New Approaches NOW

From Museum Education to Audience Engagement
The Finnish Association for Museum Education Pedaali held an international seminar ‘From museum education to audience engagement – new approaches NOW’ in Helsinki at the National Museum of Finland on 28–29 May 2015. The seminar concentrated on audience engagement, with a particular focus on the paradigm shift in museum education and on the new modus operandi of modern museums. This publication, Pedafooni 4, contains a compilation of the ideas and themes presented. It can be viewed or downloaded on the Internet at

www.pedaali.fi
The purpose of the Finnish Association for Museum Education Pedaali is to promote museum education and to reinforce the identity of the museum education profession and increase its overall appreciation. The goal of the association is to function as a forum for active and future museum educators, provide training, and work actively in the field to promote museum education. In meetings and events organized by Pedaali the members have the opportunity to network, meet other professionals and visit museums and other interesting locations. Pedaali Annual Award in Museum Pedagogy is announced every spring. The association has its own publication series Pedafooni.

The Finnish Association for Museum Education Pedaali was established in 2005. At the moment we have approximately 300 members. Anyone interested in museum education can become a member of Pedaali.
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The Finnish Association for Museum Education Pedaali held a two-day international seminar, *From museum education to audience engagement – new approaches NOW*, in Helsinki in May 2015. Over 200 participants gathered at the National Museum of Finland to listen to talks that covered the broad spectrum of audience development. The publication that you now hold in your hands contains a compilation of the ideas and themes presented at the seminar, and provides those who were unable to attend the seminar with the opportunity to read about them.

The impetus for the seminar and this publication is the almost perceptible change that is taking place. In many ways we can see that museum education entered a new era in the 2000s. The traditional paradigm of museum education is crumbling – or has already crumbled – and there has been a shift in the modus operandi and audiences of museums. We no longer talk about audience development in the context of museum education activities alone but relating to all areas of museum operations, from collections to customer service. At the same time there is a constant flow of innovative ideas from all over the world on all the things that museums could offer their audiences. Alongside the usual museum audience, there are now potential new target groups. The prominent trends in the museum field are customer orientation, participation, audience engagement and shared expertise. Topical issues, such as the introduction of phenomenon-based learning at schools, the challenges of the welfare society and immigration are practically forcing museums to emphasize their role as a social actor and opinion leader. Changes in the funding of museums are increasing the pressure that museums face to reaffirm their importance among audiences.
Audience development is creative work that demands constant renewal, and those involved must move with the times. Museums are also required to adopt an international outlook in this new era. Regardless of the country or museum, audience development employees encounter very similar situations and problems. Therefore, we must seek solutions and new ideas from abroad more and more. New technology and social media are making this increasingly easy, so travel is not always necessary in order to network or engage in cooperation.

The authors of this publication come from the USA, the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Finland. Their texts outline various solutions for the shift in museum operations that I have described above, and the rethinking of the social status of museums and the development of new modus operandi.

Marie Bourke is the former Keeper and Head of Education at the National Gallery of Ireland and has served as Chair and member of the Board of the Irish Museums Association. In her doctoral thesis The development of museums and galleries as places of learning in Ireland – 1700 to 2005 she also focuses on museum education. In her article, Bourke provides a comprehensive account of the recent history of museum audience development and the international and local trends that are now evident.

Lynn McMaster is the former President and CEO of the Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia. In her article she considers ways in which museums could contribute to social responsibility – could this be used as a vision that directs the operations of an entire cultural heritage institute? The target group and purpose of the Please Touch Museum has been strictly defined as exclusively for children and families, and it is hard to find a corresponding museum in Finland. The temporary Children’s Town exhibition, which was associated with the development of the Helsinki City Museum and held in Sederholm House from 2012 to 2014, showed that there can be great demand for services targeted purely at children. The experiment was a success, and in 2016, Children’s Town was reopened as part of the new City Museum. I would like readers of this publication to consider whether they should get involved in increasing knowledge in public health or financial matters, for example, by offering a programme that is targeted especially at children.
Suzie Thomas currently works as a university lecturer in museology at the University of Helsinki. She has also held many positions in the field of cultural heritage in the UK. In her text she considers, in particular, the role of voluntary work in the museum sector on the basis of her own experiences. Voluntary work is participation and audience engagement at its best, but should it be based on the museum’s or audience’s needs? Thomas compares voluntary work in Finland and the UK and vehemently encourages us to try it out for ourselves.

Jennifer Shutzberg, intendant at the Stockholm County Museum, considers similar themes in her text: what is actual participation in the museum context, what kind of audiences does a museum try to engage and which people consider themselves to be engaged in a museum’s activities? She candidly describes the situations she encounters in her work and discusses the decisions that are part of the day-to-day work in museums in the context of the professional ethics of audience development. The article reminds us that we museum educators and audience development employees also learn by doing.

Kaisa Mäki-Petäjä is a post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Art and Culture Studies at the University of Jyväskylä.
lä. She studies aesthetic experiences resulting from visiting museum exhibitions and museums. The article describes a subjective experience encountered by the author, which prompts readers, both as professional content producers and museum visitors, to think about ways of doing and conveying things in museums: her conclusion is that museums have no way of predicting or placing limitations on the way in which museum visitors ultimately experience or interpret exhibitions.

The programme of the seminar behind this publication also included a case study section where exemplary work models and procedures from the Finnish museum sector over the past decade were presented. All the examples had received the Pedaali Annual Award in Museum Pedagogy over the years 2006–2014. These award-winners have not been listed together before, so we want to present them here as inspiration for all those working with audience development. Many of the award-winners have created something new for the Finnish museum sector and the procedures have been widely adopted in Finland. The best innovations do not just fade away, even after the conclusion of the project, for example. This publication presents the award-winners and also assesses how each piece or procedure has continued to exist; how it has been further developed or how it has been used in places other than the original museum setting. We can also conclude that Pedaali knows exactly how to sniff out outstanding museum pedagogy initiatives: the fact that these award-winners have also been internationally recognised is also proof of this.

The Finnish Association for Museum Education Pedaali celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2015. Membership in the association, which was established in 2005, has increased steadily: the membership of 81 in the first year of operation has grown to almost 300. You could say that over these years Pedaali has established itself as an association for museum and cultural heritage professionals and as an active member of the cultural heritage field.

As it has grown, Pedaali’s membership has also become
more diversified. In the early years the membership was primarily made up of museum educators but now includes a broad spectrum of titles: guides, assistants, researchers, teachers, students, artists and museum directors, for example. Members are united by their interest in museum education and audience development. Many audience development employees, particularly in small museums, work alone. The association provides, in a manner of speaking, an extended work community, and the opportunity to meet colleagues, exchange ideas and develop professional skill by hearing the experiences of others.

Over the past decade Pedaali has become a multifaceted national association with an important role. The association, which has always been dynamic, has retained its appetite for experimentation, its openness and its ability to be inspired by the new. Pedaali’s events offer colleagues with various levels of experience the opportunity to meet and learn from one another. More and more members from outside of the actual museum sector have joined the association, enriching the fruits of its activities with their cross- and multi-disciplinary perspectives and contacts from a broad cultural field. I would like to wish Pedaali an excellent second decade of engaging museum audiences –

Photo: Anna Airaksinen
we can only speculate on the direction in which it will take the sector and the opportunities that it will seek out.

Conclusion

The articles in this publication deal with various themes that are all related to the museum work of this era. They prompt us to consider who museums actually belong to and who is the target of museum work. They redefine the boundary between museum professionals and museum visitors: at the same time both are makers and experiencers of the museum content. As is the case more broadly in the museum field today, the selected articles emphasize a greater social role and responsibility alongside the cultural heritage work. We hope that readers will gain new inspiration for their work, no matter what role they are in, be it in a museum or the cultural heritage sector as a whole. In today’s world only change is certain, and museums must embrace this and channel the winds of change into the direction of their choice.

Turku 2016,

Janna Jokela
Chair of Pedaali Ry
and the publication working group
As museums and arts organisations observe a shift towards participatory arts culture they adapt in creative ways with long-term benefits for the organizations and people they serve. While the economic downturn was the catalyst that caused audience expectations to change, the shift was about more than technology; it involved people thinking about the experience of culture in different ways. Value is placed on practical interactive experiences rather than passive viewing, and a personal sense of creativity is being activated in new ways. It is part of a larger ‘participatory economy’ whereby people want to meet and share in the work of the makers, and make things. ‘Public engagement’, the term being used for participatory culture, includes activities that enable people to participate and discover their creative side, while also attracting new visitors. It impacts at management level as ‘public’ features in job descriptions that include broadening the community’s appreciation of, and participation in the museum’s collections and exhibitions. This paper explores concepts of public engagement and its implementation through arts initiatives in European and American museums.

The early 21st century economic crisis raised questions about the role, function and future of museums. Many began to re-assess, re-evaluate and reinvent themselves, notably in Europe, where ‘there are at least 38,000 museums with probably over 500 million visitors a year, (50% did not exist before World War II)”

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1 See Netherlands Museums Association 2010; Museums Association (UK) 2005; Centre for the Future of Museums, American Association of Museums 2008.
2 Negri 2009, 1.
The traditional purpose of the museum to collect, care for, display, interpret and promote collections: objects and art works of tangible and intangible heritage, was reviewed. There was increasing scrutiny of corporate skills, governance and management in conversations about the economic viability of museums. The raison d’être of museums, the collections, historic, modern and contemporary, came sharply into focus due to limited acquisition budgets, the question of disposals, the issue of collections on display vis-à-vis in store, and the emphasis on collections management (care, conservation, storage and security). The topical issue of creating ‘access to culture’ for citizens was seen to involve more than putting collections on show and online, but part of the museum’s public role that is less about things, as Simon Weil notes, and more about people. An outcome of this economic downturn was a change of the approach to cultural institutions by the public, who wanted fulfilling participatory experiences that developed links to the collections, connected better with the institution, and in the process discover something of their own creativity. Smart museums reviewed their concept of public engagement knowing they had to grow fresh audiences to be a vital part of the 21st century lifestyle.

The idea of gaining meaning and understanding through experience is not new. In the early twentieth century, John Dewey, the American philosopher, pointed out that learning started with experience and that abstract ideas only gained a meaning as a result of being tried out, ‘become concrete only in the consequences which results from their application’. The idea of participation gathered strength in the 1970s in fields where practitioners noticed that projects failed if they did not involve people in a consultative process. Decades of development, and practical experience would demonstrate that when people influenced decisions affecting them, they had a stake in a successful outcome. In the early 1990s, the American psychologist Jerome Bruner saw that children grasped ideas and retained information better when it involved an interactive process of ‘looking and responding’. This view was echoed by contemporary philosopher, Gareth Matthews in his *Philosophy of Childhood* (1994). These ideas connected with the changing pattern of visitor engagement in museums. Participatory practice in recent museo-

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3 A museum is a non-profit-making permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment. International Council of Museums (ICOM) 2006, 14.


6 Dewey 1938, 9.


8 Bruner 1990.
logical discourse means different things to different institutions and can be defined in many ways and take on many forms, depending on its users and the content of its usage.

In 2012, Peggy Fogelman, Chair of Education at the Metropolitan Museum New York, spoke about an increasing desire by the public to participate in practical arts events in American museums. She referred to Josephine Ramirez in the arts participation study programme, commissioned by the Irvine Foundation (2011):

There is growing awareness in the arts field of what’s known as participatory arts practices, of a seismic shift toward participatory arts culture and figuring out how to adapt it in new creative ways that have long term benefits to arts organisations and the people they serve. This shift [towards participation in the arts] is about more than just technology. People are thinking about the experience of culture differently than in the past, placing value on a more immersive and interactive experience than is possible through mere observation… activating their own creativity in new and unusual ways… [They] want to meet the people who make our products, share in the work of the makers, and make things ourselves.⁹

and performing arts by designing experiences that re-contextualized objects and expanded the idea of galleries as active, participatory spaces. A Mariachi band invited visitors to dance in a 16th century Spanish courtyard in 2010, while a performance by choreographer Shen Wei in 2011 involved musicians weaving among visitors viewing sculpture. In 2007 the J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles) collaborated with artist Nicole Cohen to create a participatory exhibition uniting interpretive and curatorial public programming by using surveillance/green screen technology to access 18th century chairs from the collection, physically and virtually. During the annual *Shine a Light* event at the Portland Art Museum in collaboration with Portland State University’s M.F.A. in Social Practice, artists created programmes, performances, games and interventions questioning the way people used museums. Carol Vogel commented in the *New York Times*, ‘Institutions big and small have adopted the same mission: to transform once-hushed museums into vibrant cultural centres where the activities go far beyond what’s hanging on the walls’ 10.

The American museologist Elaine Heumann Gurian asks why museums do not engage more closely with all levels of their community. ‘Museums’, she says, ‘have not explored their potential opportunities enough when dealing with their communities under stressful conditions’ 11. Experience showed her that when the museum involved the community in a range of practical activities and events, and made space for meetings and after school children’s clubs, members of the community were quick to defend and protect their museum in difficult times. There were factors she noted, that informed the situation, including the wider use of technology and online access to collections; the rise of Do-It-Yourself communities as an alternative to formal higher education; the changing sense of identity in and among audience groups; and the increasing recognition of social, collaborative, or participatory practice, as a viable medium for artistic production.

Nina Simon explores participatory culture and civic engagement in her book *The Participatory Museum* (2010), and *Museum 2.0* BlogSpot, demonstrating that museums have to engage visitors and connect with their different communities 12. While participatory approaches are driven by economic factors

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10 Fogelman 2012, 26.
12 Simon 2010a; Simon 2010b.
and audience development, they need practitioners who develop practices that make museums more socially responsible, dynamic and engaged in community life. Just as there is no single model for active participation, neither does it deliver the same content to everyone – what works for one might not for another. Active participation means creating events ‘with’ visitors. As it is fuelled by interested members of the public, it operates best in audience centred institutions, where visitors can construct their own meanings, inform and give suggestions about events. She contends it works: for contributory projects, where visitors contribute objects, ideas and actions to the museum’s project; for collaborative projects where visitors are active partners in the museum’s project; for co-created projects in which community members work with staff on the aims, objectives and delivery of a project based on museum collections but is for the community; and hosted projects where the museum gives the space and sometimes assists an outside group in presenting the programme. Active participation also formed part of the Learning Museum Network’s (LEM) conversation about pressures from the wider world impacting on museums as social institutions. LEM has its own relevance in Finland, see the Pedaalii Award 2013:

13 www.lemproject.eu; The LEM project (2010–2013) continues under the aegis of NEMO (NEMOLEM project), see www.ne-mo.org

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Artist John Keating demonstrates figure drawing at the NGI drawing studies course. Photo: The National Gallery of Ireland 2011.
'Open Museum – a Developing Learning Environment for Adults'.

*New Trends in Museums of the 21st Century* provides case studies, involving museum practitioners, including Professor Christina Kreps, Director of Museum and Heritage Studies at the Museum of Anthropology in the University of Denver, Colorado. She states:

’The development of participatory approaches reflected the shift in museum practice from a focus on objects and collections to a focus on visitors, and making museums more accessible and beneficial to wider publics’\(^{14}\). As museums are accountable for a much wider constituency, ‘Communities are asking more of museums in terms of how they can address their needs and interests. Reciprocally, museums are asking more of community members regarding their participation. In general, participation is a label for the multiple ways in which museums can engage with communities and communities can engage with museums’\(^{15}\).

Participation can mean particular kinds of relationships between museums and communities. It also involves specific approaches to ‘practice’ that form part of the democratisation of museums as social institutions in service to society and active agents in civic engagement\(^{16}\).

Public engagement programmes and participatory events are a priority for museums concerned about being socially inclusive and reaching marginal groups. The growing literature helps to provide solid evaluations.\(^{17}\) Bernadette Lynch, museum professional and academic, notes that participatory work in museums depends on who is in control and who holds the most power\(^{18}\). For engagement work to be effective, practitioners would generally agree that reflective practice is a key component of the developmental process that enables an understanding of how things work at institutional, individual and community level. Lynch feels that public engagement and active participation will increase and gain importance as audiences become recognized as citizens and members of civic society\(^{19}\). Thus, museums that are committed to social responsibility, civic engagement and rooted in their local community, are seen as safe places where people can meet and exchange ideas about the museum and its collections, and where individual contributions and collaborative experiences are valued.

\(^{14}\) Kreps 2013, 85–102.
\(^{15}\) Kreps 2013, 85–102.
\(^{16}\) Kreps 2015.
\(^{17}\) Sani et al. 2015.
\(^{18}\) Lynch 1997.
\(^{19}\) Lynch 2011, 441–458.
museums. The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2015 European Museum of the Year Award) was noted for its thought-provoking interventions, its website for virtual visitors and its educational programmes ‘reach every child in the Netherlands by the age of twelve’. British museums constantly expand the concept of public engagement. In 2014, a musical by Cally Spooner And You Were Wonderful, On Stage, for an a-cappella chorus line was presented on the staircase of Tate Britain’s rotunda, to describe the loss of live delivery of language in contemporary life, before being performed live to camera a month later. The All of this Belongs to You exhibition at the V&A (London) 2015 used the museum as a laboratory for public life. One project, focusing on classical statues in the Medieval and Renaissance gallery, brought the objects to life by inviting the ‘Over 60’s’ club from St Peter’s Italian Church, London. Members played cards, held a raffle, sang Verdi’s ‘Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves’ and had a dance session in the galleries.

Irish museums are part of this participatory culture. Having introduced public tours and talks in 1952, the National Gallery of Ireland, initiated the popular Children’s Christmas Art Holiday in 1964. Since 1974, when education officers were appointed, the public programme for all ages has increased participatory activities. Among these events is the family programme and baby-toddler sessions, which are important in Ireland, where over 31% of the population is under the age of 24. Likewise, the provision of creative spaces was helpful in holding workshops for the exhibition, Learning from Art, a project which toured to Paris, Belgium, Edinburgh and Chicago. Drawing classes for adults, in place since 1995, resulted in a display of adult work: Drawing Studies: A Celebration. In 2008 there was an engagement with Finnish museum practitioners on Northern Stars and Golden Lights: The Golden Age of Finnish Painting, an exhibition that enabled Irish audience gain an insight into Finnish art and the national epic, the Kalevala. It was augmented by curators who discussed Finnish art, the role of women and early modernism. The accompanying workshops, school visits and activity sheets aroused a wider interest in Finland. In 2014, during the 150th anniversary celebrations, the project, Lines of Vision: Irish Writers at the NGI, involved 56 writers, poets and playwrights in

21 The Children’s Christmas Art Holiday, initiated by James White, takes place in the final days of December. It involves professional artists discussing and illustrating aspects of art for children, who create their own pictures. Originally a morning session for teenagers and afternoon for children, in the late-1980s it was reduced to an afternoon session for children; in 2000, it became a family art holiday, to involve children and adults creating together. It is firmly part of the tradition of Christmas in Dublin. In 2014, a short film was produced marking 50 years of the event. Bourke 1993.
23 Quinn, S. (Ed.) 2004. Learning from Art, this project had an extensive outreach programme.
24 Bourke, M. (Ed.) 2008. Drawing Studies: A Celebration, the works toured Ireland and were accompanied by an outreach programme.
an anthology and an exhibition, with a collaborative programme of talks, poetry readings, study mornings, conversations, creative writing sessions and films engaging the public and encouraging creativity. Another project that fascinated visitors was CoisCéim Dance Theatre’s *The Art of Performance at the NGI*, involving dancers interpreting the paintings and bringing audiences through public spaces. This approach to public engagement illustrates how the NGI has maintained its visitor figures, e.g. 718,637 in 2015, since its refurbishment began in 2010.

However, participatory work is tough, it takes thought, planning and commitment on the part of the museum, the staff and community members, and it is predicated on a number of things:

- **Do the practices and programme engage audiences in new ways?**
- **Are the activities connected with the collections, and linked to the museum?**
- **As the practices involve a range of new art forms, e.g. pop-up events, storytelling, dance, enactments, demonstrations, they must be different to what other institutions offer to attract new visitors. They must also be incorporated into the daily life of the museum and working models of museum practice.**
- **It is essential to plan, organize, source proper funding and schedule regularly to impact on visitors, and enable them to develop a strong relationship with the museum.**
- **Source quality artists because a great deal of artistic practice is co-produced between the artist and the public. The artists are best placed to engage with visitors and help them to enjoy the activities, and visitors like working with them. Artist-led projects foster genuine engagement for people with the museum.**
- **The stakes are raised by digital media and online access, therefore, it’s vital to experiment and be open to new possibilities as to how visitors want to use your museum and the collections.**

Participatory practices at other Irish museums include the Irish Museum of Modern Art, which involved innovative creative events in its work from inception (1991). The National Museum of Ireland at its Decorative Arts and History site in Collins Barracks (NMI has four sites), has the space to hold great choral events involving a thousand voices, recreations of ships and houses, and community linked projects with people with intellectual disabilities. The Chester Beatty Library uses its eastern and oriental
collections to hold wide-ranging participatory events that involve Ireland’s new communities. Public engagement events include: drama in galleries, art workshops, poetry readings, artist-writer residencies, enactments, jazz-trad-classical music performances, pop-up discos, Drawing Day and Culture Night, taking place at museums, such as the Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda, Luan Gallery, Athlone, The Model, Sligo, Hunt Museum, Limerick, Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, dlr Lexicon, Butler Gallery Kilkenny, Ulster Museum Belfast, Royal Hibernian Academy and Waterford Museum of Treasures, that encourage visitors to participate in and create in museums.

In a century that sees the pattern of people’s habits and lifestyles rapidly shifting and developing, largely through economic and migratory factors, it is a natural progression for the cultural heritage field to adjust and adapt to meet the changing needs of society. This paper looked at the growing pattern of public engagement and participatory art practices, which the author sees as a natural and developmental trend in the contemporary museum world that forms an increasing part of museum practice. It did not account for the recent movement of refugees and changing habits and lifestyles caused by conflict, economic and migratory factors that the cultural heritage sector is struggling with as ‘a situation that has no precedent in history’. Public engagement is attracting media attention enabling contemporary practitioners to explain how it is understood in museums, see The Art Newspaper, which provides an overview of issues like developing an understanding of what attracts visitor response, discovering new ideas to recharge programming and finding out the shortcomings of museums in this area. Katie McGowan, Curator of Education and Public Engagement, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, sees it moving the museum beyond seeing visitors as passive observers to active participants, ‘museums are looking for more programming where visitors use their brains. It’s about interactivity’. Kathryn Potts, Chair of Education, Whitney Museum, New York, notes the importance of the practitioner and mixing live events that go ‘beyond your usual panels, talks and symposiums… that might challenge or surprise the visitor’. The value of artists, ‘it’s not just that the museum wants to bring artists and audiences together, but that

29 Network of European Museums Organizations 2016, foreword.
30 Finkel 2014.
so many artists want to connect with audiences directly. Sylvia Wolf, Director of the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, notes the importance of community involvement for a learning organisation that works with its constituent: `Education suggests we have the knowledge and want to pass it to others. Engagement suggests we are learning together’.

Thus, as the desire of every museum is to create access to culture and its collections, involving visitors in public engagement participatory practices in our cultural institutions is a welcome development.

\[33\] Finkel 2014, 26.

\[34\] Finkel 2014, 26.
References and further reading


Much of what a person needs to succeed in life is established before kindergarten. Several decades of research have shown that it is during this time that the human brain undergoes rapid development. This is a period when a child is building all of his or her cognitive, social-emotional and character skills, as well as the executive skills that help develop problem solving and impulse control. In addition, research has demonstrated that investing in, and maximizing opportunities and support for learning during the first five years of life produce short- and long-term effects that help place young children on a path to success throughout their lives.

Experts agree that it is an investment in our future. According to the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study – a longitudinal study that began in 1962 and traced young children born into poverty into their forties – children who had had access to early-learning programs had more family stability, made more money, committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to graduate from high school.

All children benefit from early-learning opportunities, and children in low-income communities – those who tend to have the least access to programs and opportunities – benefit from them the most. The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 2010 report on school readiness, for example, recognized that children need high-quality year-round learning opportunities in both formal and informal learning environments.

There is clearly growing understanding that the early
years are pivotal for later success, along with the recognition that important foundational skills and knowledge must be supported and nurtured during the critical early years. Despite this, too many children – especially those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable – continue to fall behind. They are generally not ready for school, and the sad fact is that when they start behind, they stay behind.

A ten-year study by research team Susan Neuman and Donna Celano, called *Giving our Children a Fighting Chance* and published in 2012 by the University of Pennsylvania, followed two contrasting neighborhoods in Philadelphia: one affluent; the other impoverished. The study explored how these environments might influence children’s opportunities for learning and education, and identified enormous disparities in resources and opportunities between the two populations, which had resulted in a ‘knowledge gap’ or ‘opportunity gap’. Neuman and Celano called for an ‘unleveling’ of resources. They proposed that a significant infusion of support be provided to neighborhoods in stress, to help support their needs and issues, and to help create a more equitable situation.

There is a new wave of attention being given to the importance of early learning, along with an understanding that adequate investment is needed. In his February 2013 State of the Union address, U.S. President Barack Obama challenged Congress to expand investments supporting a continuum of opportunities for children from birth through age five. The following year, the White House convened representatives at all levels of government, along with policy-making and philanthropic organizations, to galvanize collective leadership in support of early education for all American children. This led to significant investment of over $1 billion in education and development for early learners.

There is a growing understanding that early learning is essential to the socioeconomic future of America. In 2013, the Institute of Museum and Library Services published a report titled, *Growing Young Minds: How Museums and Libraries Create Lifelong Learners*, which offers a glimpse into the outstanding work being done in museums and libraries to support the needs of early learners and their families. The report also underlines the seri-
ous implications of the `knowledge gap´ for the future.

Museums and libraries are playing an important role in the informal early-learning system by providing accessible programs and services to young children – especially low-income children – and their families in communities across America. These programs are an important part of an extensive learning ecosystem. Their success lies in the institutions' commitment to embed themselves within the communities they serve, both complementing and supporting the formal learning environment. The following highlights the work of Please Touch Museum, a museum designed specifically for children under eight years of age. The Museum currently serves 500,000 young children and their families in Philadelphia.

**History and Background**

The governing authority of Please Touch Museum (PTM) formally adopted the Museum's mission in 1976, which is, `Enriching the lives of children by creating learning opportunities through play.' The Museum was founded by Montessori educator Portia Sperr who saw PTM as an engine for the Philadelphia region’s arts-and-culture community.

In 2008, Please Touch Museum moved to Memorial Hall in Fairmont Park. Fairmont Park is one of the largest urban green spaces in the United States, covering some 3,700 hectares (9,700 acres) of trails, woods and wetlands. It was also the site of the 1876 Philadelphia World’s Fair, which marked the centennial of the signing of the American Declaration of Independence.

The 1876 World’s Fair celebrated innovation and new thinking in a variety of disciplines, including the arts, education, invention, technology, and agriculture. It also featured a model kindergarten that people could observe. At the time, educational methods were based on the ideas of German educator Friedrich Froebel. Froebel maintained that, when children engaged with the world, they gained understanding. Another important idea of his, which is the hallmark of Please Touch Museum, is the concept of learning through play. Froebel developed a series of `gifts’ (play materials) and `occupations’ (activities). The gifts included blocks that architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s mother bought at the World’s Fair and took home for her son, which would later
have great influence in his designs and theories.

PTM’s presence at Memorial Hall – a site that had been a place for new thinking about education 140 years ago – brings the idea of experiencing a museum through play to very young children. When the Museum opened its doors at Fairmont Park in 2008, it invited the community in. More than 5,000 people from the neighborhood came for a visit during a free day for the local community. It was the PTM’s first open invitation to the public, and marked the beginning of a commitment by the Museum to use its unique resources to provide greater access to high-quality experiences for those most in need in the immediate neighborhood. Today, the Museum has become a touchstone for Parkside families, where they can access valuable resources and enjoy themselves.

Early childhood is the most developmentally important period in a person’s life, given that the brain develops more rapidly during these years. By age five, the brain has developed 90% of its foundation for problem solving, communications, and critical thinking. It is imperative that children be exposed to a rich variety of learning experiences from a very young age, in order to support cognitive growth during these most formative years.

Play is regarded as one of the most powerful stimulants of intellectual and socio-emotional growth for young children. Please Touch Museum understood this, and became the first children’s museum in the United States dedicated to serving children ages seven and younger, advocating strongly for the value of play-based learning by providing programs with hands-on introductory learning experiences in the arts, sciences, and humanities.

In addition, the American Association of Museums notes that the most reliable predictor of museum attendance among adults is their exposure to museums as children. Indeed, children’s museums are a gateway: young patrons of children’s museums tend to grow up with a love of museums, graduating over time to more advanced learning opportunities at other institutions.
Accessibility is another of Please Touch Museum’s defining attributes. PTM strives to make its facilities, programs, and services accessible to all children and families, irrespective of socio-economic background or level of ability. The Museum’s aim is to mitigate or abolish all barriers that might prevent Philadelphia’s families from experiencing learning through play. PTM’s award-winning community programs serve more than 3,000 individuals each year. These programs focus on family health and nutrition, literacy, access and kindergarten-readiness.

PTM works with a community advisory board, comprised of neighborhood stakeholders that include social service organizations, faith-based leaders, local government representatives and treatment centers, as well as mental health, maternity care and child welfare agencies. The Museum’s oldest and perhaps most effective community initiative is a six-week program in which parents receive instruction in the value of play, including how they can contribute directly to the development of their child(ren). Upon completion of the program, parents receive a full membership to the Museum, providing access to all that the Museum has to offer.

In addition, the Museum provides free or discounted admission to more than 50,000 visitors each year, many of them low-income and at-risk. Children in kindergarten and Grade 1 can also visit the Museum throughout the school year for free, and an average 30,000 schoolchildren are hosted annually through this access initiative.

PTM strives to be a leader in its field by developing programs and services that serve families of children with special needs. PTM’s Play Without Boundaries initiative, for example, offers a set of programs and services for families of children with disabilities, helping them to feel welcome and comfortable at the Museum. A cornerstone of this initiative is a series of special events hosted several times a year. During these events, the Museum is opened exclusively to families of children with special needs, allowing them to enjoy exhibits and activities in an environment more suited to their requirements. Turning off exhibit sound effects and dimming lights are just two of the adjustments made to the museum experience to ensure comfort and fun for special needs children and their families.
A central component of PTM’s school-readiness program, Passport to Kindergarten, provides parents with practical and effective strategies to keep them involved in, and supportive of their children’s learning. This program culminates in an annual special event every August for 500 new kindergartners who are entering school for the first time that fall. By working to support the community in smoothing the transition to kindergarten, the Museum has helped to raise kindergarten enrollment in the surrounding neighborhood by 10%.

Please Touch Museum is innovative in both the scope and quality of its programming. Its programs address the full range of needs among families with young children, beyond conventional academic subjects. Recent examples of this are PTM’s financial literacy programming and its healthy lifestyles initiative, which address complex subjects in ways that are engaging and comprehensible – an approach firmly rooted in the philosophy of learning through play.

During the Museum’s Pinch and Penny theater show, for example, children are introduced to the concepts of earning, saving, and sharing, via a humorous puppet show. At Stroller in the Park, visitors walk a 5K path around the Museum and receive access to a Health Pavilion and Healthy Snack Tent, where they can learn about making healthy choices.

The Museum’s community and family learning staff are committed to designing and implementing highly interactive educational programs that are open-ended, process-driven, and child-directed. Each day on the Museum’s gallery floor, visitors are offered a variety of programs, from art experiences to theater shows to story times, all facilitated by trained PTM staff.

The Museum’s theater program, for example, distinguishes PTM from other children’s museums as well as from other cultural institutions in Philadelphia. Live theater provides an excellent opportunity for aesthetic, cultural, and behavioral child development. Given that Please Touch Museum is a first museum encounter for many young visitors, the institution is also proud to introduce children to their first encounter with live theater. The Theater is a key component of the overall PTM experience, pro-
viding opportunities for playful learning and imagination.

To date, PTM has measured its success through various outlets such as attendance numbers, discussions on social media, evaluation data, increasing audience diversity, membership numbers, partnerships with community organizations, repeat visitation, contributions, donations and earned revenue.

The most significant change contributing to PTM’s success has been its expansion in size when it relocated to Philadelphia’s Parkside community. Since 2008, PTM has welcomed more than two million visitors, while reaching approximately 50,000 underserved children through programs that include its School Readiness Initiative, Community Advisory Board, Free Admission Program, Target First Wednesday and Play Without Boundaries.

Please Touch Museum has undergone rapid and profound growth. Over the past eight years, attendance has tripled, and annual visitation has made it one of Philadelphia’s most-visited cultural venues. In addition, PTM was named one of the top children’s museums in the United States by both by Parents and Forbes magazines.

PTM’S efforts have also earned international recognition with the Children’s Museum Award in 2013 from the European Museum Academy, and a Children in Museums Award from the Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums. Please Touch Museum is proud to be a valued member of an extensive early-learning infrastructure working to support the needs of young children and their families. It remains committed to helping them reach their goals, knowing that today’s early learners may just be tomorrow’s leaders.
References and further reading


In this short and at times self-reflective article, I outline some of the research already carried out on museum and cultural heritage volunteers. I reflect upon my personal experiences working in various museums and heritage organizations in England. I identify some of the volunteer motivations, as well as some of the main ways in which volunteers can contribute their time and skills to museum work. Finally, I suggest potential challenges as well as benefits of incorporating volunteer management into museum work.

As an academic and former museum professional now researching and teaching in a different country to the one that I grew up and trained in, it is always interesting for me to see both the commonalities and differences in museum practice between Finland and the UK. As two prosperous northern European countries (even in spite of economic downturns in recent years), I have noted elsewhere the cultural and societal similarities between the two places which lead to more than a few shared experiences in terms of challenges and opportunities facing the museums sector.\(^1\)

I have worked in a number of museums in England, and in several of my roles I have had responsibility for museum volunteers. These have ranged from young students looking for work experience, through to long term unemployed people looking to develop new skills. In my role at the (now sadly closed) Bede’s World Museum in Jarrow, in the north-east of England,
I coordinated and supported more than 60 very diverse volunteers across the museum and Anglo-Saxon farm site. ‘Typical’ volunteer tasks ranged from leading guided tours through the exhibition areas, taking care of the herb garden, and helping the farm staff with maintenance, through to assisting the curator with cataloguing, and carrying out reception area and shop duties. We took undergraduate and postgraduate student placements from the local universities of Newcastle, Durham, Sunderland and Northumbria, who could count their work experience towards their degree credits.

My first full time job upon coming to the end of my PhD studies back in 2009 was as Community Archaeology Support Officer, working for the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) – a UK-wide charity based in York, which champions the nation’s archaeological heritage and public access to and interest in it. My first task in this brand new role was to research the size and activities of the voluntary sector, as it related to archaeology – taking into account that archaeology can be lots of things such as buildings and landscapes, and is not only about ancient artefacts and digging in the ground. There is also a clear connection to many museums and their activities. The broad range of people surveyed included those who are members of local archaeological societies (which have a very long tradition in the UK), ‘Friends’ groups at museums, and others. I started by try-
ing to locate, through the Internet and the CBA’s own records, as many relevant and active groups as I could, in order to distribute a questionnaire survey. There are limitations with this sort of research (not everybody will fill in the survey, and one can never know if one has truly found all of the existing groups and societies), but from the results that I was able to collect, I could estimate a number of headline statistics. As of 2010, there were at least 2,030 voluntary groups with an interest in archaeology, and this represented at least 215,000 individuals (a far higher number than the number of paid, professional archaeologists!). A similar survey from the CBA back in the 1980s found a number of around 100,000 individuals, showing a dramatic increase in the subsequent years.  

The CBA community archaeology study, of course, covered a whole range of different ways of engaging with archaeology – from taking part in excavations, through to working with museum collections and simply enjoying guest speakers coming to talk to the group about current research. So, although the research did not only deal with museum volunteers (for example those volunteering on excavations organized by museums or those volunteering in other ways in – mostly archaeological –

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2 See Thomas 2010 for the full report and results.
museums), it gave me a deep insight into the staggering diversity of volunteering and interests that take place. It was also rather telling – and perhaps an indicator of the people most likely to volunteer in archaeological activities in the UK\(^3\) – that the average age of volunteers came out as 55. This may be to do partly with the likelihood of having time to volunteer (younger people may be busy with careers and families), and may also point to the well-being aspects of volunteering, giving retired people opportunities to keep or learn new skills, and to socialize. There are of course many complex reasons to volunteer, which I will touch upon later in this article.

Table 1) Numbers of museums in Finland taking volunteers, 2007–2015

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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</table>

I have had many colleagues in Finland say to me that there are ‘too few’ volunteers in Finnish museums, or that the potential for engaging volunteers is not fully realized. Consulting the museotilasto.fi website\(^4\), through which Museovirasto publicizes the survey data it collects on Finnish museums, reveals two questions asked annually to museums concerning volunteers: ‘Does the Museum employ volunteers?’ (Table 1), and ‘Work contribution of volunteers’ (Table 2). The data from the survey, distributed to some 175 museums, suggests that the number of museum volunteers in Finnish museums has remained relatively stable. While there is a slight increase in museums taking on volunteers since 2007, and fewer reporting not to take any volunteers, the number of museums that did not answer the survey has also in-

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\(^3\) See also Woolverton 2016.
\(^4\) www.museotilasto.fi
increased. This makes difficult to ascertain how significant these changes in the numbers really are.

Similarly, while hours of work contributed by volunteers appears to dip as we move towards 2015, the number of institutions answering has also increased slightly. Therefore if more museums are answering this question in the survey, but if they are ones that do not take any volunteers at all, this may skew the data. In addition, the many small, volunteer-run museums across Finland do not feature in the survey. There is definitely the scope with this and other sources of data within Finland to make a fuller study of the scale and nature of museum volunteering across the country.

Volunteer motivations

One of the key questions that comes up frequently within voluntarism studies is the issue of why people volunteer in the first place. Why give over your spare time with no chance of financial compensation? The answers are, of course, different for every volunteer, as is the nature of their volunteering activities. Commitment may range from a long term and regular relationship with the volunteering opportunity provider (for example coming in once or twice per week at agreed times over a year or more), or it may be that the volunteering is very short term, and connected to a specific event or project. These different kinds of commitments likely reflect in part what a volunteer wishes to get out of their volunteering experience, but may also reflect their
own availability – with some only able to donate their free time for short periods.

In 2011, Margaret Deery, Leo Jago and Judith Mair published results of their study in Australia of the different motivations of volunteers across different age ranges. They identified three different kinds of motivational `clusters´ – types of incentives for volunteering. These were `enthusiasts´ (those with a passion for a particular subject with which the museum is associated – think for example of locomotive enthusiasts – or a wish to learn particular skills), `opportunists´ (people who volunteered for enjoyment or because it was connected to what they are already working at or studying), and `enhancers´ (volunteers looking to keep themselves active, people looking for something to do after retirement, and others). They found that enhancers tended to be the older volunteers – for example retirees, with enthusiasts also typically in their 60s, while the younger volunteers fell into the opportunist category.

Younger `opportunists´ may also be looking to enhance their CVs with relevant skills, and certainly many Museum Studies students in the UK are advised to gain voluntary experience in museums alongside their studies, in order to improve their chances in the already very competitive job market. Volunteer-ing may also give the individual special access to collections, and `behind the scenes´ social interactions at the museum with museum staff, in areas where the public are not usually allowed.

Other researchers have long looked at the motivations of volunteers, identifying for example the idea of learning as a leisure activity. Stamer, Lerdall and Guo discovered that among expats living in Singapore, museum volunteering was especially popular as something to do in place of a job (this is due to the restrictions on employment opportunities for many expats in Singapore). The wellbeing factor associated with volunteer-ing can also be incredibly powerful and significant. Chatterjee and Noble among others have investigated the benefits of utilizing museums and their collections to improve the wellbeing of hospital patients. Beyond this, there is every indication that a positive volunteering experience contributes to greater wellbeing – perhaps stimulating greater physical activity and providing social interactions and a sense of purpose that might reduce the

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5 Deery et al. 2011, 320.
6 Something which Holmes 2006 has criticized.
7 E.g. Grenier 2009.
8 2008.
9 2013.
risk of depression and other mental health issues. Working with an archaeological organization, former soldier Steve Winterton commented on how volunteering has helped him to remain positive during his recovery from serious injuries sustained during his military service:

*You can become incredibly isolated bouncing from one appointment to the next, so any way of engaging interest, enthusiasm, and bringing those with shared experiences together, can have enormously beneficial results for individuals such as me.*  

**Types of volunteering**

It is perhaps obvious, but there are many different ways in which volunteers may contribute to museums, and not all of these are connected to collections or exhibitions. A fairly common form of volunteering which often seems to get overlooked is serving on a museum’s Board or as a Trustee. Museum governance very often relies on appointed board members, often selected due to their specialist knowledge or social standing, who give their time and expertise for free. Alongside more ‘traditional’ museum volunteering opportunities such as in conservation, front-of-house (e.g. shop or reception areas), as museum guides or docents, in museum pedagogy, or in collections work such as documentation, online volunteering has recently come to the fore. The British Museum, for example, has been developing crowd-sourcing opportunities for people to volunteer their time as and when they can remotely through digital activities.

**Practical challenges for volunteer management**

While there are many benefits for both museums and the volunteers themselves from effective volunteer programmes, there are also of course challenges. Early on in my career as a museum volunteer manager I attended a training day in Carlisle, in the north west of England. The take-away point that stayed with me was the challenge that volunteer managers can often have in garnering support from their own colleagues, who may not understand the complicated and serious nature of their work. In many cases still, there is not even a dedicated post to managing and coordinating volunteers, and it may be tacked on to other duties.

*It is never as simple as just saying ‘yes’ to potential vol-
volunteers and placing them somewhere within the museum and hoping for the best. Managing volunteers takes time and resources, including possibly training and support for fellow museum professionals to help them supervise and work with volunteers. It is not just an opportunity to gain 'free labour' for the museum. Museum staff have a clear idea usually of the tasks that they would like volunteers to do in order to really help with the museum's core goals, but there may be a mismatch between what work is required and what the volunteer wants, or is able, to do. Volunteers may find that their expectations are not met, at which point they are at risk of becoming disillusioned with the museum and its staff. There are additional safety and insurance issues to consider if volunteers are working in the museum including security considerations (do you need to restrict the areas to which the volunteers have access? Do you need to run background checks of some sort on potential volunteers?). Related to this, is it advisable in your institution to have volunteer agreements? Contracts are more complicated, and may not be possible for legal reasons, but having a service level agreement between the museum and the volunteer may prove invaluable later should a dispute come up or dismissal be necessary. It is also helpful from the volunteer's point of view to have their relationship with the museum clarified from the outset.

The notion of 'serious leisure' developed in the field of sociology in the 1980s, and Robert Stebbins offers the following definition:

*Serious leisure is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its specific skills and knowledge.*

Noreen Orr, researching in the UK, drew upon this concept of serious leisure, and researched whether museum volunteering might also count as a form of serious leisure due to the amount of commitment and time required. She argued that thinking of volunteering in terms of serious leisure, rather than through a more financial lens, offers opportunities also for enhanced volunteer management within museums:

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12 Stebbins 1992, 3.
The economic conception of volunteering as unpaid work has dominated within the museum sector, but to conceive of museum volunteering as promoting lifelong learning through serious leisure offers the potential for museums to rethink their approach to volunteer management.\(^{13}\)

Given the motivations I discussed earlier in this article, I would be inclined to agree with this concept of museum volunteering, and it may be beneficial also in Finland to see volunteers not as ‘free labour’ or even as a ‘threat’ to paid museum work (as some colleagues and students have anecdotally suggested), but rather to see volunteering as an opportunity to diversify the way in which museums can cater for their different visitors. If volunteering is a learning opportunity, and volunteers are committed museum-goers who wish to ‘give something back’ and to become more closely involved with an institution that they care about, then this is surely a positive thing to celebrate and encourage.

\(^{13}\) Orr 2006, 206.


For quite some time Swedish museums have emphasized the importance of making history and museums accessible and relevant to the public. The means to this end have been discussed repeatedly and public participation is most frequently seen as the key to having a museum that is relevant. But how can you actually work with participation?

My background is in archaeology, and during my studies and professional career I have taken an interest in archaeology’s role in contemporary society and how to make it relevant for non-professionals. How do we, as archaeologists, spread the magic of that old shard of pottery? And is that shard even relevant to contemporary society? In my mind it most certainly is, because history can in many, if not most, cases increase understanding of modern societal conditions. In addition, archaeology is quite often used to reproduce and legitimize current norms, such as gender roles. Therefore I find it interesting to think about how we as professionals mediate research results and how these are used in public debate. What counts as cultural heritage is constantly renegotiated and adapted to current norms and values in a society. Defining cultural heritage is about creating a common history, and in order to do that multiple stories have to be told, not just one.

For some time now the Stockholm County Museum has been working on participatory projects, because we truly believe they are a very good way to point out and even create relevance to our users.
In this article I would like to focus on the discussion about how to carry out participation with our users. I plan to do this by exemplifying my points with the help of the work done in two projects in two municipalities in Stockholm County.

**Background and preconditions**

The Stockholm County Museum deals with the history and the public art of the county, which consists of 26 municipalities. The county has a population of about two million, and about 2.5 million people visit the region every year. Since it is the capital region mobility is high, mainly migration from other parts of the country, but also from other countries. Migration out of the region is also high. Stockholm County is also the home of a large number of objects with interesting architectural, cultural and art historical merit. For example, it is Sweden’s richest region when it comes to prehistoric sites (125 000 registered). Based on these preconditions we have chosen a methodology that might be slightly different from conventional museum methodology. Instead of keeping collections of objects, we work actively with the cultural environment of the county. This means that though the museum has offices and exhibition halls, most of our work is done out in the county, in interaction with the inhabitants in their home environment.

One example of this way of working is that a large portion of our educational activities are implemented in the form of outreach programmes: we visit schools and together with the students we explore historical sites or public art near to the school. Often the students are familiar with the sites and therefore already have stories of their own that intertwine with our professional knowledge of the site. This benefits the students and the museum as both gain new knowledge and perspectives about the location.

**Hands on**

With these preconditions in mind I would like to present some of the work that was done within two projects concerning the making of information signs for two heritage trails.

The Stockholm County Museum and other cultural institutions have been producing heritage information signs for a very
long time, and the information has been created in pretty much the same way over the years: the museums and institutions are the broadcasters and the public is the passive receiver of the information. One voice has been heard – the voice of the museum. We, the museum professionals, have chosen what is important, what has cultural heritage value, and the information signs have been made accordingly. And we have been doing this using an antiquarian language. Our institution has been producing signs in this way for the past 30 years or so, and governmental institutions have been doing so for a century. And during this time the perspective has remained practically unchanged. The important thing has not been who is reading the signs, but rather what we want to tell our users.

In 2010 Botkyrka municipality asked us to redo the signs for a heritage trail as they were getting outdated. The heritage trail describes the history of the Botkyrka parish from prehistory to the 18th century. The information signs had become yellow and some were partially burned. The burning of signs is not uncommon and is perhaps something that we should have thought about: why would anyone want to set these signs on fire? Is it perhaps because they are viewed as our signs and not everyone’s?

Apart from the fact that the old information signs were battered, the museum and the municipality also wanted to include some newly erected buildings in the heritage trail. The Church of Sweden had built a new church close to the town centre, and the Syrian Orthodox church and the Fittja mosque had also been added to the parish. Both the municipality and the museum felt that it was important to incorporate these places in the heritage trail because they are prominent features in the landscape and they also tell us about demographic changes in the area.

Botkyrka municipality is known in Sweden as a so-called ‘Million Programme’ area. The Million Programme is the name of a public housing programme implemented in Sweden between 1965 and 1974 by the government. The programme aimed to secure everyone’s access to a home at a reasonable price. The aim was to construct a million new homes, hence the name. A common misconception is that the housing constructed in the Million Programme consisted mostly of concrete tower blocks. In fact, the majority of the housing stock consists of apartment
buildings with three or fewer floors, town houses and one-family houses. Thus, these houses in Botkyrka are the result of an important part of modern Swedish political and everyday life history and we wanted to incorporate them in the trail.

Botkyrka is known among historians and archaeologists in Sweden for its many prehistoric sites, mainly from the Bronze Age. Many of these had signs along the old heritage trail and many of the archaeological excavations undertaken in the area were made during the construction of the Million Programme houses or in direct connection to it. This was another interesting story related to the Million Programme. The more we examined the area, the more stories we found, and we wanted to tell as many as possible. The question was: how to do this within the physical boundaries of an information sign? And was it really appropriate that it was only the museum who told all of these stories?

The museum had previously created audio files connected to the information signs. By calling a number it was possible to hear a story about the site told by an actor, sometimes impersonating a historical person. The question was – could we use this medium to make more voices heard on the heritage trail in Botkyrka. Instead of actors we decided to use recorded interviews with the people who use the places on a daily basis, for example youth workers in the congregations, local inhabitants, students from schools in the area, workers and so on. We also managed to interview one of the archaeologists who took part in the excavations in the seventies.

One of the sites on the old heritage trail was a Bronze Age settlement. In the remake of the heritage trail we chose to add stories about how the site is used today, besides the archaeological information. We thought that it would be hard to find people who used this site, but as it turned out it was frequently used by a nearby preschool, so we decided to interview the children about the place where they spent most of their days, the Bronze Age settlement.

What they told us had nothing to do with the Bronze Age. Apparently this was a place for Vikings, and they were a group of people that lived there a thousand years ago and who had sand and beards. Furthermore, the Vikings were not the most important thing about the place: apparently a troll named
‘Fuzzy Feet’ lived there!

Even though the children’s stories did not coincide with what an archaeologist would say about the site, we chose to incorporate the interview in the project because it explains how the site is currently used. The site is today used as a playground and an area for imagination, which is a good story about childhood in Botkyrka.

Current usage is also a keyword for the museum, even if it is not in tune with what we expect it to be. Other interviews provided us with information about one man’s everyday work at the nearby water plant, others told us what faith means in everyday life and others explained what it is like to live in the Million Programme project houses. These stories have been recorded and uploaded to a mobile phone app. The app can be downloaded with a QR-code that is posted on the new signs of the updated heritage trail. The texts on the information signs still tell the stories that we as a museum think have cultural and historical value, but they have become more multifaceted since the stories of today’s users have been included, thus creating continuity.

In addition to the interviews we worked with two school classes. The students did research on the sites that were being highlighted in the heritage trail upgrade, and were also given the opportunity to document sites that were important to them. This methodology meant that the students contributed by storytelling in a less antiquarian fashion and also with stories of their own. There were extensive dialogues about how the information signs should look and what should be included or excluded on the new heritage trail. In this sense the classes were the reference groups.

After three years the project came to an end. We had been working actively with participation and as a result more stories had been told. However, I started thinking about the concept of participation. Had the non-professionals really been that participatory? They obviously participated and contributed with their stories but we, the professionals, had chosen the sites, we had chosen the questions to ask in the interviews and we pretty much set the framework for what they should talk about. However, by the time these questions arose the project was closed and since we are a project based institution it was time to move on.
Sometime later the municipality of Solna contacted us wanting to make signs for an area called Hagalund. This area is also a part of the Million Programme. What is unique about Hagalund is that in order to build the planned Million Programme housing, an existing neighbourhood had to be demolished, inciting massive protests. Consequently, the decision was made to keep some of the old buildings. So in a sense Hagalund is an architectural compromise. The remaining buildings from the old development are now considered to be picturesque and they currently house, among other things, a museum. But at the time the Million Programme construction was planned these old houses were actual living quarters. They housed a lot of people, so this area was overcrowded and had poor sanitary conditions.

Today most of the tower blocks in the area are rental apartments. The rent is relatively low and the buildings are in dire need of renovation. This neglect has led to economic segregation where the people who can afford to have gradually left the area and the current inhabitants are generally working-class. For this reason the area is viewed as less desirable, and any media coverage is mainly negative.

We wanted to keep working with civil dialogue, as we
had done in Botkyrka, and so did the municipality. The older houses `Old Hagalund´ were ever-present when the cultural and historical values of Hagalund were discussed while the newer development was more or less non-present, even though the area is of high architectural value and the active life span of both developments is roughly the same, 40 years.

We wanted to tell the whole story, together with the people from Hagalund. With the people who live there now, and also the people that used to live in `Old Hagalund´.

One thing that had been concerning me a little after the Botkyrka project was that in order to increase the diversity of stories told we also needed to look at the immaterial cultural history. The old information signs had only provided information about tangible physical sites, which is not unusual, as signs are usually placed in proximity to objects or sites. However, the incorporation of audio files had offered new opportunities.

I started to think about documenting immaterial cultural values as there is an established record company in Botkyrka. The company has produced, and still produces, a variety of Swedish rap music, which is a musical genre that in many cases tells stories about economically deficient areas in general and the tower blocks of the Million Programme in particular. On many occasions the lyrics have created identities coupled to the area and made existing ones visible. Botkyrka is not known primarily for archaeology but more so for its hip hop music. And we had failed to mention this in the project.

A similar situation applies to Hagalund. For many people Hagalund is synonymous with a dance genre called dancehall. The municipality shared our opinion on this matter, but how could we incorporate dance into a sign?

The municipality knew of active associations, groups and individuals in the area and they gave us a list of potential participants. The local dance association was not included in the list because the municipality knew that it was fed up with so-called `social projects´.

The museum decided to give the association a try anyway. From the list we made a selection and discarded the sites that had already been documented. We chose to highlight sites and activities that we did not know about but that were well
known to the inhabitants of the area. This time around we tackled the issue a bit differently: in addition to interviews we had many meetings where we talked about the impact and significance of the area on the users’ everyday life. As a representative of the museum I was very honest about our take on cultural history and that we could tell certain stories, but certainly not all, since none of us lived in the area or were native to it. We could only provide an outside, antiquarian perspective. With time, quite a few stories emerged. The dance association chose to create a special choreography and film this instead of making an audio file. The heritage trail project in Hagalund also included the option of downloading the audio and the video files with a QR code.

**Conclusion**

So why should we involve our users? According to the museum’s goals and perspectives, the aim is to be a platform for democratic processes and for promoting human rights. Working with participation is a concrete way of trying to reach these aims.

Including other parties made the stories more multifaceted and the perspectives wider. In this way the recipient may consider the stories told to be more relevant, authentic, and personal, which are qualities needed in a democratic society. Democracy is not favoured by only a certain group of people being allowed to narrate history.

One concern that has surfaced during these projects is that if you include the stories of non-professionals, the professions that deal with these issues will become obsolete. We do not share this concern though. By highlighting the non-professionals’ stories and opening up dialogue, our knowledge also becomes more relevant. Our target groups gain a clearer view of our role; we are open with what we can contribute and what the participants can contribute. Thus our professional role gains substance and together we provide an understanding of life today through life in the past.

This way of working gives the users the opportunity to be a part of something by making their voice heard through the museum. That way they can influence and participate in creating our collective cultural heritage and have the opportunity to be creative. This is beneficial to both the individual and the collective.
When people are given the opportunity to co-create, they are really presented with tools for life-long learning. Instead of going on a guided tour, where most information is forgotten quite rapidly, one can acquire something more permanent.

Working with information signs felt significant to us since an important part of our work is communicating the cultural historical values and sites in the county. We mention this on our website and we produce exhibitions about the sites. But even those people who do not actively seek out information about a site may benefit from the presence of signs in public spaces. For many people the signs constitute their first contact with the museum. Our hope is that the signs will arouse curiosity about the sites, and also about what history is and could be and who can create it. In order for history and archaeology to be relevant it is not enough to tell a story about something that was, it has to be relativized if you actually want people to be involved in creating and narrating their own history.

Recently several studies have been published that show that cultural historical signs can be perceived as exclusive, one-sided and not relevant to the users’ interests.¹ We have worked to rectify this by including the users in the creative process of making these signs and also by involving the museum educators earlier in the process. In the past it was usually only one archaeologist who would write the text for the sign and another archaeologist who would proof-read it. Now the signs go through several more people before they are viewed by the public. For us, this has affected not only the selection of stories, but also the means of how the stories are told. This is no longer through writing alone, but rather a combination of writing, audio and video. This increases accessibility for many people. The style of the language has also changed, not only in the written material but also in the audio. We often used a hired actor in the past, but now the people providing the stories read their own material as we think that the individual way people speak is also valuable.

is money, but it is money well spent. Here is a summary of the main points of the methods used:

• Clarity – What does the museum/institution want and why? Clarify the concepts of participation within the organization – At the initial stage of each project, the project group should sit down and discuss what type of participation should be emphasized depending on the type of project.

• Letting go! – Working with people that do not have the same basis as we do as a cultural institution regarding funds, time or education, means we simply cannot expect them to follow a project plan that has been drawn on our terms. The participants’ terms must be taken into consideration when we create our mutual terms.

• Trust – Trusting the participants. There are reasons why we chose to work with those specific people. Trust that they will do their part according to ability.

• It takes time – but it’s worth it because it is a way of achieving some of the democratic goals that many museums have.

• Be humble in our role – We do not know the results beforehand, and we need to understand that everybody is different.

• Having a variety of gatekeepers – This is very important for diversity and representation in the projects.

• Research – Talk to people, research and reflect. Do this in order to avoid reproducing old knowledge.

• Keep in touch – With the participants, use social media!

And finally the most important issue:

• It is OK to fail – In every project something will turn out in a different way than expected. This is also a learning process.

Whereas signs were previously burned, they are now stolen – at the moment we choose to take this as a compliment.


Museums all around the world are brimming with activity. Visitors are being encouraged to engage and are drawn in with themed tours, dramatised guided tours, lectures, workshops, interactive exhibits, and multimedia augmentations. Old school exhibitions are giving way to a new kind of attraction. Instead of merely gazing at the displays, visitors are encouraged to dive into the exhibition’s subject matter, to take their hands out of their pockets and to get up close and personal with the things they have come to see.

Today it’s all about the narration, about the story, and it’s not just about the story told but what kind of a story we can tell ourselves. Consumer brands are no longer simple status symbols, they are stories of the tribes with which their carriers identify themselves. We want to experience the story – and we want that experience to be ‘authentic’, the real thing. We want to incorporate that story into our lives, to make it a part of our life story, or as the popular quote from the Doctor Who science fiction series puts it: ‘We’re all stories in the end. Just make it a good one, eh?’

Amidst all of this activeness I wish to draw attention to two aspects of any museum exhibition: presence, and the importance of the Other. I wish to turn our observing, scrutinising gaze to the quiet, internal, and embodied aspects of experiencing an exhibition, at the little, hushed things that matter, and to contemplate briefly the role of aesthetic engagement in the context of museum exhibitions.
In March 2013 I spent a few days in Oslo, Norway, attending the annual conference of the Nordic Society of Aesthetics. The conference ended on Saturday evening and I had decided to stay until Sunday evening. I was quite excited about this. I had visited Oslo before but it had been a few years since the last visit and there were places I wanted to experience, especially museums, as at that time I was writing the last chapters of my doctoral dissertation on aesthetic engagement in museum exhibitions.

However, the conference had drained me, and on Sunday morning I was not feeling energetic at all and the idea of wandering around the city felt exhausting, but what could I do? The choices were either to go and do the things I had planned to do or to sit in some cafe the whole day. The choice was simple (though Oslo’s cafes are very appealing) and I decided to head for the various maritime-themed museums on the Bygdøy peninsula, a short boat ride away from central Oslo.

My original intention was to visit the Kon-Tiki Museum, a museum dedicated to the adventures of the famous explorer and anthropologist Thor Heyerdahl. I had visited the place on my previous trip and I had already written about its exhibitions in my thesis. I had thought it to be prudent to use the opportunity to
check out some ideas I had had about the place. However, in the light of my tiredness, the Kon-Tiki Museum did not seem much fun anymore. I had already seen the place and I felt that I simply did not have the energy to intellectually scrutinise the museum and my experiences in it with due vigour. I wanted to see something new, but at the same time I felt I had a job to do. By the time the small ferry reached the Bygdøy jetty, I had absolutely no idea what I was going to do.

I disembarked and began the walk up towards the museum buildings. Every step was a chance to make up my mind. Every step went by without a decision. It wasn’t until the point where I had to either carry on towards the Kon-Tiki Museum or to turn left for the Fram and Maritime Museums that I made up my mind. Since the last two were closer, I turned left, and since the Fram Museum was the closest of the two, I turned left again. Easier than throwing a coin. I had only a vague idea of what Fram was when I walked in. I knew it was an old sailing ship with something to do with the Arctic. Besides that, nothing much. However, since I have always found old ships fascinating and beautiful, I was pretty sure the experience of visiting Fram would be aesthetically pleasing.

The design of the Fram Museum’s building is peculiar. It is like a tent: a gable roof reaching all the way down to the ground on both sides, and the triangular gable ends are finished with circular windows high up, close to the peak of the roof. It looks like a ship hauled ashore or in a dry dock and covered with huge, heavy tarpaulin to shield it from the elements. As a cos-
tal dweller those kinds of ships are a familiar sight for me, and though some ships may stay that way for years, in my mind a covered ship on dry land is not a dead ship. A ship like that is merely sleeping, hibernating, waiting for the next launching at the beginning of the next sailing season.

True enough, entering the museum building was something like crawling under a tarpaulin: right inside, the Fram's towering keel and prow saluted me from behind the ticket kiosk. It certainly was a tight squeeze: the walls of the building hugged Fram's sides hiding the upper decks from my view. There was ample room on the ground floor for all the amenities of a museum, from a cafe to a gift shop, but further up, due to the tent-like form of the building, there was less and less space available between the walls and the ship. The exhibits were placed along tiers running along the walls and around the ship itself. The design felt rather unpractical as there did not seem to be much room left to view the ship properly. It seemed like all I could do was to squeeze myself between the ship and the walls and stare either at the exhibits or the hull from a far too close distance.
I headed straight up. I wanted to meet the ship eye to eye if I could, to view it first from the perspective of its sailors. I skipped all the exhibits along the way up, reading only some of the titles and looking at some of the pictures that caught my eye as I walked past them. But even that shallow, unconcerned eyeing was enough to jog my memory and I remembered having seen a documentary about the ship some months before, and having read an article in the National Geographic about Norwegian polar explorers. By the time I reached the top tier I knew what I was about to greet.

This was Fram, the famous, groundbreaking ship of the legendary Norwegian polar explorers Fridtjof Nansen, Otto Sverdrup and Roald Amundsen. The three-masted schooner was launched in 1892, and it is the first purpose-built polar explorations ship in Norway. It was designed and built to withstand being frozen into the arctic ice sheet, and to withstand the glacial forces that had crushed so many unlucky ships before. With Fram, Nansen was able to prove that the polar ice cap was not stationary but that it did indeed move with the oceanic currents that flow under it. Nansen and his crew did this by spending three years stuck in the ice drifting slowly across the Arctic Ocean. A feat not many were or are willing to try and which owes its success to careful, thorough research and planning.

When I got all the way up to the topmost tier I was delighted to find out that the visitors were allowed to board the Fram. I had not expected that but had thought the Fram would be like the famous Wasa ship in Stockholm, like a ship in a bottle: something to look at but not to roam about. I quickly crossed the drawbridge and stepped onboard the Fram. I took a few tentative steps across the deck as I stared at the multimedia show that was projected on the ceiling above and around the ship. I started to wander about aimlessly and a strange sensation flowed through me. I felt weird, oddly light-headed and unsteady on my feet. I felt disoriented. My attention zigzagged between the lights and animations of the multimedia show, and the dark decking worn smooth and patinated by the sailors of the past and the visitors of today. I was at a loss and didn't know where to start. I tried to figure out what on earth was going on and all I knew was that the planks beneath my feet felt strange.
Eventually it hit me: somewhere deep in my unconscious mind and inside my body, somewhere deep within me the most embodied part of me was convinced that the deck, and in fact the whole ship, was moving. My eyes saw the stationary, resting museum but my body sensed the long past movements of the ship. Its bow lifted with the waves and sunk as they passed underneath it, and I could feel and sense the arctic sea around and beneath me, its sounds and scents, the sound of the wind in the rigging, and the bow of the ship rising and sinking with the waves. I could swear I smelled the salty cold air in my nose.

The peculiar experience lasted until I disembarked the Fram after an hour or so. It continued all the way through the ship, even inside the ship on the lower decks where I could sense the cold depths of the ocean under us and the enormous force of the polar ice sheet pressing against the bulk of the ship. I could feel in my bones the biting cold of the arctic wastes that spread endlessly around the ship, and hear the eerie songs of the distant whales and the moving sheet ice in my ears. I felt as if I was standing between two worlds, on the border between the present in the museum and the past life of the exploring ship. It was as if there had been a disruption in the space-time continuum and I was able to reach over to the living past of the ship, into history while it was still in the making. Both worlds were alive and present and available to me, both equally true, with one, the actual present, more tangible and more defined, and the other, Fram on one of its historic voyages, equally available though ethereal and only accessible through the collaboration of my body, memory, and imagination. In that hour I was dwelling in two bodies, in two lives: as an arctic explorer and as the actual me.

This all sounds awfully exceptional, and it was. By no means was it an ordinary experience but something extreme, something spectacular but yet without the spectacle, something extraordinary in the truest sense of the word. It was a particular experience and as such accessible only to me in that particular instance, within that particular mindset. I fear I will never experience it a second time: if I ever return to the Fram it will not be that same ghost ship that once stole me away. All experiences
escape our grasp even while we are having them, and once the experience is over, all we have is a memory of it. They are unrepeatable, they are unique. It is as Heraclitus claimed according to Plato: you cannot step into the same river twice.

While what I experienced was particular and accessible only to me, it was an experience of aesthetic engagement, an instance of experience that is accessible to us all. What is meant with ‘aesthetic engagement’ in the field of Aesthetics is not quite the same as what is most often meant by the word ‘engagement’ in relation to museum exhibitions. An aesthetic engagement is, as defined by Arnold Berleant, a situation in which the four elements of the aesthetic field come together and work in unison to create an instance in which the perceiver experiences presence, inclusiveness and participation with the object of her appreciative attention. It is a situation of mutual recognition and co-operation.

The four elements of the aesthetic field are present in any museum exhibition and they can be described with four word pairs: the creative/creator, the objective/object, the appreciative/perceiver, and the performative/performer. It is, however, difficult to say definitively who is who in aesthetic engagement for the boundaries between the elements are flexible and relative to the situation and the point of view. For example, in the case of my experience with the Fram there were two definite creators, the museum and its employees who had built the exhibition and myself who actively experienced it. Things become more complicated if we consider the big picture: there are also those creators who imagined, designed and built the ship itself, its sailors and explorers, and generations of people who have read, heard, and talked about the ship and thus created and maintained its legend. When I walked in that day I carried with me a heap of cultural knowledge and lore, and personal knowledge I had picked up during my life. Meeting Fram eye to eye in that engaging setting simply helped me to unify the knowledge and experiences I had, thus enabling me to make sense of it all. It is not that I left the museum with more information but that I had become more aware of and more integrated with the knowledge I carried. The experience made me one of the creators of the Fram.

It is important to note that while aesthetic engagement
requires active participation it is not an activity. Like many museums today, the Fram Museum has its share of participatory exhibits that encourage and require active participation from the visitor. There is an exhibit where a visitor can put on a harness and try pulling a flexible cord that simulates the difficulty of pulling a fully packed sledge across the arctic landscape. There is also the Polar Simulator, a kind of a haunted house that simulates the terror of being onboard a ship entrapped in ice. It is a very scary, bodily exhibit where the temperature of the rooms is close to freezing (or so it feels) and one’s ears are filled with the moaning of the moving sheet ice, the groaning of the ship as the ice crushes it, and the sobbing and screams of the explorers who know their end is near. Both are examples of good exhibition design as they offer excellent opportunities for gaining insight through embodied experiences, but they are established on clear subject/object-orientation. On one hand they challenge the visitor to expose herself to the experience but at the same time she becomes the object of the action as the museum hopes to kindle certain kinds of experiences in her. In aesthetic engagement such hierarchies are very subtle, or at least very difficult to define, even non-existent as they are constantly oscillating. In aesthetic engagement the creative potential of all the participating partners is recognised.

Empathy and presence

Meaning, according to my friend, arises from meeting, from the felt contact between oneself and what is not self. From the encounter between oneself and another person, or a river, or the surfing wind. From ultimately, the ongoing interaction and intercourse between oneself and the rest of the earthly cosmos.

Abram, David 2011.

What is elemental for an experience of aesthetic engagement is also, in my mind, what is both most natural and most fundamental for a successful museum exhibition: the experienced feelings of togetherness, inclusiveness and equanimity, or namely the experience of presence. I visit museums to be in the presence of an Other, whether it is a person, an object or an idea. I go to stand next to it, to be in its present, and to be present to it in
return. I suspect this is what most visitors are looking for. We go into museums, regardless of their field, to meet an Other, an unknown presence that will help us make sense of the world we dwell in and of our experience of living in it. This may not be a conscious objective for visitors in general, but it is the most important goal according to philosopher David Abram. It is in meetings like these where true meaning-making is possible.

This kind of encounter is characterised by mutual recognition, mutual respect, mutual presence, and mutual availability for each other. It requires an open and appreciative attitude, a willingness to recognise both the otherness of the Other present but also its sovereignty and the fact that in that moment I am myself an Other too. In a travel documentary about the Canadian Arctic the Scottish comedian Billy Connolly tells the viewers of a little man he met:

But there’s one who haunts me is a little man I met in a museum in Iqaluit. He goes in every day to watch this rerun of a film. His grandfather is in it, his grandfather’s father is in it. His whole world has radically changed. It’s gone from the dog sledges to the internet, and to me he represents this whole part of the world.


Watching the episode I can observe Connolly sit by this unnamed man and watch him watch the film playing on a screen. I can see their movements, see that they change few words while I listen Connolly’s voice on the soundtrack delivering the quote above. I have no experience of the little man’s world nor of Connolly’s. I can never appreciate the intricacies of their lives and their inner worlds. In the same way that pulling that mock sledge in the Fram Museum will not give me the experience of an arctic explorer pulling a sledge in despair as the cold sets in, the food is running out, and all that can be done is either to give up and die or die trying. Yet if I allow myself to be present and empathetically available to them I can relate to them all, to Connolly and the little man, and the explorer of those arctic wastes, and look into a world that no longer exists. In other words, that world becomes available to me through an empathetic, reciprocal meeting. This is what museums are meant to do: to take us to the edge of our
known world so that we can meet with the Other who waits for us at the other side so that we can learn about our similarities and differences and thus learn about ourselves as persons and human beings. We need the Other to show us ourselves.

The experience I had when I met the Fram had a lot had to do with my open-mindedness, my willingness to appreciate. My post-conference exhaustion meant I had very few expectations, in fact, I had only one: I only wished to see something new. Naturally, the design of the exhibition played a big part. The sounds and the music, the lighting, the visual elements and the general spatial design helped me to achieve aesthetic engagement, but the most important factors were far more subtle and, if I may say so, mundane. The most important factor was that I was given access to the ship itself. I was allowed to experience it directly with my body. This access was far more profound than any passing chance to touch or even handle a museum object with my own hands. I was allowed to dwell in the ship, to engage with it bodily in the same way that its past crews had done. While I did not sail on it or spend years or even mere days living on it, I walked on its decks, just like every crew member in its past had. There was no difference there: in that simple act of walking the Fram was bodily available to me, just as it had been available to Nansen, Sverdrup, and Amundsen. They had know the same profile of the deck that I was getting to know under my feet. It had been their feet and effort that had worn the wood smooth as they explored the frozen wastes. Over a hundred years ago they had stood and walked and lived where I was standing now. In this sense we were and are the same: our bodily experiences of the ship are compatible and shareable.

Secondly and most importantly, I was given space to explore and contemplate. I was allowed to come into an embodied contact with something I had previously only read and heard about. There was practically no information available on that open deck. All had been explained in the exhibit on the way up, or in my case in books and other texts I had read and in documentaries I had watched. While reading about the Fram and its voyages and famous crews elsewhere I had reached for it in my
mind with my intellect and imagination. I had pictured its adventures, pondered on the challenges of such life. Thinking about all that I had realised how profoundly different that world had been, how unknowable such life was for me. Yes, I had sympathy for it and I could appreciate the struggle but I could not know that life. Boarding the Fram disclosed the similarities of our lives as I was able to experience the ship in the scale of the human body for which it had been built. I was given a space to do it, a space that was not filled for me with information and activity but a space to be with. At that moment, in that space life onboard the Fram became available to me on the human scale. Just as Connolly sat with the little man and looked into his world, I stood by the explorers and gazed into theirs.

Not all engagement is participating in vibrant, lively activities. Being engaged is not necessarily a form of vigorous, animated activity. We go into museums to stand on the side of things, to gaze into other worlds beyond ours. We are explorers of our lives and of the world in which we dwell. To explore, we have to leave the security of our familiar grounds, just like the sailors of the Fram. We have to take our chances with the high seas but we also need to contemplate it if we are to reach the deep understanding which exploration can lead us to. Only contemplation can lead into a discovery of insightful meaning within us, but this requires space where it can manifest: there must be a space between before there can be presence, empathy, and a meaningful encounter. We need the Other so that we can see ourselves.

‘Experiences are volatile and unruly,’ writes philosopher Hilde S. Hein in *The Museum in Transition – A Philosophical Perspective*. Please, give them space to be exactly that.
References and further reading

Annual Awards in Museum Pedagogy
2006–2015
The Finnish Association for Museum Education Pedaali presents its Annual Award in Museum Pedagogy to draw attention to various groups and individuals that enable and promote museum education work and activities in Finnish museums. The aim of the award is to raise awareness of exemplary and worthy efforts to promote audience engagement. The award winner is selected each year from candidates put forward by the association’s members. The final decision is made by the association’s Board.

The association presented the first Annual Award in Museum Pedagogy in 2006. Up to and including 2015 the award comprised a certificate of honour and a miniature sculpture by the artist Kalle Hamm.

You can request further information about the award-winning initiatives directly from the award-winners or from the association, which will forward your requests, if necessary.
The Annual Award in Museum Pedagogy 2006 was awarded to the Turku Culture Path plan and the working group at the City of Turku Education Department that was responsible for the plan.

The Culture Path is a cultural education programme for school children, created by the City of Turku and cultural institutions in Turku. It is intended for pupils in years 1–9 and is part of the municipality-specific curriculum. Through the programme every pupil in Turku visits cultural locations and events as part of school work a total of 28 times. The programme is funded by the City of Turku.

Pedaali wanted to give particular praise for the plan as it has enabled culture and arts institutions and the education department in Turku to work towards the achievement of a common goal. The plan promotes cultural education as part of schools’ normal activities and supports the educational work carried out at cultural institutions. The plan ensures the resourcing for programme providers and the continuation of the programme in an exemplary way. The plan promotes cultural equality and teaches younger members of the municipality to become active users of culture.

The award was handed over to representatives of the Turku Education Department at the Museo yhteiskunnallisena toimijana (Museum as a social actor) seminar that was organised by the association and held at the Ateneum Hall in Helsinki on 16 May 2006.

The Culture Path plan was created in 2004 during the basic education curriculum reform. Another curriculum reform
was introduced in autumn 2016. Three Path plans of the Turku Education Department, the Culture, Environment and Entrepreneurship Paths will now be combined as a single Experience Path plan. There will also be a plan for providing education on physical activity outside of school connected with the Experience Path. This will allow pupils to visit educational environments located outside of school more frequently and more comprehensively from now on.
Järnefelt planned and managed the Lähde and Suomen Tammi (Source and Finnish Oak) projects. The basis for these projects was grassroots education. She also produced several publications on cultural education in museums and schools and trained teachers. She enthusiastically supported programmes and projects targeted at schools that have been initiated by cultural institutions. Examples of these include the Kulttuurin laajakaista – kansalliset kulttuurilaitokset (Cultural broadband – national cultural institutions) project and the Taide meille ja heti! (We want art and we want it now) multiculturalism project.

Järnefelt stood up for cultural education in educational administration. Above all she resolutely endeavoured to get ministry-level civil servants who are responsible for culture and education to sit around the same table and engage in cooperation, which is necessary for the successful implementation of education in cultural heritage and art.

By presenting this award to Heljä Järnefelt, Pedaa-li wanted to draw attention to the often invisible but important groundwork that maintains and promotes the status of culture in society and thus also has an impact on the conditions for museum education activities.

Heljä Järnefelt explains:

The award promoted the development of cultural heritage education in the form of cooperation between administrative branches. The visibility given by the
award helped to create cooperation networks between schools and museums. It also helped to ensure the operations of the Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland.

I have had the great pleasure of being able to observe the development of museum education throughout the 2000s. Today, museums are important cooperation partners for schools. This is also evident in the reformed national core curriculum.

When I retired in autumn 2015 I wanted to experience that everyday companionship with pupils for myself. In spring 2016, the Karjalohja Local Heritage Federation offered the 70 pupils in a small school in Karjalohja a cultural heritage trip. The trips, which were in the form of workshops, were based on the heritage knowledge of the museums in the local area. The internet has turned out to be a suitable source of information for pupils. There are already plans to continue this initiative. These cultural heritage activities have brought the whole village together.
The Annual Award in Museum Pedagogy 2008 was granted to the Museologia tänään (Museology Today) publication edited by Pauliina Kinanen and published by the Finnish Museums Association.

The Museologia tänään collection of articles is a continuation of the Museologian perusteet (The Basics of Museology) by Jouko Heinonen and Markku Lahti, published by the Finnish Museums Association in 1988, which is a popular seminal work in Finnish in the field of museology. Museologia tänään focuses more on the museum audience perspective than its predecessor and offers an in-depth analysis of other important and topical themes from the beginning of the 2000s.

Museologia tänään deals with four themes: museology as a discipline, museums and society, museum collections and the museum as a communicator. The museum as a communicator section discusses topics, such as the museum as a media, museums and audiences, the museum as a place of learning and the museum online. All themes are central to museum education work. The museums and society section discusses many current issues regarding the museum’s relationship with its audience.

Pedaali considers audience development as one of the key areas in museums’ work in the future, which should cover all museum activities and employees. Therefore the publication is required to give those already working in the museum sector, museology students and other museum sector professionals a diverse picture of museum activities today.

By awarding the Museologia tänään publication, Pedaali wanted to thank the Finnish Museums Association, and the
publication's editor Pauliina Kinanen and writers for awarding museum development work the same status as other traditional museum activities.

Since its publication, *Museologia tänään* has been used as a textbook in all Finnish universities that teach museology. It is also the textbook that is used in the Finnish Museums Association's Verso course. An updated and corrected edition came out in 2009 after the previous edition from 2007 sold out.
The Annual Award in Museum Pedagogy 2009 was awarded to the Kulttuuriluotsi Art and Culture Companion activities in Jyväskylä.

The award was presented to the nationally groundbreaking and commendable museum education work that is carried out by Art and Culture Companions. The award gave recognition to the voluntary companions who receive training from museums and who are familiar with regional cultural activities. The Companions encourage and help people who may not otherwise have the courage to participate in cultural activities or who would find it difficult to participate alone. The Companions include students, retired volunteers, representatives of minority groups and organisations, professionals in cultural, social and healthcare sectors, and also those working in sheltered accommodation and residents’ associations.

The credit for the award also went to the network maintaining the activities: the City of Jyväskylä’s Vapari voluntary work organisation, the City of Jyväskylä Cultural Services, the Versova project, institutions of culture and arts that are involved in the activities, and other partners. In producing the Art and Culture Companions activities, the entire network promotes matters that Pedaali hopes to have more prominence in society: the importance of culture for wellbeing, and museums and other cultural institutions as servants of all citizens.

Pedaali extended its gratitude to all Art and Culture Companions for their work to promote the accessibility of museums. As active citizens who understand the importance of cul-
The Companions with Hanne Laitinen (left, middle). Photo: Hanna-Kaisa Hämäläinen.

In the field of heritage, the Companions set a good example to others.

The award was presented at the association’s spring meeting and member meet-up on 8 May 2009 at Turku Castle to the coordinator of the Art and Culture Companions activities Hanne Laitinen, Jyväskylä Art Museum, and to Pirjo Koponen who graduated as an Art and Culture Companion in 2009.

Each year Pedaali nominates a candidate for the Nordic Center for Heritage Learning and Creativity’s (NCK) Pedagogical Prize. The prize is awarded to a person or institution that has made outstanding contributions to the field of heritage learning in the Nordic or Baltic region. The Art and Culture Companions were nominated for the 2014 prize and received an award worth 25,000 Swedish kronor. By this time the activities had expanded to over 10 locations in Finland. The activities are presented in more detail in Pedaali’s Nordic Inspiration – Fresh Approaches to Museum Learning publication (2015).

The award raised awareness of the expert cooperation between different administrative bodies. The force behind this cooperation is museum education. In order to be successful, the furthering of interaction and education in the museum environment needs more than just short projects. Museum education activities require perseverance, development and the cooperation of experts in various fields. The Art Arc programme is founded on genuine enthusiasm, interest and commitment to the cause. The project funding has been interrupted several times, but continuity has been ensured by the intense determination of those involved. Ten years later, the focused cooperation carried out by three different administrative units is proof that difficulties have been overcome.

The award was granted to the Art Arc Cultural Education Programme and the units behind it to show support and provide an example to all those who work in museum education projects and activities. Small projects can grow into large and sustainable ones when those involved believe in themselves and
their cause, and when they are able to convince also others to believe.

The award was presented at the Näyttelycafe event organised by the Finnish Museums Association, Espoo City Museum and Pedaali at the WeeGee Exhibition Centre in Tapiola, Espoo on 28 September 2010. The award was received by Sanni Pöntinen, Tiina Heikkinen, Janina Ahlfors and Marianna Lehtinen, from the Taite Cultural Education Unit, and Marjaana Hellevi-Turunen, a teacher who developed the model together with teacher Marjaana Kalliokoski. The award was also granted to Hanna Pulkkinen, Jaana Ylänen and Raisa Foster from the Taite Cultural Education Unit, to Toimi Jaatinen, Museum Director of Tampere Museums, Hannu Suoniemi, Director of Basic Education in Tampere, Jaakko Masonen, Director of Cultural Affairs, and Taru Kuosmanen, Purchasing Manager.

All children, from pre-school to the end of basic education, who live in Tampere are now able to participate in Art Arc activities. The programme’s structure, values and operation methods have remained comparatively unchanged from the very beginning. Its model and the educational approach have proven to be effective, and its structure ensures the balance of opera-
tions. The content and themes reflect the times. For example, the development of operations is being affected by the new curriculum.

Art Arc’s production method has also been used to develop services provided to the elderly, for example. The starting points for the Culture Arc operations for the elderly are its mode of operation, which crosses sectoral boundaries in organisations, and its multi-producer model, where the public and private sector work together to produce the service.
Outi Korhonen was rewarded for her determined and innovative work to improve museum services for immigrants. The Babel workshops at the Helsinki Art Museum were launched in 2009 on Korhonen’s initiative. The basic ideas for the Babel project: teachers from abroad, artists and audiences working together in their own language, and utilisation of existing museum practices generated a successful form of activity in which artists who are new Finns, museum audiences and museums meet in a new way that regenerates old practices.

By selecting Outi Korhonen for the award, Pedaali wanted to highlight the importance of art museums and cultural institutions as places to experience art and to learn that are open to all, and offered its encouragement to the important work launched by Korhonen in her role of Regional Artist on Cultural Diversity, in which audience development for new linguistic minorities is introduced to Finnish art institutions.

The award was handed over at the HIM03 Todellisuuuden jäjillä (Tracking down reality) seminar held in Helsinki on 5 May 2011 for cultural workers and artists in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

In 2013, the Babel workshop activities were extended to five museums in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Six artists built on the audience development concepts that were adaptable to variable exhibition contents. Highlighting the work of artists with
various backgrounds consequently gained new forms: Catalysti, an association of transcultural artists in Finland, was registered in 2013. The association’s online register has over 100 transcultural artists who live in Finland. The multilingualism also lives on in the form of the annual Satakielikuukausi (Month of a Hundred Languages) festival that starts on International Mother Tongue Day on 21 February and ends on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March. The Babel workshops ended in 2015. A publication on the project is currently being created.

Matryoshka doll made at the Babel workshop led by artist Irina Soboleva at the Helsinki City Museum. Photo: Outi Korhonen.
The aim of the project, funded by the Finnish Work Environment Fund, was to improve the occupational wellbeing of home care employees of the City of Turku with the help of modern art.

The *Art leaves a trace* get-togethers that started in February 2012 gave home care employees the chance to visit a modern art museum during their working hours. The afternoons when the home care employee unit had the chance to enjoy art offered a relaxed way to spending time together and a meaningful activity away from the workplace. Suitable ways to encounter art were sought with the get-togethers, for example assessing modern art techniques, and narrative methods and contents. The aim of the project, which continued until the end of the year, was to discover the ways in which museums could promote wellbeing with their collections and operations.

With the award Pedaali wanted to highlight the significance of cultural institutions that are available for all as places to experience and learn about art. The aim of the award was to encourage art and cultural institutions to engage in long-span and systematic audience development cooperation with social and healthcare service units and to develop permanent service concepts to promote health with culture and art.

The award was presented to project representatives at the *It’s all Mediating* conference on curating and education in the exhibition context held at the Kiasma Theatre in Helsinki on 31 May 2012. The project is presented in more detail in the confer-
Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova has continued to develop wellbeing services in its Virtaa museosta (Energy from museums) project where the museum worked together with pilot groups to produce new service packages directed at work communities. Methods for surveying the effects of wellbeing services were also developed.

Three occupational wellbeing packages were launched in autumn 2014, and since then these have been part of the museum’s permanent selection of services. The packages of different lengths focus on different areas of occupational wellbeing. However, the background themes are experiencing everything together and creating community spirit.

The feedback on the occupational wellbeing services has been positive and shows that museum visits have a positive impact on the atmosphere in a work community, and offer an opportunity to take time out from work and come up with new ideas. The Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova museum will certainly continue producing its wellbeing services in the future.

The Annual Award in Museum Pedagogy 2013 was awarded to the Open Museum – A Developing Learning Environment for Adults project.

Open Museum was a three-year development project coordinated by the Finnish Museums Association. Sub-projects were coordinated by the University of Helsinki CICERO Learning network, the Museum of Technology from Helsinki, the Finnish Labour Museum Werstas from Tampere, the Taite Cultural Educational Unit of the City of Tampere Museum Services Department, the Pori Art Museum and the Satakunta Museum, Pori.

The purpose of the project was to enhance the adult education skills of museum staff and to create new modes of activity and services for adult museum visitors. During the project several new forms of audience development activities were produced and tested, training was arranged, museum audiences, learning and museums as a learning environment were considered, and plenty of new cooperation was launched.

Open Museum is a successful example of a versatile project in the museum sector. A key area of the project was the comprehensive audience development work offered by museums that is directed at adults and senior citizens but that is not necessarily publicised separately. Separate merits of the project were considered to be the training arranged by the project, the national scope of the project and the new cooperation networks that it created.

The award was presented to the Finnish Museums Association, which coordinated the project, on 15 May 2013.
Works of art from the Maire Gullichsen art foundation’s collection were examined with experiential guided tours at the Pori Art Museum’s KoeTILA! exhibition (2011). The audience had the chance to vote for their favourite pieces in the collection to be included in an exhibition. Photo: Pori Art Museum.

A PDF version of the project’s final publication can be downloaded at the Finnish Museums Association Webpages

http://www.museoliitto.fi/avaramuseo/oppujulkaisu
The circus horses are under the weather is a pedagogical project for the conservation of public sculptures that was launched by the Kerava Art Museum and the Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. A unit within the City of Kerava with responsibility for the city environment was a partner in the project.

The project involved the restoration of the Circus Monument, which is part of the Kerava Art Museum’s collection, as it was in bad condition and required conservation. A class from Kerava Central School participated in the conservation and the background work. Pupils in the fifth grade monitored the conservation of the monument, collected information and wrote blogs about the monument and its conservation. The class also learned about other public sculptures and sculpture as a form of art. The project got other local people interested in public works of art by asking for their memories and photographs.

The circus horses are under the weather is a successful example of a diverse museum sector project. It highlights a new approach by combining a museum education perspective to museum and conservation sector work more broadly. In addition to the school pupils, conservator students and local residents have committed to the project. The project was considered to represent tangible, bold ideas and an outlook that broadens the area of museum education.

The award was presented to the Kerava Art Museum at
the Museot mediakasvattajina – mitä näet, mitä kerrot (Museums as media educators – what you see, what you say) seminar in Helsinki on 28 April 2014.

In 2014 Pedaali also decided to award the Finnish Labour Museum Werstas with an honorary mention for its Master Worker project. Find out more about both projects in the Nordic Inspiration – Fresh Approaches to Museum Learning publication (2015).


The Kerava Art Museum will continue to use the methods developed in the project in the restoration of public art together with the general public. In the latest project, Operaatio Kala (Operation fish), a relief by Heikki W. Virolainen called Kala (Fish) was restored with children from a daycare centre.
Adopt a Monument is a project based on voluntary work and involves working with archaeological monuments and old buildings. A monument can be adopted by an association or society of any size, such as an amateur enthusiasts’ group. The adopter then takes care of its adopted site by keeping check on the general condition, researching its history and organising various events at the location. Those involved will learn more about our cultural heritage and the way it is managed and protected. Apart from finding out more about their adopted site and understanding the methods and principles of managing such sites, those involved may also be interested in how the site is presented and in other aspects of museum work.

The project represents a new approach to involving the general public in museum work. The Pirkanmaa Provincial Museum provides the framework for involvement and its expertise, but also leaves space for interested members of the public to put their enthusiasm to work. Interaction in the project occurs between the museum and the general public, in both directions, and among the members of the public as well.

Adopting a monument also makes it easier for people to get involved in something traditionally seen as the work of specialists. It serves to highlight particular ancient relics and elements of built heritage that may have received little attention in the past, and generates commitment to nurturing our common cultural heritage through shared actions. Adopt a Monument is a
successful example of a diverse and long-term museum project that has steadily evolved into the more established form that it now takes.

The Pirkanmaa Provincial Museum has produced a guide to best practices for those adopting a monument, available digitally through the internet:

https://issuu.com/vapriikki/docs/adoptoi_monumentti_iso (in Finnish)

https://issuu.com/vapriikki/docs/adopt-a-monument (in English)

The Pirkanmaa Provincial Museum was given the award at the From museum education to audience engagement – new approaches NOW seminar in Helsinki on 28 May 2015.

Recently, the activities have been extended outside of the Pirkanmaa region. Monuments have been adopted in Central Finland and in the Helsinki Metropolitan Region, for example.

In 2016 the Adopt a Monument project was granted the Europa Nostra Award, the European Union’s most prestigious prize in the cultural heritage field. Seven of the 28 award-winners were chosen to receive a Grand Prix main prize worth 10,000 euros. The Adopt a Monument project received its Grand Prix award in the education, training and awareness-raising category for education in cultural heritage.