

SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Unpacking the complexities, challenges, and nuances of museum community engagement practitioners' narratives on knowledge production in Scotland

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Abstract

This paper explores how community engagement practitioners understand their knowledge production work in facilitating and choreographing dialogical spaces (Freire, 2005) within which “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971) and “alternative” knowledge emerge. Using a qualitative, phenomenological research strategy, data were generated through semi-structured interviews with community engagement practitioners in Scotland. Practitioners emphasize the importance of equity in the relationship with project participants in knowledge production. Practitioners' narratives reveal how those relationships are realized and how these inform their own and the museum institutions' practice. We acknowledge that community-based project participants' expertise is prioritized by practitioners as critical to effective community engagement. We argue for a nuanced conceptualization—and appreciation—of the complexities inherent in museum community engagement practice, which is often absent in museum studies work. This conceptualization is embedded in practitioners' subjective experiences and reflections, as well as structural contexts, which simultaneously enable and constrain meaningful community engagement work.

KEYWORDS

dialog, knowledge production, museum community engagement, practitioners

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INTRODUCTION

Museums are living institutions that echo broader societal processes and change, which compel museums to perpetually revisit their purpose and to ensure contemporary relevance (Watson, 2007). Political pressure and an increasingly policy-driven cultural sector in the United Kingdom have shifted museums' attention away from an over-concentration on collections, toward people and, in turn, shifting the role of the museum “from being about something to being for somebody” (Weil, 1999, p. 257). Informed by this participatory turn at the dawn of the new century, UK museums have increasingly engaged new audiences and brought “new” voices through community engagement work, with the aim to disrupt and challenge existing power structures within, and outside, the museum to make them into spaces of reflection, dialog, wellbeing, and social justice (Morse, 2021). Priorities and practices for working with communities are commonly developed in response to local needs and contexts; therefore, the approaches differ across museums and there is no “script” of what community engagement should look like (Morse & Munro, 2018). There are, however, commonalities: the work generally involves a small group of people (often from “marginalized” or “vulnerable” groups) coming together for regular sessions facilitated by community engagement practitioners, focusing on different topics, activities, and goals (Morse, 2021).

At the core of the critique directed toward museum community engagement is an often-existing uneven power dynamic in the museum community relationship, resulting in work that is tokenistic and experienced as short term by the community-based participants (Fouseki, 2010; Lynch, 2011). In response, Benson and Cremin (2019) call for a more socially engaged approach to community engagement and introduce the concept of “abundance” to frame their vision. A multidirectional process of shared decision-making and democratization, “abundance” encompasses opening up the collection and connecting to the skill, passion, and expertise of people outside the museum, to make them closer connected to their communities and, in turn, into truly meaningful places (Benson & Cremin, 2019). Reminiscent of Freire's (2005) concept of “dialogical spaces” where “students” (project participants) and “teachers” (museum practitioners) are both educators and learners, they argue that valuable knowledge is generated in the dialog between the two. In working sustainably and consistently with knowledge and experience emanating from communities, museums can ensure that their knowledge production is not directed solely by museum expertise, but that it encompasses a variety of voices, knowledges, and perspectives.

Docherty-Hughes et al. (2020), drawing on Gramsci's (1971) work, conceptualize their community-based participants as “organic intellectuals,” who can evoke social change and transformation by mobilizing knowledge emanating from their lived experience. Facilitating spaces that enable and empower the emergence of such critical “alternative” knowledge, then, can play an important role in diversifying museum narratives and interpretations, further non-hegemonic interests and lead to sustainable legacies for both the museum and participants (Kirschberg, 2016; Wallen & Docherty-Hughes, 2022). Spaces where such knowledge can emerge has been argued to be dependent on being accepting, supportive and caring to make participants feel valued and empowered to take ownership of their experiences and expertise (Wallen & Docherty-Hughes, 2022). Morse (2021) uses the term “care” to explore what museum practitioners do within community engagement spaces; noting that practicing care involves providing emotional support, listening, encouragement, showing compassion and kindness, as well as providing practical support and opportunities for people to develop skills, confidence and interests. Community engagement practitioners' work is also underpinned by a duty of care and sense of personal accountability toward their communities and a “belief in what they are doing” (Morse & Munro, 2018), often resulting in experiences of overwhelming affective and emotional labor (Munro, 2014).

Due to the extent of care in these spaces, Morse and Munro (2018) argue that many aspects of museum community engagement work in the UK resemble social work. Acknowledging these

similarities is important, they argue, because of a tension in the perception of community engagement work within many museum institutions where “social work” is a term directed toward “non-traditional” museum work, often holding negative connotations among museum practitioners who are not involved in such work and who have little understanding of what it entails (Morse & Munro, 2018). Moreover, as working with communities using bottom-up, community-led approaches come with the museum relinquishing power (Lynch & Alberti, 2010) it can be met with some hesitations based on fear of excluding existing audiences (Hakamies, 2017). This apprehension is reinforced by the apparent dichotomy of excellence/access, which is well established in Western museological literature, particularly in considering community input as “less than” the knowledge conveyed by museum practitioners (Golding & Modest, 2013; Karp et al., 1992; Watson, 2007). Thus, there is a lack of awareness and appreciation of what museum community engagement practitioners do, what their role in knowledge production is and how that knowledge challenges and fits into Western knowledge production and engagement processes within the context of museum institutional settings, as distinct from, and alongside, community-based and focused settings. In response, this research offers a fine-grained analysis of the accounts to emerge from interviews with museum community engagement practitioners, refracting the lens on the particular challenges, complexities, expertise, and skills required for meaningful co-production of knowledge in community engagement projects.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Participants and projects

The data presented in this paper emanate from two separate studies, conducted in 2019 and 2021, respectively.

The 2019 study involved six participants recruited through gatekeepers with experience of museum community engagement work in Scotland. Particular focus was given to the inclusion of practitioners from a variety of museums, projects and with varying experience, in order to provide varied and broad accounts within the small participant sample. Four of the participants (Crucilla, Alice, Cissie and Eleanor) were part of a large museum institution that encompasses several venues across Glasgow, Scotland's largest city. However, they and their community engagement projects were predominately based in a museum with an emphasis on outreach work. One participant (Margot) was based in a national development body for the museum sector in Scotland, with a particular focus on community engagement and outreach. Lastly, one participant (Sophia) was based at a science center and her role revolved around outreach work. The different institutions that the practitioners were based in, and their role and experience of community engagement projects were varied—ranging from interactive outreach events with children and young people to displays that had been co-curated with a range of community groups across Scotland. All participants in this sample specialized in museum community engagement and outreach work specifically.

The participants in the 2021 study were all based at the same small, archeological museum in rural Perthshire in Scotland, and were paid members of staff (Mike, Rachel, Rich, Jason, Graham and Jenny). Six participants were interviewed twice—first in July and then again in December 2021. Participants were recruited with the help of a gatekeeper within the museum team. The museum prides itself on its long-term work with communities and there is no dedicated community engagement team, although two of the participants have roles that more directly focus on work with various communities. In their interviews, the participants reflected on work they had done with various groups (such as people who were part of a mental health organization) as well as long-term community engagement work that shapes the everyday running of the museum, in the form of their apprenticeship program.

Furthermore, the accounts of participants from a range of museums with different emphases on community engagement work form a strong basis for our analysis of museum community engagement practitioners' role in knowledge construction. Indeed, the perception and understanding of such work differs across institutions; for example, community engagement work is undertaken by a small team of expert practitioners in the context of a much larger cross-city museum service in Glasgow, while community engagement work is the central focus of all practice in the archeological site in Perthshire.

Methods

This research is underpinned by a phenomenological theoretical perspective and research design, which facilitate the exploration of a deep awareness and understanding of lived experience in relation to a specific setting or event (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Accordingly, phenomenology does not attempt to explain the causes of a phenomenon, but rather how it is subjectively experienced, and the meaning people attach to these experiences. The number of participants for each study was based upon the recommendation that a small sample is ideal for sound phenomenological research (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007).

Informed by this phenomenological approach, the data were generated through semi-structured interviews with community engagement practitioners in Scotland in two separate studies. Semi-structured interviews allowed us to be responsive to the participants by enabling them to expand on, and deviate from, the questions they were asked, as well as for us to follow lines of inquiry we had not anticipated when creating the interview guides (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Furthermore, asking open-ended questions allowed the participants to answer, interpret and expand upon the question in a way that is more reflective and personal than close-ended questions permit, which is key for phenomenological research that aims to understand lived experience (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). As a result, the data were personal and rich, made up of “thick” descriptions (Geertz, 1973).

Sixteen of the interviews took place in the museum where the practitioners worked which, in some cases, made it possible for the participants to further contextualize the points they were making by gesturing to and referring to the surrounding environment. The other two interviews took place in the participants' offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow, respectively. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and were transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, where re-occurring themes are made apparent in the generated data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Both studies were granted ethical approval by our university's internal ethics panel. Standard protocols for ensuring participant informed consent, confidentiality, and wellbeing were implemented throughout the projects. In the reporting of the data, the names of the participants in the 2019 study have been replaced by pseudonyms. In line with the participants' wishes—and our submitted ethics application—the participants' real names are used in the reporting from the 2021 study. This decision was made as the 2021 study is part of a larger research project and is one of multiple case studies in which their museum institution is named.

Limitations

This paper focuses specifically on the perspectives of community engagement practitioners—although with varied roles and responsibilities—and does not include reflections of other museum practitioners, such as archivists, conservators, or front-of house staff. Further investigation that includes perspectives from a range of museum practitioners is required to better understand the perception of such work and in relation to knowledge production, in

community engagement spaces. Moreover, this paper is specifically focused on community engagement traditions and practice within a UK policy and Scottish practice context and further consideration of the variety of professional perspectives from other cultural and political contexts would generate further insight into knowledge production in community engagement spaces more broadly.

FINDINGS

Theme 1—Community engagement in the museum institution

Based upon all practitioners' acknowledgements that their work aligns with their values and beliefs in equality, inclusion, and diversity, they recognized the possibilities and hindrances they face acting upon these beliefs. Despite the increased emphasis upon community engagement within the museum sector (Museums Galleries Scotland, 2020; National Museums Scotland, 2015) most practitioners, particularly those working in larger institutions, reflected on a lack of recognition and understanding from the wider museum institution of what their work requires and entails. Indeed, this was the prevailing understanding, despite practitioners expressing how they had seen improvements in, and an increasing visibility and acknowledgment of, museum community engagement work over the course of their careers. Crucilla said:

I don't think there's enough recognition of what it is that we do within outreach or what skills are needed to do that. It's not just about having tea and cake with the community (...) It's really hard work and it takes a lot out of you and it's a specialism. It's a skill to work in this and when this isn't recognised, I just feel... I'm not doing my job properly; I'm doing my job with the groups properly but clearly not feeding it back into the museum or there aren't the right channels to get that into the museum so that you can use it as an institution, and approach different groups or take it forward and support and build on or develop.

Most practitioners related the persisting misunderstanding of their work to a lack of recognition of the impact that incorporating voices and knowledge emanating from museum community engagement could have upon the wider museum practice (Morse & Munro, 2018). Relatedly, Crucilla's feeling of not doing her job properly was shared among most practitioners and resulted in them experiencing a lack of agency and impact within, and upon, the museum institution. Their accounts resonate with the discussion of accountability in previous research on museum community engagement (Morse & Munro, 2018). They similarly illustrate their commitment, based upon their shared values and beliefs in equality, inclusion, and diversity—which they all acknowledged led them into this work and shape the way they do it. Alice explained:

Sometimes it can be frustrating because you can see changes that you see could be positive to happen within the organisation, but because you're not in a position to affect those changes it can be really frustrating. I think, yeah, that's probably the thing that grinds us a bit, the fact that we could make all sorts of suggestions and we could also bring the people we work with to around the table and they could be part of that discussion but, you know...

The internal museum structure and hierarchy were largely seen to shape what community engagement work is possible. At the core of the community engagement practice at the small museum in the second study lies long-term sustainable engagement, or what they referred to as a “move away from short-term projects.” Their established apprenticeship

program is a cornerstone of that sustainable engagement, and the five apprentices play an important role in all aspects of how the museum works: from the decision-making process to visitor engagement. Mike, the museum director, explained the ethos behind their engagement with the local community, making specific reference to their apprenticeship program, saying that “you connect to your communities when you actually employ people from that community, and they blossom into being what they always had the potential to be, and they contribute to the organisation.”

Existing works on care in museum community engagement practice predominately focus on participants as part of specific projects (Morse, 2021; Morse & Munro, 2018). However, practitioners working in the small museum suggest that care is part of the very structure of the museum and that it extends into all practice. Equally, while community engagement work is often—although not always—done by one specific team within the museum, the small scale of this museum and the overall emphasis on community engagement has made the work an integral part of the institution, rather than an added extra beyond the formal institutional setting. In so doing, it opens up the opportunity to further reflect on care within museums in a more holistic sense. Rich said:

Community engagement is at the centre of [our museum]. It is the single most important thing we do, and by that I mean it's... everything that we do is community engagement. It's not for us, it's not a tick box thing, a lot of people say what are you doing to engage communities? Everything we do is engaging the community. That actually runs through the organisation.

Practitioners, such as Margot, also spoke of partnerships, and particularly “meaningful” partnerships that built on the direct involvement of communities in the design and direction of projects:

True partnership in museums can achieve a lot, both partnerships with themselves and partnerships with communities especially now, with funding, when the economic climate is not [laughs] great. So, uhm, the way forward is for museums to actually, if they are thinking of diversity and inclusion for their sector, then they really do need to work in partnerships [...] You've got to have patience because it takes time to build partnerships. You have to build trust with communities, but it takes time, it takes energy, it takes resources.

The perception of much museum community engagement work as “tokenistic” is a prominent criticism within the existing body of academic literature (Lynch, 2011; Morse & Munro, 2018). Conversely, all practitioners emphasized the importance for museums of engaging in meaningful and long-lasting partnerships with communities, as well as other institutions and sectors. Crucilla explained how she engages in careful “social engineering” to manage projects where all partners have an equal voice. This can be a demanding task as “some voices are louder than others,” thus requiring her to break down hierarchies of power and agendas. Practitioners noted the importance of remaining transparent, critical, and reflexive in their practice and partnerships to make sure that communities were not taken advantage of—thereby avoiding waging into tokenistic community engagement for the sake of “ticking boxes” in museum strategies and policies. Instead, they emphasized their belief in practice that involve sustainable engagement in co-produced and community-led projects that challenge the foundation of “traditional” museum practice (Morse & Munro, 2018). At the same time, however, the practitioners highlighted the particular challenges that come with such an endeavor, such as lack of time and funding.

Theme 2—Diversifying knowledge and expertise

Practitioners reflected upon the impact that new perspectives and the diversification of voices heard and represented can have within museums and the way their collections are seen and understood. Alice said:

I think that so much could be absorbed by the institution and museums could have much to learn from this kind of grassroots working and interpreting objects and researching objects and how much experience and knowledge people in our community have. Think of all the neglected stories!

The practitioners shared many examples of displays that had been curated and interpreted by communities, which resulted in museum collections taking on new meanings through these displays, as the interpretation of the art and artifacts were mostly embedded in program participants' lived experience, rather than interpreted by museum curators. However, they similarly acknowledged that much of this work is “invisible,” as these exhibitions are predominately displayed within smaller community-settings, such as libraries and community centers, rather than in more formal museum venues.

Programs and projects were seen as a space of knowledge exchange between all parties with each party benefitting and learning from one another. This perception is reminiscent of a Freirean dialogical method where “students” and “teachers” are both educators and learners (Freire, 2005). In line with this, it is noteworthy that none of the practitioners perceived themselves as the only expert in the room. In fact, Alice expressed how she sees her role more as “a catalyst bringing collections and communities together” rather than as a museum curator sharing her knowledge and expertise with communities. Most practitioners expressed how they engage in constant self-reflection upon their practice and its meaning; questioning their own agendas, motives and commitment to their communities and how it is realized.

Indeed, heavily emphasized by almost all practitioners was the value of the program participants' knowledge and expertise as based on their lived experience and local knowledge. Considering this through the prism of Gramsci's (1971) “organic intellectual,” who incites social change and transformation by challenging hegemonic understandings by drawing on expertise that emanates from lived experience, it resonates with Wilson's (2010) argument—when discussing Gramsci—that knowledge that comes from outside the traditional “museum person” has the potential to challenge established narratives by offering alternative perspectives. The foundation of this lies in questioning what, and whose, knowledge is valued. Jason explained:

Who's to say that an apprentice who's been working here for two years on making dyes and understand it completely; who can say that a curator who's never experienced that is ever going to know more than that apprentice? So that gets into like a whole discourse around power dynamics in a museum and what is information and who keeps it or gatekeeps it and all kinds of things. So, we all curate, we all co-curate the museum.

Such practice involves considering the role of different types of knowledge, experience, and expertise at a structural level. Rachel further highlighted how empathy and being open to listen and learn is key in facilitating a space that enable people to develop their interests and take ownership of their knowledge:

You have to open yourself up to being able to learn, so whenever you're engaging with somebody else or another community member, they're coming at the museum

from a different perspective with a different set of knowledge... what you need is empathy and being able to accept that other people have knowledge and that you are able to learn from other people.

All practitioners expressed how the most impactful and enjoyable aspect of their work is to see the program participants developing confidence in their abilities and beliefs in themselves. Crucilla spoke about projects she had previously led where participants got the opportunity to develop and enhance transferable skills. She commented that she knows a project has been successful when “someone takes it and just runs with it and it's theirs... that's what makes me happy. That's when I know I've done a good job.”

Theme 3—Facilitating dialogical spaces

All practitioners had experienced that people they had worked with in their community engagement projects had not previously felt listened to—particularly those from “vulnerable groups”—and that dialog and encouragement in programs constitute a key part in the participants realizing the value of their perspectives, knowledge, and expertise. A key aspect of their work, then, was regarded as involving listening and providing supportive and caring spaces for interactions between practitioners themselves and between participants and practitioners (Morse, 2021). Jason expanded on the notion of care and how it extended into the way their museum and practice is structured:

We're also unique in our way of working. I think it's a great sense of freedom of self, so people come in and then go ‘I want to do this today’ and that's fine and rather than go ‘no, you can't’ it's like ‘okay, what resources do you need?’ [...] others may come from a background that's completely structureless and actually the opposite is true, like having a structure they might feel at home. So, you provide a very safe structure ... and then they experience freedom of self that way.

Others spoke about projects being collaborative processes and the importance of ensuring that the environment was participant-led, and the exchange of knowledge was not premised on a clear practitioner/participant divide and hierarchy. Cissie reflected on this, saying:

I think – whether we did it consciously or instinctively – we didn't say to the participants, ‘this is what you have to do’. It was very much shared, uhm, and it has to come from the community that you are working with. Anything other than that, is just ticking boxes for some policymaker saying: ‘we have to do that’ and that's not the way that I like to work [...] The project wasn't a divide between us and them, the project was all of us. And we all brought something to it, and we all gained from it [...], it's a collaborative process, it's an iterative process, it's a process where we work together.

All practitioners also noted the importance of challenging the participants, to encourage them to think critically and independently and, at times, to encourage them to move beyond their comfort zones. Overall, they expressed that project participants must under no circumstance feel patronized, but that the space must encourage them to feel valued, understood and listened to; this balance was seen as sometimes being challenging. In achieving such an environment, they highlighted the importance of flexibility and empathy, in being open to listen and understand where people are coming from (see also Carnegie, 2006; Chatterjee & Noble, 2009; Morse, 2021; Wallen & Docherty-Hughes, 2022). Sophia said:

You just can't make assumptions. So, yes you can go in with a script with all things set up and then actually that could all go completely out the window and you can start again. I think the main thing is a willingness to listen. It's not just about talking to people, it's not about what you're saying, it's what the people you are engaging with are saying as well.

The practitioners noted that the project space must enable dialog; where the project participants can express themselves, question one another and the museum practitioners, as well as ask questions. In fact, not “shutting people down”—unless their comments were judged to be directly harmful or inappropriate—was perceived as particularly important in the facilitation of such a space. Eleanor explained:

I think it's important for people to be able to express themselves and to not shut people down unless it's really offensive. So don't shut it down; let people express themselves and then, you know, and you see if someone is upset saying ‘see this is upsetting so and so, can you understand why that's happening?’

DISCUSSION

In locating this work on practitioners' reflections on knowledge production in museum community engagement projects in Scotland, we have analytically framed their commentaries in the context of a range of conceptual and practice-based museum community engagement knowledge. The paper acts as a rallying call to acknowledge and embrace the significance of the experiences of museum community engagement practitioners' experiences and narratives, while unpacking the complexity, challenge, nuance, and skill in the work that they do, in co-producing knowledge with project participants.

The practitioners' narratives revealed multi-layered and complex ways of making sense of their role in museum community engagement. Permeating their understandings was the underlying belief in the importance of what they do and the impact it has upon the project participants, the museum institution and wider society (Morse & Munro, 2018). Regarding their work as intrinsically linked to values grounded in equality, inclusion, and diversity—practitioners' conceptualizations of the value of museum community engagement were practical; *how* it ought to be done, rather than *what* is done—a focus on process over product. In many ways, the practitioners' work aligned with, and reflected, their own values, leading them to undertake work that is embedded in the lives, values, and experiences of community-based participants as it was deemed “the right thing to do.” Central to their understandings was the importance of project participants' agency in and ownership of the projects, and in the case of the 2021 archeological site study, the overall running and work of the museum—ensuring that the work and these spaces are equal and community-led.

The museum community engagement practitioners perceived their roles as facilitators of dialog between museums and communities rather than museum practitioners sharing their knowledge and expertise with community groups (Freire, 2005). Challenging the perception of who and what belongs in the museum (Bourdieu et al., 1997) through reconceptualizing what expertise looks like, the practitioners recognized that a key aspect of their work lies in mobilizing and inspiring organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971). More specifically, they described how they aim to encourage and support project participants to draw upon their knowledge and expertise based on lived experience and take it outside the specific project context. Consistent with previous studies (Morse, 2021; Morse & Munro, 2018; Munro, 2013, 2014; Wallen & Docherty-Hughes, 2022), the practitioners similarly understood their roles as one encompassing “care of communities”; responsibility of, and accountability to, their project participants

and local environment. However, their accounts also evidenced feelings of responsibility in terms of impacting the wider museum institution and their belief in that their practice has the potential to generate more diverse interpretations, stories, and perspectives that may otherwise be overlooked. Such legacies were contingent upon practice as reliant upon collaboration, “informality,” and caring spaces that require practitioners to be open, empathetic, to listen carefully, and to supportively challenge participants. Indeed, a sign of work well done was when project participants took ownership of knowledge production in interpreting museum artifacts, often related to their own realities and communities, and when they confidently shared this knowledge with others.

Perhaps an element of community engagement practitioners' experiences which is under-explored in previous research, the practitioners in this paper identified the positive impacts their interactions with their communities and project participants had on them. For instance, with their practice being based on co-production and knowledge exchange, the practitioners recognized how all parties learnt from one another. Again, drawing on their belief in the importance of valuing and recognizing different kinds of knowledge, their sessions were conceptualized as places and processes where new perspectives and ways to look upon and understand the world were valuable for practitioners and project participants alike. Unlike some previous research that has predominately focused on what project participants learn and get out of community engagement activities, this work acknowledges that just as important are the positive benefits experienced among practitioners and the wider museum institution(s).

Considering the perceived benefits of museum community engagement work for both participants and practitioners, our practitioners' narratives revealed a lack of recognition of the expertise, effort, and skill required in their work within the wider museum institution (Munro, 2013). The practitioners commented that some more “traditional” museum practitioners understood their work as predominately involving “having tea and cake” and that the knowledge generated in community engagement projects was categorized differently (as implicitly “less than” by the community exhibitions being given less space in the museums) than the interpretations and exhibitions put together by curators who were not involved in community engagement work. This was particularly the case for the practitioners working in larger museums employing more staff who predominately work in separate teams, distinguishing between who does community engagement work and who does not. In contrast, practitioners based at smaller museums, with a more close-knit team who all regularly work alongside one another in a community-focused way, expressed that community engagement work informed all the work they did and, hence, that it was well-recognized in their museum as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Museums can learn much from the ways in which community engagement practitioners navigate complex, sometimes emotionally and practically, challenging situations. Acknowledging the privileged and rarefied perception of museum institutions and practitioners, community engagement practitioners in these projects were clear about the importance of challenging what “legitimate expertise” looks like in the context of museum work. The resultant, necessary, critical questions that non-traditional, community-based practitioners and participants pose about hegemonic knowledge in museum institutions and practices must be made visible and can be put to good use in enhancing partnership working across museum institutions and areas of expertise. Indeed, what is clear is that there must be greater acknowledgement of the work of museum community engagement practitioners within the museum sector, and that meaningful institutional, structural support should be in place to facilitate the agency, confidence, expertise, and flexibility that are required to enhance their work in co-producing knowledge with community-based participants.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None declared.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data are not shared.

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