varied data collection and analysis methods that best suit the context and the phenomenon under investigation (p. 315). However, planning an open approach without due care can result in ill-designed attempts at research with no real benefit, as such attempts are usually run by 'trial-and-error' (p. 315). Experimental designs can be carried out in the following ways:

- Soft, open-ended and quasi-experiments,

- Experimental designs for pilot studies, followed by

- True experimental pre-test-post-test designs.

Quasi-experiments: Quasi experiments avoid the randomised assignment or selection of groups prior to commencement (Sørensen et al., 2010; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) and seek to find cause-and-effect relationships between independent and dependent variables. Examples of quasi experiments are open-ended experiments, field experiments, natural experiments, time-series experiments, and non-randomised control group experiments. Some types of quasi-experiments seek to explore real life situations and are carried out in natural settings and not in laboratories or researcher-controlled environments.

Methodological benefits and limitations: When randomising is not possible or practical, quasi-experiments are useful. Not all confounding variables can therefore be controlled, and researchers need to clarify, consider and explain in their analysis all the variables that they have no control over (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The results are therefore not generalisable and are very situation specific (Sørensen et al., 2010). In these experiments, knowledge is applied practically, seeking to solve real life problems in specific contexts.

One variant is the structure of the project in terms of the artist-participant relationship. So, for example, projects can be broadly similar in structure to those below, or a combination of two or more.

- **Artist-led -** where the artist retains creative control of the project's development and outcomes

- **Participant-led -** where the participants are given certain creative or organisational autonomy, and have a greater input into the project's direction and output

- **Pedagogical -** where the project has a more educational nature, and involves imparting information and skills, or allows for learning

- **Participants as artists -** where the participants are treated as creative professionals and allowed creative autonomy

Opening Doors (2008 - present) is a Maltese arts organisation that provides opportunities for adults with diverse intellectual needs. Training in music, dance and performance is provided by a team of professional artists, but the participants themselves are also treated as professional artists, and are empowered to take ownership of the creative work and process.
www.openingdoors.org.mt

- **Information donors -** where participants pass on stories and memories from which an artist may create work, and be guided to varying degrees by the participants

- **Co-creation -** where the artist and participants jointly contribute to an artistic creation, both guiding its content, and possibly performing alongside professional artists

The project Nuorten hyvinvoinnin ankkurit (Anchors of Young People's Well-Being) (2008 – 2010) worked with young people aged 15 and over in Lapland to improve well-being and youth exclusion, loneliness and mental health in the transition period after primary school. Group work (on large-scale sculptures of various media) proved to be a significant factor in art action models. Participants worked together, using a wide range of communication and collaboration skills, interacting, and negotiating with each other.
www.sosiaalikollega.fi/hankkeet/paattyneet -hankkeet/nuorten-hyvinvoinnin-ankkurit/ main_page

- **Bi-directional integration -** refers to a mutual process in which local people and recently-arrived immigrants are given support for integration, where cultural, multicultural and local contexts are undergoing rapid change.

The ArtGear project (2015), conducted as a large number of refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Europe, aimed to create spaces for new encounters and to tackle harmful social divisions and radicalisation of youth through arts-based action. It aimed towards 'bi-directional integration', which refers to equalising access to cultural activities regardless of background for both locals and immigrants. Bi-directionality also refers to a mutual pro-

cess in which the locals and immigrants are given support for integration into the new multi- and intercultural situation.
www.ulapland.fi/FI/Yksikot/Taiteiden-tiedekunta/ Tutkimus/Projektit/Taidevaihde---ArtGear

- **Participants in control -** participants can be encouraged to take on tasks of responsibility or take some control over the project, to instil a greater feeling of ownership;

The Konst Händer project (2018) took place in the district of Prästholmen, in Boden, Sweden. The project was based around the idea of the open living room – open to everyone. The public living room provided a new context, and an opportunity for a renegotiation of predetermined roles. By opening their living room to visitors, the family could change their role by changing the subject position: from the needy and waiting as a refugee to the active role of host.
www.sakaria.se/works/konst-hander

Projects can also vary in how they approach creativity and the creative process. Different approaches to creativity might look like some of the examples below.

- **Outcome-centred -** where both the creative process and final outcome are intrinsically important to the successful implementation of the latter.

- **Journey-centred -** where the creative journey of the participants is a process which is an intrinsic part of the project.

Structuring a project

Projects making use of experimental design tend to manipulate and measure the effects of different variables. Observational studies consider natural settings, while experimental interventions in the community permit researchers to understand and collect evidence about variability in the community. However, socially engaged projects can be conducted in numerous ways, often depending on the nature of the communities or participants that artists work with. The structure, working methods and overall scope of the project will depend on many factors, including some of the areas discussed above, such as the type of community the project members are working with, aims of the project or available resources.

• **Culture-consuming** - where the project brings participants together through consuming culture, rather than creating it. Participants may curate or select what they would like to see.

Nuovo Armenia Cinema (2016 – present) is a multicultural cinema in the Italian city of Milan, which screens films from the numerous international cultures represented in the neighbourhood, curated in collaboration with the community. Each film is introduced by inhabitants of the neighbourhood in two languages, and the screenings promote understanding between the communities in the city.
www.nuovoarmenia.it

• **Social-gatherings** - where the project places a strong focus on allowing participants to meet in a safe environment, with creativity playing a secondary role.

The project Magdalenina prádelna (Magdalena´s Laundry) (2019 – 2020) blurred the lines between art practice and social work, personal and public duties, and private and shared property. The project worked with clients of Jako doma, an organisation that provides support to homeless women, and provided a space for people to meet, listen and communicate, while waiting for their laundry. No rules or instructions were given – workshops and conversations were held in an open format, and a horizontal structure was maintained among participants.
www.iniproject.org/en/prostor/archive/2020/ magdalena-s-laundry

• **Umbrella-project** - a larger, longer-term structure which provides funding and support to smaller, possibly pre-existing projects, giving them support with less bureaucracy, and allowing for creativity and collaboration within the community.

Med början i Fisksätra (Starting in Fisksätra) (2016 – 2018), based in the socio-economically vulnerable suburb of Fisksätra in Sweden, acted as an umbrella-funder for many smaller arts projects. The project's long-term aim was to stimulate creativity, autonomy, and cooperation between different actors in the area, leading to a smaller number of larger, collaborative projects, and establishing a sustainable network among them.
www.fisksatra.se/2017/03/31/med-borjan-fisksatra

Many projects also vary in their relationship with the public, and the project's final outcome:

• **Final outcome** - an exhibition, presentation or performance can be presented and made open to the public;

• **Indirect contact** - the final outcome can be made available to the public through a publication, online film or other indirect means;

• **Anonymous participants** - in some cases, the participants may be happy for their work or the project's outcome to be shown to an audience, but may choose to remain anonymous;

• **No audience** - where the presence of an audience is not important to the project's successful implementation;

• **Long-term users** - where that being created is seen and used long-term by communities and inhabitants of the area.

CHROMOPOLIS_la città del futuro (CHROMOPOLIS_the city of the future) (2017 – present) is a biannual project which supports and enhances the creativity of young people within the city of Trieste, with the aim of improving the liveability of the city and its suburbs in particular. The project works to create new networks and synergies between artists, local authorities and communities that use the spaces affected by the interventions, and works with a collective of young professionals specialized in urban regeneration, participatory planning and usability of public spaces.
www.artefatto.info/article/pagine/edizioneincorso

Another variable is the type of creative practice used. Some artists may work exclusively within their specialisation and skill, but some project leads may be more open to allowing the group of participants and their own particular interests and talents to guide how the project works.

• **Free-disciplinary approach** - depending on and taking its lead from preferences or hidden talents of participants;

• **Multidisciplinary approach** - depending on competencies and preferences of participants;

• **Using other activities to facilitate creative work** – non-artistic but social activities such as socialising, eating together, story-telling, or walking;

• **Using digital tools** - new technology to broaden access;

• **Using existing artworks for inspiration** - such as in a museum, or using a piece of classical music or theatre;

• **Cross-over of sectors** - collaborating with a specialist from another sector, for example a social worker, youth worker, architect or someone who works specifically with the project's target group;

The project Deep Shelter, by artist Pamela Baldacchino worked with patients and staff at the Psychological Support Services at Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Centre, Malta and was based on a framework of reflection, relation and revelation, allowing for the analysis of the experience of illness, hospitalisation and care, and relating this to the visual art process. Nurses and doctors not only worked with the artist to plan the project, but also took part in its process.
www.deepshelter.com

• **Cross-over of cultures** - combining different cultures from disparate communities or marginalised groups.

Romafuturismo Library (2016 – 2019) examined to what extent the Afrofuturistic concept applies to the Roma people, and what aspects of the liberation history of Afro-Americans might inspire the Roma today.
www.artycok.tv/en/42836/lacka-ladislava-gaziova

The role of the artist within a project

Within the structure of the project, the artist may carry out one or more roles, either simultaneously, or as time goes by. In some cases, the artist may be an instigator and project lead; in others, the artist may be brought in to work on the project alongside other professionals in different disciplines.

- Facilitator

- Teacher

- Partner

- Creative director

- Mediator

- Equal

The Jamming Project (2014 - present) in the Czech Republic supports artists with intellectual disabilities, and creates opportunities for collaboration between them and artists, who are seen as equally hindered by their academic education. The professionally equipped art studio supports the artists and is not intended to provide education or therapy.
www.jamming.cz

- Participant

- Learner

- Contributor

In Mraky (Clouds) (2011 – 2014), the artist Veronika Švábová sifted through the history of her family seeking significant moments and seeming trivialities, using her family's history, compiled from photos, diaries, videos and a recipe. These memories have survived and remain as the fabric of family community.
www.handagote.com/en/handa-gote

- Researcher

The three-part project Utopian Nights (2017-2018) engaged with various communities and disciplines, and, in particular, involved a strong overlap between curation, creation and anthro-

pology, with many artist-researchers taking on multiple roles over the course of the project.
www.issuu.com/davidpisani1965/docs/binder2s

- Curator

- Guide

- Political Activist

During the 1960s and 1970s, theatre in Italy extended its scope to enter previously unchartered territories and collaborations within factories, suburbs, deprived areas and mental health institutions, engaging with under-represented audiences in order to restore their right to creative expression. Today, the practice is no longer unusual, and with it comes a reconsideration of the artistic value as well as the 'inclusive' potential of socially-engaged creative work (Valenti, 2004).

ical interdependence. Every participant has strengths, ideas and skills that are important to the project, no matter the diversity of ideas, personalities and background exhibited by the group members.

Below are some areas which should be borne in mind when aiming towards an equitable balance of power throughout a project:

• **Accessibility -** issues of literacy, ability, perceived class and cultures should be considered throughout the project's trajectory, to ensure that all participants can contribute equally;

• **Language -** the participants should be able to use the language which they feel most comfortable with. The facilitator should be able to speak the same language; failing that, a translator should be present throughout;

• **Content -** establishing the content and subject of the project should be done collectively. The subject should be relevant to the participants and should meet the needs of those engaging with it;

• **Structure -** boundaries will provide a sense of security and safety to all participants. What is discussed during the process must be treated sensitively and confidentially by all participants. A solid sense of boundaries will enable trust and deeper interaction within the group;

Ensuring an equitable balance of power

A socially engaged arts project is, at its core, a collaborative project by arts practitioners and community members. Whether the initiative for the project is generated directly by the community, or artist-initiated, it is crucial to ensure that the process involves the participants themselves and that the resultant artwork embodies the experience of participants' aesthetic of the everyday (Johnstone, 2008). In a truly collaborative community arts project, there would be no hierarchy, from the planning stage through to the implementation and eventually the evaluation of the project, but rather a sense of equity and rad-

• **Trust -** if trust and an element of disclosure is expected of the participants, it should also be offered by the artist leading the project. Revealing humanity and a certain amount of vulnerability, as opposed to adopting a more formal leadership style, can lead to improved team cohesiveness and a more meaningful project;

• **Dignifying incorrect responses -** 'incorrect' or unexpected responses should be treated with dignity and without inhibiting further participation.

• **Acknowledging Differences -** people are different, have different strengths and limitations, and so may be able to participate in different ways. Participants should be made to feel empowered to participate and contribute in their own way;

• **Radical Interdependent Leadership -** this is driven by the belief that leadership is a collective activity that requires mutual enquiry, listening and learning, leading to a high level of collaboration and openness. Radical Interdependent Leadership involves close observation, mindful listening and ensuring that all participants' voices are heard.

- **Close observation –** a high level of observation, particularly at the beginning of a project, will allow the artist to understand the participants' skill-set, in order to plan appropriate activities and tasks;

- **Mindful listening -** being in the present with undivided attention focused on the speaker (Shafir, 2000, page 105) helps the artist to pick up on the non-verbal cues, and understand the intentions of the speaker;

- **Equal participation -** ensuring everyone's voice is heard. Discussions that are dominated by a small number of participants with powerful personalities will stifle engagement from others who might have important contributions.

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Project frequency & duration

The duration of projects can vary hugely depending on their needs and resources. While some projects deliver a 'short, sharp, shock', mobilising communities for a short, intense period of time, others can continue over much longer periods of time, and can involve generations of participants over years.

Artists can sometimes be restricted by time or resources, and have no choice other than to conduct relatively short projects. However, a short, well-planned project can often still be beneficial to participants in many ways. For example, a short project can allow for intense focus with meaningful interactions between participants. The intensity over a short period of

time can allow participants to fully engage with the process and immerse themselves in the activities. With a short period of time, where perhaps a finished outcome is not so important, creativity can become more spontaneous, and participants may feel less pressure to produce work. A shorter project can also keep the attention of younger people, in particular, or that of other participants who may not be able to commit on a long-term basis.

In practical terms, a short project may be the only available option in some cases because it is more accessible to participants who have other commitments such as work, or even, in the case of some communities, migration.

Manifesta 11 in Zurich (2016) invited artists to work with different professionals working in the city. Maurizio Cattelan worked with Paralympic world champion Edith Wolf-Hunkeler to create a wheelchair on which she glided across the surface of Lake Zurich in unannounced appearances. Artist Daniel Binswanger worked with his host professional – a journalist - and researched details of the Swiss job market, eventually turning the results into a comic printed in the weekly supplement Das Magazin. Through numerous such collaborations, the city was engaged in and collaborated with the artists' practices for an intense period of time.
www.m11.manifesta.org/en

A longer-term project will allow more time for trust to be built between artist and participant. The project's processes can be carried

out slowly and thoughtfully, with time to mature and develop. Participants' confidence can grow, along with their skills. A longer process allows for different activities, discovery of talent, encouraging changes in lifestyle, and increased participation in creative activities.

A longer project may also allow for a more ambitious 'output', with more time to plan and create.

Many variations of project length and frequency exist, including

• An intensive month during a school year;

Within the Hungarian project Felhőkönyv (Cloudbook) (2013 – 2014), elementary school children watched the sky every day for one month, and drew the most beautiful clouds they saw. From these drawings, four writers created stories which were then illustrated by students from Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design.
www.cloudfactory.mome.hu

• An annual festival – participants and possibly artists will change over time, but the aims of the project can remain the same;

The Festival der Regionen (Festival of the Regions) (1993 - present) takes place every two years in different locations outside of the urban centres and cultural hubs in Upper Austria. Through its approach to confronting social issues and everyday living conditions with contemporary art, the festival's emphasis on

participation and stimulative discourse remain the same, while every edition approaches issues such as homeland, labour, asylum, and migration.
https://fdr.at/en

• Over the course of a school / academic / calendar year;

Dessine-moi la Méditerranée is an international project established in 2011 by the association EDAAV (École D'Art au Village), reaching hundreds of children of different ages, artists and educators in many countries around the Mediterranean, including Italy, Algeria, Malta, Morocco, France and Tunisia. The project asked children to produce drawings in soft pastels on black paper that interpret landscapes, heritage and colonial sites, histories and domestic or other objects they identify with the Mediterranean Sea, and involved them in a collaborative process with a photographer on the creation of a double exposure photographic work that juxtaposed their artwork in pastels with their own photographed portraits, merging their colourful images into their own faces.
http://edaav.org

• Demand-led – a project can exist long-term, but can reach out as needed, and as resources allow, to work more intensively with communities.

Sometimes it is not the length of a project that is problematic, but a lack of continuity following or between different projects. If appropriate, and if possible, contact can be kept

with the community following a project, and new activities should take into account what the community participated in before.

The Finnish nation-wide TAIKA I (2008 – 2011) studied the challenges inherent to the development of working life from the viewpoint of arts and culture, studying and assessing how well art-based methods can respond to the development needs of working life. The project was based on the premise that arts projects addressing societal challenges generally have good results, but their lack of continuity has been perceived as a problem, since proven activities have often ended with projects.
http://taikahanke.pbworks.com/w/page/38011235/
TAIKA-hankkeen%20loppuraportti

Project outputs

Not every project must result in a tangible art-work or performance. For many participants, the most meaningful and productive part of the project is the process through which they engage with creativity. However, a definite 'result' or final presentation can sometimes provide a concrete goal for participants to work towards. Depending on the community's interests and abilities, the artist's specialisation, and the project's context and resources, some outputs can broadly be described as below.

- **Exhibition -** a presentation of participants' or artists' work
- **Performance -** a performative presentation
- **Publication -** a printed collection of imagery and/or writings created during the project
- **A digital presentation of the project**
- **Collaborative artwork -** for example an outdoor sculpture
- **A community event -** such as a community meal, a traditional celebration
- **Storytelling**
- **Broadcast -** digital (visual or podcast) or on local television or radio
- **Film**
- **Long-term installations or physical artworks**
- **Celebratory event -** opening an exhibition, showcasing work done

Apart from tangible outcomes like those listed above, research projects - particularly those that are rooted in experimental design - can also lead to significant research outcomes that need to be evaluated and even measured, particularly in the case of funded projects. Contexts, communities and situations can be described and analysed, while 'cause and effect' relationships related to the societal impact of the arts can be assessed. Balanced evaluations of research methods and evidence also value different stakeholders' perspectives, not only those of researchers. Understanding research outcomes and impact involves researchers in questioning processes that aim to make them and others reflect on the findings. Combinations of concrete results (like performances, exhibitions, and so on) and scientific research can have a significant impact on policy.

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4. Recruiting & Engaging participants

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Recruitment strategies & gatekeepers

Different participants and projects may need different strategies for recruitment. Sometimes collaborators are found by chance; at other times, a more formal request is required. It's also important to be aware that individuals who are approached may not be able or willing to participate due to time or job constraints, or other factors related to confidentiality.

Recruitment strategies depend on the nature of the project. For example, if your project requires your team to survey members of the general public you will probably require different recruitment procedures from those involving a formal institution like a sports club. Some projects may require researchers to target a diverse group of participants; others may need to target a small group with specific knowledge and/or experience. If you plan to work with participants in marginalised or stigmatised groups that are hard to get to, sometimes respondent-driven sampling is the method of choice for recruiting a sufficient number of participants. This sampling procedure would require researchers (or NGOs supporting their work) to identify a small number of respected persons who then help to generate interest and trust in a research project amongst others in the broader community. Working with communities requires artists, researchers or artist-educators to have the humility to acknowledge that they may need others' advice in order to understand the most appropriate modes of action (Harris Lawton, Walker & Green, 2019, p. 82).

Depending on the social structure the study relates to, the artist may plan to:

• spread the word through community newsletters or local authority websites;
• use social media to disseminate information;
• attend church or local association meetings, if applicable;
• spend time at a community centre or with captive audiences (like in a home for the elderly), so that people can hear directly what the project is about;
• ask community leaders to speak about the project on your behalf, or with you;
• spend time going door to door;
• spend time in places where the community meets naturally, for example, a social club;
• make changes to initial plans based on meetings with community members
• contact relevant organisations that work with potential participants.

In research projects that fall under the responsibility of a higher education institution like a university, for example, an ethics review will normally precede recruitment, and will often require the involvement of a 'gatekeeper', especially if the project proposal revolves around the participation of vulnerable persons or groups. Ethical considerations are especially important when engaging with sensitive topics, and gatekeepers may offer a safe zone for potential participants in which they feel protected against possible misuse of personal data. Involving gatekeepers in arts projects can add another layer of vigilance to those put in place by the researchers or artists themselves and institutions' ethics committees.

The project unLOCK *(2014) worked with inmates in Malta to develop collaborative skills, as well as individual identity. The artist and co-creator worked with the prison authorities to carry out the project, arranging for participants to leave the prison to attend the opening of the final exhibition of their work.* viva.org.mt/uncategorized/unlock-pierre-mifud

Gatekeepers can help you access potential participants and settings and are usually in key administrative positions (such as heads of schools or directors in hospital wards), or leaders of NGOs who work closely with defined groups, persons who are perceived as being representative of a particular social structure and even family members.

The performative project No Different *(2019) worked with an at-risk group (vulnerable women working in prostitution) with no prior experience in drama or drama therapy, who were very cautious about taking part. Through Dar Hosea, which offers support and assistant to vulnerable women, the project was able to make contact with potential participants and gain their trust.*

Permissions and support granted by gatekeepers to conduct research within such structures can be essential

• to obtain ethics approval;
• to disseminate calls for participation;
• to ensure respect for local cultures or sensitive issues;
• to follow accepted regulations within such groups;
• to aid with data collection;
• to assess any potential risks for participants;
• to offer professional support to participants in case it is required.

Whenever researchers and artists need to ensure the anonymity of participants (meaning that even researchers themselves would not know respondents' identities), gatekeepers (or professionals sub-contracted by them) may be in a good position to liaise with both researchers and respondents to make sure that ethical procedures are respected.

It is important to remember that gatekeepers may have different motivations or views about a project than artists or researchers related to recruitment of specific persons, research duration or issues of confidentiality. In this sense, gatekeepers can influence research outcomes. Maintaining continued support from gatekeepers and a clear research focus is occasionally a challenge and may require negotiations and agreed benefits between gatekeepers and research teams. For example, formal organisations represented by gatekeepers may receive a summary report of research findings (Saunders, 2006). Alternatively, the organisation could receive funds for a particular cause. It is usually better to involve gatekeepers early in the research process in order to minimise misunderstandings or complications later on (such as denial of access to research participants).

Incentivising participants

While the aims of the project should benefit the community taking part, sometimes an additional incentive - or at least an 'advertising' of the project's benefits - may be needed. It might be clear to the artist how the project will benefit participants, but it might not always be so clear to communities - especially if they have no prior experience of art projects. The artist will need to speak about the project in a clear way, and in a way that will make people want to take part, possibly using different terminology from the language you may use when pitching the project to potential funding bodies or institutions.

There may also be different layers of 'benefits' to participants, including benefits that you might not have expected. One way is to ask them, and develop ideas for activities with them to make sure that participants appreciate the fact that the project benefits them in various ways. Benefits may also help to maintain regular attendance during project meetings. Some benefits include:

• teaching participants a practical skill, which can have a positive impact on one's confidence and employability;

• helping participants to learn collaboration and negotiation skills through group work;

• involving participants in activities that have secondary benefits like entertainment, socialisation, keeping fit, and so on;

• helping to increase knowledge and respect for participants' memories and traditions;

• giving participants the possibility of making their voices heard in the community and beyond;

• transcending economic disadvantages that may function as barriers to participation in the arts;

• giving participants access to research results that may help them to advocate for a particular cause;

• issuing a token payment to individual participants;

• letting participants keep any artefacts produced during workshops;

• making a contribution to the upkeep or equipment of a community centre.

An example will help to illustrate some of the issues related to recruitment and the benefits described above.

In 2018, artist duo Aglaia Haritz and Abdelaziz Zerrou led a series of artistic workshops with several Filipinas working as carers in Malta. The artists behind this project (called 'Exiled Homes') were supported by anthropologists, a Maltese cultural foundation and a few Filipino leaders in the community. The project aimed to study similarities and differences between the Filipinas and Maltese persons they cared for and to understand the experience of the exile of migrants who travel thousands of kilometres from their homes in the Philippines to find work. One of the main outcomes of the workshops carried out with the participants was a number of cushions embroidered with narratives created by the women themselves. Amongst the benefits for the women, there was a small honorarium for each participant, the development of embroidery and story-telling skills, and the public dissemination of experiences that may have helped to advocate for their rights as migrant (and relatively poorly paid) workers (in an ex-hibition that was open to the public in the cultural foundation's premises).

As for recruitment, the organisers faced a challenge from the initial stages of the project. While Filipino gatekeepers helped in the selection of caretakers for participation in the project, the intention to involve their employers as well (elderly persons) in the research and artistic stages proved to be impossible for two reasons. The health status of some elderly persons would not permit them to participate, while most Filipinas did not wish to share their stories in their employers' presence. The organisers therefore decided to focus exclusively on the caretakers' experiences throughout the project (Galea, 2018).

It is very important that prospective participants are recruited to research projects only after their consent is obtained. The equitable selection of participants also requires that artists or researchers only involve participants who are appropriate for their research and are not vulnerable to coercion. Participants should not be put at risk from being exposed through the study but, at the same time, vulnerable groups should not be automatically excluded from research, especially if they could benefit from the results.

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5. Participatory Strategies

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• participants should all have a chance to contribute;

•participants should not be judgemental or negative towards one another;

• all participants have something to contribute to the project.

Activities should take into account the participants' culture, age, language, abilities and personalities, and can be encouraged, but never forced. Physical activities can break the ice, especially if language barriers exist within the group.

The PACO *Design Collaborative has drafted a guide for NGOs, social entrepreneurs and practitioners seeking to work with marginalised communities using elements from design practice and participatory service design. The toolbook contains useful and simple-to-use activities and tools which can promote dialogue and creativity within participating groups.*
www.pacollaborative.com

While the cultural field is shaped by interactions between people, some forms of cultural expression tend to be receptive (simply attending a performance, for example) while others are more participatory. Brown, Novak-Leonard & Gilbride (2011, p.5) have identified a spectrum that helps to distinguish between different types of interaction between artists and audience. At one extreme, the audience is involved in 'spectating' (receiving the end-result of an artist's work). Still receptive but more engaging than 'spectating' is 'enhanced engagement' (enrichment programmes that do not involve audience participation). Then, within the participatory range of the spectrum, one finds 'crowdsourcing' (audience members are involved in certain artistic choices), 'co-creation' (audience members contribute to some aspect of an event or product) and, at the highest level, "audience-as-artist' (control over process is entirely in the hands of the audience).

Creating a sense of community

The beginning of a project's activities may be the first time that participants, artists, and anyone else taking part are meeting each other. During this delicate time, it is important to create a safe space, where participants can build a sense of belonging and trust.

The setting of ground rules within which the group can work help to establish a safe space for all participants is an important step. Rules can include:

• all that is shared during these meetings is treated confidentially;
• participants should show kindness towards one another;

Collaborative activities

Most ice-breaking activities start with the group in a circle - a democratic equitable shape with no hierarchies. Some groups may find it easy to work together, but others may need some encouragement to interact. Ice-breaking activities can form a sense of community at the beginning of a project.

• The name game is a fun self-introduction activity. Each participant thinks of something they like doing, starting with the same letter as their first name. In turn, each participant will introduce themselves and mime their activity. So, Daniel will announce that he likes dancing, Francesca will say that she likes flying.

• 2 lies and a truth is another self-introduction activity for groups of 4 - 6. Each participant thinks of two true facts which can describe them, and a lie. As each participant introduces themselves, they present the three as 'facts' - other participants need to guess which is true and which is false.

As time goes by, sessions can begin with warm-up activities, or, depending on the needs of the participants, visualisation and relaxation exercises. An experienced practitioner may be able to sense the group's atmosphere as participants enter the space, or even ask people directly how they are feeling, and how the group is doing.

• Breathing exercises can begin with the group lying on their backs with eyes closed. Participants can slow-breathe in good energy, and take a strong breath out to allow stresses to go with it. Ask the participants to visualise their day so far and think of things that caused them stress. Then ask participants to sit up, and write down these thoughts on a paper, and finally to place these thoughts into a bag which is then thrown out of the room.

A guided visualisation, carried out in a relaxed environment, can lead participants to draw upon their own personal experiences and emotions and encourage creativity.

• Visualisation can begin once participants are lying down comfortably. Invite them to breathe deeply, and move into a 'body scan' where each area of the body is encouraged to relax

through a series of prompts: 'Imagine you are lying down by the sea with your eyes closed. Listen to the sounds of the waves of the sea…pause…Are there any other sounds you can hear?…pause…What month of the year is it?…pause…What time of day is it?…pause… Where is this beach? How are you feeling?… pause…Why?' The prompts can continue until participants are completely relaxed. www.innerhealthstudio.com

Teamwork activities can encourage collaboration within a group, and instil a sense of fun and camaraderie in the project as a whole.

• The Marshmallow Challenge engages the group in collaborative visualisation and design activities. In groups of four, participants are given 20 sticks of spaghetti, 1 metre of tape, 1 metre of string, and one marshmallow. Each team aims to build the tallest freestanding structure they can with the marshmallow on top, with a strict time limit of 18 minutes to finish the task. (Wujec, 2010)

• Guess The Leader teaches much about group dynamics, the power of observation and concentration. One participant - the investigator - leaves the room until another participant is appointed 'leader'. With the group in a circle and music playing, the group will copy the dance moves of the leader as closely as possible. The investigator stands in the middle of the circle, and attempts to identify the leader. The better the teamwork and observation skills of the group the tougher it is for the investigator. Any strategies the team

may use to hide the leader's identity must be worked out without speaking. (Farmer, 2011)

Once the participants have become more familiar with each other, some exercises can work well at the end of a session to allow the group to reflect on what they have achieved together.

• Common Positivity can allow a group to appreciate each other's strengths. Participants stick a piece of paper onto each other's backs. Everyone in the group writes something positive on each participant's back, making sure that what they write is sincere, and different from the other statements that have already been already written about that person. Following this, each participant removes the piece of paper, and goes to a quiet space to read what has been written about them. A conversation at the end will emphasise the importance of seeing the positive in others and realising it about ourselves.

• Following a set of activities, a reflection circle can allow participants to share some thoughts. This can include a discussion on which negotiation strategies worked, and which didn't, what could have been done better, and which skills were needed to carry out the activities.

project from in-person to online participation. Once participants' skills and preferences of your participants are identified, more complex tools and resources can be used. This section focuses on how to initiate and strengthen online activity for a community. An appropriate choice of media with suitable activities - while taking precautions for participants' personal information - can create a digital solidarity within the project.

Before encouraging participants to interact online, participants will need to be aware of how to protect their personal identities online, how to grant or deny consent for their data, and how to protect themselves online.

The digital self-defence database Defend our Movements offers information and resources on how to defend personal information and make various online platforms secure. Participants can learn how to be safe when using everyday communication over Gmail, Facebook and Instagram, and Zoom, or can learn to protect their phones in more serious situations such as protests or other crises.
www.defendourmovements.org

Whether the online skills of the participants you are working with are limited to sharing content, or advanced enough to develop an online service, this section asks two main questions for every online engagement:

• What data is captured?
• By whom and for whom is the tool made?

Engaging online media

Whether through choice or necessity, a project may need to engage its participants in an online setting. This can present challenges, especially with participants who are not comfortable using digital platforms. But it can also present opportunities, such as working with communities or artists who are physically distant, or allowing people to collaborate at their own pace, and in their own time. While inequalities may appear in terms of access to internet connectivity, working online can also allow a community to work on a more equal footing, without physical or geographical differences.

It is always simpler to make use of established and popular platforms in order to shift a

Collaborative tools can be used to host participants and engage them in a simple task, at the same time identifying their online skills and preferences.

Light exercises in online writing and reading are a good way of engaging a mixed bag of skills - following this, the participants can 'breakout' into groups for a more active contribution. Below are a few platforms that can be used easily for a group to communicate:

• Google Docs is a good option for general audiences to run an ice-breaker over text;

• If participants are confident in working online, the open-source, web-based collaborative real-time editor Etherpad can be used. It is non-extractive, and as such, a community's data cannot be automatically scraped;

• Alternatively, drawing pads such as the WBO Collaborative White Board or Excalidraw, can also be used to remix each other's work with basic shapes, as well as with rough sketches.

Inspired by the novella Le Petit Prince, Aaron Koblin developed a collection of 10,000 sheep from an online drawing pad. His project used Amazon's Mechanical Turk to engage participants in exchange for a fee of €0.02 and invite them to draw a sheep. Online drawing is constrained by sharp movements over a small trackpad, or a small screen by its mobile version. Rather than focusing on what's realistic and efficient in every drawing, the artist focused on how such a simple task can take

on new value under the guise of a corpus of online activity.
www.aaronkoblin.com/work/thesheepmarket

As time goes by, participants can be engaged on a more complex and critical level:

• Participants can be engaged in small groups, through a collective reading session over Google Docs or an Etherpad. The host can provide excerpts from narrative fiction about online autonomy.

• As a follow-up, participants who share an interest can be invited to engage in discussion on a specific topic, and develop it with another excerpt. These links can be prepared in advance, and the group can break up into separate pads to do so.

• Alternatively, experienced participants can be invited to use social media tools (which are generally used for aggressive media campaigns) to understand how they work with a practical example. If directed with a sense of irony and lightness, this process can help identify how the online activities of one person can also play a part in a much wider circle of political influence.

The artist Jonas Lund frequently engages participants in a critical position. His project Operation Earnest Voice took on the role of a marketing agency, inviting participants to campaign against fake news with the same tools used to support Brexit. This included chat bots to derail online conversations,

sock-puppet profiles and twitter bots, among other tools used by world powers. In addition, a few participants were also invited to sign a highly transparent contract about consent, and take critical action with a sense of irony. This included engaging in corporate culture, such as team building activities, as well as automatically sharing data about themselves to online media.
www.operationearnestvoice.co.uk

Participants with more advanced skills can also access the code which maintains community-run platforms, using "open source" technology, whereby developer skills are mediated over fora hosted by Gitea.io, or more specific organisations such as Varia, or Homebrewserver, among others. In part with the Digital Solidarity Network these organisations aim to detract from centralised systems of control, and revert to in-house coding with a preference for privacy, autonomy, and social interest, as opposed to market-driven applications. Through the organisation of hackathons, small conferences, seminars, and workgroups, practitioners are invited to meet users and activists in order to further develop these resources together.

In addition to transparency with regard to coding, i.e. 'open source', the links noted here are also 'non extractive'. This is the characteristic which makes it difficult for online giants to harvest data from a participant's online activity. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to recollect it as a corpus of big data without the consent of each contributor from this community.

Itineraries is a series of publications by Constant, a small Brussels-based organisation. In order to mediate this process of solidarity, advanced participants are invited to modify, improve, or contribute to community run platforms by working directly with the users, such as other participants in a project, and identifying what a community needs on a practical level.
www.iterations.space/live/#resources

The Guardian Project has led the way in developing applications to secure a personal identity and protect participants interested in posting over public platforms. Their applications are used to deter unnecessary surveillance, such as wiping the geographical-metadata from an image being shared online, or simply, by automatically identifying each face in a photo, and blurring its details.
www.guardianproject.info

Working online also allows for a more active participation. Recent world events have seen artists and organisations use online platforms creatively to retain a sense of community, although participants may be separated physically. Below are just a few examples of community projects that can also work online:

• **Community choirs** - platforms such as Zoom can be used to bring together a large number of people online. Performances can be recorded or live-streamed.

• **Music** - participatory music activities in general can take place online. While some

negotiation will be needed for sound quality, depending on the technology available to the group, participatory rehearsals and even performances are possible.

• **Interactive Performances** - inventive use of communication platforms can allow participants and audiences to participate in performances, forming collaborative and experimental works.

• **Communicating from afar** - online platforms can be used to broaden a community's circle, and to collaborate with other communities further afield.

• **Pre-recorded activities** - participants can share recordings of themselves carrying out specific tasks, challenges or performances.

• **Voting** - while not applicable to all situations, online voting for preferences can allow a group to plan future activities.

Photovoice

One successful participatory action strategy is Photovoice. The strategy makes use of photography for positive social change, often partnering with individuals or other organisations to promote participatory photographic projects or workshops (https://photovoice.org).

The concept for Photovoice was developed by Wang and Burris (1997, p. 370), based on literature on critical consciousness, feminist theory, and documentary photography. The project works to provide equal representation, designing and delivering tailor-made participatory photography, digital storytelling and self-advocacy projects for socially excluded groups. Photovoice can offer unique contributions to exploration and empowerment of marginalized social groups. According to Wang and

Burris (1997), participants can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a photographic technique and as a practice based in the production of knowledge.

Photovoice's three main goals are:

• to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns;

• to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs;

• to reach policymakers and influence decision-making related to some social issues.

During a photovoice session, participants are required to take photographs related to a selected research problem, to choose a smaller number of photos and discuss a set of questions (SHOWD). Participants also write short texts describing their selected photos based on the above-listed questions. Support and training are given, as well as training in ethical standards, confidentiality and respect for the rights of other participants. Guiding items for use during photovoice sessions include the following, or similar questions:

• **S** = What do you SEE here?
• **H** = What is really HAPPENING?
• **O** = How does this relate to OUR lives?
• **W** = Why does this problem or strength exist?
• **D** = What can we DO about it?

Photovoice has been further developed and adapted to different social conditions by numerous researchers who contributed to the further development of this powerful action research tool (see for example Latz, 2012; Liebenberg, 2018; Migliorini & Rania, 2017; Wang & Hannes, 2020). Future research studies that apply this technique are expected to further develop this action research method through adaptation to the specific research objectives, needs and characteristics of different community members and their needs.

A wide array of studies that apply photovoice demonstrate the capability of this approach to contribute to the empowerment of marginalized social groups. The following are just some examples of Photovoice projects.

The photovoice method was used in a project involving women working in diverse aspects of the sex industry. The project aimed to understand sex workers' lived experiences through their own artistic self-representation, and to support the acknowledgement of individual strengths, skills, visions, and voice. Opportunities were provided for group dialogue, engagement in community education, and activism through art. Using the photovoice method in this context allowed photography to be used as an act of resistance to this stigma, and affirmed agency, self-representation, voice, and choice in sex work. (Desyllas, M. C., 2014)

The Language of Light Photovoice project enabled men and women living at a shelter in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to photograph their everyday

health, work, and life conditions in order to document their struggles and strengths; to promote critical dialogue through group discussion about their photographs; and to reach policy makers and the broader public about issues of concern to homeless people. The authors' approach used photovoice, an innovative participatory action research method based on health promotion principles and the theoretical literature on education for critical consciousness, feminist theory, and a community-based approach to documentary photography. (Wang, C. C., Cash, J. L., & Powers, L. S., 2000)

Photovoice methods were used in a Liverpool project exploring older people's perceptions of respect and social inclusion in cities. Four groups of older people from four contrasting geographical areas in Liverpool, the UK, took part in the project, photographing what they saw as positive and negative aspects of respect and social inclusion in the city, and reflecting on the meanings of the photographs with researchers. (Ronzi, S., Pope, D., Orton, L., & Bruce, N. 2016)

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RESOURCES

The resources listed below provide a list of platforms which depend on an alternative life-cycle, and favour community run platforms that are not driven by profit-making interests. This type of engagement can be taxing on both a technical and political level for any participant. In part with applications and solutions, several organisations are also issuing guidelines for careful mediation and online engagement.

• **Constant** - Publications, webinars, guidelines, and practical tools for an alternative infrastructure, as well as some information for online educators, including a link to web conferencing platforms which highlight autonomy, and privacy.

• **DataDetoxkit** - A collection of guides for basic users interested or in favour of wellbeing, social cohesion, and security, for engaging with online media. It also includes an alternative app centre for beginners interested in finding replacements for mainstream services, such as search engines, internet browsers, messaging services among other applications we use on a daily basis.

• **Defend Our Movements, Digital Self Defense Curriculum** - An online, collaborative source of information and resources about protecting data.

• **Fediverse** - A collection of social media platforms that can provide an alternative to mainstream platforms.

• **FemtechNet** - A network of scholars, artists and students working on, with and at the borders of technology science, and feminism with an interest in pedagogy and technology. For guidelines on moderating with care, and engaging digital tools for learning in schools, colleges, and universities.

• **The Guardian Project** - A collection of applications developed to secure smartphones by prioritising anonymity and privacy. This includes simple tools to blur faces and wipe out gps tags on images, such as Obscura Cam and Scrambled Exif, or to send a warning if in danger, such as the Ripple application, or to identify what information is being surveilled without explicit consent of the user.

The networks listed below are based on a federated network developed by a community of people around the globe and independent from any corporation or official institution.

• **Bibliotecha** - A framework to facilitate the local distribution of digital publications within a small community, relying on a microcomputer running open-source software to serve books over a local wifi hotspot.

• **Calibre** - A powerful and easy to use e-book manager, part of an open-source community with half a dozen developers and many, many testers and bug reporters, used in over 200 countries and translated into a dozen different languages by volunteers.

• Drawing Board Excalidraw - A whiteboard tool that allows for easy sketching and diagrams, with a hand-drawn feel. Anything which is scribbled on this board is also carried over to storage with end-to-end encryption.

• Drawing Board WBO Collaborative White Board - A free and open-source online collaborative whiteboard that allows many users to draw simultaneously on a large virtual board. The board is updated in real time for all connected users, and its state is always persisted. It can be used for many different purposes, including art, entertainment, design and teaching.

• Framasoft - An organisational tool to create personal calendars, events, as well as collaborate with others over spreadsheets, writing pads, and scheduling tasks. It is open source and non-extractive; thereby, no one has access to the data except its users.

• Office Suite Crypt Pad - An office suite to create documents with 100% encryption. This includes presentations, documents which are rich in text and typography, as well as spreadsheets and polls, among other types of documents.

6. Educational Strategies

Raphael Vella

Education and participatory projects

While participatory projects in art do not necessarily have educational goals, the historical connections between community arts and education are strong, while pedagogical strategies are increasingly used by contemporary artists who aim for sustainable connections with different publics. Such linkages between participatory arts, education and publics are especially evident when the methods employed by participants and other stakeholders are action-oriented and aim towards some sort of transformation of communities, cultural and political contexts. It is also important to understand that these connections are

sometimes fraught with tensions arising from different aesthetic and social goals: artists may occasionally feel that educational agendas overtake artistic aims when they work with various communities. They may feel that one of their roles as artists in the community is to provoke participants, rather than achieve some kind of consensus with them. Alternatively, participants may feel that the project merely reinforces existing hierarchies even though it is presented under the guise of collaboration, change, and so on (Burdick, Sandlin, O'Malley, 2013). These tensions are intrinsic to projects like these and artists should welcome the possibility of reflecting on and discussing the challenges they experience in collaborative and pedagogical contexts. These challenges expand the possibilities and reach of art, research and social practice.

However, to speak of 'education' as though it had a singular set of aims would also be unrealistic. Factors like degree of participation, participants' needs and age as well as project duration affect educational outcomes in various ways. Independent variables, such as educational attainment or the age of participants at the beginning of a research project can also have an effect on dependent variables such as an interest in particular cultural manifestations. So-called 'pedagogical projects' in the field of social practice can lead to a variety of educational 'benefits'. For example, they can refer to the acquisition of particular skills, like practical skills which contribute to job opportunities and professional development. However, educational strategies are often

transformative in nature, aiming at social change and a critical sense of positionality in all participants. While social transformation may be more difficult to measure or quantify than specific hands-on skills, the unpredictable nature of this sort of research should not be understood as a problem, but a significant value in the spectrum of artistic qualities of projects like these.

These broad distinctions may also imply different options and possibilities related to assessment. Assessing practical skills may seem more straightforward than assessing changes in people's attitudes towards certain issues, for instance. 'Success' or 'impact' in participatory projects involving adult participants may need to be assessed differently from those involving children. Amongst the many forms of assessment, participatory projects may involve artists and academics in:

- Arts-based research
- Action research
- Participant observation
- Keeping of field notes
- Use of video interviews
- Analysis of audience and participant feedback
- Assessment of a group's mental wellbeing
- Artists' reflections
- Surveys
- Analysis of student portfolios
- Pre- and post-assessment of specific skills
- Self-assessment tools

The following are some guiding questions that team members can ask in relation to the evaluation of projects like these:

- How have people in specific groups been affected by or involved in arts projects?
- How has their participation in creative projects increased or improved?
- Did participants learn new skills during the projects? How well did they grasp these new skills?
- Which artistic processes were most successful in attaining specific goals, according to participants?
- Which artistic processes were most successful in attaining specific goals, according to artists and other stakeholders?
- Did artists, stakeholders and participants have similar or different goals in mind when they got together to collaborate on projects?
- What kind of balance was achieved between different goals, and how does this balance reflect a sense of artistic excellence and impact?
- How sustainable are the relationships created between artists and other participants?
- How were audiences affected by the projects?

We will now look at a handful of relevant goals that can be targeted by artists in projects with underserved communities or groups.

Social exchange and critical consciousness

Creative processes employed in participatory artistic projects are often socially engaged, involving artists and others in collaborations that are generated through dialogue and activist goals, leading to the possibility of highlighting inequalities among underserved communities.

Critical Pedagogy: Associated with the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and more recent thinkers like Henry Giroux and Antonia Darder, critical pedagogy transforms oppressive situations into emancipatory situations by guiding participants to take control of their own learning, hence becoming more autonomous in the process. For critical pedagogues, education aims for social justice and political transformation. Education is not restricted to schooling, because the communication of culture is, itself, an educational process. While different outlooks on the goals of critical pedagogy have been developed over the years, it generally involves participants in 'problem posing' (Freire, 1970), urging them to ask difficult questions about their own life conditions and therefore supporting the emergence of a critical consciousness, which is understood as the ability to recognise and analyse inequalities and the motivation to affect positive change. Critical pedagogy can be aligned with socially engaged arts projects in various ways, for example:

• Working on theatrical productions with marginalised children with low self-esteem, transforming passiveness into social action and critical thinking processes;

• Using museum collections with local participants as a means of understanding the political roots and agendas of specific hierarchies of knowledge, and developing creative outcomes that critique such hierarchies;

• Working creatively with a group of residents in an urban environment and posing questions about decision-making related to public art, or the historical and political value given to specific streets, monuments or buildings;

• Using cultural funds, sponsorships or invitations from cultural institutions to offer free, public workshops leading to social interventions that improve the life conditions of a particular social group (for example, the work of the artists' group WochenKlausur).

Service-learning: By participating in tasks that combine academic learning with civic engagement, learners or participants in service-learning (sometimes called community-based learning) get a deeper experience of specific content whilst rendering a service to the wider community. By offering "a learning strategy in which students have leadership roles in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet real needs in the community" (Cipolle, 2004, p.14), service-learning helps to build both higher-order thinking skills and a sense of duty, responsibility and solidarity. Service-learning exposes participants to real-life situations and environments, thus helping them to become more analytical and prone to understanding problems from different people's perspectives. The content they engage with becomes more meaningful and contextualised; theory is integrated with practice. Learning becomes more reciprocal, because it does not only rely on institutional needs and strengths, but builds on strengths found within the community. Aligned with the arts, service-learning can take various forms, for example:

• Students following a course in graphic design are introduced to the members and aims of a Non-Profit Organisation or Charity and help to develop the organisation's online identity and publications related to recruitment and other promotional materials

• Drama students develop a play for residents in a home for the elderly

• Architecture, fine art or interior design students collaborate with the administration and residents in a homeless shelter to develop designs for furniture and redecoration

• Tertiary students use creative writing and/or acting skills to work on new narratives that are 'tested' with young children in rehearsed readings

Skills development

Skills development can be an important component of arts projects because various skills often survive beyond the duration of a project. The selection of particular skill sets for integration in participatory arts projects is often gauged on the basis of an analysis of participants' needs prior to the commencement of a project. Needs can be group-specific or even individual and can be explored through a needs-analysis consisting of, among other things:

• A study of official reports, newspaper articles and surveys

• Interviews or focus groups with different stakeholders

• Producing learner profiles

• Identifying main challenges in specific parts of town

• Analysis of qualifications and prior learning

• Investigation of national or regional provisions in educational sectors

The enhancement of lifelong skills can be integrated into arts projects if artists and other team members are aware of the needs and specific skills that could improve the life conditions of groups of people they are working with. For instance, arts projects can target the development of hard skills (quantifiable, technical and tangible skills such as computing, mathematics, language proficiency, acting and writing skills) and/or soft skills (attitudinal, behavioural and social skills such as teamwork, communication skills, leadership, critical thinking and time management). Some participants may consider such skills as being crucial to their participation in an arts project because they feel that having these skills will support the development of their career prospects. Needless to say, the integration of activities developing hard skills does not exclude the possibility of developing more explicitly political goals.

The Council of the European Union sets recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning, focusing on literacy, multilingualism, mathematics and competence in science, technology and engineering, digital technolo-gies, personal, social skills, and learning competencies, citizenship, entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression (Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2018). The Council considers an investment in basic skills and key competences as crucial to personal fulfilment, health, employability and social inclusion.

In turn, UNICEF considers the following four skill sets as being important for success in school, life and work:

• **Foundational skills:** numeracy and literacy

• **Digital skills:** Understanding and using digital technologies

• **Transferable skills:** Skills like problem-solving or empathy (sometimes called "life skills" or "soft skills")

• **Job-specific skills:** Skills associated with specific occupations (also called "technical" and "vocational" skills)
(Adapted from www.unicef.org/education/skills-development)

Skills development in participatory arts projects can occur in various ways, including:

• Artists or creative teams working with communities offer face-to-face or online workshops that develop specific skills: for instance, skills in the use of kinds of software, photographic skills, fashion design, and so on.

• 'Experts' in specific skill sets can be brought in from outside the community.

• Sometimes, persons or teams are recruited from within the community on the basis of their expertise in a specific discipline. The concept of Manifesta 11 in Zurich in 2016, for example, involved contemporary artists in joint ventures with citizens involved in other professions and vocations, like dentists, flight attendants, therapists and engineers.

• Teams can create Knowledge Building Communities in order to develop interdisciplinary research on specific problems and construct more democratic spaces.

• Artists can also make use of peer learning situations in which learners interact with and teach other learners.

In socially engaged art projects that are informed by educational frameworks such as workshops, the actual process of engaging others pedagogically is often seen as an integral part of the artwork. Helguera (2011) writes that a project that presents itself as an educational workshop requires us to ask "what, specifically, is being taught or learned, and how" (p. 78). It might also be useful to ask whether artists leading such workshops are, themselves, learning new forms of exchange and skill sets as a result of the new encounters generated by such pedagogical experiences.

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7. Stakeholders

Margerita Pulè

Involving potential stakeholders

The Oxford Dictionary defines the term 'stakeholder' as a person or company that is involved in a particular organization, project, or system, especially because they have invested money in it. In the context of participatory arts projects, it refers to any person or organisation that has invested something, however small, in a project, and has an interest in seeing it thrive. Stakeholders can provide support and resources to a project and can be useful in reaching areas (for example, areas of knowledge, or funding resources) that an artist may not have easy access to. On the other hand, stakeholders also demand time and at-

tention that the artist may feel would be better used on participants and carrying out the project itself. However, just as with sponsors and other supporters, an appropriate amount of time spent communicating with stakeholders will usually bring benefits to the project.

From a strategic point of view, having well-respected stakeholders on board will add credibility to a project, and may make it easier to access certain funds, or to other stakeholders. A successful collaboration with aligned outlooks and aims can leave a positive legacy, with stakeholders continuing to work together on a long-term basis.

Stakeholders can vary from private individuals to large multinational companies. Each comes with its own 'personality', and each will want different things from their involvement, so it's good to be aware of how each potential stakeholder works. Below are some broad examples of the types of stakeholders which may help to see which are best suited to be involved in a project.

• **Individuals -** Individuals may come to be involved in a project in various ways – possibly by helping out on a personal basis, by taking part in the project in the past, or by having family members or friends involved in the project. They can offer genuine and very personal input into the project – sometimes the impromptu loan of a room or a bicycle can be as useful as a larger offer of help.

• **Professional individuals -** Some projects may collaborate with specialists from other fields, such as social workers, researchers, anthropologists, historians etc. Whether these professionals are paid for their involvement or not, they should still be treated as someone with an interest in the project once their work is finished, and should be kept up to date with the project's progress and outcomes.

• **Local NGOs -** Smaller local organisations can provide specialised help or guidance in their field. They can also help with making contacts with potential participants or other stakeholders. NGOs will quite often be over-worked and under-resourced, and may not always be able to provide as much assistance as hoped.

• **Civil society groups -** similar to NGOs, civil society groups are often under-resourced. They are often – but not always – focused on a political or civic mission, and so collaboration can take place only where the project's aims are aligned with theirs.

• **Local authorities -** Local authorities should have the well-being of the community in mind, but are often driven by external pressures and resources. However, they may be able to offer valuable information about their communities and their histories, customs and populations.

• **Arts organisations -** arts and culture organisations can offer advice and sometimes mentoring in carrying out socially-engaged projects. They may also be able to provide networking, which may be of benefit to your

project. Museums may be able to offer their spaces or access to their collections. Depending on their size, arts organisations may collaborate on the project, play a minor role, or provide funding for a project.

• **Well-being organisations -** these include organisations responsible for the well-being of the elderly, or people with mental health needs, whether they are government organisations or smaller institutions. If the project aims to work with vulnerable people, bringing such an organisation on board may be helpful, not only in terms of participants, but also expertise and specialist support. Such organisations are usually quite aware of the benefits that the arts can provide to those they care for.

• **Funding bodies -** funding bodies such as arts councils or larger foundations provide financial resources, usually against an open, competitive call, although some foundations may operate on a more informal basis. Whatever the case, it's important that the aims of the project are well-aligned with the aims of the call or funding body. Don't try to make the project fit the funding call – it will be obvious to the funders and will be very difficult to implement successfully.

The project Släpp loss kulturen (Let Go of Culture) (2016 - 2018) in Malmo in Sweden inspired young people to discover and develop their creativity through workshops in film, dance, music, and visual art. Several smaller pop-up performances, as well as a larger performance, were also held at various locations in

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the area. The project organisers could link their cultural work with other social initiatives and collaborated with criminal justice, police, social services, housing companies and the school, in order to provide opportunities for participants.
www.flammanhyllie.se/projekt/slapp-loss-kulturen

When seeking to work with a stakeholder, the following questions may be useful to identify the best collaborators;

• What competencies and knowledge will this stakeholder add to the project's team?

• What resources (financial or other) can the stakeholder reasonably contribute?

• Will the collaboration widen the project's network?

• Could it also broaden the project's potential audiences?

• Will the stakeholder be able to allow the project access to potential participants?

• Will the stakeholder be supportive when things don't go as planned?

Before approaching an organisation, research their aims and structure, and try to find out, through a polite phone call, who best to make initial contact with. Make sure that their aims are aligned with those of the project. And be aware of contexts which may be relevant [e.g., contacting a migrant rights organisation when they are over-busy because of an influx of migrants].

NGOs or more formal institutions may best be approached through a formal letter or email of introduction, requesting a meeting, followed up by a phone call. Several attempts may be necessary, particularly if the organisation is busy or under-funded.

Strategies for approaching stakeholders

Potential stakeholders can be approached differently, depending on their knowledge of the project's aims, and of creative work in general.

Individuals are often introduced on a personal basis. As when approaching project participants, their knowledge of socially engaged projects may vary, so a clear explanation of the project's background, its aims, context and participants is best. The relationship can be allowed to develop from there – meeting in person will provide immediate feedback.

Organisations that are not familiar with the arts may need a change in tone or language when contacting them. Potential sponsors, for example, will want to know that their contribution will be given adequate visibility. Local councils may want to know more about how the project will benefit their residents and contribute to the cohesion of their neighbourhoods. Organisations working with vulnerable groups will need to be reassured that these groups will be treated sensitively and with respect. Some organisations may need to be persuaded about the benefits of supporting a creative project and may need reassurance of how the project will develop over time.

Lastly, funding bodies that work with an application system can be approached for advice or feedback on the most suitable funding streams, but ultimately, an application or

proposal will have to be submitted in line with their requirements.

The research-based interdisciplinary project You Are What You Buy (2016 - 2018) found an unusual stakeholder in a collaboration with a local supermarket. A team of six researchers and the artist, guided by a social anthropologist, worked in a supermarket, observing the space, branding and marketing strategies of the supermarket, interviewing shoppers and employees, observing shopping patterns and choices, and studying shopping lists and receipts.
www.kristinaborg.com/youarewhatyoubuy

8. Considering a Venue

Margerita Pulè

Familiar and unfamiliar venues

Where participants meet to collaborate and create can make a big difference to how they feel about a project, and how comfortable they are with taking part. Sometimes a project must use simply whatever spaces or studios are available, but it may be worth putting more thought into an element that has the potential to determine the character of the project. In field experiments, a researcher's decision to study a group within a natural setting is considered an integral component of the study, because the venue's connections with real-world occurrences and behaviour are perceived as being more valid from a re-

search perspective. Using such natural settings may be inevitable when working with control groups, for example.

The spaces that will eventually come to be associated with the project can be chosen in order to make participants feel supported, but it can also encourage communities to take ownership of venues that they did not previously feel they had access to. They can also be chosen to instil a sense of pride in an area, or to change perceptions about a particular space. The venue may also be related to the content or nature of the project – for example, it may be a building with a specific meaning in the community, or it may be a disputed space, with histories which the project is attempting to address.

The community museum project Naqsam il-MUŻA (Share the Muse) (2016 - 2018) invited communities to work with the entire national collection at the Museum of Fine Arts in Malta. Participants were invited to the archival and storage areas of the museum, allowing them access to a national institution, and demystifying some of the curatorial process. The project then worked with the same participants to curate work in their own communities, thus creating a link between the institution and everyday life.
www./valletta2018.org/cultural-programme/ naqsam-il-muza

Below is a consideration of some familiar or unfamiliar venues, and what they can bring to a socially-engaged project, both during the creative process or a final presentation.

• **Familiar venues** - For example, a school hall, local community space, or avenue where the community already meets regularly can encourage a close community bond, and will mean that the artist, rather than the participants, is in an unfamiliar space. On the other hand, an already familiar space may come with its own particular meaning and history (positive or negative). A familiar space will not have a sense of 'difference' or novelty, which may make the project more interesting to some participants.

The digitisation project Magna Żmien (Time-machine) (2017 - present) works with communities to digitise analogue photographs, slides, sound and audio-visual recordings. Their presentations and community meetings are generally held in venues that have meaning for the communities they are working with, for example a local bar or community space.
www.magnazmien.com

• **Unfamiliar spaces** - Unused spaces within the community may provide an interesting background to a project. For example, a neglected open space or garden or a forgotten historical site may come back to life, and acquire new meaning through fresh use.

• **Public space** - Parks, open spaces, common land, even car-parks may encourage participants to think of public spaces as belonging to the community, rather than to private entities.

The Windrose Project, carried out in Malta, (2014 - 2016) worked with four fishing and

farming communities to create large-scale wind-vanes in each locality, created after numerous discussions and workshops with participants. Each wind-vane has now become significant in its own location, acting as a marker of the venue, and a reminder of the project.
www.windroseproject.com

• **Formal institutions** - A national museum or concert hall may seem intimidating and unwelcoming, but inviting participants to enter such a venue - possibly for the first time - can instil a new sense of self-value and belonging.

The Inclusive Memory project in Rome (2018) fostered the construction of a shared and collective social memory through an inclusive system within a museum context. While acknowledging the strong links between museums and their surroundings, the project worked to include those in the region who may have been excluded from its cultural life, and thus unable to contribute to its collective memory. The museum was seen as an educational or instructive site, but also as a context for social integration, allowing for collaborations, and skills such as critical thinking, communication and cooperation.
www.host.uniroma3.it/progetti/inclusivememory/ en/index.html

• **In the wild** - Practitioners are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of rural and natural environments to health and well-being - something which communities may not always have regular access to.

The research project Erämaa opettaa: Kehollis-esti ympäristön, taiteen ja yhteisön maisemis-sa *(Wilderness teaches: Bodily in landscapes of environment, art and community) (2004) examined the Tunturin Taidepaja (Fell Art Work-shops) taking place in Northern Finland, which offered a learning and working environment in the field of art education to unemployed young people at risk of social alienation .The project took the learner's phenomenal, physical and sensory relationship with the environment as the starting point for all learning - the multisen-sory physical work done in Tunturin Taidepaja was closely tied in to the surrounding environ-ment and culture. Hiltunen, 2004*

• **Emotional ties –** Does the venue have any special significance to participants? Could this have a negative effect on participation? Is more information needed to address this?

Practical considerations

Some practical elements will need to be con-sidered when choosing a venue, and the fol-lowing questions may need to be asked:

• **Accessibility –** is the venue accessible to all of the project's participants?

• **Health & safety –** is the venue safe for all, and do any changes need to be made to make it safe? Is help needed in ensuring partici-pants' safety?

• **Permits & permission –** are any permits need-ed from local authorities, and has permission been granted from the owner of the space?

9. Creating sustainable connections

Margerita Pulè
Tang Tang
Paul Wilson

Thinking about particular media or channels of communication make it more likely that audiences will be reached in ways that they will understand and expect. Fashioning creative and meaningful messages can touch audiences and spark an interest that can create attention and, importantly, action - in ways that create relationships enabled to live alongside a project and its development, moving beyond its lifespan. Understanding how and why the project's communication is relevant and appropriate, and getting a sense of how and why particular audiences react or respond allows for meaningful and sustainable connections. Giving participants and audiences opportunities to interact will also allow for new communication ideas and platforms. Being able to plan for the project to continue to have some kind of presence after its completion can also create novel impacts and engage with potential audiences, and so extending its life in unexpected ways.

Developing a sense of audience needs is very useful for a project's communication, since this generates a deeper sense of understanding and empathy. It is crucial to consider elements such as personal experiences, views and concerns.

Connecting and communicating with audiences allows your project to find and reach them in a way that's focused and makes the best use of the projects' resources.

Thinking strategically

The strategy for any project's communication should always consider that project's audience and their needs, including the best ways to reach them and the message that they should receive. Knowing more about - and understanding - the audience in depth and detail means that communications will be relevant, appropriate, and have some potential to both connect and engage with participants, close audiences, and wider audiences alike. Indeed, a project's communications may need to reach out to very different 'audiences' - including the initial stakeholders and collaborators, the participants and co-creators, and, finally, the audiences of a final presentation, if one is planned.

Knowing who your audience is

How might you start to define your audience? Thinking specifically and in detail about how audiences are defined and getting a better sense of who they are improves the opportunity for successful and meaningful engagement.

Some questions to consider in developing an understanding of an audience can include:

• How old are they (their generation, the decade they belong to, their stage of life)?

• Where do they live? Are they clustered together in a particular place or separated in some way geographically? What's their time zone?

• What languages might they speak? Are they the most widely-spoken languages in that area? What are their interests, and how could these connect with the project?

• What are their beliefs and values? We're more than age, education or income - thinking about things that people have in common (and points of difference) relating to their lifestyles and interests can help connect with audiences in surprising ways.

The Orfeo & Majnun project (2016 - present) - which took place in six European countries - targeted specific audiences and communities. In Malta, communication was developed in English, Maltese, French and Arabic, to make sure that diverse communities could take part. www.orfeoandmajnun.eu

• Where can audiences be found? Connection and communication depend a lot on getting into the eyes, ears and brains of potential audiences - otherwise an audience may not be reached, or the wrong audience might be targeted.

Some questions to consider in gaining knowledge of where an audience's attention might be found can include:

• How does an audience like to read, listen to or view information? Do its members use certain devices or reply on particular (familiar) sources?

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• Are they familiar or unfamiliar with certain types of media? What's the best way to connect with them? Are there certain types of media they won't engage with? It's useful to think of how old and new media can work together to find your particular audiences.

• Can examples in the media they use which connect in particular ways be worth learning from? There could be websites that audiences might regard as useful or informative in certain ways or publications that they're certain to see.

The community project Ġewwa Barra (Inside Outside) (2017-2018) worked with a very specific section of a marginalised community in Malta's capital Valletta. In order to attract participants, the project lead, accompanied by a community leader, called many of the residences in the city in person, speaking to people and spending time encouraging them to take part. While time-consuming, this approach allowed the project to reach people who would not read newspapers or follow social media online.
www.facebook.com/gewwabarra

Knowing what matters

How do you start to think about making your audience care, making them realise that they're interested or intrigued and convincing them to connect with a project? The communications industry bombards us all with thousands of messages every day, so trying to find a way through this noise and attracting an audience can be challenging, but also presents many opportunities.

Some questions to consider when developing a message which can meaningfully connect with an audience could include:

• What is the main reason for trying to connect with an audience and the appeal a pro-

ject has? What does the project offer that they'll be keen to find out more about? What message does the project have that the audience simply must hear? Should they think or act in a particular way in response to the project's communication?

• Can project participants connect with audiences in ways that run parallel to the projects? Do participants' stories or messages represent something vital and engaging? How could opportunities be created for the project participants to have a voice or play a part in the project's communications?

The project En oförglömlig historia - Trajosko drom romano (An Unforgettable Story) (2-16 - 2018) worked with a Roma community in Sweden and told the story of the Roma journey over a thousand years, through a musical performance. The work was created and performed by Roma amateurs and professionals from different groups and of different ages. Young people develop knowledge of their own history, interview their elders and practice writing, reading and storytelling. At the same time, the audience was given an insight into the Roma journey through the ages, creating a deeper understanding of the group's situation today.
www.postkodstiftelsen.se/blog/projekt/ en-oforglomlig-historia-trajosko-drom-romano

• Are there any barriers or challenges in getting the message across to an audience? Why might its members lose sight of or misunderstand any communication?

Any project is long, possibly complicated, and composed of a lot of different activities. Thinking about when (as well as how) to reach out, connect or develop a relationship with audiences can be very powerful - it doesn't always have to happen at the end of the work. Some questions to consider when developing a timeline to help plan when to communicate can include;

• Are there points within the project when it would be a good idea to make people aware of the project's activities?

• Are there benefits to updating audiences on progress made at particular milestones within a project?

• How can the story of what's being made be told in a way that gets people interested and sustains this up to a point when the project is launched? There might be different ways to connect with audiences at certain points in a project's life.

We might often think that once a project is complete and an audience has been found, then the job has been done - but in fact, it's often just the beginning. Post-project activities may need to be promoted; these communications need to be part of the timeline to connect with the project's audience. How will communications be sustainable, and for how long?

The project Life Bitch! *is an artistic platform and a social movement in Södertälje, Sweden where young girls and women aged 13-25 can express themselves and find community beyond cultural, religious and ethnic differences. The vision of the project is to raise the status of young women, on stage, in the city, and in Sweden. The project organises open activities and an outreach project, inspiring girls in the city.*
www.livetbitch.se

Some questions to consider when developing sustainable communications can include:

• Is there the opportunity to archive the project and all activities in one place? Would a website or a publication be the most appropriate way to achieve this?

• How can the project's afterlife exist in such a way that is useful and valuable to the artist, participants and audiences in the future? A website can sometimes seem to be unloved or ignored when it stops being updated, and in some cases can cease to exist and go missing entirely - so having a plan for making sure the project remains available and accessible can be very important, as organisations develop and grow or change.

Considering impact

Understanding the impact of a project's communication is vital for any art-based project and is closely linked to knowing who the audiences are, and why things matter to them. One useful way to help understand the intended impact is to write a statement which summarises the change the project hopes to achieve – this then allows a consideration of how best to make any communication with audiences.

How does the project's communications perform - are certain resources needed to reach audiences in particular ways or in certain numbers? Are certain people required to perform particular tasks related to how these communications can take place? Is a photographer, copywriter or designer needed? Who has skills which can help to create the materials that best reach the project's target audiences? There could be opportunities to work with stakeholders to help develop ideas and materials for communication, or where sponsorship helps to produce things such as publications or help host websites which allow the project to exist materially or tangibly.

Measuring impact and audience response will allow a reflection on whether certain methods might be best to develop as part of existing work or in the future. There might be ways of receiving feedback or extending the relationship with audiences through mechanisms such as email newsletters, comments pages, submitting reviews or responses to events or performances. Audience reach and how many people see communications are one way of measuring impact - opportunities for feedback, dialogue or co-creation make for a richer relationship and one that can be more sustainable over time. There may be a particular measure which is most appropriate or relevant for the project and its audiences - this could be used to capture the project as part of the communications approach. It may also be useful to share the results of the project's impact with participants and stakeholders, so that success in reaching, connecting and communicating becomes something to celebrate - showing numbers of viewers or examples of audience response, for instance.

10. Legacy and impacts of research

Raphael Vella
Karsten Xuereb

Value of Legacy

As suggested by the roots and development of the word itself, 'legacy' invokes the idea of something, such as a result, being tied to something else that preceded it, like a cause ('legare' in Latin and still used in Italian nowadays, meaning to tie, and later to delegate, and therefore represent, or speak on one's own behalf). This bond, this consequence of action, as well as the idea of responsibility, allows us to identify an interesting connection between a project and what may follow it. An action that comes after a project ends may be intended or not; either way, that follow-up may be argued to be its legacy.

Many projects do plan for a legacy to take place in a certain way. Generally, such planning is required for funding applications, and

to argue that once a project ends, any benefits will continue being enjoyed by participants and their communities.

As discussed in the previous chapter, sustainability in arts projects refers to the ability of a community to maintain an involvement in activities initiated by artists, researchers, NGOs and so on. It usually means that some aspects of a project can continue even though public or other funding is no longer available. If one went along with these interpretations of the terms 'sustainability' and 'legacy', then one could argue that the two are different characteristics of a project, while being related. However, one could also say they are not too closely related or inter-dependent. For instance, may a project be unsustainable and have a legacy? Yes. Inversely, may a project be sustainable but not establish a legacy? Yes.

One way of establishing a legacy for an arts project is to disseminate tangible results (works of art, artefacts, outreach programmes, reports, new educational material, and so on) and intangible results (improved participants' self-confidence or motivation, improved recognition of a district's assets, knowledge gained by participants, and so on) in order to spread information on a scale that is usually broader than the community within which the project was carried out. It often helps that a dissemination plan is discussed at the beginning of a project, to make sure that creative results and research findings are exploited well. A list of outcomes (developed at the beginning and updated later in the

project) will help researchers to target particular users or audiences.

Sometimes it also helps to consider which of these outcomes should be considered as the most crucial finding in a project and reflect on these questions: What is so significant about this product or finding? Why? Who would benefit most from this finding? How would they benefit?

A well-planned exploitation of outcomes helps to maximise the long-term potential of research by ensuring that they do not only benefit research teams. Amongst others, research is carried out and disseminated:

• To benefit participants (pride in their achievements)
• To benefit stakeholders (assuring that their resources have been put to good use)
• To benefit artists and the artistic community
• To benefit other projects (sharing best practice)
• To convince policymakers of the importance of the work
• To help change policy
• To attract funders for future projects

In order to achieve a broad range of benefits, a solid dissemination plan would target specific end users or channels that could help to communicate research to different audiences, such as:

• Print and other media (TV, radio, etc.)
• Social media

• Academic journals
• Conferences
• Webinars
• Local and international specialised magazines
• Opinion leaders
• Websites
• Training for organisations and other stakeholders
• Continuous professional development programmes
• Events for the general public

When making plans for communication, it is useful to consider the following issues:

• How much detail would you want to include to make sure that the communication of main research findings is effective and beneficial?
• Depending on the specific audience you are targeting, what kind of language should a report or article be couched in to maximise the use of a particular communication channel?
• How can you present your findings in a way that is relevant to targeted groups?

can also have an overall negative impact in the long-term; for example, the culture-led regeneration of certain districts in a town could appear like a positive impact initially, but might lead to gentrification in the longer term.

A research project studied culture as a participative process of co-creation in Umeå, which was the European Capital of Culture in 2014. It has been described as central in Umeå that residents and organizations were joint producers of meaning, but afterwards there were contradictory accounts as to how this cocreation of meaning was carried out in practice. This is referred to as the so-called participation paradox, which points towards a tendency to presume that co-creation benefits all and to ignore how destructive this might be unless it is carried out in a democratic spirit. The project studies experiences of co-creation with citizens and public officials within the cultural sector in order to look more closely at how cultural policy may contribute to social inclusion."
(Hudson, C. 2014 - 2016)

Cultural 'value' and impact include a wide range of aspects, some of which might be mis-represented to justify funding or for other reasons. Studying cultural value calls for multi-criteria analyses in order to understand the notion of value from different perspectives, including the perspectives of individuals or inhabitants in particular social contexts, civil society groups, people affected by urban regeneration, persons in different economic strata, art therapists and health care workers, educators, different ethnicities, and so on (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016).

Evaluating the impact, value and success of research

When rigorous research methods like experimental design are utilised in arts projects, this can help researchers or artists to assess the impact of creative, educational and other interventions. If the societal impact of the arts is reported without the necessary rigour, this may negatively affect the possibility of using the research to influence policy. Besides, evaluating the impact of a research project may not be sufficient because it could overlook the fact that results do not correlate precisely with the initial goals of the project. A project

A study about community transformation carried out in Toronto (Toronto Arts Foundation, 2013) identified different impacts of the arts on people:

- Sharing Experiences
- Building Connections
- Networking Opportunities
- Bridging Difference
- Understanding Issues
- Local Participation
- Neighbourhood beautification
- Legacy building

Apart from recognising a project's impacts, it is also important to gauge its success. 'Success' may look different to a funder or a stakeholder than to an artist, or someone working closely with participants, so there is a measure of relativity in such evaluations, depending on the evaluator. Participants may be reluctant or too 'nice' to criticise a project - this is a risk in some post surveys, for instance. Reducing response bias is a crucial concern for researchers, so respondents need to be informed about the actual goals of a project and the importance of accurate data. For researchers and practitioners, it is crucial that objectives are clear from the beginning of an activity - this facilitates the evaluation of a project's success later on. A good project evaluation studies a project's results but also recommends possible improvements in future iterations. Researchers sometimes use indicators to measure progress in terms of quantity and quality. Some examples of indicators are: percentages, particular products, events like exhibitions, meetings with

participants or stakeholders, successful media coverage and policy-makers' feedback.

While evaluation is central to most arts research projects, it should not become a mere bureaucratic exercise that possibly restricts artistic experimentation or community-led, dynamic processes. Artists' views on a project's outcomes and lifespan should also be respected and included in reviews, and can help to generate new outlooks on research and participatory strategies in the arts (Wright, 2018, p. 7).

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11. Documentation

Aidan Celeste
Raphael Vella

Planning for Documentation

Documentation is an essential component of any artistic venture today, particularly ephemeral processes like workshops, because it provides evidence of actions that were conducted, people who participated at different stages, materials that were employed in the production process, duration and times of day of different activities, and a good deal more. Documents of artworks and collaborations produced by the creative team itself as well as external sources (for example, newspaper stories) help future researchers and others to make sense of current artistic productions.

The various qualities and possibilities of documentation need to be planned ahead, to ensure that different creative phases, artistic aspects and people's perspectives are saved for posterity once projects are terminated. Naturally, you need to keep in mind that documentation is not the thing itself, and often cannot be considered as a valid 'substitute' for the real event or object. Moreover, documentation does not only preserve representations of material artefacts or texts but should ideally also refer back to the actual practices of documentation themselves. In other words, the question 'who is documenting materials and processes?' is at least as significant as 'what is being documented?' The information that is selected, gathered or preserved, relies to some extent, on the persons taking photographs, the people being interviewed, or those who are taking notes in the background. While objects have physical qualities that might be there for all to see (colours, dimensions, media, and so on), their interpretation and presentation in a different medium (for example, a text that analyses an artwork, a photograph that represents a dancer's performance) is influenced by structural, cultural, personal, representational and other criteria. Artists and researchers may have their own reasons for documenting processes in specific ways, but you might also consider participants' photographs or those taken by members of an audience as significant, additional material that your research might benefit from. In the documentation of some forms of art, like performance and new media, the audience's experience of a piece is often overlooked. In order to fill this gap in experiential documentation, researchers and artists ought to consider underlining the experience of the general audience, creating a varied documentation of how the artworks appeared (Muller, 2008, p. 3). Such experiential material helps to contextualise objects and processes and highlights the possibility that artists' and researchers' intentions and plans do not always correlate with those of an audience.

The documentation of participatory projects needs to take collaborative aspects into account. Audio-visual files can capture these collaborative aspects; for instance, interviews can be held with different collaborators. Ideally, the documentation of participatory arts projects will trace the development of a project from its inception, representing different stages as they develop. This requires long term support and commitment. Documentation in video is also bulky in terms of storage, so it might help to identify early on the most essential aspects of a project. Some questions to consider are;

• Which kind of document best represents the artist's intentions?

• Which documents exemplify researchers' goals and data most effectively?

• Are material processes visible in photographs or videos taken during workshops or in the studio?

• Are participatory practices also visible?

• Can a work's dimensions and format be properly gauged in photographs?

• Is the broader cultural, natural or urban context evident in the documentation?
• Has the right resolution been used for this document's (online or printing) purposes?

• Does the length of the video convey enough information about the project?

• Can I collect photographic evidence from others who were present during an event? How do their photographs differ from those of the artist or researcher?

schemes. Including documents that help policymakers better visualise the impact of the arts on individual participants and communities can help to strengthen policies focusing on social welfare rather than populist principles. Supported by photographic and other types of documents, policies can articulate more effectively a school's, museum's or other institution's commitment towards the promotion of the arts and towards a more demonstrable participation in cultural activities. When planning for documentation in relation to policy-making, artists would benefit from reflecting about the following questions:

• How can documentation become a catalyst for real change?

• Will the planned documentation inspire the confidence of different stakeholders?

• Will documentation communicate the project's vision clearly to policymakers?

• Which kinds of documents would be able to help policymakers identify priorities in this specific town or environment?

• Will documentation indicate future creative and research possibilities to residents, other stakeholders and members of the art community?

Documentation, partnerships and policy

The documentation of an artistic project reflects that project's philosophy and mission. Visible outcomes provide potential partners in other projects, granting agencies and policymakers concrete evidence of successful strategies and other facets of good practice. Documentation produced by artists and researchers can also become part of independent or civic art databases that can be invaluable resources for cultural agencies, NGOs, businesses and policymakers. Well-planned documentation of artistic projects can facilitate the development of new models of artistic production as well as new funding

Basic references for project documentation

These four pieces of information create a robust reference project documentation:

• Creator
• Title
• Date
• General Description of Object

These four pieces of information are aligned for every file about the same project in an archive. They are useful to connect items which are distributed across different ranges, be these an array in the records of an archive, a collection, a library, or otherwise. This

alignment functions as a common point of reference and, essentially, is used to make it easier to find information about the same project across different items and their specific location. Thus, a project can be recorded as:

Jordan Wolfson. Coloured Sculpture. 2016. Installation in the South Tank at Tate Modern 03 May to 31 August 2018.

Digital media has inherited the same pieces of information from archival practice. In order to sift through any type of document and its content, archives depend on a Finding Aid. This template holds these four pieces of information together, such that a user is given a quick reference to what kind of content is available and where to find it. In traditional archives, this information is split into a layered hierarchy which, firstly, refers to an accumulation of material, described as a Collection or Fonds; secondly, a range of files which are comparable and share a common association, i.e. described as a Series; thirdly, a File which is used to hold multiple documents under the same Finding Aid and the four pieces of information listed here.

Following the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, this alignment of tags was streamlined for digitisation in archives across the world. Here is a combination of tags for a single point of reference of multiple items in a file.

• **Creator -** Write the Name and Surname of the Lead Author(s) (if necessary, use semicolon for additional authors)

• **Title -** Write the full title of the project by the lead author (if necessary, use semicolon)

• **Date -** Write the date of its original presentation (format date by yyyymmdd)

• **General description -** Write about the object in the context of a presentation (avoid repetition and be precise)

If documentation includes audiovisual material, having versions of it in different versions will allow the project to be presented easily;

• **A Low-Quality File -** This can be used for quick previews, such as a thumbnail in a list among other files

• **An Online-Quality File -** This can be used as a mezzanine file to share on personal devices and online platforms. It is also used for formal presentations, general access and reuse, such as exhibitions and festivals.

• **A High-Quality File -** This can be used as preservation master, and ideally is locked in storage for safekeeping.

A usable online copy of a video can reach up to 1080p, and be available in MP4, H.264, MOV, or a WMV at 1920x1080. These requirements can change depending on systematic constraints, such as the internet connection, the platform running your media, or a project's collaborators. If participants do not have access to a device which can provide the minimum requirements for an online copy, a set of

still images can be used and combined with an interview to describe the same project.

The copyright notices needed for documentation can vary by jurisdiction, however generally, the fields marked below are necessary. A differentiation should be made between the rights holder (for example, the artist), the owner of the object (such as a collector or a production company), and the owner or producer of the object's reproduction (for example, the photographer).

On the other hand, an Alternative Copyleft Notice allows for levels of reuse and remix, such that any user is allowed to copy, distribute, and modify it under the Free Art License. Such an approach allows for an open and free sharing of material.

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CONCLUSION

Raphael Vella

Evidence of the important roles that participatory arts research may play in a variety of applied social contexts, ranging from work with ethnic groups, urban communities, mental health settings, schools and many others is present in a broad range of literature. Whilst benefiting from such literature and other specific examples of good practice in the field of the arts, this toolkit has a more generic goal – that of bridging the more academic disciplines of qualitative and quantitative research with the day-to-day practices of artists and other stakeholders engaged in collaborative productions and processes. The two areas are neither mutually exclusive, nor do they exist in opposition to each other, and we hope that this toolkit goes some way in showing that they can be part of a fruitful dialogue. Arts-based methods of research are increasingly mixing creative and reflexive processes generated by artists with qualitative and other methods that usually carry a stronger association with the social sciences (Sullivan 2005).

Yet challenges exist in most arts projects that attempt to bring together the needs and agendas of different cultural institutions, NGOs, university departments, artistic practitioners, community members, gatekeepers, and so on. The toolkit does not aim to iron out differences or disagreements; rather, it discusses issues related to recruitment, participatory strategies, methodologies, education, documentation and other relevant areas from various perspectives, including online realities that have become more dominant than ever in present times. While the toolkit does offer practical suggestions for those researchers and artists who venture to work in naturalistic and other settings, it often presents information in the form of questions or points to reflect on.

One question that artists and researchers working with participants certainly need to reflect on is related to a balance of artistic impact, civic engagement and quantifiable outcomes that are expected in participatory arts projects of this sort. While the arts can certainly have a profound impact on community life, researchers need to explore ways of shedding light on specific strategies and processes that work better in different contexts. However, research can only clarify such situations if it is supported by rigorous artistic practitioners who engage others in critical thinking processes by asking difficult, innovative and, occasionally, confrontational questions. We hope that this toolkit helps to contextualise artistic work within wider political processes that can affect and restrict social life, but that can also be transformed.

REFERENCES

Sullivan, G. (2005). *Art practice as research: Inquiry in the visual arts*. Sage.

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Karsten Xuereb researches and teaches cultural policy and relations in Europe and the Mediterranean. He is a member of the scientific committees of Brokering Intercultural Exchange (https://managingculture.net) and The Phoenicians' Cultural Route of the Council of Europe (http://fenici.net/en), the latter on behalf of the Maltese cultural association Inizjamed (https://www.inizjamed.org). His writing and videos are accessible at https://culturalpolicy.blog.

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Participatory Arts Projects:
A Practical Toolkit**