

IMMER #1 2018

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INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON MUSEUM EDUCATION & RESEARCH
Rethinking Museum Theory and Practices

This publication comes out of the first edition of IMMER #1 *International Meeting on Museum Education & Research. Rethinking Museum Theory and Practices* that took place at Museu do Douro (Douro Museum), Peso da Régua, Portugal, on the 23rd and 24th May 2018. IMMER is a project designed within the PhD programme in Arts Education of Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto with the support of i2ADS - Research Institute in Art, Design and Society, FBAUP and Museu do Douro Foundation.

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Museu do Douro Foundation | i2ADS | 2019

Published by: i2ADS - Research Institute in Art, Design and Society

Faculty of Fine Arts (FBAUP) - U. Porto

ISBN: 978-989-54417-3-0



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IMMER – DESIGNING A PLACE FOR THE INTERSECTION OF CRITICAL DISCOURSES ON MUSEUM EDUCATION

Marta Coelho Valente

* Translated by Fernanda Maio

The publication now being introduced seeks to materialize the assembly of intertwined discourses that shaped the first edition of IMMER - *International Meeting on Museum Education & Research. Rethinking Museum Theory and Practices*¹, a meeting that took place in the context of the doctoral programme in Arts Education of Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto, produced by i2ADS - Research Institute in Art, Design and Society, in partnership with Fundação Museu do Douro.

IMMER was conceived with the purpose of creating a time and a space dedicated to the sharing and confrontation of experiences, in a broadened perspective of the interpenetration of discourses between theory and practice, focused on the educational territory in museums or other cultural structures – about its practical possibilities, assumptions, challenges and setbacks. On the one hand, it aimed to establish an informed field of practices and projects that have been referenced at an international scale and, on the other hand, to activate a network of critical reflection and discussion that had been deemed crucial to develop, particularly in the national territory. The first edition of IMMER launched an invitation: for rethinking the museums from the problematization of educational and research practices, focusing on the exploration

¹ IMMER #1 - *International Meeting on Museum Education & Research. Rethinking Museum Theory and Practices* took place at Museu do Douro, Peso da Régua, Portugal, on May 23rd and 24th, 2018. Information available at <https://immer.fba.up.pt/2018/>

of dissident and transformative educational processes, consistent with more democratic and socially engaged values².

Within the current framework we recognize a change concerning the discourses that are part of the institutional policies and programmes, which seem to want to dissolve the traditional symbolic barrier between the museums, and their local contexts, and the people. Programmes are being presented that testify the will to transform the relationships with the publics, that focus on concepts of collaboration, activism and social change and seem to appear as alternatives to the still generalised positionings that embrace illusory processes of inclusion, centred on an increase and loyalty of new publics, that perpetuate the disciplining power that the museum diffuses, or superficial processes of participation in which, as Bernadette Lynch argued in the text that she presents, “the participants are, in reality, treated as passive beneficiaries rather than active agents”. Within this ambiguous and conflicting scenario that describes the current policies and practices it is important to rethink the educational component in institutions and to explore its alternative relational possibilities and the potentialities of change that can be unleashed. In this sense it matters to question: how can the educational space in museums create a common space, i.e., of creation of shared meanings, where the differences, the approaches and the singularities of those involved in the relationships are exposed and discussed? How can it become a space for active solidarity, in which possibilities of agency substantiate movements of justice and social change? In fact it is relevant to examine the proposals that are currently enunciated and to question ourselves about the narratives in which we are involved, to understand what they in fact translate and which effects they produce in order to, from there, reflect on how we may position ourselves for

² In <https://immer.fba.up.pt/2018/about.html>. The central theme of the research I am developing and that laid the foundations for conceiving IMMER, which has been presented in seminars and publications: Valente, M. C. (2018). *Challenges and tensions in the relationships between museums and their landscapes. The educational proposals of the Museu do Douro*. Presentation proposal to IMMER #2 - International Meeting on Museum Education & Research – Rethinking Museum Theory and Practices, Peso da Régua, Portugal. Available at <https://immer.fba.up.pt/textos/marta.html>; Valente, M. C. (2018). *Questioning relational possibilities and public engagement in museum education*. Paper presented at IMMER #1 - International Meeting on Museum Education & Research – Rethinking Museum Theory and Practices, Peso da Régua, Portugal.

the change and what tools to use within the existing conditions: do our practices effectively inscribe inside a transparency frame in what concerns the real involvement of the people, where the differences, the confrontation, the divergencies and the natural conflicts of relationships are accepted? Just as Bernadette Lynch proposes: are our practices “Passive or active? Empowering or disempowering? Operational or performative? Pity-porn or social change?”

The challenge will be to think of the museum not only as a space open to the outside, where one is invited to be a part of, but in a more implied way, as a place where a part is taken; not only as a space for meeting or consultation, but where cross-lines of knowledge and experiences flow from the intervening agents involved in the construction of new meanings and actions; not only as a place for consensual dialogue but as a place that accepts and enhances confrontation and conflict in the involvement in decision-making³.

For the challenge launched by IMMER, researchers and professionals from the fields of education, artistic practice and curation came together as speakers at the meeting, presenting their dissertations and experiences, inciting discussion and making visible several educational approaches in museums and points of questioning around alternative relational possibilities. This sharing didn't have the objective of finding definitive answers or solutions for acting. Instead, and starting from the proposed thematic field and the particular frames that were being exposed, it aimed to create arguments capable of generating joint discussion with the participants, considering the urgency to explore what is not always easy to reveal – the challenges, the tensions and the conflicts –, traditionally occult, but of extreme importance in the sense that it is from an open and transparent reflective frame that it becomes viable to envision a change in the future, i.e., it is by recognizing the challenges and the conflicts that new change enhancing practices may arise – like Janna Graham questions in her text, “how can our uneasiness become the site of our research and from there the source of our interventions?”

From the common will to register what happened at IMMER #1, from that laboratory for the construction of shared, intertwined meanings, that we have sought to create, came the idea of compiling

³ Valente, M. C. (2017). The Museum and the Landscape: The Educational Proposals of the Douro Museum. *Museum International*, 69 (1-2), 156-163. doi:10.1111/muse.12159.

the voices, expressions and manifests that occurred. To that end, we have decided to organize the texts in the publication according to the sequence presented in the programme of the meeting, in an attempt to mirror the movements gathered there. It is important to note that, given the specificity of each text in what concerns the style of bibliographical referencing, we have opted for respecting the organization and the style established by each author⁴.

We would like to express here our deepest appreciation to the authors that so willingly acceded to our request for collaboration in the meeting and the publication. And a special thank you to i2ADS - Research Institute in Art, Design and Society, to Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto and to Fundação Museu do Douro for welcoming the project, which anticipates already its second edition, a thank you that is extended equally to all the collaborators and stakeholders that were involved and made possible this first meeting and this compilation of texts that seeks to activate an extended, continued and situated reflection dynamics.

⁴The editorial option was to respect the style of referencing proposed by each author as expressed in her or his text.

WILL MUSEUMS MAKE US BETTER? WILL MUSEUMS MAKE AS HAPPIER? WILL MUSEUMS MAKE US CIVILIZED?

Catarina S. Martins¹

This text results from my opening remarks at the First International Meeting on Museum Education and Research that took place at Museu do Douro, an event that is now (in 2019) preparing its second edition.

The event was organized by i2ADS – Research Institute in Art, Design and Society, which I was, and am, directing, and by the Museu do Douro. The idea for the first edition came from Marta Valente, a PhD student, and as part of her research project². I was, at the time, one of the persons opening the Meeting, and this text, as explained before, was prepared for that occasion. However, and as I stated at that meeting, my specialization is not in museum education and my interest in museums is merely theoretical and speculative. It is true that I work in arts education, and that I am interested in thinking about the kinds of education that take place, are reproduced, or are being (re)invented, within museums and cultural institutions in general, but I always try to raise questions more than to find answers or solutions. I remember at the Meeting someone coming to me and saying that if I was working in the field, maybe I would become less critical in relation to museums as power institutions, and that the past is important but that what is happening in the present is much different from the past. In a way, I agree and, in a way, I completely disagree with such affirmations.

I work at a University, and we all know what universities are becoming in the present. It is not only the marketing languages that invade our daily teaching and researching tasks, but also a kind of catering that today marks what we are supposed to do, to deliver and to evaluate. And it is precisely within this context that I find the opportunities to question what is assumed as being the natural and inevitable

¹ Researcher at i2ADS – Research Institute in Art, Design and Society/Faculty of fine Arts – University of Porto

² Marta Valente is a PhD student at the Faculty of Fine Arts (within the Arts Education PhD Programme), in which i2ADS is based, and developed her research at the Educational Services of Museu do Douro.

development of things. In a Derridean sense, my aim is to think the possible impossible; that space where thinking tries to go beyond its present contingencies.

I try to look into the present with an eye to the past. Not that I am a kind of Angelus Novus, that looks to the past while he is being taken into the future, but I think that it is important to historicize the present in order to understand better who we are, how we came to be what and who we are, and to think about the possibilities and impossibilities of becoming something that is not yet known.

I think that the field of the arts – and the museums also occupy a central place there –, is very easily captured by different kinds of power and establishes itself as a field of power.

I will travel, briefly, to the 19th century.

The argument of the arts as a moral and civilizing technology was part of a way of reasoning about government, territory and the making of citizens as part of a new body called ‘population’. Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1991) called this new art of government, ‘governmentality’. The neologism is useful to evidence the ‘government of mentality’, or, in other words, the conduct of the conduct by each person, transformed into a citizen. Citizens are not born, but made. In modernity, museums, as well as schools and the family (as an institution), were those places in which citizenry as the belonging to a community and to a nation were fabricated.

The museums were thought in close connection with a rationality for the government of the populational body, working as an antidote for risky behaviours and even more to the possibilities they could open for an inner transformation of each individual. During the second half of the 19th century, the effects of the arts were being discussed in various fronts and to serve several purposes. For the new industrial society, the arts, particularly drawing, was a kind of technological sublime, providing a grammar to invent, read and work with machines, but the arts were also explored as a field of leisure that, separated from the field of labour, would give the working class the opportunity to contact with the values of ‘culture’. As Tony Bennet argues, in the minds of 19th century politicians and reformers, art, “not necessarily of the highest quality, would assist the purposes of reform so long as it started the working man off on a course of aesthetic and, thereby, moral self-cultivation” (Bennet, 2007, p. 94). The government of each citizen articulated discipline with

the idea of freedom and autonomy. In most of the European states, the rhetorical mobilization of the arts as part of a public improvement provided “a moral rhetoric, a secular equivalent for religion that linked the experience of the works of art to the promise of liberty” (Taylor, 1999, p. xiv).

Art museums represented the shift from a classical episteme to a modern episteme in which a new order of things (which implied a new way of seeing, saying, and acting) appeared along a chronological and developmental line, being equivalent to the progress of civilization. The notion of history became articulated with the trilogy of the past, present and future, being the future imagined as the progress and civilization to come. In these histories – from the history of a nation to the history of art or the history of the ‘race’ –, many exclusions were in the making and, simultaneously, different kinds of citizens were being fabricated. Art museums were produced as salvation institutions whose mission was not only to preserve a certain memory and narrative of collective history, but also to enlighten those that were perceived as in need, and marked as potential threats to a certain idea of civilization, or to cultural and moral order.

During the 18th century, as part of a colonial enterprise, many European nobles started to develop practices of collecting, buying, selling, displaying and viewing art not only as part of their nobility’s power, but also as a cultural and symbolic practice that was equivalent to their superior and civilized status (Mörsch, n.d.). At a national level, the national galleries and museums were established also as one of the ways of exhibiting the nation and its greatness through the display of man’s top achievements. The Louvre Museum, as a product of the French Revolution, marks the beginning of a path that brings to the present the naturalization of the civic rituals of museums as secular institutions. Carol Duncan argues that museums, whether we are talking about the aesthetical or the educational museum, are ritual structures “designated as reserved for a special quality of attention” (1995, p. 4). The birth of the museum operated through a certain distribution of the sensible and the making of different positionings between the possibilities of contemplation or learning. Within the museum, a certain behaviour was, and still is, expected. Museums were there to affirm the nation as a modern civilization and to civilize the working class, producing a civic seeing and civic rituals. Simultaneously, a memory was being produced for the

nation and its citizens.

The arts were meant to be equivalent to a civilized status through a rhetoric of beauty and perfection that represented the highest level of human creation and, thus, as an instrument to act in problematic social zones. Poorness, drunkenness, criminality, sex, gaming, were just some of the threats to an efficient government of the state. This government did not depend on the use of coercion or force, but rather on a detailed knowledge of each of these fields that the social sciences were rationalizing as ‘social questions’ (Popkewitz, 2008). The English social reformer and philosopher Jeremy Bentham, the author of the panopticon, stated that:

“All the arts and sciences, without exception, inasmuch as they constitute innocent employments, at least of time, possess a species of moral utility, neither the less real or important, because it is frequently unobserved. They compete with, and occupy the place of those mischievous and dangerous passions and employments, to which want of occupation and ennui give of birth. They are excellent substitutes for drunkenness, slander, and the love of gaming.” (Bentham, 1825, p. 207)

The view of the arts as a powerful technology for self-regulation was soon perceived by politicians, reformers and educators. It was the open of an avenue for a will to change, both as a gun against vicious and an alternative way of spending free time, but also by the relation that a romanticized view of the arts effected within each individual (as a spectator or a producer).

Even if, in its claims, the art museum was born from the principle of talking to, and for, all citizens, it acted as a mechanism of distinctions in the making of different kinds of people.

Museums as well as schools, hospitals or the prisons emerged as, and through, new forms of social government in which new techniques of regulation and self-regulation were being enhanced and improved. It was, thus, under the moral and civilizing argument that the arts appeared as a terrain for a biopolitical strategy, and also as an instrument for the enactment of the technologies of the self in the making of a civilized being. The device of ‘civilized’ inscribed the differentiation of those who possess ‘reason’ from those who did not (Martins, 2018).

The civilizing process corresponded to a line of development in which culture and the state of being civilized were the opposite of savagery and barbarism. It implied a comparative reasoning that normalized some patterns and pathologized certain traits. This process had different nuances in different Western countries, but it corresponded to a colonial project in which hegemony was calculated through the governing of differences.

I know that, today, museums, or, at least, some museums, seem to be different. Mainly because the kind of language and the technologies of government being used are not so close to a disciplinary power, but much closer to the technologies of the self.

Neoliberal language affects all fields of our lives and this is also visible in the rhetoric that today establishes the rules of participation in museums. If we examine the discourse that today is part of museums' missions and agendas, it seems it is all about the critical, reflective, autonomous, responsible, creative and participatory citizen. It seems that museums not only open their doors, but that they rather have the great capacity to make us better, happier and more civilized. It goes almost unquestioned the idea that museums and their programmes must increase opportunities for citizen's active participation, that they have to invite us and give us the possibility of having great experiences. This, to me, seems as a consensual practice that almost makes unquestionable the 'good' and almost 'innocent' side of participation as it usually puts into play other notions that seem also to be naturalized: inclusion, negotiation, democratic decision-making.

One of the topics of this meeting that I find most interesting is that of 'participation', that buzzword: participation! I have to confess that I am tired and bored with this word that today, along with the words 'creativity', 'autonomy' and 'freedom', is an ingredient in all the speeches, from the political to the educational or artistic.

Who defines who participates? Who has the power of enunciation? Who defines the rules of the game? Who defines what is good, for what and for whom? Are museums really interested in putting their own agendas, that respond to more general international agendas, at risk, by opening up the possibility of a political activism?

Who are those that are defined as the target groups for participation? Marginalized groups? Communities? Migrants? Groups thought in terms of a social or chronological hierarchy? Aren't those the groups

that are defined in social, economic, political, educational terms, as needing something that they seem to ignore yet, but that these salvation institutions and experts will soon tell them and explain? Isn't art being instrumentalized once again in history, not by its political force, but by the common-sensical, romanticized and psychologized notion and assumption that it possesses a vital role for creating the conditions for kindness to grow, to increase the levels of happiness or wellbeing? Despite best intentions, aren't these practices part of a more general one of anaesthesia for the fabrication of the productive and efficient citizen and worker who has the illusion of being participating in, and for, a great cause?

As Nora Sternfeld argues, "today, art and culture are no longer supposed to merely be there 'for all', rather, under the banner of 'participation', art is now supposed to be done 'with everyone'". Some target groups are invited to participate, but "they are expected to be available as objects of representation. Within this context, art and cultural education are ascribed the role of a bridge between these target groups and the elitist themes of the institutions. They are expected to close the gaps in the (educational) responsibilities that the institutions have failed to fulfil – and to ensure that the institution remains as fully intact as possible. Within this context, participation usually means interaction" (Sternfeld, 2013, p. 2).

What is the very notion of participation doing, in terms of its effects? Again, I want to stress that museums, as well as other power instruments, are constantly making certain kinds of subjects. Discourse is not only the surface of language that describes objects and people, but it acts by making those objects and people. Those that are seen in need of rescue, of being empowered by the benefits that the museums offer, actually are constantly being deprived of their political agency.

What to say when museums and their educational programmes think and say that they are being inclusive, collaborative and empowering, increasing the wellbeing of the under-represented? How, and for whom, are the museums' engagement practices useful?

I said in the beginning that I am much more interested in raising questions than in delivering recipes. I think that questions can make us think within the practices and institutions in which we are involved and can make us more conscious of the powers that we are always activating, and also of those that are being activated upon ourselves. The past mat-

ters much more than we usually think for understanding what is being naturalized in the present. My main concern over the participatory agendas of museums is related to their effects in the making of people and in inscribing, maintaining and even reinforcing the structures of power. It is not a power exercised through brute force, but a power that is exercised through the 'soul' of each citizen.

Isn't participation being instrumentalized through the good intentions and salvation rhetoric of institutions, as a societal-sedative? This is my main question.

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COCKTAIL OF QUESTIONS

Denise Pollini and Raquel Ribeiro dos Santos

* Translated by Fernanda Maio

I don't know if it is necessary, but I think it's funny that the museum is used for people to play in a different way and that they feel themselves in a different way.

Elvira Leite

What are the criteria for evaluating the success of an education service?

Denise Pollini

Making silence into a possibility for response.

Raquel Ribeiro dos Santos

As a mediator you are always on the wrong side.

Nora Landkammer, with reference to Janna Graham

The museum is an education service.

Elvira Leite

I will repeat, for everyone.

Lara Soares

Denise Pollini and Raquel Ribeiro dos Santos, Heads of Education from two different institutions, in Oporto and Lisbon respectively, propose to facilitate a shared session. They will not speak directly about the achievements of the cultural institutions and departments which they, ultimately, represent. A subversive and collaborative act. A coincidence unites them: they both collect instigating questions placed by speakers, poets and other colleagues. From this collection¹, now made into a common heritage, they opt for drawing a very simple device. A game. A socialization protocol.

Dozens of questions, thoughtfully selected among the spoil of both speakers, after being printed in photocopier paper, were moulded by origami method into sushi shapes. In the place of the seaweed, that usually

¹ Even if through two relatively different devices, Raquel Ribeiro dos Santos had already brought to the public, also in conferences, a collection of questions. In 2010, in the conference “Em nome das artes ou em nome dos públicos?” (Culturgest), and in 2012 at “II Congreso Internacional: los museos en la educación: De la acción a la reflexión” (Museu Thyssen).

surrounds the rice, papers in 5 different colours corresponding to 4 thematic axes (a 5th colour, the “vegetarian menu” signalled the questions in English to contemplate the international speakers). The different questions were then placed in trays that circulated among the audience at the beginning of the session. Two technological devices accompanied the game. The 60 seconds virtual chronometer, projected in large format on the screen in the room, would guide the participant’s time for intervention. An online roulette composed of 4 colours projected on the same screen, commanded by the computer, raffled the next question to be made public.

The collection was structured in 4 axes that proved to be encompassing of the main key ideas that were wanted to be brought to the debate: 1) what is mediation, after all? 2) public *versus* publics? 3) interpretation? reading? 4) institutions. Even if these axes have been fundamental to develop the debate and the critical thinking of both speakers, early on a decision was made that no individual points of view would be presented from the start. It was left to the participants of the conference the chance to share their readings of the questions prior to the presentation of the speakers. This protocol was expected to dilute the boundary between presenter and participant, to broaden the space and time for debate and, ultimately, to build common intellectual heritage by instigating public intervention.

Still on the 4 axes that organized the collection of questions, it is pertinent to highlight that they were shared with the audience only as a visible title in the projected digital roulette. Their conceptual characterization was left to an eventual conclusion. The device of the game, in randomly drawing the questions, did not impose the need for prior definition and allowed the whole group to progressively intuit the common characteristics to the different thematic axis.

After the result of the roulette draw defining the colour and, therefore, the corresponding focus theme, one of the participants who had selected a “sushi” with that colour would read a question to any other participant who had the same colour.

The possibility of disobeying the rules of the game was included, from the start, in the instructions of the proposed protocol. With an apparent process open to debate, the protocol imposed numerous constraints on the group. It did not invite the interpellation of the intervenient who replied to the question, the time to answer was very

short, and several questions were polysemic or contained a critical positioning whose mere reply initiative compromised whomever answered.

Disobedience was adopted mostly as a resource in rejecting the tyranny of time. Early on the chronometer lost its usefulness. All the questions had an answer (or several attempts at answering). The speakers of anterior and posterior panels were an integrant and very active part in the process of replying: Nora Landkammer, Samuel Guimarães and Sofia Victorino.

From the numerous reflections that could be obtained from this instigation, we highlight three.

The valuing of uncertainty

There was an interesting direct access to a state of debate activating of personal and interdisciplinary sharing, almost in a tone of confidences and exposure of vulnerabilities. An intimate process characteristic of the recognition of doubt and uncertainty as shared experience held in common.

The proposed methodology sought exactly to open the space for uncertainty, and this decision was found among the founding concepts that guided it: to replace the presentation “of what has been done”, by the respective programmes of the departments of education of the institutions that we represent (respectively Culturgest and Serralves), with the instauration of a welcoming forum for uncertainty as structuring element of the work in these departments.

What we could describe as “pedagogical value of uncertainty” is essential to the work developed by the museums’ department of education insofar as it embraces the process as a value to be recognized and not as what we could classify as “final product”.

The critique to the question drawn

“Do we trust our publics?” (question introduced by the speakers in the panel)

“I don’t know if we do... I do! How can we mistrust? Mistrust what?” (from Elvira Leite’s answer to the question)

The critique to the question drawn, a form of meta-analysis, was incorporated as a natural ante-chamber process of the response, often in dialogue with issues that were already part of the critical heritage of that particular session, but also with other panels promoted by IMMER during that day.

Very quickly the developed mechanisms reached the expected result: they transformed from a socialization protocol to an assembly of peers who share the doubts that emerge from their reflection and their practice, debate points of view and make use of questions as trampolines for flights unheard of.

The possibility of critique to the question drawn has a very particular advantage in the strategy of amplifying the place of the speakers' speech and, also, in the power statement that the citations, in their written crystallized format, could contain.

The expanded field of response

“If one is not free to answer, what is the use of questions? If the answers are false, what is the use of questioning?” (*Ai Ferri Corti: confronto inevitável com o existente, seus defensores e seus falsos críticos. Textos subterrâneos – Discórdia Edições: 2000, p. 22, own translation*)

It began with response times of 60 seconds and, progressively, the group got to develop the same question, in interventions of different participants, for over 25 minutes. This development was not carried under the form of multiple or diverse individual responses as might be supposed, but under the form of expansion of the current state of that collective response. An expanded field of response. A process of response prolonged not only in time, but mostly prolonged by a collective body that was responding as a construct.

The Sanctuary of Fátima, Stalin and Elvis Presley were invoked. We spoke of intimacy, partisanship, subjectivity, narratives, trust, transversal knowledge and teams, of the end of curatorial hierarchies and of the sharing of responsibility. We went through radical diplomacy and evaluation as a spiritual exercise, but also as possibility of counterpower

and bilateral transformation. We have inquired about whether the word “Education” should be in the name of the museums’ departments of education and what would be the alternative if it were to be replaced.

Lastly, we have approached the theme of the profound complexity in the articulation of these services in their relationship with the remaining departments or sectors of the institutions where they are, besides the obstacles in achieving the emancipatory principles that guide them.

Without dialogue there is no understanding. The question is only worth being asked if it is open to the unexpected, if it embraces divergence as an essential ingredient to the construction of new understandings.

The art of encounter has its own materials and techniques that are a part of the usual resources and mechanisms in museums’ departments of education and in the programming that activates public participation. The “Cocktail of Questions” proposed to summon some of those techniques, from common materials and spoils, promoting internal relations, without a previous statement.

More than presenting conclusions, the procedure proved to be extremely valuable in promoting the confluence of (un)certainities and doubts, by establishing a collaborative mechanism for the exchange of experiences in the area of educational action and participation in Museums and Cultural Institutions.

OFF CENTRE AND IN BETWEEN: A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE EDUCATIONAL PROJECT OF CENTRO DE ARTE OLIVA – SÃO JOÃO DA MADEIRA – PORTUGAL

Lara Soares¹

Of movement – Down and up the street

*“Is this a museum? Or a factory? I know... It’s an art factory”
(Primary school pupil from EB1 Carquejido)*

This small discovery by an 8-year-old pupil visiting Centro de Arte Oliva for the first time is very telling about the way spaces and shapes impact and haunt our body.

They left school on foot, expectant of a project about to begin, where artists would talk about art and teachers would teach in a different way.

Centro de Arte Oliva² is situated in São João da Madeira, a small town in the north of Portugal. In 2009, this mostly industrial town decided to renovate and repurpose the spaces previously occupied by factories, which were then derelict, converting them into cultural and artistic projects.

In 2013, part of this project comes to be with the creation of Centro de Arte Oliva, which would accommodate two contemporary art collections, the Norlinda and José Lima Collection – one of the greatest private catalogues of contemporary art in Portugal – and the Treger/Saint Silvestre Collection – one of the most important catalogues of art brut/outsider art in Europe.

In 2017, under new artistic direction, the possibility arises for the creation of an educational project which is intended to work in articula-

¹ Lara Soares is a PhD Researcher in Arts Education, part of the i2ADS and supported by national funding – FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, with the project reference: SFRH/BD/128602/2017.

² Centro de Arte Oliva is the only artistic institution in the country dedicated to contemporary art and art brut/outsider art. With an exhibition space of around twenty-five hundred square metres, organised into three galleries, it provides an annual programme of temporary exhibitions. The exhibition programme regularly and continuously showcases the art collections deposited at Centro de Arte, along with exhibitions by renowned artists, both national and international.

tion with the exhibition and curatorial view of this place.

This project soon becomes a possibility for a public space to create a dialogue with the people and the surrounding area. A political project, in the sense that it is not neutral and for that reason it is also part of a discussion, a practice and a broader reflection in the town and before civil society.

Right from the start, a team of artists and educators was created, which didn't exist before, partners in this project, who allow for its growth and daily transformation.

This 8-year-old boy who is amazed³ when he arrives at Centro de Arte Oliva is part of a very important project that symbolically begins in a primary school.

The Down and Up the Street project is created out of a will to bring together the school and the museum in order to build new ways of combining pedagogical and artistic practices. This desire originated a training programme with all the teachers and pupils from EB1 Carquejido, João da Silva Correia School Grouping, which served as a trial balloon for a new thinking regarding artistic education in primary schools.

In these sessions, different formats of public sharing were tested, always in a permanent collaborative dialogue between teachers and artists, thus creating for each of them several practice enabler devices, memory activators or crossings for processes of transformation of concepts and research materials.

³ "amazement", in Oxford English Dictionary, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/amazement> A feeling of great surprise or wonder. = ASTONISHMENT, SURPRISE, BEWILDERMENT, SHOCK, STUPEFACTION, DISMAY, CONSTERNATION, DEVASTATION, CONFUSION, PERPLEXITY, INCREDULITY, DISBELIEF, BAFFLEMENT, SPEECHLESSNESS, AWE, WONDER, WONDERMENT.



Picture 1. Down and Up the Street Project.

The drawing of a square on the floor, which works as an activator for thought, questioning or simply a place for being, is one of the examples of a device these teachers and pupils would find as they arrived for each session.

Or in another way, already at school, opening the field of pedagogical practice, for derivations of a proposal tested only among teachers and that was individually implemented and transformed with their group of pupil in the classroom. Using the book *Siga a seta* (Martins, 2010), by publishing company Planeta Tangerina, each teacher experimented, transformed and recreated the initial proposal taking into consideration for example:

1. their own rhythm (some proposals were longer, other more occasional);
2. their students' moment of learning (considering that classes spanned from pre-school to primary school and would be in different places of the curriculum);
3. different subject relations (articulating contents from Portu-

guese, Maths, today's World, artistic expression or others).

Though limited to this school, this project allowed for the crossing of some more rigid places in these school systems and, in a sort of pollinizing effect, the creation of wills and desires of change in the training of teachers who feel isolated everyday between curriculums and a time that seems to flow at lightning speed.

The possibility of creating (im)possibilities within an extremely constructed and structured context was decisive for the sharing of practices between schools and their relation with the town's cultural institutions, which are sometimes visited in a very superficial and disconnected fashion.

The *Down and Up* the Street project opened a channel of communication between these two spaces which, while naturally having different functions and positions, are both part of the individual and collective construction of the teachers and pupils, parents and cultural operators. Thus, it is that which Foucault (Tepper, 2010) problematizes with the notion of happening, in the relation with an ontology of the present where the subject has the ability to question himself as a possibility of his own composition, as an autonomous subject, who questions the limits of the present and the possibility of their transgression or transformation.

This movement of going down and up the street, included in the title of the project, also reveals another movement, from the inside to the outside and back again, which makes this happening an experience for questioning and a generator for broader knowledge.

It bears mentioning that this project, as a micro-action inside a cultural and artistic institution like Centro de Arte Oliva, which is dependent on the municipality and an extremely formal skeleton of public policies, makes it possible to maintain a work methodology based on the unpredictable and proposes wandering as a metaphor for action and thought.

Summoning the figure of the pirate that Larrosa (Bondía, 2000) explores in his text about the notion of experience, particularly in the field of education and its relation with the idea of territory of passage, where the subject is allowed to tumble, fall or lose balance in the unknown.

Of movement – Centre and periphery

Let us start by bringing to this text the notion of *dialectical contemporaneity* by Claire Bishop (Bishop & Perjovschi, 2013) which mobilizes an attention to the possible approximation to the works of art showcased in museums, rather than highlighting a style or a time associated with its practice.

This notion, acknowledged as “a dialectical method and a politicized project with a more radical understanding of temporality” finds in this instance an open field between the educational and the artistic which tackles the consequences of that position.

“One of the consequences of approaching institutions through this category is a rethinking of the museum, the category of art that it enshrines, and the modalities of spectatorship it produces.” (Bishop & Perjovschi, 2013)

Bishop’s book also deals with the creation of images by artist Dan Perjovschi, who shows us very clearly the countless possibilities of interpretation and approximation to these places.

One dimension that his drawings bring us is the dimension of the audience and the countless times we find ourselves between the centre and the periphery and we don’t really know how to cross or walk in order to move from this place where we apparently belong. Either as culture professionals or as spectators of those same places.

With a view to materialize this dimension, we bring you the project that allowed us to think carefully about those crossings – Transatlantic Soup⁴.

⁴Transatlantic soup is a simple recipe: a work of art, a Municipal Market, three cooks who have lived here and there. Add local ingredients and others from far away. Mix it all on a Saturday, gently, season everything with memories, each other’s stories and a pinch of curiosity. In the end, a different soup at every meeting, for every curious person who might like to join in and talk.



Pictures 2 and 3. Transatlantic Soup Project.

A project conceived by artist Amanda Midori, who is part of the team of the Centro de Arte Oliva educational project and who materializes this dimension of being a spectator in the confection of a soup.

This project emerges as a proposal for the activation of another, called Artworks for the town, Norlinda and José Lima Collection, which created a circuit of artworks for the town of São João da Madeira, occupying places such as the municipal library, a music academy or the municipal market, where these soups are created and savoured.

The soups are cooked at the market, with local products, and serve as a stepping stone for the creation of a public sphere where discussion, questioning and strangeness take place. The questions arise, the bodies position themselves, words give rise to gestures.

Speeches mix and the expanded field of mediation overcomes institutional speech, which is premeditated and structured. Bringing here the notion of “Pedagogy of the event” by Dennis Atkinson (Atkinson, 2017) summons a whole team to the thought of proposals and places we cannot deal with, which move away from practice and allow us to invade this public sphere which we commonly call the community of the territory where we act.

The place of the collector that shifts to the arbitrary thought of the public, the politician that enunciates the event to the population and appropriates the constructed words and images, the place of the artist/mediator that cooks, welcomes and gives back to those who come forward, an artistic direction that goes beyond walls, a museum that enunciates the popular with the erudite, the place of the centre and the periphery that are either accentuated or overlapped.

Concrete places for discussion and production of knowledge, which activate forces of power between the artistic and the educational fields, between the public and the private, between the political and the institutional.

This (IMMER #1) is also a place for meetings and conflicts where the aim is to open fields of discussion between different presentations and that is why the conversation⁵ format seemed to us to be a pretext

⁵ Lara Soares and Andreia Magalhães’ participation in IMMER #1, on 23rd and 24th May 2018 at Museu do Douro, Peso da Régua with the title *Off centre and in between: A conversation about the definition and development of the educational project Núcleo de Arte Oliva.*

for discourse and reflection for those who listened to us. With this text, we wished to establish two pillars of thought that span our practice. To highlight the importance of a micro-scale work, summoning a project in the scope of school which was created at the invitation of the school itself, but always related to the museum's ability to step outside of itself and create dialogues with those who cross its path and so bring a transatlantic project for the creation of unstable and experimental crossings that allow us to walk together through the interstitial spaces.

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PITY PORN OR ACTIVISM FOR SOCIAL CHANGE? A CRITICAL LOOK AT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, PEDAGOGY AND ACTIVISM IN MUSEUMS TODAY

Bernadette Lynch

While museums increasingly use the language of social justice and go so far as to claim they are adopting a rights-based approach for social change, the fact is that change is something with which not all museums are comfortable.

Museum claims in support of social change must be interrogated for the extent to which museums enable those whose lives are affected the most by inequality, prejudice and social injustice, to articulate their own priorities – and to make change happen. And if this is indeed the museum's social commitment, it has a significant impact right across the museum's professional practice from research to curatorship and education.

Yet, despite this rhetoric of activism and social change, the question we return to time and time again, is the effect of the museum's social inclusion and participation resulting in people becoming active agents or rather, passive beneficiaries? For example, a recent turn in 'participatory practice' in many museums has involved targeting those most marginalised, and accessing social and healthcare (especially mental healthcare) funding to do so. Yet, targeting such individuals brings with it the danger of returning to a more passive and less challenging client/carer relationship, positioning the museum as saviour.

Meanwhile, the stories and images of those most marginalised when included in museum displays can also elicit what some have called, 'pity porn'. This is a useful term in this regard. It is an unattributed phrase also known as 'poverty porn' that first appeared in the 1980s in reference to charities portraying images of suffering to generate more aid. Generally, these days it refers to any type of production or exhibition designed to elicit pity from others – museum visitors for example – but without actually making a difference for the people concerned.

In this way, while the museum claims 'activism', those most marginalised may find themselves even more powerless, while the museum

may be reinforcing (sometimes even helping create) further categories of victimhood, stereotyping and marginalisation. It is a common debate whether it is justifiable or not to portray stereotypes and to use sensationalism in order to generate empathy. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie notes in a webcast that “The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (Adichie 2009).

One always has to question attitudes towards pain and humiliation on the part of well-meaning institutions, and once again to ask questions of purpose, in terms of active or passive outcomes for those who are targeted in this way – and for museum audiences as well.

The rhetorician, Pheng Cheah (2014) from Berkeley reminds us in the strongest terms how what he calls the “humanitarianization of the world” destroys the worlds of aid-receiving peoples because it regards them as passive suffering victims and objects of pity and erodes their dignity and self-determination.

I have seen this in my own practice, where engaging in collaborative practice museums inadvertently diverts and defuses justifiable anger and potential resistance on the part of their collaborators¹. I have written extensively elsewhere a critique of museum participation in which the participants are, in reality, treated as passive beneficiaries rather than active agents, resulting in “empowerment-lite” (Lynch 2017a,b,c; 2014 a, b, c; 2013; 2011a,b,c,d; 2010a,b). My research has shown that even the most well-meaning museum relationships with others that offer “empowerment-lite” only serve to disempower and control people’s contributions, particularly those that challenge to museum’s carefully managed agenda or storyline.

False consensus and false promises are widespread within such museum public engagement practices. Meanwhile the museum tells itself it is being inclusive, collaborative and thereby empowering, increasing the ‘well-being’ of these others less fortunate – the unrepresented, the marginalised.

Social anthropologist Andrea Cornwall (2008) reminds us that simply having a seat at the table is a necessary but not sufficient condition for exercising voice. Nor is presence at the table [on the part of institu-

¹ I have written about this in a paper entitled *Legacies of Prejudice and others on conflict in museums*, here listed in bibliography.

tions] the same as a willingness to listen and respond.

I have also spent the past decade examining the effect of what I call a “politics of kindness” within socio-cultural relations in the museum (Lynch 2016), based as it increasingly has become on a notion of the museum’s humanitarianism. But this cannot go unexamined.

In other words, with the best of intentions, our kindness can actually undermine the empowerment of those whom we are attempting to ‘empower’, effectively preventing their self-empowerment.

Thus, by continuing to place people in the position of beneficiaries of the museum’s generously inclusive gaze, the museum/gallery exercises invisible power that inadvertently robs people of their active agency and, most importantly, the necessary possibility of resistance.

This is particularly evident in the museum’s almost complete avoidance of conflict. This is something in which I am particularly interested, seeing it as I do as central to democratic dialogue and exchange.

The problem of which too many museums remain unaware – even some brand-new institutions – is that there are vestiges of triumphant neoliberalism running throughout this work – an assumption that simply by being ‘inclusive’ and adding some words of social activism, all other subtle and not-so-subtle traces of discrimination are eliminated.

Researching the impact of such subtly undermining processes has led me to examine the underlying institutional values and assumptions that inform the museum’s public engagement and participation practice. What clearly emerged was an understanding that the museum institution itself presents its greatest obstacle to its well-meaning engagement and participation practices.

I therefore suggest we ask these questions of our practice:

- Passive or active?
- Empowering or disempowering?
- Operational or performative?
- Pity-porn or social change?

Added to the outcome of my research was the acute realisation of the inability of museums as institutions to change themselves, without the help of others as ‘critical friends’. This directly led to an understanding of the central role of reflective organisational practice, collaborative

reflection with stakeholders as critical friends. It became abundantly apparent that ‘reflective practice’ is not some add-on or after-thought under the heading of ‘evaluation’ but is instead absolutely central to breaking through towards ethical and effective relations between museums and people. It also means collectively ‘doing something’, whilst learning from each other, challenging each other, sometimes learning in opposition to each other, but thereby beginning the process of building capabilities and thereby beginning to collectively make change happen.

Collaborative reflective practice is not easy – it’s uncomfortable. As the philosopher Ralston Saul put it, real participation is a situation of ‘permanent discomfort’ – so museums had better get used to it! But I have seen how this collective reflective practice can help museums translate their activist rhetoric into collective reality.

This was the thinking behind the Our Museum programme that grew out of my influential *Whose Cake is it Anyway?*, report (Lynch 2011a), focused as it was on museums and organisational change through collective critical engagement. In terms of, radically addressing change in the culture of museums, the *Our Museum programme*², (supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation³), has acted as a large-scale experiment in this regard – an organisational change programme for museums, working over five years across nine museums in the UK (among them large national museums) that have aimed to embed this new focus on participation and reflective practice within museums⁴. (See Lynch 2014b, Five Year Review of the programme’s progress to date).

Thus, the *Our Museum* programme is not ‘just’ about participation and engagement – it aims also to address museum sustainability through significantly raising museum self-awareness about public

² *Our Museum: Communities and museums as active partners*: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/>

³ See Paul Hamlyn Foundation <https://www.phf.org.uk/>

⁴ The four *Our Museum* evaluation criteria (derived from the *Whose Cake is it Anyway?*, report by the author, noted earlier) are outlined in detail and are available to download as a pdf from the Our Museum website here: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/>

participation, social responsibility – and above all, change⁵. The *Our Museum* programme is focused on organisational change (changing the culture of museums), so that museums can be better fit-for-purpose in working with people to achieve social change.

What do we mean by change?

Today we witness museum rhetoric increasingly adopting the notion, not only in supporting people’s individual active agency but with a wider focus on ‘social activism’ and ‘social change’.

Internationally, museums are increasingly declaring their commitment to this notion of ‘social change’. But, as Nora Landkammer⁶ of the Europe-wide Traces research project notes, “social change sounds good so long as you don’t say what the change is about.” Landkammer suggests that it may be more useful for museums to publicly focus, instead, upon “social justice” through fostering and concentrating upon a “rights-based practice”⁷.

A rights-based practice is something we must in-turn examine for its meaning in actual museum practice.

Tara Bell is an artist/researcher who has recently worked on a series of projects with Glasgow’s Riverside Museum, aimed at increasing the agency of local people. This is a rights-based practice in effect. Yet Bell notes that museums can be really effective in representing un-represented groups, but they have a great deal of difficulty in entering into

⁵ I recommend looking at the results online of this five-year programme of museum organisational change. It makes of very interesting reading, and there are lots of practical resources for organisational change on the Our Museum website: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/>

⁶ Nora Landkammer is Department Head at the Institute for Art Education at Zurich’s University of the Arts. She is also work-package leader for Education and Stakeholder Involvement in the Traces Research Project. Her project is promoting what it calls, an ‘open research atmosphere’. See TRACES: Transmitting Contentious Cultural Heritage with the Arts <http://www.traces.polimi.it/>

⁷ Traces is a three-year project (March 2016 – February 2019) which brings together artists, ethnographers, heritage agencies and other stakeholders from nine EU countries. <http://www.traces.polimi.it/>

an “active, precise criticism of either local or national government.”⁸ She asks if this means that only institutions “whose livelihood is not dependent on local or national funding” are the ones best able to enter into activist, social change partnerships with communities.” As one museum staff member stated, “I want to do stuff that is more radical than museums can handle.”⁹

This power to *do something*, change things, can be fundamentally understood as the power that people can exercise in helping civil society institutions, like museums, translate their democratic rhetoric into workable practice – to collaboratively reach, as the welfare economist, Amartya Sen (2009) puts it, a “reasoned diagnosis” for what is to be done. Thus, the emphasis in museums should therefore focus on developing people’s capability to *do something* – to facilitate people diagnosing what needs to be done and to make change happen.

Sen therefore defines a capability as “the power to do something” and stresses how ideas of social justice relate to ideas of power, capability and democracy. Therefore, we can say that activism in museums means people “doing something” (Sen 2009).

But is this always the intention behind the recent rhetoric of activism in museums? What is the intention for promoting activism in the museum? Who is intended to have the active agency – the museum or the people with whom the institution is collaborating?

Yet, there are emerging rights-based practices and rights-based museums within the museum community from which we can learn – museums that aim to go further in what might be considered the museum’s moral responsibility to help others take up their own agency in making change happen. These are museums that aim to assist people in campaigning for change with a very specific political focus – for example, how the UK (United Kingdom) deals with the dramatic growth in homelessness.

The UK’s new Museum of Homelessness (a museum project not yet with a home of its own), launched ‘State of the Nation’ in spring 2017 at the Tate Modern, a year-long creative exploration into the homelessness crisis that presently grips the UK. This campaign (for this is what

⁸ Tara Bell in interview with the author, 2017.

⁹ *Ibid.*

it is) aims at shining a light on the realities of homelessness today. It is actively pushing for change, while the activism it promotes is that of people themselves taking up that fight – those who are now, or were in the past, homeless.¹⁰

Avoiding what they openly call ‘pity-porn’ towards the homeless, their focus is on change in public perception (that is, prejudice towards the homeless), as well as policy change through lobbying government and, where necessary, agitation and disruption.

This is not pity porn, nor is it simply performative. It is most certainly about people’s rights.

If we borrow from reflections on rights-based practice in an international development context (Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall 2004), a rights-based approach must be interrogated for the extent to which it enables those whose lives are affected the most to articulate their priorities and to make change happen. Thus, a rights-based approach might be described as empowering people to know, claim and activate their rights, and increasing the ability and accountability of individuals and institutions who are responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling rights. It is also about clearly articulating those rights.

But I would add something here – and this is where some level of unease still lingers for me in this otherwise praiseworthy shift towards a focus on rights and activism – we must also ask if the museum’s activism is simply ‘performative’ or is it ‘operational’?

Active for whom, and for what?

It is more important than ever to differentiate between the museum’s activist image (for example, an exhibition on refugees or climate change) and its efforts to support others in developing their own activism for change. Should museums be asking themselves, ‘who actually benefits from the museum’s activism’?

Before looking at some examples of museum practice that is openly working towards change, my question with regard to claims for social activism in museums, is again: Whose activism? Does the museum know what it actually means when it shifts to an’ activist practice’?

¹⁰ See Museum of Homelessness website: <http://museumofhomelessness.org/>

In other words, is it possible that under the banner of active agency, are we nonetheless contradicting ourselves in our practice – and continuing to treat people as passive victims without significant agency?

At its worst, this so-called ‘activist museum practice’ may therefore inadvertently serve, if we borrow from the writer and activist, Arundhati Roy, to:

... defuse political anger and dole out as aid or benevolence what people ought to have by right. [They] alter the public psyche. They turn people into dependent victims and blunt political resistance... They have become the arbitrators, the interpreters, the facilitators. (Roy 2014)



Figure 1. Recent image from local press in Bristol reporting on solidarity actions with Calais refugees barred from entering Britain. Photo permission: Julia Shirley-Quirk.

Are museums in fact preventing active solidarity and resistance? While museums increasingly present their engagement and participation projects and programmes as examples of ‘active agency’, again, we

must ask, whose activism? Who has the active agency? And for what purpose? Who or what does it change?

The activist claim is usually based upon the simple fact that museums target marginalized communities – like refugees and asylum seekers – and offer them ‘participation’ in museum-led programmes.

As political philosopher Celikates puts it, we must be clear-sighted in helping people to act as citizens,

in many cases (most evidently, in the case of undocumented migrants and refugees) without being recognized as citizens by the state. In these ways they are reclaiming the political capacities of citizens that the state (or some other actor that acts in a state-like fashion) denies them or grants them only partially. (Celikates 2016, 14)

Let’s ask ourselves, are museums, acting in a state-like fashion, while only partially granting these capacities, these capabilities, these rights? Do we have a right to deny people knowledge of these rights, by simple not prioritizing rights when we speak about activism?

The problem is, instead of focusing on rights, museums can too easily assume the activist role on behalf of people and thereby inadvertently to deprive people of the chance to understand their rights and make change happen.

Alistair Hudson, until recently, Director of MIMA (the UK’s Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art) notes, “we need to differentiate between performative activism and operational activism – a lot of the problem with contemporary art [for example] is that it only allows it to be performative.”¹¹ Hudson expresses anxiety about exhibitions which are always performative – a ‘show’.

The concern here is the possibility of the museum’s ‘activism’ becoming just for ‘show’, in contrast to working in collaboration with people to *do something*. When the museum promotes activism for change, there is a need to differentiate between what is performative and which is operational activism in the museum.

As Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell puts it,

¹¹ From interview with the author in 2017. See also Hudson (2016) article on art museums and social justice.

Performative activism is highly visible, highly praised, but empty of strategy and impact. It is marches, rallies, viral hashtags, and grand displays of social cohesion around an issue. These efforts do not have a measurable impact of change. As the great activist organizer Saul Alinsky noted in his seminal *Rules for Radicals*, “Communication on a general basis without being fractured into the specifics of experience becomes rhetoric and it carries a very limited meaning.” (Bryant-Greenwell 2018)

While raising the museum’s visibility as an activist institution, the museum may be simply sidestepping any real commitment to helping people further their cause in a real or impactful way. In other words, performative activism without social change. As Bryant-Greenwell ads, “Authentic activism considers the endgame: protecting, expanding, or officialising human rights, not simply raising voice against the infringement of rights.” (*Ibid.*)

What are the elements of successful, activist practice in certain museums?

If some museums can do it, why do not others? Or does there continue to be an underestimation of the role museums could play in society?

Some museums *are* rising to this challenge of answering these questions while helping people to make real change happen. Under Alistair Hudson’s direction of Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) the museum’s exhibitions were influenced by his commitment to the idea of ‘the useful museum’ (inspired by international Art Util movement that he co-founded).¹² Hudson puts it this way, “The museum offers itself as a function for people to construct a story to build their lives around”.¹³ He maintains that there is an underestimation of the useful role institutions like museums could have in a community in this way.

¹² <http://www.art-util.org/about/activities/>

¹³ From interview with the author in 2017.

Hudson's vision for MIMA was very much based on establishing strong local partnerships with grassroots organisations, local authorities, development agencies and locally-based industries, situating the museum as a partner in local planning, regeneration, employment (traineeships) and social enterprise based upon full public participation, debate and co-production. He sees the museum as both a catalyst and an agent of social change.

Similarly, in California, the Yerba Buena Centre for the Arts (YBCA)¹⁴ operates with a similar commitment to activism and change. It sees itself as a social movement, a civic asset and citizen institution. YBCA believes that culture is an essential catalyst for change. Therefore, they believe that it's the responsibility of arts institutions to spur and support societal movement. Their mission includes "a commitment to inquiry, and asking the urgent questions of our time; Convenings that bridge people, communities, and sectors, and civic coalitions that create lasting change and policy shift."¹⁵ They explain how they do this, similarly (as was seen in Middlesbrough) opening up civic collaborations, dialogue and debate:

Our community's biggest challenges require collaborative solutions. That's why YBCA works with over 40 local arts, advocacy, social justice, and community organizations. We work across sectors to advance the insights, ideas, and projects that can create real change. In addition, our multi-year partnerships with the San Francisco Planning Department and the San Francisco Unified School District have yielded new ways to help citizens of all ages shape the future of their communities.¹⁶

Some museum institutions interpret activism in other ways, building upon past activist campaigning to inspire change today. The impressive Glasgow Women's Library in Scotland, (which has now gained museum status), came out of a campaign to promote equality, diversity and inclusion for women. It is a fine example of activist research and social change practice, right back to its founding and on through is current

¹⁴ See Yerba Buena Centre for the Arts, <https://www.ybca.org/>

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

practices.¹⁷

The Library's archives contain records of a host of past and present campaigns: anti-nuclear, anti-racist, and anti-sectarian. Adele Patrick, the library's co-founder, emphasises the importance of making the record of social/political movements available to provide inspiration for action and change. Yet, the Library is also firmly rooted in the present, and has not shied away from facing up to the most difficult of subject matter with contemporary resonance, such as sectarianism. The project *Mixing The Colours: Women Speaking About Sectarianism*, tackled continuing sectarian conflict in the city head on.¹⁸ Patrick adds, "We need to create an environment where people can openly share their points of view, and we can point to the collections that show how women have been involved in leading these debates."¹⁹ The commitment to encouraging women to conduct their own research into women's struggles, battles and victories of the past and present is central to the Library's work.

Peoples' open access to research methodologies is precisely what the Danish Welfare Museum (Svendborg, Denmark)²⁰ is attempting to establish, in a way that is not only liberating through informing and inspiring activism, but also actively changing the museum itself – and beyond that, actively changing government policy. The museum collaborates with people who are, or have been, stigmatised and excluded and have experienced social vulnerability, lack of understanding and, personal downturns. Most of these participants are what is known as 'care leavers', which broadly means "an adult who spent time in care as a child, i.e. under the age of eighteen. Such care could be in foster care, residential care – mainly children's homes – or other arrangements outside the immediate or extended family)" (UK Care Leavers Association).

At this remarkable museum (itself a former residential welfare institute) active research is a tool that promotes and facilitates change. Most importantly, the activism is led by people themselves, using research methodologies that the museum has traditionally monopolised. Cen-

¹⁷ See <http://womenslibrary.org.uk/>

¹⁸ See <http://womenslibrary.org.uk/discover-our-projects/mixing-the-colours/>

¹⁹ Adele Patrick of the Glasgow Women's Library in an interview with the author, 2017.

²⁰ See the Danish Welfare Museum: <https://www.visitsvendborg.com/ln-int/svendborg-museum-welfare-museum-gdk632423>.

tral to the museum's success is the rehabilitating effect that sharing and debating their personal history, thoughts and reflections, in the context of the museum, has for the participants. Museum Director, Sarah Smed, says, "the power is with people as the researchers".²¹ It also signifies their freedom.

The museum's programme *Welfare Stories from the Edge of Society* makes it possible for care leavers for the first time to read, comment, reply and reflect on their child record – an emotionally powerful experience.

This leads to shared discussion hosted by the museum with other care leavers, and to further action and sometimes campaigning. As Smed puts it, "It seems that starting dialogues in the past creates respectful debates in the present, where difficult personal issues can be shared, discussed and understood."²² In the case of the museum's "Hidden Denmark Stories" programme, the 'expert researchers' are the care leavers researching past histories of others in care, and making connections with their own, more recent experiences. One of the care survivors described it to Smed, "It's therapeutic, because we have so many in-depth talks and discussions, which are been both redeeming and thoughtful."²³ The museum is also activist in another regard, bringing about change in health and social service delivery, and state education, by focusing on training for social workers, mental health workers, teachers and local authorities through role play reversals and facilitating active interaction with care leavers.

Viktor Frankl famously claimed that the last of human freedoms is the ability to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances. (Frankl 1946) For the participants, free to research their own lives, and for other professionals and museum visitors exposed to the work of this museum, this is personal change in action.

²¹ Sarah Smed of the Danish Welfare Museum in an interview with the author, Summer 2017

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Richardt Aamand quoted by Sarah Smed, in an interview with the author for this paper, Denmark, Summer, 2017.

Research as activism

Looking at some of these and other examples of activist practice in museums, what has emerged is how uniquely well positioned museums are in supporting ‘research as activism’: a singularly effective form of active agency.

But let us first consider for a moment the notion of research as a right and a bedrock of activism in the rights-based museum. Arjun Appadurai argues that the ability to conduct research on one’s social surround should be considered a basic human right. (Appadurai 2006, cited in Cammarota and Fine 2010, vii) By the ‘right to research’, Appadurai means: “the right to the tools through which any citizen can systematically increase that stock of knowledge which they consider most vital to their survival as human beings and to their claims as citizens” (Appadurai 2006, 168).

Building capability through practicing the right to research is precisely what is happening in all of the examples I have mentioned, from Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, to the Museum of Homelessness, the Glasgow Women’s Library and the Danish Welfare Museum.

In *Revolutionizing Education*, educational theorists, Julio Cammarota and Michelle Fine (Cammarota and Fine 2008), asserted the right to research as a fundamental right for all young people around the globe. In particular, through the use of participatory action research (PAR) – research that is conducted ‘with’ or ‘by’, as opposed to ‘on’ youth, about the issues they feel are most important in their lives.

While Frank Fischer, politics and global affairs specialist, similarly proposes working with what he calls “communities of inquirers” (Fischer 2000). He suggests that, “rather than providing technical answers designed to resolve or close off political discussion [regarding pressing social or political problems], the task is to assist citizens in their efforts to examine their own interests and to make their own decisions” (Fischer 2000, 171).

In my experience, museums involved in upskilling people as researchers is a continuous theme running throughout the best of the ‘activist’ museum programmes so that people can make use of the knowledge they uncover, both inside and outside the museum – informed by networking and open debate. The museum thus becomes a useful vehicle for individual and collective activism.

The Brooklyn Museum²⁴, for example, recently teamed with the non-profit Equal Justice Initiative for the ‘The Legacy of Lynching: Confronting Racial terror in America’, Robin Scher writing in Art News 2017, describes this group exhibition and featured research into the history of violence against African-Americans and their communities. (Scher 2017)

Museums fostering young activists

The raising of consciousness and skills of critical enquiry is particularly important when it comes to young people – and even more important that they learn to feel their views and actions can make a difference. This is a particularly vital role for museums. Yet, despite genuine attempts at democratising museum pedagogical practice, research has shown that museums still tend to control the dialogue, to contain and divert conflict, resistance, and any form of unrest.

Thus, a constructive deconstruction of the museum’s pedagogical practices is urgently required – and with it a likely revival of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy is a teaching approach inspired by critical theory and other radical philosophies, which attempts to help students question and challenge domination, and to undermine the beliefs and practices that are alleged to dominate. In other words, it is a theory and practice of helping young people achieve ‘critical consciousness’.

Critical pedagogic educator Ira Shor defines critical pedagogy as:

Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional cliches, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse. (Shor 1992, 129)

In this tradition of passionate, engaged pedagogy young people are

²⁴ See the Brooklyn Museum: <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/>.

encouraged to question ideologies and practices considered oppressive (including those at school or in the museum, or other institutions), and encourage liberatory collective and individual responses to the actual conditions of their own lives.²⁵

Critical pedagogy has a history of influence in museum education practice (Particularly the work of Henry Giroux (Giroux 2011a,b,c; 2012) Yet, what appears to be lost to memory within critical pedagogical practice in museums is that it was never only a theory and a philosophy of education but was also a *praxis-oriented social movement* (emphasis added) (Shor 1992,129).

We may need to re-envision the role of museums to mobilise a revived form of critical pedagogy, using the museum, to borrow from political philosopher Chantal Mouffe, as a vibrant sphere of contestation where different views can be usefully confronted (Mouffe 2005, 5), based on the notion of creative struggle through which new identities as active agents may be forged.

Thus, the prime task of a “return-to-the-political” approach to critical pedagogy in the museum is not to eliminate conflict, or, as Mouffe puts it, “passion and partisanship”, but rather, to mobilise them for democratic ends, museum professionals and young people working together to create collective forms of identification around democratic objectives (Mouffe 2000).²⁶

Such a renewed focus on the politics of the museum, its values and practices, paves the way for a critical pedagogy that, as philosopher John Searle characterizes it in another context, aims “to create political radicals”, thus highlighting what we can begin to understand as the contestable and antagonistic, moral and political grounds of museum education as a social force (Searle 1990).

This collaborative critical analysis with young people may begin to illuminate how knowledge, identities, and authority are constructed

²⁵ A good picture of this development from social member to dissident to radical teacher/learner is offered in both Paulo Freire’s (1972) book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and bell hooks’ two works: *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994) and *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (2010). References in bibliography below.

²⁶ Chantal Mouffe notes that Carl Schmitt attacked the “liberal-neutralist” and “utopian” notions that politics can be removed of all agonistic energy, arguing conflict is embedded in existence itself (Mouffe 1999).

within particular sets of social relations, including those of the museum itself. Museums, to borrow from Giroux, may actually begin to work together with young people in developing exhibitions and programmes that in the process draw attention to and make overt questions concerning who has control over the conditions for the production of knowledge, values, and skills (Giroux 2011a).

Radical pedagogy in museums might begin, as the Toolkit for MASS, authored by Elisabeth Callihan suggests, by emphasising the ‘absences’, the stories and artifacts of those whom traditional history has largely forgotten or those whom dominant cultural thinking (infused as it is with racism, sexism, classism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, etc.) has deemed unworthy (Callihan 2017).

The Toolkit for MASS suggests collaboratively finding who is missing from the stories museums tell. This is a research exercise that has huge potential for working with young people to identify the gaps in museum representation:

The exercise of examining the stories, identities, political positionings, etc. that are evident bubbles up those that are lost, missing or hidden. The work of presenting those missing stories is the work of representation. Critical to this is identifying the power dynamics at play. If those missing are historically marginalized or unacknowledged, interpretive plans should be structured to include objects and interpretation to highlight those narratives and support responsible representation. However, if what is missing represents dominant culture, voices, and ideas — interpretation can leverage this by acknowledging “this is what people know” and shifting to less familiar ways of thinking and seeing. Different types of museums may find value in a series of critical “reminder” protocols — at a history museum, for instance, interpreters may consider their narrative through the lens’ of gender, race, class (while understanding intersectionality). (*Ibid.*)

In this way, museums can play an essential role in activating young people in society, at a time when hopelessness is all too prevalent.

In a Guardian newspaper article entitled ‘Critical pedagogy: schools must equip students to challenge the status quo’, UK educator, Tait Coles, maintains that teachers should embrace a radical pedagogy and

provoke students to demand equality for themselves and others.²⁷ He continues,

Critical pedagogy is the only way to achieve this... [It] isn't a prescriptive set of practices – it's a continuous moral project that enables young people to develop a social awareness of freedom... It allows students to understand that with knowledge comes power; the power that can enable young people to do something differently in their moment in time and take positive and constructive action... Education has the power to change social inequality by nurturing a generation with an educated mistrust of everything that has been indoctrinated before. This educational stance is one that we must all strive for as the moral purpose of education. (Tait Coles 2014)

Within the museum's learning and public engagement strategies, we must revisit notions of the pedagogical to reinvent traditions not within the discourse of submission, reverence, and repetition, but “as transformation and critique” (Borsa1990, 36).

How does this apply in practice to museums? Let's take one more example from the United States. In November 2018, The Museum of the City of New York²⁸, as part of a programme entitled *Activist New York: The Next Generation*, hosted journalist and activist Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now!* and three inspiring young activist leaders: Brea Baker, Ramon Contreras, and Hebh Jamal. They shared their front-line perspectives on the key mobilizations of the moment – from gun control to immigrant rights – and how they connect to New York City's previous waves of activism and protest. The event also celebrated the Museum's publication of *Activist New York: A History of People, Protest, and Politics* (NYU Press 2018) and a new case study on the movement against the Vietnam War in their *Activist New York* exhibition.²⁹

To combat hopelessness and powerlessness, museums must actively set up new partnerships with those already committed to working with youth activism. There are multiple partnerships and collaborations

²⁷ Tait Coles, 25 Feb 2014, Guardian newspaper, <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/feb/25/critical-pedagogy-schools-students-challenge>

²⁸ See Museum of the City of New York: <https://www.mcny.org/>

²⁹ <https://www.mcny.org/event/activist-new-york-next-generation>

available out there, to open up youth activism in museums. Why not team up with international youth activist organisations such as, for example, the Global Justice Now youth network?³⁰ This is a space for young people to come together to share ideas and experiences – and take action. This particular network (and there are many others) has been set up to make sure that youth voices are a part of global movements against corporate power, inequality, climate change and racism.

Activism in the age of anger

Is it the museum's responsibility in this troubled world to help people collectively form a reasoned diagnosis of what is to be done – and to help them design tools to make change happen?

In his recent book, the *Age of Anger*, Pankaj Mishra (2017) ends his blistering narrative with the all-too-convincing warning of a global pandemic of powerlessness and rage. Museums have little choice but to respond – now! Such mobilisation means helping people to act. Action is urgent and imperative if it is not already too late.

Once again, in the United States, where some of the most interesting activist practice in museums is currently taking place, MASS Action: Museums as Sites for Social Action³¹, is one such mobilisation. MASS Action was launched by the Minneapolis Institute of Art in October 2016 with a gathering of 50 museum practitioners for an action-oriented conversation around topics of equity inside the museum, creating relevant programming, and community engagement. Here is their joint statement:

As the museum field begins to shape its identity in the 21st century, MASS Action poses the following questions for practitioners to consider: What is the role and responsibility of the museum in responding to issues affecting our communities locally and globally? How do the museum's internal practices need to change in order to align with, and better inform, their public practice? How can the museum be used as a site for social action?

³⁰ Global Justice Now youth network: <https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/youth>

³¹ MASS Action 2017: <https://new.artsmia.org/programs/community-arts/mass-action/>

It was launched with the following questions:

What is the role and responsibility of the museum in responding to issues affecting our communities locally and globally? How do the museum's internal practices need to change in order to align with, and better inform, their public practice? *How can the museum be used as a site for social action?*

With this three-year initiative, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, in collaboration with stakeholders across the field, is providing a platform for dialogue on these topics to take shape publicly and move towards an activist practice. Participants worked collaboratively to develop a toolkit of resources, including shared language, strategies to address inequity, and actions and exercises to build more inclusive museums practices. The intention of the MASS Action Toolkit is described in the following way,

to provide irresistible clarity around why this work — preparing museums to become “sites for social action” — matters... we are unified in our belief that there is... above all, a moral imperative for this work. It is the right thing to do, because it makes our field and our world more just and sets an uncompromising, high standard for conduct in our field. (Callihan 2017)

Conclusion: activism equals doing something

A substantive form of democratic engagement experienced through participation in museums becomes one in which people, of all ages and backgrounds, might begin to exercise their political agency as citizens, and might include processes of mobilisation and local cultural and social activism.

As this paper has argued, under the banner of activist practice, it is not sufficient for the museum to simply highlight current global crises and injustices. This is *not* the same as a commitment to activism embedded within a rights-based practice. It is *not* the same as commitment to facilitating people's right to express themselves and to act towards social change.

The other singular aspect of genuinely activist institutions is their ability to be openly reflective and self-critical. It is only through a process of shared, open and participatory critical appraisal that activism can be meaningful and therefore effective in museums. This can only happen through a commitment to ongoing, collaborative and reflective practice. In this way, individuals can develop their capabilities while becoming activated.

The Danish Welfare Museum and Glasgow Women's Library are just some of the highly reflective, self-aware organisations, where reflection and inclusive activism are fundamental elements of their vision and mission. These institutions, and the others mentioned here, are moving notions of 'activism' away from mere 'performativism', and practicing it throughout their organisations – behind the scenes as well as on display.

The museum's role now must be to create an environment of critical dialogue and *action for change*, while continuously reflecting upon its own role that may, from time to time, simply be getting in the way. Then and only then, the museum may begin to live up to its activist claims, its activist branding, by beginning to help people to harness their own collective power for change. This is an activist role for which some museums, as we have seen (and there are others worldwide) are leading the way, and beginning to act in solidarity with people, helping people to effectively mobilise.

So, my question remains – have we moved beyond the rhetoric of activism in museums – to deeds instead of words and empty claims? In other words, are we helping people to *do something*?

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TWO TALES OF 'WE': UNEASINESS AT THE BORDERS OF ART, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Janna Graham

Many years ago, when I was a student of geography, I was introduced to the theories of postcoloniality.

Anne McClintock, in those days, argued against the monolithic umbrella that the term postcolonial has become. She advocated “more complex terms and analyses [...] to deal with the complexities that cannot be served under the single rubric of postcolonialism”¹ and, with Henry Louis Gates, for a “multiplication of margins”². This multiplication would, argued theorist and activist Gayatri Spivak, allow for a dissection of the failures of decolonisation, and provoke the question of the ‘who’ of decolonisation enabling us to view the *re* and *neocolonisations* of the present.³

I encountered these thoughts while deeply embedded in a solidarity struggle with the Ardoch Algonquin First Nation and Allies (AAFNA) in central Canada. We, students, from the university, were supporting Howard Perry and Bob Lovelace in their work to re-constitute the former occupants of Ardoch, and lay claim to a very small piece of land in southern Ontario. The occupants had been displaced through fires widely known to be set by the Ministry of Natural resources earlier in the century as well as by coercing other nearby Algonquin communities to cede the land to the government on behalf of those who had routinely refused to give up their territory or accept the terms of the colonial authorities.

Howard was the last remaining Algonquin resident of Ardoch. He had lived in a settler community for almost all of his life, he and his family quietly practicing their language and custodial activities such

¹ McClintock, A. (1995). *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge. p. 13.

² Gates, H. L. Jr. (1991). Reply. In *American Literary History* 3 (4) (pp. 747-752). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³ Spivak, G. (1995). Can the Subaltern Speak?. In Griffiths, G., Tiffin, H. et al (eds.). *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.

as rice harvesting and sustainable hunting and fishing. At age 65 he decided to find all of the children who had been adopted out of the area by governmental authorities as a result of the fires and dispossession process. At the same time, he had begun hunting, fishing and harvesting rice from the territorial lake without a permit, to get himself arrested and push a land claim case through the courts.

In this process, he was asked again and again, by the courts, the lawyers of the ministry of natural resources, the press, and indeed by other activists, 'Who is AAFNA, who do they represent, and by what authority? Are we at the table with *representatives of the people*?' Where are 'the people'? Apart from the audacity of the question, given that 'the people' had been effectively disappeared by the very same authorities, the question was a demand for a performance of a 'we' that could be read, heard and examined through and by the colonial paradigm, a 'we' that was comfortable and predictable in its performance of colonial subjecthood, a 'we' that was no matter for the birds, the rice or the paddle that moved through the lake, no title for an emerging constituency whose histories and indigenous background had remained a secret for most of their lives, and no word for the definition of territory understood by Harold and his family in the unpredictable naming of rivers whose waters changed the shape of that land with each passing day. By no accounts was this 'we' to include a bunch of undergraduate researchers learning to be committed to social justice, a paralegal who had been adopted by Harold as native, some white settlers and reuniting families who until recently had never met.

Incredibly, at the hands of a judge on the verge of retirement, Harold won this case, but in many ways through a concession, a crafted performance of the 'we' that we as researchers had played a role in, convincing the authorities that the people by colonial definition – that is to say hierarchical, blood based, and governable – had come to exist.

While we deemed it politically necessary to stage this performance we, at the same time, developed other means for constituting our research, producing aesthetic and communal archiving strategies, teaching each other through unknown experiences, sharing cameras, collectively editing material and understanding the process as integral to the constitution of a 'we' on different grounds.

What I learned in this constellation of experiences was the myriad of differences between the 'we' constituted by what Suely Rolnik, after

Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari – called the macropolitical entities of state, colonial and linguistic power and the many ‘we’s’ that exist across these divides in the micropolitics of grassroots struggle.⁴

Moving across these registers this new ‘we’ was uncomfortable, it made us queasy, it made past knowledge feel strange, it forced us to discuss the undiscussed, it brought out the untrusting, the stereotypes and the contradictions that were at the heart of what the years of colonial process had cultivated to secure us as subjects constituted by our separation. To be together otherwise we had to learn this uneasiness, understand its dimensions and contours, let it become a fundamental aspect of our research.

Constituent Queasiness

When in 2008 I began working in an urban neighbourhood in London’s Edgware Road area, I was reminded of this period. Here, I was entangled once again, this time with an art gallery situated in a park adjacent to a major through-fare, and an area home to some of the wealthiest people in the world alongside some of the most precarious. The gallery that was the Edgware Road project’s host, the Serpentine, has both a historical relationship to poor and migrant residents, but an even stronger affiliation with the wealthy class of land owners and developers seeking to ‘regenerate’ the neighbourhood to the exclusion of all others.

This area that is so commonly referred to as representing the Middle East in London (due to the migrant communities who have developed its local culture) sits on land that was bequeathed by Henry the VIII to two great paradigms of Euro-western culture: The Church of England and the aristocratic property developers, the Portman Family, who together continue to own the majority of land on either side of the Edgware Road. Three regeneration schemes in the area aim to displace the poor, all interested in how contemporary artists and curators can support them in executing a ‘strong curatorial vision’ for the area, where ‘strong’ and ‘curatorial’ are equated with top down, tidy paradigms of social cleansing. Equally, the Edgware Road has always been the site of the

⁴ Rolnik, S. (2006). *The Geopolitics of Pimping*. As posted on eicpc.net 10 2006.

production of other ‘we’s’ minor histories: of sex workers, of the poor, of migrants and refugees.

Amongst this complicated and implicated terrain, myself and others (artists, area residents, students, archivists and activists) who worked on the Edgware Road project sought not to wash away the unease of this position, but for what Isabelle Stengers describes as an “ecology of practices”⁵, practices that could address this unease as a constituent component of our work. It was our hope that such an ecology would enable practices of solidarity to emerge with those whose shops, homes and livelihoods were deemed dispensable in the development process, while at the same time skirting around, below, above and away from the gaze of these organising entities. It was our aspiration to listen for and with the quiet and less audible encounters, of lives lived and crossed, of unpredictable constituencies and coalitions between human and other than human things, to fight against the quiet violence of urban dispossession.

Among the various ‘we’s’ who have organised on and through the Edgware Road, radical pedagogical and research histories have become navigational coordinates. Like the informal educational experience of becoming with AAFNA, the ecology of practices they indicate – which I have elsewhere called *thinking with conditions*⁶ – reaches across the twentieth century, across geographical and existential territorial divides.

Militant Discomfort

Practices of militant research sit within this ecology and – in spite of the seeming certitude of the term ‘militant’ – are indeed characterised by an uneasy, schizophrenic and less predictable relationship to power. As the Argentinian group *Colectivo Situaciones* suggest, “the universe of the dominated exists as a scission: as active servility and voluntary subordination, but also as a silent language that allows the circulation of

⁵ Stengers, I. (2005). Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices. In *Cultural Studies Review* (Volume 11, pp. 183-196). Issue 1 March 2005.

⁶ Graham, J. (2010). Between a Pedagogical Turn and a Hard Place: Thinking with Conditions. In Wilson, M. and O’Neill, P., *Curating and the Educational Turn* (pp. 124-139). Amsterdam: Open Editions/de Appel.

jokes, rituals, and knowledges that form the codes of resistance.”⁷

And it is this resistance that grounds the figure of the “researcher-militant”, whose quest is “to carry out theoretical and practical work oriented to co-produce the knowledges and modes of an alternative sociability, beginning with the power of those subaltern *knowledges*.”

It is in this way, they say, that “the researcher-militant is distinct from both the academic researcher and political militant, not to mention the NGO (non-governmental organizations) humanitarian, the alternative activist, or the simply well intentioned person.”⁸

Where many critical agents operating under the cover of the arts attempt to embody such a role, what is less discussed is how groups cope when their critical or radical curatorial research aims and subjectivities are in direct conflict with the conditions that frame their work.

Critical pedagogy has something to say about this uneasiness. For educator Paulo Freire, addressing the contradictions of the classroom and other sites of organised power is a first step in constituting a shared literacy, a set of terms and a catalyst for solidarity and group formation that includes both teachers and students. For others, such as Jacques Rancière – whose work has been predictably more popular for contemporary art world in its ‘educational turn’ – this uneasiness is less important. For Rancière, emancipation comes from students making the teacher redundant, rather than a direct confrontation with the organisations of power that inevitably underpin the education relationship. While compelling, as feminist pedagogues have routinely suggested, sidestepping relations of power in political process the name of freedom often allows the dynamics of power to re-assert themselves.⁹

⁷ Colectivo Situaciones. (2003). On the Researcher-Militant as posted on eipcp.net 09 2003.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Freire, P. (1974). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum. Freire developed these ideas in different texts, in which he suggests that a confrontation with the framing conditions of the educational relationship is the grounds for dialogue and intervention into these and other oppressive social conditions. In Rancière, J. (1991). *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. California: Stanford University Press., on the other hand, emancipation is based on the negation of the role of Jacotot, the teacher, who lets the students learn for themselves, which is much more in keeping with artistic narratives of artistic autonomy. As feminist theorists have routinely suggested, sidestepping relations of power in political process the dynamics of power creep in other forms.

Uneasy Pedagogues

On the Edgware Road, an effacement of the project's enabling conditions was neither responsible nor possible. It was our choice rather, to collectively decode and analyse this uneasiness. One such site of analysis encountered early in the project, and the subject of more than five years of work, was a school, one whose macro and micro political landscape came to symbolise what it means to engage spaces steeped in neo-liberal contradiction today.

The story of the school is not terribly unfamiliar in London's urban landscape. It is what is described in the UK as an 'Academy', meaning that while adhering to state curricular guidelines it has been taken over and re-organised according to the logic of a key donor, in this case a businessman who has charged the school with a commitment to 'international business'. The Academy came to be as a result of the closure of a former school, which was known for commitments to critical pedagogy, Marxist politics and experimental conceptual arts programming. The school was deemed 'failing' due to measures that have become the primary justification for the Academy paradigm introduced by New Labour and now adopted as the central education for policy for schools under the Conservative government. So-called failing schools legitimise the re-structuring of education, largely around the performance logics of businesses, with Head Teachers re-branded as CEOs, routine busting of teachers unions and new architectural buildings that, in this case, resemble corporate headquarters more than a place for learning.

The narrative around this particular school suggests that it offers a step up for the poor refugee young people of the local area, by virtue of an award winning building and exposure to personal trainers from corporations such as Visa Europe, who also sit on the school's board of directors. Its cynical re-working of social justice is built into the very architecture of the school, with quotes by Martin Luther King, coinciding with large terms such as 'Enterprise', 'Global Citizenship' and 'Communication' embedded in its walls.

When we began working with this school, we were told repeatedly to couch all of our lessons in the terms of international business, and to refer to artists *vis-a-vis* this relationship. While we spent a great deal of time de-coding the capitalist framework of the international art world with the students, our focus in collaborating with them was to ground

us all in the sites we were together occupying: namely that of the school and its surrounding neighbourhood.

One of our first exercises was indeed to work through the most obvious traces of our own discomfort: the school's textual landscape, to audit the semiotics of the school, as common ground for discerning whether our environmental queasiness was also experienced by the students. Students documented the bold statements by MLK and others, alongside those of the business language, motivational messages, the school's rules and the bank logos strewn on signage advertising the school's upcoming sports competition that they were sponsoring.

A map of these semiotic coordinates provoked what Stengers describes as "things that force thought"¹⁰, in this case, assertions about the contradictory landscape of learning. The exercise led to us talking about what it was to live in the area, and how the school's proclamations were very far from students' lived realities of intensive policing, of the threats to their homes by local developers, the double days students performed to provide child care after school while their parents worked, their role as translators for family members attempting to get UK visas, amongst others. Facilitators described the strangeness of our role, working on social justice issues in the context of a market driven gallery. In the course of this exercise, a student sarcastically quoted the school's motto 'learning is our business' in order to express his heightened sense of the contradictions. Other students maintained a commitment to the aspiration aims of the school, suggesting that quotes by Martin Luther King and others remained powerful in spite of the overarching context.

From this initial encounter, we began a multi-year investigation that centrally informed the Edgware Road project. Through a weekly seminar groups of students from the school could be engaged collectively in critiques of both the context of education, and the neighbourhood's policies of regeneration.

Occupying the school's vocational requirement to gain work experience, our under-riding project was a protest against the world of work as it is currently constituted. Instead asked the question: how can we make the kind of work we feel is important to do? The answer to this

¹⁰ Stengers, I. (2005). The Cosmopolitical Proposal. In Latour, B. and Wiebel, P. (eds). *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (pp. 94-103). Cambridge: MIT Press.

question mirrored the most urgent issues in our lives. With one group of students, we deconstructed the council's process for consultation about the re-development of the area, citing its various exclusions and its ultimate aim of coercion over consensus. Offering alternative modes for discussion of local issues, their research revealed a very different set of responses to the development than the overwhelmingly positive ones cultivated from above. Another group took on the rhetoric of the 'gang' in circulation to justify increased level of policing and the proposed reduction of social housing, by highlighting the identification software used by police to circulate images of perpetrators. Producing free portraits using the software, they highlighting the ways in which criminality is constructed as justification for changes that propose to dislocate the urban poor.

Before and around this work on the conditions of the local area, another set of conditions guided an equally significant investigation within the project: one stemming from the experience of being together outside of the classroom, outside of the gallery, working collectively in social space. In this aspect of the project, each of us, artist, curator, student, had to respond to the other's uncertainties. As organisers we were confronted by students about the framing of the project in which 'we' were the educators and the students the 'learners', where 'we' were part of the very corporate pedagogical machine of which we were all critical and 'they' dependent on that same machine for future life and employment. Students had to develop a relationship to each other and to ourselves, as adults, that was not based on dynamics of submission/rebellion they had developed to cope with their various repressions of formal education. Working through processes of codification and de-codification of our observations of one another and the surrounding environment, constituted a great deal of the work of the group.

Like the AAFNA project many years before, this emergent 'we' had to consider how we might constitute ourselves on different grounds. We had to discuss and feel in our stomachs the differences in desire, particularly around our desires for critique and the students' aspirational aims: wanting to make things, contribute them, move beyond this critique into other paradigms. We had to confront our different uses of language, to try to understand the terms that we were using, each attached to the subjectivities we had cultivated.

Over the years, the continued analysis of our discomfort with the

enabling constraints under which we work has become a core issue of analysis on the Edgware Road. Out of this has emerged a series of responses, an ecology, one might say. Proceeding from there, rather than that which we avoid, or the struggles we wish to champion, we have come to ask, how can our uneasiness become the site of our research and from there the source of our interventions?

WALKING THE LANDSCAPE

Carla Cabral

* Translated by Fernanda Maio

Landscapes are no longer to be separated from human experience or seen as purely visual, instead they are part of a world of movement, relationships, memories and histories.
(Barbara Bender, 2001)

I. Walking

Walking is one of the most intimate ways of relating to the landscape, so it says writer and essayist Rebecca Solnit (2014). At the centre of this encounter lies the body: through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, feet, skin, the landscape becomes a space of sensorial, mental and emotional construction. The body that walks allows us to incorporate what surrounds us (Lund, 2005; Harvey, 2014), to perceive the tangible and intangible of places, to access the several layers of the landscape, its history, memory and identity (Bender, 2001). Through the multisensory experience of the body in the landscape we touch our memories and create new ones, get emotional and construct our own personal and collective narrative (Pink, 2007; Costa et al, 2014).

This contemporary approach to the landscape, as a space of livingness and construction of meanings, places before us a series of questions, whether about the way in which our perception and experience of the landscape is influenced and moulded by the sensorial body moving through the space, or about the way in which that sensorial experience influences our well-being, emotions, behaviour and identity.

II. The Construction of Narratives: Knowing Landscape with the Feet on the Ground

In 2014 I organized a series of walking interviews (Figure 1) in the scope of a research in landscape architecture which focused on the multisensory experience of the landscape in the specific context of Corgo Valley in Alto Douro Wine Region, and which intended to understand the contribution of the senses in the perception of the material and

immaterial dimensions present in Corgo Valley and the joint influence of these aspects in the human experience of this landscape.



Figure 1: Audio and video recording of the walking interviews.

As a methodology in motion and implemented in situ, the walking interviews allow people to express most naturally and immediately the perceptions and values of their experience of the landscape (Bergeron et al, 2014). Through the walking interviews it was possible to access the narratives constructed by the participants along two paths in Corgo Valley. Included in these narratives are not only the most immediate perceptions but also the most elusive, dynamic or ephemeral aspects of the human experience of the landscape:

“[...] you knowing the landscape with your feet on the ground [...] is completely different.”

“we have seen this in photographs, in pictures and the sort, but it is you being here, you feeling it, it is you taking the walk, the walking, it’s different...”

“you hear the birdy, you hear the water, you feel that thing of the impact, you feel that the soil changes, you understand that the ground on which you stand is different, and you feel the smells, you brush on a grass there and feel the sting, you feel the shade, you feel the sun [...] you live more.”

“it is moving to look at the landscape and understanding the labour involved here.”

“The only flaw is that it’s hard to work there, to come down from above, on foot, to climb, spray machine on the back, isn’t it?... It is tough. Look what’s been worked here, everything made by hand labour.”

“you see with all the senses.”

“to walk here [...] gives me that tranquillity”

“the smells [...] when I am passing by here, I am reminded of my grandfather...”

“what I liked most was the tranquillity that the river transmitted and also the inner peace that I got with the contact with nature. It is something absolutely extraordinary.”

“this place is mountain... it makes us think how small we are... it remains immobile and stable, we keep moving from one place to the other very unstable... [the mountain] gives a feeling of security.”

“[to make the route] has brought me tranquillity... has brought me joy, it is funny.”

The *in situ* experience of the participants allowed us to establish a series of relations between the senses and the dimensions of the landscape making equally possible the emergence of different perspectives on the Douro’s landscape of Corgo Valley: in counterpoint to the unidimensional perspective of Douro’s landscape as an eminently visual and scenic homogeneous representation, the experience of the participants has revealed a landscape of a sensorially diverse and multidimensional character. The perception of Corgo Valley as highly intervened cultural landscape is frequently overlapped by a rather naturalistic perception of this landscape, even in areas where the human action is quite notorious by the presence of vineyards, vegetable gardens, olive groves or walls (Figure 2).

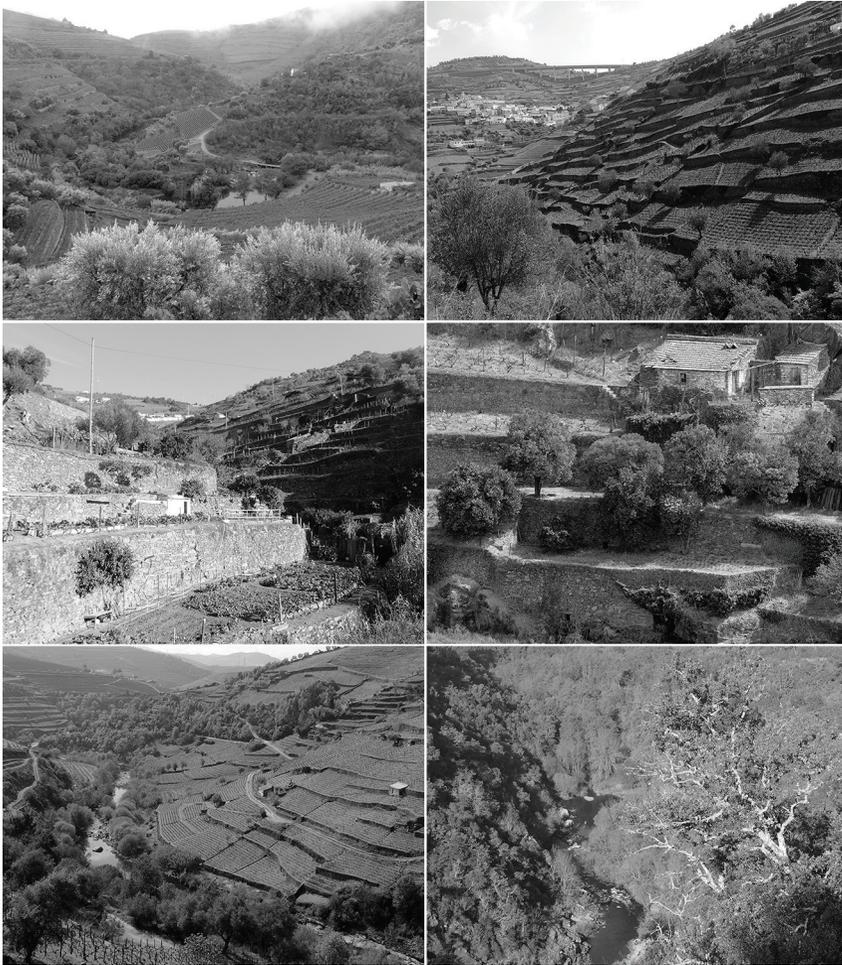


Figure 2: Aspects of Corgo Valley landscape

The immaterial and intangible dimensions of this experience, particularly the well-being and emotions, were also quite relevant and significant. The well-being resulting from the perception of the serenity of the space and the multisensory diversity of nature at Corgo Valley had a particular impact and was valued by all the participants. The emotional dimension assumed a more diverse and intimate character with the emotions and memories lived during the paths adding meaning to the participant's experience.

III. Cartographies of the Landscape

The landscape of Alto Douro Vinhateiro is, still today, almost always presented in images of uniform taste where a one-dimensional perception of Douro as a monumental, scenic and frequently stereotyped landscape prevails. This perception is anchored on a dated concept of the landscape as static contemplative scenario. The landscape, in a broader and more contemporary perspective, is the context where we move, work, have fun, inhabit, live. It is a multiple and dynamic landscape, where each of our different experiences is inscribed.

To reflect this perspective, and in counterpoint to the more conventional representations of the landscape, one sought a medium that simultaneously made possible a broader translation of the landscape of Corgo Valley, the nature of human experience in that landscape and the narratives built there during the walking interviews. Alternative cartographies, that assume a more experimental character, allow the inclusion of more intuitive, psychological or emotional aspects, beyond the mere physical, formal, topographical or geographical aspects of the more classical approaches. This option widens the possibilities of communicating the landscape as space of sensorial, mental and emotional construction.

Mapping the experience of the landscape has roots as old as the representation of a system of paths where the daily life of a Palaeolithic village unfolds in a rock engraving at *Val Camonica* in Italy. More contemporary approaches include the situationists psycho-geographic maps, drawn as result of drifting through space and the appropriation of the territory through experiencing alternative behaviours, some Richard Long works, where the body is a measuring instrument for space and time (Careri, 2013), or yet other multifaceted perspectives on the landscape such as the ones by Kate Mclean who cartographs the odours of different cities (Figure 3).

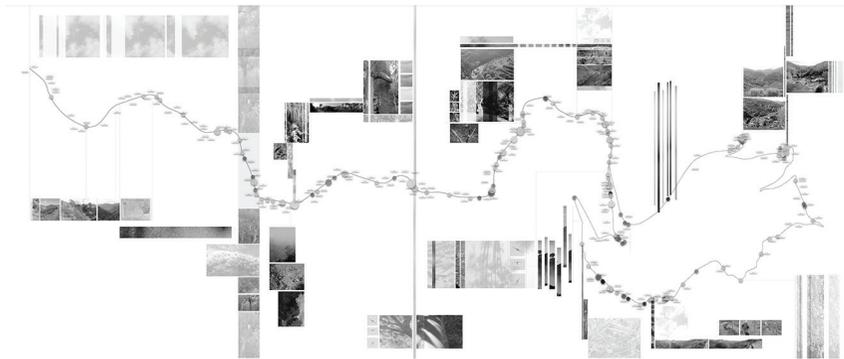


Figure 4: Joint map of the two paths – mural presented at the exhibition “Conhecer a paisagem com os pés no chão” [“Knowing landscape with feet on the ground”] that took place at Douro Museum in April 2016.

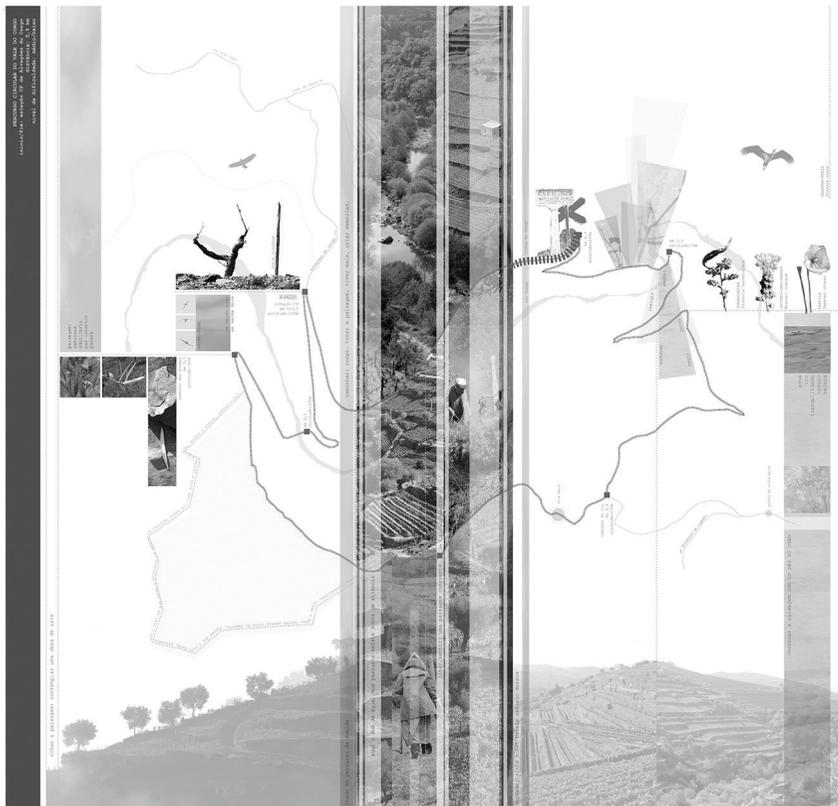


Figure 5: Map of path 1

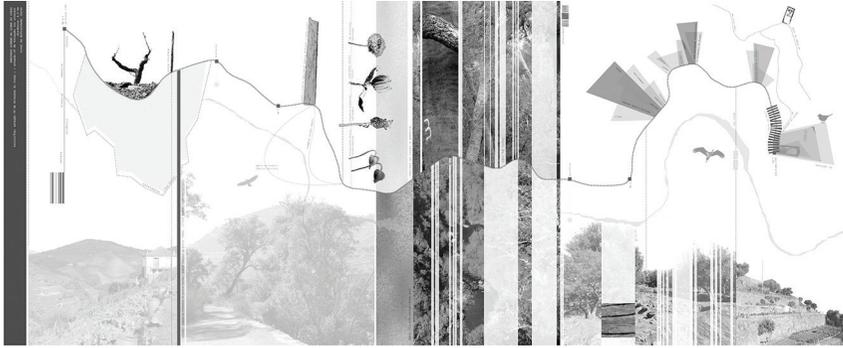


Figure 6: Map of path 2

Resorting to images and text, the cartography evokes the dimensions, sensations, emotions, memories, reflections, stories experienced and shared by the participants along the paths – the maps are transformed into memory and testimony of the immersion of the body in the landscape.

IV. Conclusion

Walking allows us to re-prospect our relationship with the landscape and understand the sensorial body as central in the construction of meanings and connections between *the I*, the others and the world around us.

The understanding of the way in which we relate with the landscape has an impact on the way we think, feel, plan, draw, recreate, intervene or act in it, whether on an individual or collective, sociological or ecological, political or artistic plan. Thus, to access those meanings and connections created through the experience of the landscape is fundamental to understand how landscapes become, or can become, meaningful for the people who interact and live in them.

The alternative cartographies allow us to translate the landscape in a more encompassing way and to communicate its multidimensionality, showing the trail, the street, the trees, the walls, the fauna, the people, the village or the city, and making visible, simultaneously, its more intangible aspects and the most intimate and poetic dimensions of our experience of the landscape.

Walking the landscape: making landscapes a part of us.

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SECRETS AS CIPHER OF POWER

Samuel Guimarães

(This text opens with a briefly description of an episode that occurred in a work field and tries to articulate it with an ongoing reflection about secrets and power and how they can define our lives... and how can we whisper (or shout) changes and displacements of our beliefs or rules...)

Between March and May 2017 we were working with teenagers and young adults using video. The work happened under the school's scope¹, with the team of the Educative Service, a video artist and was sponsored by EDP (Electricity of Portugal).

During this video workshop, we were recording and trying to make an intuitive cartography of the places that the students usually inhabit, within the landscape, in a special village, Picote, on the frontier in the northeast of Portugal.

Near this village there is an abandoned modernist architectural complex that has been coined as *moderno escondido* (*hidden modern*). It combines the rules of the new radical modernism, in Europe, with a stratified housing plan with 3 main types of buildings: a block for the engineers, another for the technicians and a third for the construction workers. These constructions belong to the Picote's dam (1958) that is part of one of the biggest national endeavor that defined the Portuguese energy politics during fascism.

In the context of the workshop, video was a plea for the Walks, and the Walks were a means of getting out in the open; a means of getting out of the stucked bodies on a chair. Walking allowed a less invasive presence of the foreigners that came to work there – us. While doing one of the main walks, where we were using the international trail signs, some of the students decided to leave the group and run away from the trail taking a short cut. What seemed fine for them seemed dangerous for the adults in charge. When back together, one had to face a quarrel

¹The teenagers and young adults were in a specific education and training program (PIEF) of portuguese ministry of education “*wich is a temporary and socio-educational measure by the education government to be adopted after all other school measures have been exhausted, aiming to promote compliance with compulsory schooling and social inclusion*” (<http://www.dge.mec.pt/curriculo>).

(that has been videoed and later included in this intuitive cartography).

The clash of conducts raised issues such as:

- protocol *vs* decision making;
- how much a rule is a rule;
- the rules of the game taken for granted;
- negotiations of right or wrong;
- different ways of dealing with that particular landscape: inhabitant *vs* foreigner.

After this episode, the workshop took place as planned with the chance of going into the ruins of the complex playing some fictional roles. The episode seemed just like a suspension.

Codes, suspensions, silences (or shouts) made us return to an ongoing reflection about power and secrets.



Figura 1: Barrocal - frame of Recording Picote - Paula Preto

When Bob Marley sings, “*we refuse to be what you want us to be, we are what we are and that’s the way it’s going to be*”, that space of refusal, where we can say no to the colonizer, no to the downpressor, is located in the margins. [...] I want to note that I am not trying to romantically re-inscribe the notion of that space of marginality where the oppressed live apart from their oppressors as “pure”. I want to say that these margins have been both sides of repression and of resistance. And since we are well able to name the nature of that repression we know better the margin as site of deprivation. We are more silent when it comes to speaking of the margin as a site of

resistance. We are more often silenced when it comes to speaking of the margin as a site of resistance. (Bell Hooks, 1990, p. 341)

Secrets and Details²

Why work with and departing from secrets? Tough question. First guess: because secrets require detail, they command a concern with detail.

Secrets necessarily involve one who is unaware of his own role. Once they are out, there comes a state of exposure – to others, to human and non-human life. And secrecy takes time, it goes against the increasing abstraction and liquid modernity/liquidity of human relationships (we talk, flirt, date and break up on our mobiles, we do business, submit applications, put an end to love on *skype*...).

We acknowledge that technology has always unmistakably called for procedures and compliance standards from our bodies and minds, thus defining the *homo faber* as ‘prime’ humanity.

In the Douro Valley, our work grounds, many different and relevant technologies have had (still have) an impact upon the landscape, as upon every minute neighbouring activity, most markedly from the 19th century onwards. When comparing traditional technologies with high tech attention to detail is at once required, again.

So, why secrets?

Because they trigger our propensity for fiction and our ability, our acumen to retrieve things, small big things found at random or by affinity, things we may deem pure chance or actual epiphanies. To ‘manufacture’ chance, to contrive it, we’ve made chance a significant part of our route – chance findings while taking a stroll in the mountains, through vineyards or woods, at recess, by car, motorbike, bicycle, in a hotel designed by renowned architects, in the refectory, at the gym, in the cellar, in the cherry orchard, in the apple orchard, in our arms, legs, necks or tummies.

Why secrets?

Because secrets perform disclosures, they challenge what we be-

² We follow here the written reflection *On Secrets* – an education project on landscape, developed by the educative service in 2013. (Translated by Constança Carvalho Homem)

lieve to be spontaneous and natural. Sharing a secret requires posing questions to oneself regarding what is natural, normal and normative, and thus a growing awareness of just how little, if at all, innate, these constructions really are.

In the Douro Valley, it is not uncommon to talk about the secrets of wine, grape varieties/cultivars and soil, but amidst those local secrets we want to talk of lovers; of voices and particular accents; of apples; of video recordings; of daisies (*she loves me, she loves me not*), of cherries; of dancing; of oranges; of loves; of names; of theatre; of red poppies; of lands, of the names of lands; of plants growing on riverbanks; of songs, of the lyrics of songs; of the secrets contained in the lyrics of songs; of cinema; of breeding; of poplars; of bodies; of body parts; of chestnut trees; of ash trees; of poetry; of rivers; of tributary rivers; of philosophy; of olive trees; of partners; of power; of hierarchy in the landscape and in human relationships; of secrets as a currency of power.

One can say why it feels urgent to work with secrets in this particular territory and in the fast-paced days of our early 21st century. How to is a much harder question – can secrets actually be considered work material? Or do they call for an altogether non-material approach?

*They babbled the strange tongue that children
talk about when play pretending to be foreign...*

Edward Bond, *The War Plays*, 1985

How can we shape a secret?

How can we make it visible, audible, touchable?

(The immaterial nature of secrets is unequivocal and deeply effective in ruling human and non-human lives).

Language is secrecy's purest elemental requisite. One should note, however, that language issues and denies secrecy. When a secret is out, whatever the way, language shapes it, allows it to grow, then kills it. Speech allows for reported secrecy and thus erases the very nature of the-never-said.

We have sought to devise and fictionalize, departing from known approaches, media and tools, in order to explore other truths and further realities and in order to question our own account of what's real – we have looked for specific languages, discourses, for lack of a better word, to shape the immaterial nature of secrets.

Hanna: *Why you call me Chora?*
Isabel Coixet, *The Secret Life of Words*, 2005

The languages used as a field for being with different kind of groups of children teenagers and their educators:

- Theatre, with Inês Vicente: a workshop where secrets were the raw material for creation, the knot and route towards devising; secrets as a work-in-progress ritual and trigger for stage action.
- Dance, with Marina Nabais: a workshop with a focus on the observation of body and voice – signals, marks, folds and sonic potential; the body, its motion habits and spatial scripts.
- Building, with Matilde Seabra: a workshop devoted to the building of shelters, ephemeral and transitory refuges for intimate dialogue; redesigning military charts and photographs, thus prompting fictive territories.
- Sound Design, with Rodrigo Malvar: a workshop focused upon tracking and recording sound layers; the mixing of water sounds from the rivers Varosa and Douro, Tedo and Douro. Tracing the soundscape at wine cellars, barbershops, vineyards, houses, quarries, abandoned villages, plazas, terraces, as if sound, distinctly heard on a one-to-one basis, could actually summon the land to your head(!)phones.
- Landscape Design, with Carla Cabral: a dusk-time workshop where the human and non-human elements of the landscape were identified and accurately named, in its many combinatory possibilities and variables.

Inside My self
The secret grows
My own Shelter Agony goes
Antony and the Johnsons, *The Crying Light*, 2009

The exploration of a new-found discourse with those deeply familiar with it forces a *vis-a-vis* between expertise and insecurity, because you know something I don't. Interestingly enough, in the pleasurable cross-roads between known vs unknown, tried before vs first try, the secret is at work both as a boundary and bond (Giorgio Agamben).

The immaterial nature of secrets shows its face as power currency

and is felt upon the material laws that command life. I know something you don't. I hold information that you, pupil, employee, citizen, cannot hold. I carry a secret inside: a secret desire, a secret motivation, a secret decision already made, a secret possession, a secret fear, a secret lie or embarrassment – *that's why I can't tell – what would the others say?* We have internalized standards, rules, control mechanisms; and we dread talk about illness, loss, passion, frustration, fancies, thoughts, personal taste, political, affective and sexual proclivities [these were the major 'types' of secrets mentioned throughout our work sessions]. Moreover, the connection between secrecy and fear was one of the most recurrent:

[...] We are all rookies, one way or another. It's hard to leave the ranks, to face the disapproval, the censorship, the violence of a majority offended by a different idea of loyalty. [...] To quit from having our pace set according to our own tribe towards a mental world that is much wider, but lower in number – if breaking bonds and dissidence are not a common or gratifying disposition – will be a complex and strenuous process. [...] It is easier to swear loyalty to those we know, to those we see, to those we fit in with, to those we share with – it may well happen – a community of fears. [...] Fear brings people together. And fear draws them apart. Courage inspires communities: the courage of example, for courage is just as contagious as fear... Generally speaking, a moral principle is something that sets one apart from a prescribed practice. (Susan Sontag, 2011, p. 201) (our highlight)

In our early discussions about working with secrets we sensed a danger: of tackling secrets with mellow hands, knowing that in these regions poetry is a foundation for life and exerts great fictive power:

*All round, the city rests; even the lit street grows quiet,
And resplendent with torches, carriages rumble away.
Sated, men return home, looking for rest from day's pleasures,
So many thoughtful heads balancing gain against loss,
Now home-grounded, content; empty of grapes and flowers
And of its home-made wares, the busy market rests.
But a stringed instrument sounds, far away out of gardens;
Maybe a lover is playing there, some lonely man perhaps
Thinks of his youthful days and of distant friends; and the fountains,
Springing constantly fresh, rustle the fragrant beds.*

*Calm in the twilight air, bells ring reverberations,
And, with his mind on the hour, a watchman calls it by name.
Now too, a soft wind rises, riffing the wood's highest branches,
Look! and mysterious, the shadow-world of our Earth, the moon,
Rises with it; and Night, the fanciful dreamer, rises,
Full of stars: little concerned, so it would seem, about us.
There, the amazing, she gleams, stranger to all our people,
Moving splendid and sad over the mountain peaks.
Friedrich Hölderlin, *Bread and Wine*, 1801*

We did not intend to work on the surface of secrets. We did not conform to the sheer dimension of sugar-coated statements of love and friendship mimicking depictions often derived from fast food movies and television (reality show *Secret Story* was just about to be broadcast!) or even the web, all of which issue their own definitions of what is actually a secret... The new identity is an identity deprived of the personal core in which ethics, as we used to consider them, have lost ground and call for thorough reassessment. Until that happens, it is reasonable to foresee a general collapse of the personal ethic principles that for centuries steered Western ethics (Agamben, 2010, p. 68).

*Look, I found her...
Red coat. Look, I found her. Look, I found her...
Red coat. Look, I found her.
Damn.
James Blake, *CMYK*, 2010*

One of our major concerns was the danger of putting intimacy and private lives at stake when working with the secrets of adults, and especially with those of children and teenagers. Some of the children's drawings resulting from our work sessions did, in fact, contain more or less overt elements of domestic violence. We faced these delicate findings knowing that the often stark truth of the home does not usually belong in the school or culture premises. Sure enough, our boundaries were no more than dashed lines and thus these findings can be a problem. They entail a significant amount of risk, they require thoughtful options and words, and a portion of trial and error. This is one of the topics we should address when discussing on secrets:

*I made wine from the lilac tree
Put my heart in its recipe
It makes me see what I want to see
And be what I want to be
When I think more than I want to think
Do things I never should do
I drink much more than I ought to drink
Because it brings me back you
Lilac wine is sweet and heady,
like my love Lilac wine,
I feel unsteady, like my love
Jeff Buckley, Lilac Wine, 1994*

When shared, secrets bring people and things together – a blood pact; the empathy arising from a personal confession; even what was said after one too many glasses of wine – but it’s their nature to divide just as well. Secrets draw the line between those who hold them (more precisely, those in power to hold them) and those who don’t and can’t, those destined to not knowing. Secrets may issue bonding and severance; some define hierarchy, others duplicate it. In a territory where power and bondage are such an obvious part of the landscape, we wanted to aim and instruct our enquiry towards those small big things that could act as magnifying glass and issue further enquiries. We have sought ways in which to pay close watch over power and secrecy. According to Giorgio Agamben, the words severance and secret share the same etymology. Secret comes from the latin SECERNERE – to divide, to set aside. SE stands for apart; CERNERE – stands for distinction, sieving. KREI has an Indo-European root associated to filtering, sieving, discriminating and making distinctions; it should be the missing link between secret and severance, as well as between severance and the idea of secret as Word for power. It’s almost routine to remark that the concept of secret originates from the process of sieving grains, so as to separate the edible from the non-edible, the good grain from the bad. In fact, secrets require division and a decision to divide.

In this line of reasoning, secret is a cipher for power, an act defining sovereignty and authority (Garrison, 2009). Related to secrecy as both verb and name, the changing concepts of intimacy and privacy where a direct input in as they gradually become a more frequent concern in

our language and daily routines: confidentiality; discretion vs deliberate display of private and family life; faded distinction between private and public spheres; protection of bank secrecy; protection of online personal data at home and in the workplace (e.g. tax revenue information). The *WikiLeaks* scandal, or the recent revelations made by whistleblower Edward Snowden, or the discrimination of the Chelsea Manning case attest for this growing awareness.

The notion of secrets as both boundary and bond can also help question the practice of those of us working at the crossroads of education, culture, arts, landscape and territory. We were often asked: *Is this what you want? Will this do? Did I do it right? Or: Isn't this theme too political or too complex for ages x or y? Or: What exactly is this for?* These questions confirm century-old asymmetries, separate worlds and points of view brought together by the practice of the aforementioned discourses. Thus, we do not propose a mellow vision of condescending harmony for both sides; we propose an immersive *vis-a-vis*, leading to further ways of joint or individual practice where no one perception replaces the other.

What we cannot account for is the smell and shrill acoustics of gyms, lecture halls, work areas in the main building, and how these bodies came to inhabit them, not just sitting, not just walking. We offered stimuli with no expectation or estimate of the immediate consequences. We contrived experiences aiming at different space usage and at summoning the landscape to the body. Outside, we sought to collect the traces of those bodies set in motion in the landscape. We rummaged through birthmarks, folds, skin imperfections, strange hand shapes and other singularities (those we can actually share) looking for likeness and affinity with an awareness of how different everyone is. We clearly wanted to question that which we are most keen to divide and sever, that which we name and consider to be natural (typical, genuine): distinctions such as place of birth, social status, gender, race. Because when faced with the land, our artificial constructs are readily exposed.

Something's comin' over, mmm mmm
Madonna, Secret, 1994

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THEASTER GATES: SOUL MANUFACTURING CORPORATION, WHITECHAPEL GALLERY, LONDON

Sofia Victorino

Drawing on the project ‘Soul Manufacturing Corporation’, by Chicago-based artist Theaster Gates (b. 1973, Chicago), my presentation discusses collaboration as a methodology that is central to an understanding of socially engaged practices, and art’s relation to the socio-political world. Can artists’ ways of working trigger spaces of critical and transformative potential? How to radically re-imagine the role of art institutions?

The intersections of art, architecture, performance and music have provided Theaster Gates the ground from which to address the politics of place, and the transformative potential of communal exchange and solidarity. Gates’ work challenges assumptions about the role art might play when dealing with social inequalities and economic disparities. Informed by his background in urban planning, ceramics and religious studies, the artist’s activism and commitment to social change has its epicenter in Dorchester, a neighborhood in Chicago’s deprived South Side where he grew up. Since 2006, Gates has funded the renovation of spaces to nurture local economies and artistic education.

The first time I saw Gates’ ‘Soul Manufacturing Corporation’ was at the Fabric Workshop and Museum, in Philadelphia, early 2013, in a space with large windows facing the street, converted by Gates into a workshop where artists were invited to produce objects in clay, wood and textiles. This workshop was a platform for local makers, international artists, apprentices and students to come together. Later in 2013 I worked closely with Gates and his team to realize the project at Whitechapel Gallery.¹ The East end of London, a place where historically bricks were made, became its temporary home.

‘Soul Manufacturing Corporation’ (SMC) took the shape of a

¹ Gates’ ‘Soul Manufacturing Corporation’ was part of ‘The Spirit of Utopia’, a group exhibition held at the Whitechapel Gallery where ten artists and collectives speculated on alternative futures, considering pragmatic models for social change.

ceramic studio to investigate skill, teaching and craft. As visitors entered the Whitechapel Gallery, they would see potters wedging, throwing, drying and firing in the open studio created by Gates. Three master potters worked with three apprentices², recruited through the Gallery's local networks. Mathew Dercole, from Gates studio, guided the team on the pieces to be made: sake cups, dishes and tea bowls of different sizes and shapes, as well as bricks. The wares and bricks were displayed on shelves and ink drawings added to the wall. Poet and performer Zena Edwards was invited to perform readings on craft and labour as a gift to the makers. A community was built around the project and friendships developed over time. The exhibition turned into a space of production. Here 'production' is not understood simply as making 'things'. It is experienced as a free-form assembly of knowledge and skills, prompted by conversations and sharing.

But can clay bring about change in society? What does it mean to be a potter? Let's start with simple things: an understanding of the body's relation to the material and the celebration of the people who engage in the work. Clay is the material that enables this process – responsive and flexible, choreographed by body, hands and mind, resistant to heat and yet also fragile. In an interview for *Ceramic Review*, Gates stated:

“Soul Manufacturing Corporation was my attempt to allow the practice of clay production and the territory of making to re-enter the museum. In this way, Soul Manufacturing Corporation, not only manufactures things, it creates makers and it moves from simply making the things to being the structure that produces people who will make many things. It's as close to apprenticing I can imagine while continuing to insist that the museum should be an open space to question modes of production, systems of power and access to the imagination for everyone.”

Gates also talked about his interest in the history of Stoke-on-Trent, a city in the West Midlands of England, and the manufacturing origin of the British pottery industry. While working on the project I

² I would like to express my thanks to the potters Fred Gatley, Joanne Woffinden and Nalini Thapen and apprentices Jake Laffoley, Janey Xuereb and Sassirika.

had the opportunity to travel around the area. Two of the highlights were the Gladstone Pottery Museum and visiting a modern day factory. The first is an industrial heritage site with five extraordinary bottle ovens that date back to the late 18th century. It shows the life of the workers, from labour relations to production techniques. The latter is a pottery factory housed in a Victorian building on the banks of the Caldon Canal. Our host, a former teacher from Stoke, asserted that the process relies on highly skilled people, and it is increasingly challenging to train a younger generation in a hard and relentless profession.

Modernism and the tradition of 20th century studio potters in the UK – such as the ones developed by Lucie Rie (1902-1995) and Bernard Leach (1887-1979) – have informed the ethos of ‘Soul Manufacturing Corporation’. Indebted to the celebrated novelist, socialist and textile designer William Morris and the Arts & Crafts Movement, Leach developed his craftsmanship in Japan. Together with his close friend Shoji Hamada (1894-1978) he founded the Leach Pottery in St. Ives, Cornwall (1920). A leading figure in the Japanese *mingei* folk crafts – a movement that embraced the aesthetics of simplicity, truthfulness to materials and the beauty of the handmade utilitarian object –, Hamada is one of Gates’s most important influences and sources of inspiration. Poetically weaving Japanese minimalism and African-American culture, the project ‘Plate Convergences’ (2007) fostered dialogues across cultures through rituals, meals and conversation. Gates tells the ‘Yamaguchi Story’, a tale about a fictional Japanese ceramicist, Shoji Yamaguchi, who founded a pottery commune in Mississippi in the 1960s, after having fled Hiroshima and married a black civil rights activist named May. Away from the realm of fiction to a real life story of resilience, in the performance ‘My Name is Drake: A Hymnal’ (2010) Gates pays tribute to the life and work of Dave Drake, also known as Dave the Potter (c. 1801-c.1870s), a literate African-American ceramicist who lived as a slave in South Carolina. Gates sees ceramic production as a sort of choir rehearsal, a ritual. A 200-person choir performed the poetic verses found on Drake’s pottery at the Milwaukee Art Museum, in 2010.

Gates way of ‘making art-as-life’ intervenes in a web of complex histories of inequality and social struggle. In a project presented at Documenta 13, Kassel (2012), ‘12 Ballads for Huguenot House’, he worked and lived with a group of collaborators from Chicago to rebuild

an abandoned house which was used for communal and performative events. The project connected two histories of migration and exile, that of the Huguenotes in France and the African diaspora. The memorable performances with the Black Monks of Mississippi are a tribute to these histories. The idea of finding meaning in redemptive moments – a counter-narrative to certain postcolonial histories – becomes an element intrinsic to the work. Even when borrowing terms such as ‘corporation’ – equated with profit, private property and capitalism – his proposition remains clear: to change the infrastructures that create inequality in the first place. ‘Soul’, ‘manufacturing’, ‘corporation’ are words that dare to imagine institutions otherwise. As argued by art historian Huey Copeland, “While Gates’s strategies may read as very much of their moment, they should also be understood as feints and tactics grounded in opposition to a racialized social order that has much deeper roots than our current socioeconomic condition and that must be battled on all fronts, within and beyond artistic discourse.”³ Despite the commodity status of the object within the market economy of the art world, perhaps clay holds the potential for transporting us ‘inside the work’, towards our own interiority and subjectivity.

³Huey Copeland, 2013, ‘Dark Mirrors, Theaster Gates and Ebony’, *Artforum*, Vol. 52, NO. 2, p. 229.

THE MUSEUM AS A SITE OF UNLEARNING? COLONIALITY AND EDUCATION IN ETHNOGRAPHIC MU- SEUMS, A STUDY FOCUSING ON GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND SWITZERLAND¹

Nora Landkammer

“What are all of these things?” a seven-year-old in an ethnographic museum asks the facilitator on her way through the exhibition. “Did you make them all yourselves?”

What can the facilitator say in response except “no”? The many possible answers, what they emphasise and what they omit, necessarily make assertions about the people who produced the objects, about research, about colonial history and about the definition of the museum. They indicate stances on questions that have been wrestled with in museological debates both inside and outside of ethnographic museums² in response to postcolonial critiques: questions about property relations and the control over objects that came to Europe during the colonial era, questions about representation and about the power of definition

¹ This paper is first published in German in the volume: Einführung in die Museumsethnologie, ed. Larissa Förster and Iris Edenheiser, 2019. Translation: Joel Scott, Gegensatz Translation Collective. The work on this paper in part was carried out in the project «TRACES – Transmitting Contentious Cultural heritages with the Arts», which has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No. 693857. For further information please visit www.tracesproject.eu. The views expressed here are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Research Area

² In the museum sector in German-speaking countries, there are traditionally two types of museums dedicated to ethnographic collecting and research: the *Völkerkundemuseum*, dedicated to peoples from around the world (except for the museum’s home culture), and the *Volkskundemuseum*, dedicated to the study of local traditions, customs and folk art. Ethnology therefore has a traditional split along the lines of self and other into two different disciplines. The museums discussed here are the heirs of the ethnographic museum in the tradition of *Völkerkunde*, the study of world cultures.

in narratives about culture and difference³. Against the self-conception of museum educators, against their typically marginal positions within institutional hierarchies and the precarity of their working conditions, this study will describe museum education as an activity that is invested with power. As such a powerful field of work, the debates concerning the future of ethnographic museums⁴ cannot continue to treat museum education as a secondary activity that only communicates pre-existing content. Whether in a classic guided tour or in a participatory project, the museum is created performatively through interaction with the participants⁵ – *one* possible version of the museum. In the process, a version of the world is produced that museums claim to give access to when they take on names like *Weltkulturen Museum* (museum of world cultures) *Weltmuseum* (world museum), or *Museum Fünf Kontinente* (Museum of Five Continents).

What the museum offers to visitors are subject positions, for example when young people are invited to “travel the world”.

³ Kazeem, Belinda and Martinz-Turek, Charlotte and Sternfeld, Nora (eds.), *Das Unbehagen im Museum: postkoloniale Museologien*, Vienna, 2009; Ogbecchie, Sylvester Okwu-nodu, ‘Who Owns Africa’s Cultural Patrimony?’ in *Critical Interventions*, vol. 4(2), 2010, pp. 2–3, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19301944.2010.10781383>, [accessed 10.11.2015]; Förster, Larissa, ‘Öffentliche Kulturinstitution, internationale Forschungsstätte und postkoloniale Kontaktzone: Was ist ethno am ethnologischen Museum?’ In Bierschenk, Thomas; Krings, Matthias; and Lentz, Carola (eds.) *Ethnologie im 21. Jahrhundert, Ethnologische Paperbacks*, Berlin, 2013, pp. 189–210.

⁴ Harris, Clare and O’Hanlon, Michael, ‘The future of the ethnographic museum.’ In *Anthropology Today*, vol. 29(1), 2013, pp. 8–12, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12003>, [accessed 14.04.2017].

⁵ Garoian, Charles R, ‘Performing the Museum.’ In *Studies in Art Education. A Journal of Issues and Research*, Vol. 42, Nr. 3, 2001, pp. 234–248.



Depictions of the trope of the “travelling world in the museum”

Travelling the world is a very popular format for framing educational programmes in ethnographic museums. In programme announcements and on websites, children – usually boys, occasionally girls, and mostly *white*⁶ – are often shown bent over maps or holding a globe in their hands symbolising the world. In the texts that go along with these programmes, they are sent on “expeditions”, provided with “equipment”, addressed as “adventurers” who set out to discover “mysterious islands” or explore “nature, culture and society in Asia and Oceania”. The objects of their research are culture and society, or in other words, the people of Asia and Oceania.

Regardless of the intentions of the facilitator, in this model an educational project is being perpetuated which is historically inscribed in the museum: the European imperial project. Which subject positions are being proposed here? Children (and occasionally also adults) in Europe are interpellated as individuals who are capable of making the world their own, who as discoverers and explorers have unquestioned

⁶ The italics indicate the constructed character of this label (cf. Eggers, Maureen Maisha (eds.), *Mythen, Masken und Subjekte : kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland*, Münster, 2005).

access, with all the allure of adventure, to the rest of the world. Here, something is being perpetuated that can be described through the concept of ‘coloniality’. As opposed to colonialism as political domination, ‘coloniality’ is defined as epistemic violence that contributes to the production of subjectivities (coloniality of being) and of knowledge (coloniality of knowledge).⁷ According to Grosfoguel and Castro Gómez in their introduction to the volume *El giro decolonial* (The Decolonial Turn), with formal decolonisation, we saw “*a transition from modern colonialism to global coloniality*”, a process that has certainly transformed the forms of domination deployed by modernity, but not the structure of centre-periphery relations on a global scale”.⁸ This structure reproduces itself through distinctions between subject and object; between those who *have* culture and those who *belong* to a culture; between those who seem to have no skin colour and others who are constantly reminded of theirs. As this example shows, “postcolonial questions” are not just one topic among others that can be dealt with in special programmes, as they underlie all educational activities in museums, and the very pedagogical mission of the museum itself. This example also shows that these problems cannot be resolved by simple gestures, since the mode of “discovery” is linked to impulses such as the desire to know and to learn, which are so central to museum education. When educational programmes in ethnographic museums address culture and difference, coloniality is also thematised, and potentially perpetuated. Which position, which view of the world do I offer as education? Considered as a site of subjectivation, education in ethnographic museums is also a sphere in which these regimes can be reworked and revised. I contend that the pedagogical mission of the museum should be situated in this context. For if ethnographic museums are a place where powerful distinctions are made visible and negotiable, they are also a site in which

⁷ Quijano, Aníbal, ‘Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina’, in Lander, Edgardo (eds.) *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas*, Buenos Aires, 2000, pp. 201-246, http://bvirtual.proeibandes.org/bvirtual/docs/quijano_colonialidad.pdf [accessed 06.05.2018].

⁸ Castro-Gómez, Santiago and Grosfoguel, Ramón, ‘Prólogo: Giro decolonial, teoría crítica y pensamiento heterárquico’, in Castro-Gómez, Santiago and Grosfoguel, Ramón (eds.), *El giro decolonial: Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*, Bogotá, 2007, pp. 9–23, here p. 13, emphasis in original (translated from the Spanish by Joel Scott).

we can *unlearn* coloniality.

Education in ethnographic museums in German-speaking countries today – discursive positions

How do museum educators interact with this context?

Even in German-speaking countries, where postcolonial issues and theories were taken up much later than in other regions, ethnographic museums are currently engaged in a controversial debate around how to deal with their colonial heritage. Despite the centrality of educational activities, there is almost no contribution to the debates about the future of ethnographic museums issuing from the education departments.⁹ We have seen only a handful of publications dealing with postcolonial relations in education related to ethnographic collections.¹⁰

Between 2011 and 2015, I carried out a qualitative interview-based study on how museum educators conceive their work in ethnographic museums, the goals pursued by museum education, and the challenges that the postcolonial museum poses for educators. In conversations with

⁹ See, for example: Kraus, Michael and Noack, Karoline (eds.), *Quo vadis, Völkerkundemuseum? Aktuelle Debatten zu ethnologischen Sammlungen in Museen und Universitäten*, Bielefeld, 2015; Chambers, Iain, *The postcolonial museum: the arts of memory and the pressures of history*, Farnham, 2014; Harris and O'Hanlon, 'The future of the ethnographic museum'; Audehm, Kathrin; Färber, Alexa; Dietze, Gabriele; and Binder, Beate (eds.), *Der Preis der Wissenschaft*, Bielefeld 2015; Förster, Larissa, 'Öffentliche Kulturinstitution, internationale Forschungsstätte und postkoloniale Kontaktzone: Was ist ethno am ethnologischen Museum?', in Bierschenk, Thomas; Krings, Matthias; and Lentz, Carola (eds.) *Ethnologie im 21. Jahrhundert, Ethnologische Paperbacks*, Berlin, 2013, pp. 189-210; Kazeem, Belinda; Martinz-Turek, Charlotte; and Sternfeld, Nora (eds.), *Das Unbehagen im Museum: postkoloniale Museologien*, Vienna, 2009.

¹⁰ In the German-language literature, Endter, Stephanie and Rothmund, Carolin (eds.), *„Irgendwas zu Afrika“: Herausforderungen der Vermittlung am Weltkulturen Museum*, Frankfurt a.M., 2015b and Kamel, Susan and Gerbich, Christine (eds.), *Experimentierfeld Museum: Internationale Perspektiven auf Museum, Islam und Inklusion*, Bielefeld, 2014; in the English-language literature, Golding, Viv, *Learning at the museum frontiers: identity, race and power*, Farnham, 2009; Golding, Viv and Modest, Wayne (eds.), *Museums and communities: curators, collections, and collaboration*, London, 2013; Baird, Jill Rachel, *Landed Wisdoms: collaborating on museum education programmes with the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kaay Llnagaay*, dissertation, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 2011.

stakeholders from 12 major museums in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, different and even competing views of museum education work emerged. These ways of understanding the museum, their own work and education can be described as “discursive positions” – different “regimes of knowledge” that facilitators employ to describe their work.¹¹ In what follows I would first like to describe three dominant discursive positions that shape this field, in order to then look into postcolonial museum education as an emergent position, and to work through the difficulties and contradictions described by facilitators who seek to engage critically with the museum’s colonial heritage.

Experience and visitor-centred museum education

One of the dominant discursive positions that can be identified when educators speak about the objectives of their work is that of experience and visitor orientation. In this position, the focus is on ensuring a positive experience in the museum. In this case, children and young people are the primary audience. The objectives and qualitative criteria do not differ in this regard from those in art or other cultural and historical museums, insofar as access to the museum as a space of education and pleasure, fun and enjoyment is a primary concern.¹² According to this perspective, the specific collections and themes addressed by ethnographic museums often take a back seat in order to prioritise visitor experience of the museum: the important thing is to make sure “that the children leave with a good feeling” and that “their attitude towards the institution of the museum” is transformed into a positive one, as one facilitator described in an interview.¹³ The central factor here is that which Carmen Mörsch has called the reproductive function of museum

¹¹ Methodologically, the study is based on discourse-analytical approaches in educational studies, especially the analysis of discursive practises in educational contexts by Daniel Wrana (Wrana, Daniel, ‘Die Analytik diskursiven Praktiken als Zugang zu Professionalisierungsprozessen’, in Thompson, Christiane and Jergus, Kerstin and Breidenstein, Georg (eds.), *Interferenzen: Perspektiven kulturwissenschaftlicher Bildungsforschung*, Weilerswist, 2014, pp. 175–198).

¹² See Deutscher Museumsbund and Bundesverband Museumspädagogik e.V., *Qualitätskriterien für Museen: Bildungs- und Vermittlungsarbeit*, Berlin, 2008, p. 6

¹³ I04, 26.3.2013.

education, namely educating the audience of tomorrow and thereby ensuring the continued existence of the institution.¹⁴

Participation

An experience and visitor-centred approach often goes hand in hand with a focus on participation. The evolution of pedagogical approaches in museums and exhibitions from knowledge transfer and empathy to participation and co-determination¹⁵ can also be discerned in ethnographic museums. Many facilitators who were interviewed emphasised longer term projects with groups as the highlight of their work. References to spaces for participation and co-determination appear frequently in the literature about educational work in ethnographic museums.¹⁶ One of the goals of this approach is that something emerges which couldn't have been planned, and that the group dynamic "takes on a life of its own."¹⁷ Accordingly, many museums carry out medium and long-term co-operation projects, the results of which are sometimes visible in the exhibition space. As is currently being developed in other

¹⁴ Mörsch, Carmen; (2009). "At a Crossroads of Four Discourses: documenta 12 Gallery Education in Between Affirmation, Reproduction, Deconstruction and Transformation", in: Mörsch, Carmen/research team of documenta 12 education (Hrsg.): documenta 12 education #2: Between Critical Practice and Visitor Services, Zürich, Berlin: diaphanes, 9–31.

¹⁵ For a definition of different forms of involvement, see the chapter 'Wie wird vermittelt?' in the Institute for Art Education's publication *Zeit für Vermittlung: Eine online Publikation zur Kulturvermittlung*, 2013.

¹⁶ Mesenhöller, Peter, 'Erwachsenwerden ist nicht schwer... Das JuniorMuseum im Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum - Kulturen der Welt, Köln', in Leonard, Yvonne (eds.) *Kindermuseen: Strategien und Methoden eines aktuellen Museumstyps*, Bielefeld, 2012, pp. 153-160; Cohn, Miriam, 'Jugendlichen eine Plattform geben: Das Projekt 'Urban Islam Medial' am Museum der Kulturen Basel', in Klages, Rita and Grünewald Steiger, Andreas (eds.) *Forum Kultur: Die Praxis der Interkultur – Dokumentation des Symposiums vom 1. - 2. Juni 2006*, Wolfenbüttel, 2007, pp. 31-41; Endter and Rothmund, „Irgendwas zu Afrika“; Bystron, Daniela and Zessnik, Monilka, 'Kulturzentrum oder Museum? Vermittlungspraxis im Ethnologischen Museum Dahlem und Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin', in Kamel, Susan and Gerbich, Christine (eds.), *Experimentierfeld Museum: Internationale Perspektiven auf Museum, Islam und Inklusion*, Bielefeld, 2014, pp. 319-354.

¹⁷ I02a, 22.10.2012.

types of museums¹⁸, intersections between curating and education are becoming increasingly prevalent.

Reflexive ethnological education

While the two previous rationales and modes of argument concern the institution of the museum in general, the third relates specifically to the ethnographic museum and foregrounds teaching about culture(s), cultural difference, and diversity. According to this perspective, the task of museum education is to contribute to reflections on identity, on one's own cultural background and on our images of self and other, as well as to encourage visitors to interrogate their prejudices and values. What is essential in these formulations is that they explicitly reject showcasing of the "foreign" and the "exotic". Such showcasing, as I will outline below, still exists as a practice in some museums. However, in the objectives outlined by education staff in the interviews, it certainly serves as a kind of negative image to be resisted. Accordingly, the dominant position can be described as *reflexive* ethnographic education, which aims to counteract simplistic images of the foreign and the other.

This approach represents an understanding of museum education that emerged out of the debates about the educational function of ethnographic museums that began in the 1970s. To explain this, a brief historical excursus is necessary. In the discussions that took place at that time around the guiding principles of the ethnographic museum, whose representation of the 'other' was disputed by the internal critique of ethnologists and by external criticisms in the age of decolonisation, the educational function of the institution was central. In the late 1970s in West Germany, solidarity and/or tolerance were discussed as principles that would guide the reshaping of the ethnographic museum.¹⁹ The focus was on an educational model that would promote a reflexive approach to alterity and to the relationship between the "first" and "third" worlds, such as when the problem-oriented exhibition was

¹⁸ Mörsch, Carmen; Sachs, Angeli; and Sieber, Thomas (eds.), *Ausstellen und Vermitteln im Museum der Gegenwart*, Bielefeld, 2016.

¹⁹ See the debates in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 1976.

designed as a model.²⁰ West Germany's new directions in museum concepts and educational objectives had parallels with museum pedagogy in the East, such as the approaches in Dresden and Herrnhut, which focused on societal developments in newly independent former colonies, albeit with clearer – socialist – political objectives.²¹ In the West German debate, however, the transmission of knowledge about economic contexts and the pleas for “solidarity” that were decisive in the proposals made by Volker Harms lost relevance in the following decade. Instead, the discussions that ensued focused on cultural difference as a central element for the educational mission of the museum. From these debates, three essential educational objectives and goals emerged that continue to shape museum education to this day. The first is the education of tolerance and recognition; the second is the presumption that “cultural defamiliarization” can lead to a reconsideration of our own unquestioned cultural behaviour, thereby leading to an “overcoming of ethnocentric perspectives” (as explained in Jacobs with reference to Greverus²²); and the third is the interrogation of stereotypes, the deconstruction of prejudices,²³ and de-exotification.²⁴ According to these criteria, a reflexive approach to culture is to be conveyed, which

²⁰ Kelm, Heinz; Münzel, Mark; and Museum für Völkerkunde Frankfurt am Main (eds.), *Herrscher und Untertanen: Indianer in Peru 1000 v. Chr. – heute*, Frankfurt/Main, 1974.

²¹ Schützenmeister 1989. The development of museum pedagogy in the ethnographic museums in the GDR, which was also marked by conflicting concepts, would demand a separate discussion – here I am concerned with the evolution of concepts that are currently influential, and which can be traced through West German publications.

²² Jacobs, Doris, *Interkulturelle Museumspädagogik: internationale Bemühungen der Museumspädagogik in ihrer Relevanz für das ausländische Vorschulkind*, Weinheim, 1989, p. 186.

²³ Ganslmayr, Herbert, ‘Völkermuseum und Vorurteile’, in *Museum, Information, Forschung: Rundbrief* (4), 1975, p. 21.

²⁴ Kelm 1973, quoted in Stötzl, Monika Elisabeth, *Probleme der neueren Museumsethnologie : ein Beitrag zur Kritik der eigenen und der fremden Kultur*, dissertation, Philosophische Fakultät Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, 1981, 38. Volker Harms, among others, called for an economic view based on the notion of “solidarity”, which highlighted the necessity “of demonstrating the structures of interdependency between the industrialised countries and those countries providing the raw materials” (Vossen, Rüdiger; Ganslmayr, Herbert; Heintze, Dieter; Lohse, Wulf; and Rammow, Helga, ‘Bilanz und Zukunft der Völkerkunde-Museen’, in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, vol. 101(2), 1976, pp. 198-205, 204) and thus of counteracting the exploitation of the third world by the first world. This approach was not widely taken up in the standard understanding of museum education.

goes hand in hand with a self-reflexive questioning of how ethnographic knowledge is produced. With these aims in mind, ethnographic museums have developed a broad spectrum of methodologies. These deal with the construction of self and other, for instance through exercises where visitors categorise objects in the museum and then reflect on the attributions they have made. Other techniques highlight the constructed nature of the representational modes employed in the museum, for example, by explicitly naming sources, or by smuggling a new object into the collection to uncover the “truth effect” of the museum. And they relate cultural identity and its complexity back to the visitors themselves, for instance by talking about style and belonging in youth cultures.²⁵

There is another aspect that has persisted in the debates on museum education since the 1970s: the discussions about migration in ethnographic museums. One of the first “problems” that was addressed in the new “problem-oriented” exhibitions was migration, for example in the exhibition *Turkey: Home for People in our City* in Bremen (German-Turkish Working Group, quoted in *ibid.*, 93). The connection “foreign objects – foreign neighbours” from the perspective of the cultural majority has since developed into a constant trope for museum education, where the experience of cultural difference in the museum is connected with the experience of social heterogeneity through migration. Intercultural pedagogy, an approach which takes “culture” as a central element of difference in a society shaped by migration, and which emphasises the interstitial spaces and the translation processes between cultural characteristics (“inter”), was a crucial reference point for museum education in ethnographic museums in the 1990s and 2000s²⁶ and continues to be influential today. “Intercultural competence can be taught with the aid of selected exhibits”, writes Sonja Schierle from the

²⁵ The strategies mentioned are examples given in the interviews.

²⁶ Kunz-Ott, Hannelore, ‘Museen: interkulturelle Lernorte’, In *Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft* (eds.), *Interkulturelle Bildung – ein Weg zur Integration: Dokumentation der Tagung vom 14./15. November 2007 in Bonn. Essen/Bonn*, 2008, pp. 137–140; Jacobs, Doris, *Interkulturelle Museumspädagogik: internationale Bemühungen der Museumspädagogik in ihrer Relevanz für das ausländische Vorschulkind*, Weinheim, 1989; Bolduan, Anka and von Gemmingen, Ulrike, ‘Museum und Gesellschaft: Interkulturelles Lernen im Museum’, in Kunz-Ott, Hannelore and Bundesverband Museumspädagogik (eds.), *Kulturelle Bildung im Museum: Aneignungsprozesse – Vermittlungsformen – Praxisbeispiele*, Bielefeld, 2009, pp. 143–152.

Linden Museum Stuttgart.²⁷ Schierle connects knowledge about cultures outside of Europe in the museum with the fact that “people from different cultures ... are often our next door neighbours”.²⁸ At the same time, the interviews I conducted show that a radical change is currently taking place here. Doubts emerging in educational practice combine here with the incorporation of political and academic critiques of intercultural pedagogy. For example, by looking at cultural identity, participants can be made foreign again – and thus an order of “belonging” and “not belonging” can be maintained.²⁹ This critique is also mirrored in the interviews, with the majority of the interviewees problematising the act of addressing visitors as representatives of a culture. According to the interviews, intercultural pedagogy is a residual discourse that continues to shape the field, but is currently subject to significant critique and reshaping. As a means of distancing themselves from “interculturality”, museum educators increasingly refer to the concept of transculturality.³⁰ Global learning³¹ and diversity³² are also mentioned as new guiding concepts, although in the interviews the attendant methodological approaches are largely yet to be fleshed out. Migration remains a central theme for programming in museums.

²⁷ Schierle, Sonja, ‘Blick über den Tellerrand: Museumspädagogik im Völkerkundemuseum’, in *Kunst + Unterricht*, 349/350, 2011, pp. 16–18, here p. 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁹ See Mecheril, Paul, *Migrationspädagogik*, Weinheim, 2010.

³⁰ Interviews, Cohn, ‘Jugendlichen eine Plattform geben’; Menrath, ‘Phantominseln für eine transformative Musikvermittlung’. The concept of transculturality, which actually dates back to the Cuban ethnologist Fernando Ortiz (1940), was largely shaped by Wolfgang Welsch (‘Transkulturalität: Zur veränderten Verfassung heutiger Kulturen’, in Schneider, Irmela and Thomsen, Christian W. (eds.) *Hybridkultur: Medien, Netze, Künste*, Cologne, 1997 [1991], pp. 67–90). In contrast to multiculturalism and interculturality, which continue to carry a problematic understanding of culture as a self-contained unit, he emphasises the way processes of diffusion and change produce culture.

³¹ For an approach to global learning informed by postcolonialism, see, for example, Andreotti, Vanessa, ‘Soft versus Critical Global Citizenship Education’, in *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, vol. 3, 2006, pp. 40–51 and Danielzik, Chandra-Milena, ‘Überlegenheitsdenken fällt nicht vom Himmel: Postkoloniale Perspektiven auf Globales Lernen und Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung’, in *ZEP – Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik* vol. 36, no. 1, 2013, pp. 26.

³² For an introductory look at the potentials and problems of diversity-based approaches, see Mecheril, Paul, ‘Diversity: Die Macht des Einbezugs’, in *Heinrich Böll Stiftung (eds): Dossier Managing Diversity*, 2007.

Postcolonial museum education

In this panorama, museum education from a postcolonial perspective is an emergent discursive position. It problematises the colonial heritage of the ethnographic museum and of society more broadly.

As one interviewee phrased it:

The museum also has its history in a kind of human zoo, right? So basically you're showing the riches that were brought back from the colonies. And I... just ask myself how a museum can come to terms with something like that, a history like that. Or how we can deal with that responsibility in the future.³³

The concrete goal for educational work in this discursive position is to critically teach the history of museums and collections. This is supplemented by another perspective that addresses the material and intellectual/epistemic legacy of colonialism in the present. One of the facilitators interviewed described the goal of having participants understand that their city itself and its institutions “would be inconceivable... without colonies, without this interwoven history”.³⁴ Here, the focus of educational work is on conveying (post)coloniality in the present and in everyday life. As an emergent discourse, postcolonial museum pedagogies are yet to crystallize into concrete methodological approaches and practices –they manifest rather as a way of working with and in contradictions. In what follows I will elaborate on two of these contradictions and the question of how to deal with them productively.

Contradiction: critical museum education – audience interest

The contradiction most frequently mentioned in the interviews is that between the facilitators' own objectives and the interests of the audience. This contradiction can be seen in statements such as the following:

³³ I01, 06.07.2012.

³⁴ I05, 14.5.2014.

I find it very, very challenging to combine critique with [the involvement of visitors] ... because the expectation is: now I'm going to learn how the Chinese live and how the Indians live. What did the Indians do, and now can you explain to me how they live now? Do they still eat out of these clay pots? Those kinds of things. How do I deal with them? So I let that happen, actually... so I let that happen, well I can't really stop it from happening. But how do I get to a point where something 'clicks', and they start to think differently?"³⁵

Here the stereotypes and exoticised expectations that visitors bring to ethnographic museums are problematised. It is a question of a contradiction between different perspectives on what education work in a museum entails, a contradiction between the discursive positions identified above: between the position of a visitor and experience-orientated approach on the one hand, and reflexive ethnographic pedagogies and postcolonial education on the other. This contradiction presents itself as a *catch-22*, as becomes clear in the following interview quote:

Because of Karl May there is an unbelievable affinity with the Indians of North America, with all the clichés that go along with that... There is a strong affinity with Africa, with all kinds of exoticism, and accordingly, our Africa exhibits are usually well visited. That always makes me feel a little queasy..."³⁶

As a concession to these audience interests, programmes are designed and continue to be offered despite the fact that the facilitators are uncomfortable delivering them: programmes that romanticise and homogenise indigenous people from North America, and which construct the continent of Africa as a strange and foreign realm. Both examples were named repeatedly in the conversations, and they appear as a persistent pattern in museum education that continues against the will of those responsible for delivering the programmes.

Museum education departments are under increasing pressure to prove that the exhibitions receive high numbers of visitors. It is difficult to break with established programmes in this situation. As real as

³⁵ I05, 14.05.2014

³⁶ I12, 5.11.2014.

these effects are, for example, when teachers request “something about Africa”,³⁷ I would like to argue that the opposition “visitors’ wishes vs critical education” is nevertheless a specific construction. This construction restricts the development of museum education.

At first, the audience here appears to be homogeneously white and uneducated in matters of racism and critiques of representation. When the contradiction between audiences and critical approaches is stated as in the quotations above, there is no regard for the potential visitors who cannot/do not want to use an ethnographic museum precisely because of these programmes, which allegedly serve popular interests. For example, the continued display of objectifying and exoticising images of Africa is violent for visitors of African descent and for others who reject this form of violence. Such exclusion contradicts any arguments made about visitor orientation.

Another aspect that requires closer investigation is the fact that when describing the problem, interviewees attribute exoticising ideas and expectations to the public, positioning the museum clearly as the agent seeking to counteract these ideas. The interview partners depict the visitor as a figure who expects exoticisation. Programmes that respond to this actually end up triggering exactly these expectations, and ultimately fulfilling them. Conceiving of visitors in this way allows the museum and the facilitators to play the role of the forces that oppose this expectation, but are ultimately forced to submit to it. Two things are obscured by this approach: firstly, the exclusions of the aforementioned visitors who do not conform to this figure; and secondly, the history of the ethnographic museum itself, which was historically one of the central actors in the creation of these images of objectified and desired others. If the same paradigms are perpetuated today, the contradiction will become a cycle that ensures that the problematic desires which facilitators distance themselves from will continue into the future.

But even though this discussion has demonstrated that a clear break is needed, the problem is somewhat more complex. For it is not only

³⁷ These visitor expectations even provided the title (“Something about Africa”) for the Weltkulturenmuseum Frankfurt’s publication on museum education (Endter, Rothmund, *„Irgendwas zu Afrika“*), in which the facilitation team presents its counter-proposals for educational work from a postcolonial perspective and reflects upon the challenges this entailed.

the romanticising and exoticising educational programmes that can be traced far back into the history of museums, but also their denunciation. As early as 1909, Karl Weule, director of the Leipzig Museum and proponent of the popularisation of ethnographic museums over purely scientific or scholarly collections, saw the public's perception as an essential problem:

For many of our fellow countrymen, by the way, these collected goods still [occupy] the role of curiosities today. ... In the best case they are amazed that those pathetic savages, who despite all education are still more or less considered to be half-animals in our public sentiment, produce utensils at all, let alone in such astonishing diversity and abundance".³⁸

And this was "despite all education", according to Weule. The museum thus saw itself as an educational institution counteracting this image of the "savages" and their exotic "curiosities". Weule is not an isolated case. Georg Thilenius, who was the director of the ethnographic museum in Hamburg at the same time, lamented the fact that visitors only find ethnographic exhibits "curious" and "strange"³⁹, and tried to avoid any proximity to the "cabinet of curiosities" and other popular spectacles of the foreign in his public collections.⁴⁰ From a scholarly perspective, the public and its exoticising scopophilia were declared a problem as early as 1900, with counteracting this tendency being figured as a part of the museum's bourgeois disciplinary function.⁴¹ In his history of German ethnographic museums, Glenn Penny identifies a dilemma in the ethnology of the time: on the one hand, the scientific project, embodied above all in the figure of Adolf Bastian, who wanted to create a non-hierarchical archive of human cultural expressions; on

³⁸ Weule, Karl, 'Die nächsten Aufgaben und Ziele des Leipziger Völkermuseums', in *Jahrbuch des Städtischen Museums für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, 1908/1909*, 1909, pp. 151–174, here p. 155.

³⁹ Thilenius Georg, *Völkerkunde und Schule: Einführung in die Ausstellung des Museums für Völkerkunde Hamburg 1.-7. Juni 1925*, Munich, 1925, quoted in Penny, H Glenn, *Objects of culture: ethnology and ethnographic museums in imperial Germany*, Chapel Hill, 2002, p. 205.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 209f.

⁴¹ Bennett, Tony, [et al.] *The birth of the museum: History, theory, politics*, London, 2005.

the other hand, the audience, who requested an exotic spectacle.⁴² The dilemma formulated by facilitators today seems to be a long-standing one.

But the extent to which there actually is an opposition between “critical scholarship” and the “audience” begins to appear questionable if we take a closer look at the discourses of science, which placed itself on a moral high ground above the prejudiced “public sentiment”. In the same text, Karl Weule calls African, Australian and South American cultures “miserable creatures” in contrast to the “unique summit of the white man’s culture”.⁴³ The distinction between “primitive” and “civilised” people,⁴⁴ which was at that time a formative scientific norm, taught the very hierarchy that Weule rejected in its popular form – symbolised by the word “savage”. A few years later, Thilenius declared “race” to be the determining factor for culture and not only set up a racial exhibition, but also published a brochure for schools so that teachers could carry out “racial biological studies” on their pupils and judge “talent” by “racial characteristics”.⁴⁵ Certainly by the time the second generation of German ethnologists after Adolf Bastian had arrived, “pure” science was at least as problematic as the visitor expectations it condemned. The ostensible opposition was merely a division in terms of vocabulary and forms of expression, that is, one informed by class and education. Werner Schwarz has elaborated a similar effect of social distinction in relation to the history of showcasing human beings in “ethnographic expositions”, describing the exhibitions as a venue for making a division between science and popular culture. “The denigration of ‘seeing’ as a cheap, anti-emancipatory amusement was also associated with the devaluation of traditional forms of entertainment as amusement for the uneducated, broader population”.⁴⁶ The exhibition became “a doubly

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2015.

⁴³ Weule, ‘Die nächsten Aufgaben und Ziele des Leipziger Völkermuseums’, p. 157

⁴⁴ Translator’s note: the German terms *Naturvolk* and *Kulturvolk* differ slightly from the English equivalents of ‘primitive’ and ‘civilised’ peoples, though the parallels are clear.

⁴⁵ Thilenius, *Völkerkunde und Schule*. For an analysis of the development from “culture” to “race”, see Laukötter, Anja, *Von der „Kultur“ zur „Rasse“ – vom Objekt zum Körper? Völkerkundemuseen und ihre Wissenschaften zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2007, pp. 292.

⁴⁶ Schwarz, Werner Michael, *Anthropologische Spektakel: zur Schaustellung “exotischer” Menschen, Wien 1870 – 1910, dissertation*, Universität Wien, 2000, p. 21.

exotic place, since for an educated audience it also became a place for observing the ‘primitive’ inclinations of the masses”.⁴⁷ Schwarz reveals how the simultaneous critique of scopophilic curiosity and the employment of scientific methods to research the people in the shows functioned as a Bourdieuan process of distinction.

In the early history of the museum, the way in which non-Europeans were dealt with also contributed to the construction of a compounded scholarly superiority: a superiority not just over the distant others, who were turned into objects of research; but also over the emerging mass culture in their own country, which was characterised by a class distinction. Invoking Stuart Hall’s theorisation of repression and fetishisation in “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’”, we could say that the “scientification” of the gaze functions to sublimate the scholar’s own scopophilia, allowing the immoral aspect to be attributed to the masses.⁴⁸ The moral rejection of popular exoticisms is revealed as a split, as a rejection of the desire, fascination and “impurity” that racism in science produces.

This historical detour shows that there is a tradition in ethnographic museums of blaming the public for problematic and ideological perspectives on the “foreign”. The tradition of this separation and its blame-shifting should give pause for thought when today a contrast between postcolonial approaches and visitors’ expectations is postulated. The current problematization of the public’s desires also creates “others”, namely the unreflective visitors, who are themselves exoticised in their class and education-inflected ideas. The museum can thus be validated as the site of “correct”, “critical” knowledge. Is it not precisely the ascription of this power of interpretation to the museum that postcolonial critique should seek to interrogate?

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Hall, Stuart, “The spectacle of the ‘Other’”, in Hall, S. (ed.) *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*, London, 1997, pp. 223–279, here p. 268; see also Gilman, Sander, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness*, Ithaca, 1985.

Taking action: what kind of fun?

How can this contradiction be challenged? The opposition between ‘science and scholarship’ on the one hand and ‘amusement’ and fun on the other is already evident in the historical discourse, and it remains present today. ‘Critique’ and ‘postcolonial approaches’ are opposed to the need for entertainment and fun. But one wonders whether or not the desire for fun always has to be bound up with exoticism and clichés. One might be tempted to ask: what kinds of fun and desire are there that don’t come at the expense of others?

For example, in *Alarm, Alarm! Die Welt steht Kopf in ‘Zone X’* (Alarm, Alarm! The World’s Gone Topsy-Turvy in ‘Zone X’),⁴⁹ children at the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin developed and filmed a story based on an end-times scenario which included aliens and zombies as protagonists. Objects in the museum’s collection became a part of the story told by the children – not as representatives of “one culture” or of people in a region, but as things with a social function that were transferred to a fantasy world. Science fiction is a possible starting point for a joyful and at the same time deconstructive approach. In an interview, the museum educator David Dibiah emphasised that it was important to him that the works of art could take on a role in a new context. One could extrapolate on this point and ask: is it possible that, instead of reproducing fantasies about people from other parts of the world, cultural knowledge can have the function of producing other worlds of fantasy?

Contradiction: ceasing to “talk about others” – mediating cultures

We talk about people, but we aren’t people... At least not the ones we talk about.⁵⁰

The interviewee corrects herself here, but with her struggle to describe the people “we talk about” and those who speak, she makes a crucial point about the issues of subjects and objects. In doing so, she

⁴⁹ Holiday programme by Jugend im Museum e.V. in co-operation with the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, 2014, directed by David Dibiah.

⁵⁰ I03, 30.05.2013

touches upon the central contradiction that white facilitators who are not from minority groups must tackle when they engage with critiques of representation. Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie summarises the fundamental question of the illegitimacy of museums thus: “Who can assume the right to own and represent the material culture of others?”⁵¹ How can we take this question seriously and stop talking about and for others when this is precisely the job description for educational work in an ethnographic museum? “Speaking about others” is so closely connected with the ethnographic museum that one interviewee objected that anybody who had a problem with it should not work in ethnographic museums at all.⁵² From a postcolonial perspective, this would have to be formulated the other way around: having a problem with “speaking about others” is fundamental for a reflexive form of museum education in this context. Given the colonial configuration of the ethnographic museum, it is not possible to “speak about others innocently”.⁵³ According to Gayatri Spivak, a postcolonial pedagogical approach is associated with criticising the structures in which one is integrated and on which one’s own position depends.⁵⁴ As is evidenced in the interviews, such an approach is manifested when facilitators stumble over their words, interrupt themselves, search for a way of speaking that critiques its own speech acts. The contradictions that result from having a dominant position as a speaker cannot be resolved, but they can be shifted, challenged, or reconfigured in order to find new possible forms of action. The shift begins by asking: What can I talk about from my position? What do I want to talk about? And do I have to remain the only speaker?

⁵¹ Ogbechie, Sylvester Okwunodu, ‘Respondenz zu Susanne Leeb: Zeitgenössische Kunst, ethnologische Museen und relationale Politik’, in *Texte zur Kunst*, vol. 23(91), 2013, pp. 73–81, here p. 79.

⁵² I06_1, 17.6.2014.

⁵³ Endter, Stephanie and Rothmund, Carolin, ‘Im Spannungsfeld von Erwartungen, Strukturen und der eigenen Haltung’, in (eds.) „Irgendwas zu Afrika“: Herausforderungen der Vermittlung im Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt, 2015a, pp. 4–21, here p. 9.

⁵⁴ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, ‘The Making of Americans, the Teaching of English, and the Future of Culture Studies’, in *New Literary History*, vol. 21(4), 1990, pp. 781–798, here p. 795; Castro Varela, María do Mar and Dhawan, Nikita, ‘Breaking the Rules: Bildung und Postkolonialismus’, in Mörsch, Carmen and the documenta 12 education research team (eds.), *Kunstvermittlung 2: Zwischen kritischer Praxis und Dienstleistung auf der Documenta 12 – Ergebnisse eines Forschungsprojekts*, Berlin/Zurich, 2009, pp. 339–353.

Taking action: the museum as a site of unlearning

This shift not only means replacing the phantasm of having to represent an entire culture – a phantasm that is still inscribed in museum education, even though ethnographic research would hardly make this claim any more – with educational content that is more concrete, historically defined and forward-looking, as is already happening in many museums. It means following the request that Gayatri Spivak formulated for a white male student from the global North who believed he could no longer speak after engaging in a critical confrontation with postcoloniality: “Why don’t you develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for you that you are silenced?”⁵⁵

The point would be to move beyond self-interruption, to develop a rage against that which makes one’s own speaking a dilemma. A rage against the history that has produced positions from which it is impossible to speak, such as the position of a facilitator amidst cultural assets from former colonies that have been shipped to Europe, who is supposed to make her job fun as well. Museum educators can address the structures that take away their voice, the history that has produced the museum, their own privileges, and the way the contemplation of cultural alterity is interwoven with racialisation and inequality. Thus, the museum can become a site of unlearning not only for the facilitators themselves, but also for the public it attracts. As an institution in which the legacy of colonial history becomes materially and symbolically tangible, the ethnographic museum is perhaps better suited than any other educational institution to take up the task of unlearning this legacy.⁵⁶

Some museums have already begun discussing these colonial para-

⁵⁵ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, ‘Questions of multiculturalism: An interview with Sneja Gunew’, in Wood, Nigel and Lodge, David (eds.), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, Harlow, 2008, p. 597.

⁵⁶ For the concept of unlearning in museum education, see also Castro Varela, María do Mar and Dhawan, Nikita, ‘Breaking the Rules: Bildung und Postkolonialismus’, in Mörsch, Carmen and the documenta 12 education research team (eds.), *Kunstvermittlung 2: Zwischen kritischer Praxis und Dienstleistung auf der Documenta 12 – Ergebnisse eines Forschungsprojekts*, Berlin/Zurich, 2009, pp. 339-353; Sternfeld, Nora. *Verlernen Vermitteln*. Kunstpädagogische Positionen, Band 30. Hamburg, 2014.

digms in their work with visitors.⁵⁷ One example of how complex this endeavour is can be seen in the *Störbilder* (Disruptive Images) programme at the Weltkulturen Museum Frankfurt, which invites school classes to engage with the museum's image archive.⁵⁸ What do the classification systems of such an archive reveal? How are different people depicted in the images? A comparison with contemporary images from the media permit discussions about how colonial paradigms are reproduced in today's image production. Such a discussion is not possible without problematising one's own way of seeing: for example, can we look at anthropometric photographs again (and do we want to), and to what extent is violence analysed or perpetuated in doing so? How should we deal with the fact that the historical situation is only accessible to us through the one point of view that we are seeking to question?⁵⁹ In this sense, unlearning cannot be understood as simple subtraction. The conventions of Europe's gaze on its "others" cannot be removed from

⁵⁷ In Cologne's Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, an installation forces viewers to reflect on their own perspective when the African continent and racism are addressed (installation *Der verstellte Blick* [Distorted Gaze], <https://www.museenkoeln.de/rautenstrauch-joest-museum/Dauerausstellung-Vorurteile>, [accessed 14.07.2017]). In Hamburg, "ethnological expositions" and their legacy in the museum collection are the subject of a school programme (*Die Darstellung der Anderen* [The Representation of Others], <http://www.voelkerkundemuseum.com/793-0-Die-Darstellung-der-Anderen.html>, [accessed 24.12.2017]). In the same museum, students have addressed its colonial past for visitors in a virtual exhibition project *Colonialism and the Museum*, in a co-operation between the Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg and Prof Dr Jürgen Zimmerer, head of the research centre Hamburgs (post-)koloniales Erbe (Hamburg's (post)colonial heritage) at Universität Hamburg, 2014-2015. <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/exhibit/koloniale-hintergr%C3%BCnde-the-museum-%C3%B6-Cr-v%C3%B6lkerkunde-hamburg/3gLSWkBOpqlsLwahl=de>, [accessed 14.08.2017]. In Basel, the effects of a "colonialism without colonies" in the museum and in the city was addressed in both city excursions and school programmes (school programmes *Koloniales Basel vor der Linse* (Colonial Basel on Camera), <http://www.museenbasel.ch/de/institution/schulangebotdetails.php?id=12702>, [accessed 14.08.2017])

⁵⁸ Designed by Stephanie Endter, Esther Poppe and Berit Mohr. The programme was originally developed as part of the exhibition *Ware und Wissen, or the stories you wouldn't tell a stranger* (2015), but is now permanently established in the educational programme.

⁵⁹ See also, with reference to the Frankfurter Bildarchiv, the video and text work *Unearthing: In conversation* by Belinda Kazeem-Kaminski (in Kazeem-Kamiński, Belinda; Sternfeld, Nora; and Bayer, Natalie (eds.), *Kuratieren als antirassistische Praxis*, Berlin/Boston, 2017, pp. 73-87).

our reservoir of knowledge; rather they must first be understood. As Grimaldo Rengifo Vázquez, a Peruvian educator from the tradition of liberation pedagogy, writes, unlearning colonial knowledge means “curiously, learning it anew”.⁶⁰ This means returning to the knowledge one has learned in one’s own life – but in a critical fashion. Unlearning is a deconstructive operation.

It also becomes clear that decolonial unlearning is not synonymous with the critique of stereotypes, which plays such a central role in the objectives of reflexive ethnographic education (see above). When clichés and stereotypes are discussed, the opinion persists that the problem is a lack of knowledge. As Danielzik, Kiesel and Bendix point out, “the suggestion is that things would change if only we all had a better and less simplified picture of each other”.⁶¹ Yet it is precisely the accumulation of knowledge about others, in other words the subject-object relationship that this implies, that should be subject to negotiation. In addition, by focusing on clichés and prejudices, the problem is framed as a universal one that all people use to deal with complexity. What does not take place here is an “interrogation of the asymmetries in power relations created by colonialism, that is, that ‘our’ images of ‘others’... have an incomparably greater impact globally than is the case vice versa”.⁶² Instead of criticising how people deal with clichés, the central question here must be who produces knowledge about whom, and how the production of knowledge about “the world” is inextricably linked to economic and political factors.

Taking action: plurivocality and cooperation

Focusing attention on the “discontent in the museum”⁶³ allows for a shift in the speaker position of the facilitator. A second shift is initiated with the question: can and must white, European educators really solve

⁶⁰ Rengifo Vázquez, Grimaldo, ‘La enseñanza es estar contento’, *Educación y Afirmación Cultural Andina*, Lima, 2003, 29.

⁶¹ Danielzik, Chandra-Milena; Kiesel, Timo; and Bendix, Daniel, *Bildung für nachhaltige Ungleichheit*, Berlin, 2013, p. 29.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Kazeem, Belinda; Martinz-Turek, Charlotte; and Sternfeld, Nora (eds.), *Das Unbehagen im Museum: postkoloniale Museologien*, Vienna, 2009.

the problem on their own? Whose knowledge is needed to interrupt the monologue of European, Western knowledge?

Working toward this shift is first of all a matter of personnel policy. The majority of my interviewees who are responsible for staffing in the museums stated that they would like to see more diversity in the education team – at present, however, the diversity of society is hardly reflected in the staff. Where staffs with a migrant background are employed, they often have to struggle with being confined to experience-based knowledge and being assigned to representing a geographical region, for example, by being asked to demonstrate traditional techniques. One interviewee, for example, explained that he had learned drumming in Germany in order to work in a museum. In addition, there are often other barriers standing in the way of the desire for diversity. For example, in some cases very specific qualifications are required, ignoring other relevant knowledge, or institutions will only admit people who have already overcome barriers in other institutions – for example, when a degree in ethnology and a completed museum traineeship are prerequisites for employment. Internationally, the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg led the way during its founding phase under the direction of Jette Sandahl. It conceived its education programme as a series of “exercises in democracy”⁶⁴ and discussed exhibition themes with “as many different voices as possible”, as Pernilla Lutropp, the head of the education department at the time, explained.⁶⁵ This meant building a heterogeneous team in terms of their origin, their experiences of being confronted with racism or not, as well as their age, gender and forms of expertise, including personal experience with the theme of an exhibition. Developing anti-discriminatory hiring practices is not a question of geographical representation in which “talking about others” is replaced by “authenticity” and cultural self-representation. Instead, museum educators should be able to speak from different positions on racism and have different geopolitical reference points – and this goes for speaking about all content in the museum. As Sandrine Micossé-Aikins formulated in her ‘how to guide’ for less racism in the cultural sector: “If you are a cultural producer with

⁶⁴ Sandahl, Jette, ‘Cultural Pluralism and Cultural Participation’. keynote paper to the debate Negotiating differences – a responsibility of artists and cultural institutions, Brussels, 2008.

⁶⁵ Pernilla Lutropp, Interview, 16.5.2014.

a staff and some influence, try to put together a crew that contains all kinds of people. That also means different kinds of black people/POC, for being black/POC is usually not the only quality/identity aspect a person has, so one cannot be enough to truly open up new vistas/perspectives for your entire team/project.”⁶⁶ Critical diversity development is not limited to the selection of personnel but also includes the creation of a reflexive working environment – here it is not just the education departments of museums which have a part to play.

In addition to personnel development, cooperation and networking are crucial. Collaborative museology – which initially emerged from indigenous communities demanding self-determination and access to their cultural heritage in museums in their own countries, predominantly in Canada, USA, New Zealand and Australia – is currently taking hold in Europe as well, albeit with delays. While Boast⁶⁷ writes that in the English-speaking context there is hardly a museum with ethnographic, anthropological or archaeological collections that processes and exhibits these collections without some form of consultation with representatives from the original contexts, in German-speaking countries, collaborative projects are still more the exception than the rule. Work within the collaborative paradigm⁶⁸ also offers the possibility for museum education to directly include international co-operation partners in educational activities, or to indirectly build upon their knowledge. In her widely acclaimed text on collaborative museology, Ruth Phillips sees collaboration as an essentially pedagogical activity, a mutual learning process.⁶⁹ However as the interviews with museum educators show, the opportunities for such learning processes in co-operation with international stakeholders have not yet been sufficiently taken up. Instances of

⁶⁶ Micossé-Aikins, Sandrine, ‘7 Things You Can Do To Make Your Art Less Racist – A comprehensive How-To-Guide’, in Heinrich Böll Stiftung (eds.), *Heimatkunde: Migrationspolitisches Portal – Dossier The Living Archive – Kulturelle Produktionen und Räume*, 2013 <https://heimatkunde.boell.de/2012/12/18/7-things-you-can-do-make-your-art-less-racist-comprehensive-how-guide>, [accessed 05.05.2018].

⁶⁷ Boast, Robin, ‘Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited’, in *Museum Anthropology*, vol. 34(1), 2011, pp. 56–70 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1548-1379.2010.01107.x/full>, [accessed 21.04.2015].

⁶⁸ Phillips, Ruth B, ‘Community Collaboration in Exhibitions: Toward a dialogic paradigm, Introduction’, in Peers, Laura and Brown, Alison K (eds.), *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge reader*, London, 2003, pp. 155–170.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

facilitators participating in international projects and allowing this to inform their programmes with visitors are an exception. Several interviewees reported that they were not included in international research collaborations and that they were not even informed when international delegations visited the museum to discuss their cultural heritage. The museums' efforts to co-operate with source communities brings with it the possibility of genuinely replacing the institutional monologue with a diversity of voices in their interaction with visitors – these possibilities should be used in a much more concerted fashion.

In contrast to international co-operation, participative or collaborative projects in museums with *local* diaspora communities and migrant groups are often firmly located in the field of education and outreach. Cultural self-representation (festivals, cultural techniques) and the integration of different lifeworlds and experiences are often the focus (see above on migration as a core topic of museum education). However, among the diverse landscape of networks and collaborations, it is rare to find co-operations with people who through their experiences of migration or perspectives as people of colour have acquired knowledge from outside the museum on the core themes of representation, post-colonialism and critiques of racism. Christian Kravagna has formulated a pointed critique on the matter: the efforts to integrate “other voices” in the museum remain problematic as long as *other* “other voices” – the critical ones – are ignored.⁷⁰ Not only in the direct confrontation with ethnographic collections, but also in working through the legacies of colonialism and in anti-racist educational work and organisational development, museum education departments should be working with independent initiatives and associations that have developed methodolo-

⁷⁰ Kravagna, Christian, ‘Konserven des Kolonialismus: Die Welt im Museum’, in Kazeem, Belinda; Martinz-Turek, Charlotte; and Sternfeld, Nora (eds.) *Das Unbehagen im Museum: Postkoloniale Museologien*, Vienna, 2009, pp. 131-142, here p. 99.

gies and produced knowledge from minority positions.⁷¹ In this area, there would be many potential partners for co-operation in the development of educational activities in museums.

Such collaborations are not easy. They can only succeed if decisions about design and content are actually made collectively. For collaborative work, this also means “planning resources for reflecting upon and addressing power relations and conflicts of interest when cultural institutions cooperate with groups that are endowed with less capital, be it economic or symbolic”.⁷²

If these shifts – towards unlearning, towards cooperation and a diversity of voices – succeed, museum education will genuinely become a space for interrogating difference and knowledge in a global context. Reflecting upon contradictions is part of this – what we need to do now is progress from reflexivity to action. As bell hooks writes: “Acknowledgment of racism is significant when it leads to transformation”.⁷³ Reflection on museum education and its postcolonial dilemmas is significant when it leads to changed practices.

⁷¹ To name just a few examples with a decidedly pedagogical component: Postcolonial educational approaches were developed in Germany in exhibitions outside of ethnographic museums, for example in the project *Freedom Roads*, which is about colonial street names (<http://www.freedom-roads.de/>, 17.11.2017). Other current examples include projects such as *Here and Now: Kolonialismus und Kolonialrassismus im Schulunterricht* (ARiC Berlin – Antirassistisch-Interkulturelles Informationszentrum Berlin e. V. and IDB | Institut für diskriminierungsfreie Bildung, http://www.aric.de/projekte/hier_und_jetzt/, [accessed 17.11.2017]) or *Connecting the dots*, a project by glocal.eV. in which an e-learning tool on development, colonialism and resistance was developed. (http://www.glocal.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/10/WSTS_Methode_2017_12_15-1.pdf, [accessed 19.11.2017]). Education and exhibition projects from the Initiative Schwarzer Menschen in Deutschland (Initiative of Black People in Germany) (<http://isdonline.de/homestory-deutschland/>, [accessed 17.11.2017]) are just as important to mention in this context as the projects on colonial history in educational institutions outside of museums such as “Ein vergessenes Erbe? German Colonial History” at the Anne Frank educational institution in Frankfurt (http://www.bs-anne-frank.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Slider/Publikationen/Deutscher_Kolonialismus.pdf, 17.11.2017).

⁷² Institute for Art Education, ‘Zeit für Vermittlung: Eine online Publikation zur Kulturvermittlung’, Zurich, 2013.

⁷³ hooks, bell, *Feminist Theory: from margin to center*, Boston, 1984, p. 54.

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AUTHORS

Bernadette Lynch

Bernadette Lynch, PhD, is an academic and museum professional with twenty-five years' experience in senior management in the UK and Canadian museums. Formerly Deputy Director at the Manchester Museum at the University of Manchester, she has developed an international reputation for leading ethical, innovative participatory practice. In her research and consultancy work she specialises in public engagement and participation with diverse communities and in leading museum transformation and change, publishing widely on all aspects of participatory democracy in museums. Her recent work has been very influential in raising debate on the impact of public engagement in museums. She has extensive experience in leading participatory action research with museums across the UK. She is frequently asked to lecture, advise, teach museum studies and mentor museum professionals internationally. She is Honorary Research Associate at University College London (UCL) where her ongoing research relates to decolonisation, power, democracy, dialogue, debate, engaging with conflict, contested collections and difficult subject matter and organisational change in the museum.

Carla Cabral

Carla Cabral holds a master's degree in Landscape Architecture by Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD) with the theme *The multisensory landscape experience: senses contribution on perceiving landscape material and immaterial dimensions on the Douro Landscape of Corgo Valley*. On this matter she held exhibitions in Museu do Douro and Centro de Ciência de Vila Real. Within the research framework of landscape experience she has been collaborating with Museu do Douro and UTAD and participated in seminars. She is also graduated in Arts (Painting) by Faculdade de Belas Artes, Universidade do Porto (FBAUP) and works as an art teacher.

Catarina S. Martins

Catarina Silva Martins is the Head of the i2ADS - Research Institute in Art, Design and Society and Professor at the Faculdade de Belas Artes, Universidade do Porto. Her research interest lies in rethinking arts education curriculum studies in the present from a historical approach focusing on the systems of reason that govern policy and research. Her previous work has examined the historical intersection of art education with cultural distinctions and divisions inscribed in notions of the artist, inventiveness, and genius that emerged at the turn of the century in Portugal.

Denise Pollini

Denise Pollini is Head of Education - Arts at the Fundação de Serralves - Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto, Portugal. For more than fifteen years she worked at the Fundação Armando Alvares Penteado (MAB/ FAAP) in São Paulo, where she was responsible for the implementation of the Educational Sector of this Museum. During this period, she trained and coordinated the educators' teams, developed training programmes for public and private school teachers, and also developed partnerships between the museum's education sector programmes with various institutions such as Committee for Education and Cultural Action — International Council of Museums /Brazil (CE- CA-ICOM / BR), Fundação Bienal de São Paulo and Instituto Moreira Salles in the development of joint projects, seminars and conferences. At Serralves she coordinates educational projects for schools, families and adults, as well as social and intellectual inclusion projects. In 2016 she developed at the Museu de Serralves the international conference *The Museums and Their Publics* with speakers from the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) — United Kingdom; Museu de Arte, Arquitetura e Tecnologia (MAAT) — Portugal; Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR) — Brazil; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA) — USA and Van Abbemuseum — Netherlands.

Janna Graham

Janna Graham is a practice-based researcher who works at the intersections of geography, radical pedagogy and cultural production. She is currently Lecturer in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths University where she runs the BA in Curating. A key figure in what has been termed ‘the educational turn’ in art, she has developed exhibitions, residencies, research and writing between art and contemporary social urgencies including the struggles around migration, gentrification, education, anti-racism and indigeneity. From 2008-2014 she was a founding researcher and curator of the Centre for Possible Studies, a popular education and arts research centre that worked against social inequalities in London’s Edgware Road neighbourhood. She is currently, with Valeria Graziano and Susan Kelly, developing a monograph on the histories and problematics of Public Programming, is a member of the international sound art and political collective Ultra-red and a researcher with the Another Roadmap for Arts Education international research project.

Lara Soares

PhD researcher in Arts Education at the Faculdade de Belas Artes (FBAUP) with a grant from FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia. Master in Practice and Drawing Theory at the same faculty (2008). Degree in Visual Arts at ESAD CR – Caldas da Rainha (2005). Recently she made several presentations, nationally and internationally, on her research work between art and education – Cape Verde, Ireland and Denmark. Since 2017 she is responsible for the educational programme of the ORBITAL project in the city of Porto. In the last years she has collaborated with different structures of Contemporary Art, emphasising the work in CENTA and BALLETEATRO in the area of coordination and production of creative projects and artistic education. In 2010 and 2011 she was a lecturer at the Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra. In 2012, she joined the Guimarães Capital of Culture 2012 team, at the CCVF and CIAJG in the educational service programme, remaining until 2017. She’s currently working as a consultant on audience mediation in the Municipalities of Ovar (Centro de Arte), Ílhavo (23 Miles programme) and São João da Madeira (Núcleo de Arte Oliva).

Marta Coelho Valente

Marta Coelho Valente is a PhD student in Arts Education at the Faculdade de Belas Artes, Universidade do Porto, holds a scholarship from FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, and is a member of i2ADS – Research Institute in Art, Design and Society and LabEA – Research Laboratory in Arts Education. Her research interests are centred on relational possibilities and public engagement in the context of educational practices in museums, seeking to explore critical and transformative dimensions of real collective agency. She has a Master in Painting by FBAUP, and degrees in Painting by Escola Universitária das Artes de Coimbra and in Art History by Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto. From 2001 to 2014 she was a visual arts teacher and in 2014 and 2015 she worked as a special education teacher, alongside her art practice.

Nora Landkammer

Nora Landkammer, gallery educator and deputy head of the Institute for Art Education at Zurich University of the Arts. She studied Art and Communicative Practices at the University of Applied Arts Vienna and Spanish and Latin American Studies at Vienna University. As an educator, she worked at documenta 12 (2007), Kunsthalle Vienna and Shedhalle Zürich. In the project TRACES – Transmitting Contentious Cultural Heritages with the Arts (<http://www.traces.polimi.it/>) she is conducting research on conflict in learning and community engagement around difficult heritage. She pursues a PhD project on decolonising perspectives in education in ethnographic museums, and is active in the international network Another Roadmap for Arts Education (<http://colivre.net/another-roadmap/>). She teaches in the MA in art education, specialisation in curatorial studies at ZHdK.

Raquel Ribeiro dos Santos

Head of Education at the Fundação Caixa Geral de Depósitos – Culturgest since 2005. She studied Contemporary Art with Margarida

Acciaiuoli and Raquel Henriques daSilva, among others, at Universidade Nova de Lisboa – Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas. Has additional training in the areas of expression, pedagogy and psychology at Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada. She has organised conferences in the area of mediation, programming for children, education and audiences in museums and art centres, such as Discourses and dialects and Team, Ethic and Error, both under the major theme In the name of the arts or in the name of the audiences? (Culturgest 2010, 2011), Mediation, Emancipation and Participation: In the name of the arts or in the name of the audiences? (Gulbenkian, 2012), Temporary Convictions: In the name of the arts or in the name of the audiences? (Serralves, 2013), Risks and Opportunities for Visual Arts Education in Europe (INSEA, APECV, Culturgest, 2015), After the Amazement (Centro Cultural de Belém – Fábrica das Artes, 2016).

Samuel Guimarães

Samuel Guimarães, work in art education since 1993; contemporary art and culture teacher in the theatre department of ESMAE, Porto (higher education performing arts school of Politécnico do Porto) since 2002 on BA and MA courses; Head of education department of the Fundação Museu do Douro since 2006. Former Head of education department of the Fundação de Serralves - Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto (1999-2002) and as invited teacher at European Studies Institute of Macau, China (1999, 2000). As an art educator works for theatre companies, festivals, etc. PhD in Arts Education (2016) Faculdade de Belas Artes, Universidade do Porto; Member of i2ADS – Research Institute in Art, Design and Society - FBAUP. Main interests: questioning mediation in its ontological colonial status, its practices and discourses | independent editions (fanzines).

Sofia Victorino

Sofia Victorino is the Daskalopoulos Director of Education and Public Programmes at the Whitechapel Gallery where she leads a programme

of artists' residencies and commissions; community projects; public events, performance and film. Previously Head of Education and Public Programmes at Fundação de Serralves - Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto (2002-2011) her research interests focus on art, performativity and social practice.

INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON MUSEUM EDUCATION & RESEARCH #1

Rethinking museum theory and practices

23rd and 24th May 2018

Museu do Douro, Peso da Régua, Portugal

SYNOPSIS OF THE PROGRAMME

Currently, museums are part of an ambiguous and conflicting framework that extends between a desire to embrace emancipatory and solidarity processes, and to consolidate their civilizational and disciplinary legacy. At the international level, academic research explores the educational processes in cultural institutions, in their collaborative relationships with artistic and curatorial practices, and, in the extended field, their relationships and engagement with their contexts, local communities and social justice movements. Emergent practical processes of collective agency with external museum contexts, expressed as potentially horizontal strategies, are commonly seen as a sign of institutional 'openness'. However, it is important to question those processes that simply convey the museum as an open and accessible space whilst perpetuating unilateral power mechanisms; to explore possibilities that allow us to break institutional hierarchical and elitist barriers by incorporating analyses of emerging alternative relational

and collaborative processes within an emancipatory, deconstructive and transformative vision. It is therefore necessary to reflect on and explore the conflicting points in the current institutional educational narratives and to understand how arts education within a critical and collaborative reflexive approach can challenge the still dominant hegemonic and colonialist narratives, building from there ramifications of possible transformative continuities and new institutional realities.

In this first edition of the meeting, the aim is to rethink museums by questioning educational and research practices, seeking to address the relational processes and real audience involvement, as well as to explore dissident and transformative pedagogical possibilities in tune with more democratic and socially engaged values. The idea is to stimulate national and international dialogue by gathering researchers, students and professionals from the fields of education, artistic practice, curation and museology to create an informed field concerning the current institutional relational and pedagogical practices.

ORGANISERS

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Catarina Almeida (i2ADS/FBAUP)
Lara Soares (i2ADS/FBAUP)
Samuel Guimarães (i2ADS/MD)
Alice Semedo (DCTP/FLUP)

PROGRAMME

23rd May 2018

09h30 - 10h15

Participant registration and coffee

10h15 - 10h30

Welcome and opening of the meeting
Fernando Seara (Director of Museu do Douro); José Paiva (Director of FBAUP)

10h30 - 11h00

Questioning Relational Possibilities and Public Engagement in Museum Education
Catarina S. Martins
Marta Coelho Valente

11h00 - 12h30

Cocktail of Questions
Denise Pollini
Raquel Ribeiro dos Santos
Moderator: Catarina Almeida

Lunch

14h00 - 15h00

Off centre and in between
Andreia Magalhães Lara Soares
Moderator: Samuel Guimarães

15h00 - 16h00

Pity Porn or Activism for Social Justice?
A Critical Look at Public Engagement in Museums Today [Virtual Presentation and Talking Circle]
Bernadette Lynch
Moderator: Catarina Martins

Coffee Break

16h15 - 17h45

Where Are We When We Think
Janna Graham
Moderator: Marta Coelho Valente

24th may 2018

09h30 - 12h00

Walking Down to Earth. Multisensory Experience and Enquiry in the Landscape
Carla Cabral

Lunch

14h00 - 15h00

i am landscape – secrets as cipher of power
Arts and Education Service, Museu do Douro
Samuel Guimarães
Moderator: Marta Coelho Valente

15h00 - 16h30

Art and Collaboration Sofia Victorino
Moderator: Lara Soares

Coffee Break

16h45 - 18h15

The Museum as a Site of Unlearning?
Coloniality and Education in Ethnographic Museums
Nora Landkammer
Moderator: Catarina Almeida

IMMER #1 website:
<https://immer.fba.up.pt/2018>

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