



II MUSEO PARTECIPATIVO: RIFLESSIONI SULL'ESPERIENZA INGLESE

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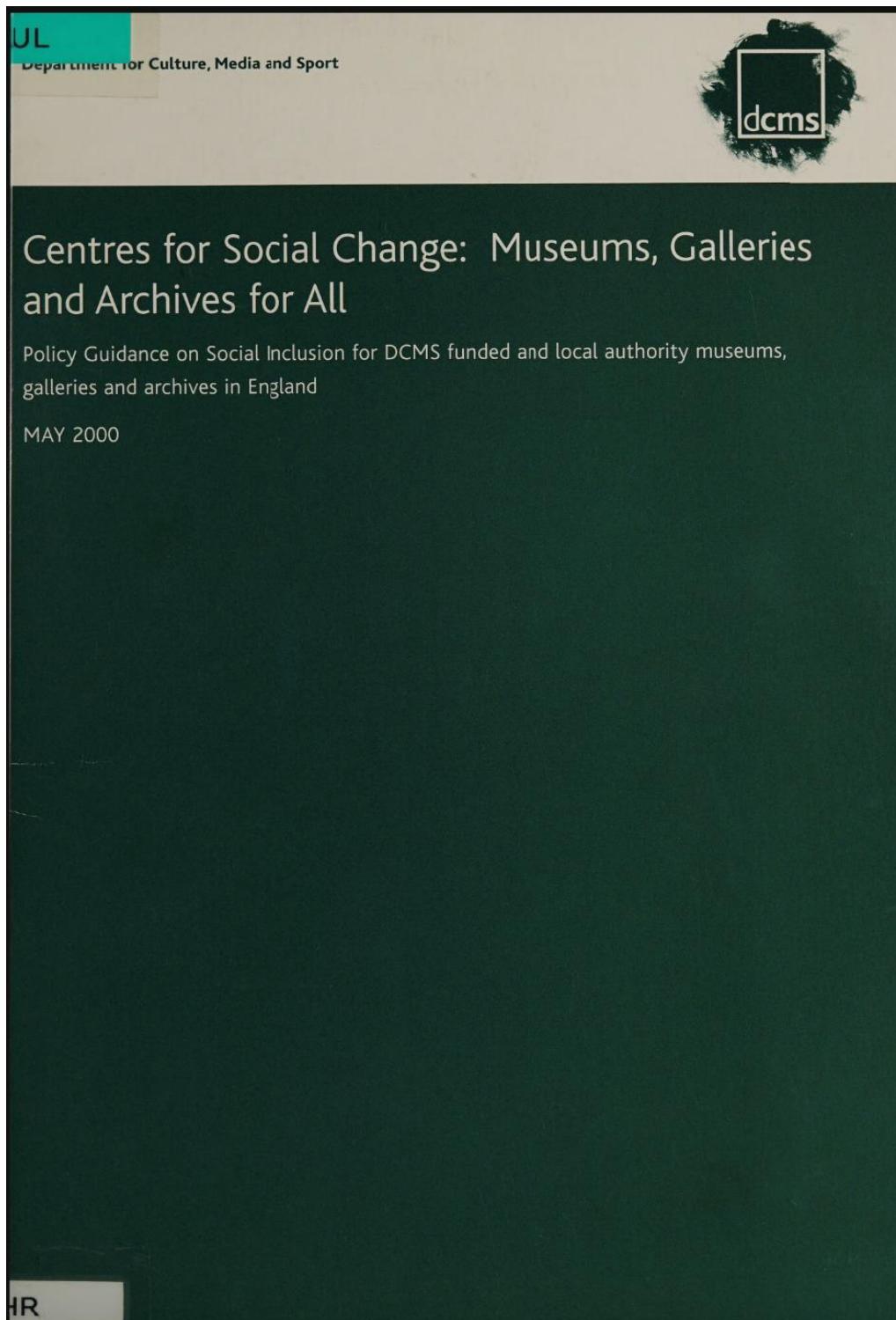
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La lunga strada verso il museo partecipativo

AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITIES

Guidance from a collaboration between Open House at Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge and the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, University of Leicester



AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

A recent research collaboration between Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge and the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG), University of Leicester offers new insights on ethical approaches to museum and gallery collaborations with communities.

Inspired by learning from *Open House* at Kettle's Yard—a long-term socially engaged community programme working at a hyperlocal level in North Cambridge over the last seven years—that led to significant organisational change, the framework presents the ways in which museums and galleries can become more useful to, and more used by, local communities.

This organisational shift, or what we might describe as a journey of change, has inspired the development of an 'ethical framework' that exemplifies the archetypal characteristics of The Traditional Museum versus those of The Useful Museum. The framework does not aim to suggest that any museum or gallery, including Kettle's Yard, falls neatly into either category, or has done in the past; rather it helps us to envision an imagined starting point and what an aspirational destination might look like. The framework uncovers and confronts deeply entrenched traditional practice, as well as offers guidance for how other museums and galleries might shift towards becoming more useful and relevant for communities. While not necessarily a linear path, these characterisations intend to show a form of progression, and enable us to visualise the direction of change over time, alongside the ways in which socially engaged community programmes, like *Open House*, can foster conditions for a Useful Museum.

This framework can be used as a starting point by museums and galleries of all kinds working with communities.



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The connection with the ‘decolonization’ mission

In the UK, the “new museology”’s focus on democratizing the institution of the museum and on participatory practice has also connected to increasing pressures on the museum, galleries and heritage sector to finally deal satisfactorily with its colonial and imperial past, and its persisting legacy in the present.

(Non é stato un processo facile e le contestazioni non sono mancate!)

The screenshot shows the University of Leicester website. The top navigation bar includes links for Study, International, Research, Services for Business, Alumni, and About, along with a search icon. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features a 'Research archive' menu with a list of items: 'The Activist Museum Award', 'Addressing the museum attendance and benefit gap', 'Articulate', 'Birmingham Museum Trust Vision', 'Books connect 2', 'Building inclusive museums', 'Buried in the footnotes', 'Cabinet of Curiosities', 'A Catalyst for Change', 'Advancing equity: Challenging embedded whiteness in London Museum', 'The Cinematic Musée Imaginaire of spatial cultural differences [CineMuseSpace]', 'Contested Desires Constructive Dialogues', and 'Cultural activity within historic houses'. The right column displays a page titled 'Co-production Framework at National Museums Liverpool' under the heading 'Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG)'. Below the title is an image of a waterfront development in Liverpool. The text below the image describes the collaborative work between RCMG and National Museums Liverpool (NML) to develop a Co-production Framework for the Waterfront Transformation Project and the redevelopment of the International Slavery Museum.

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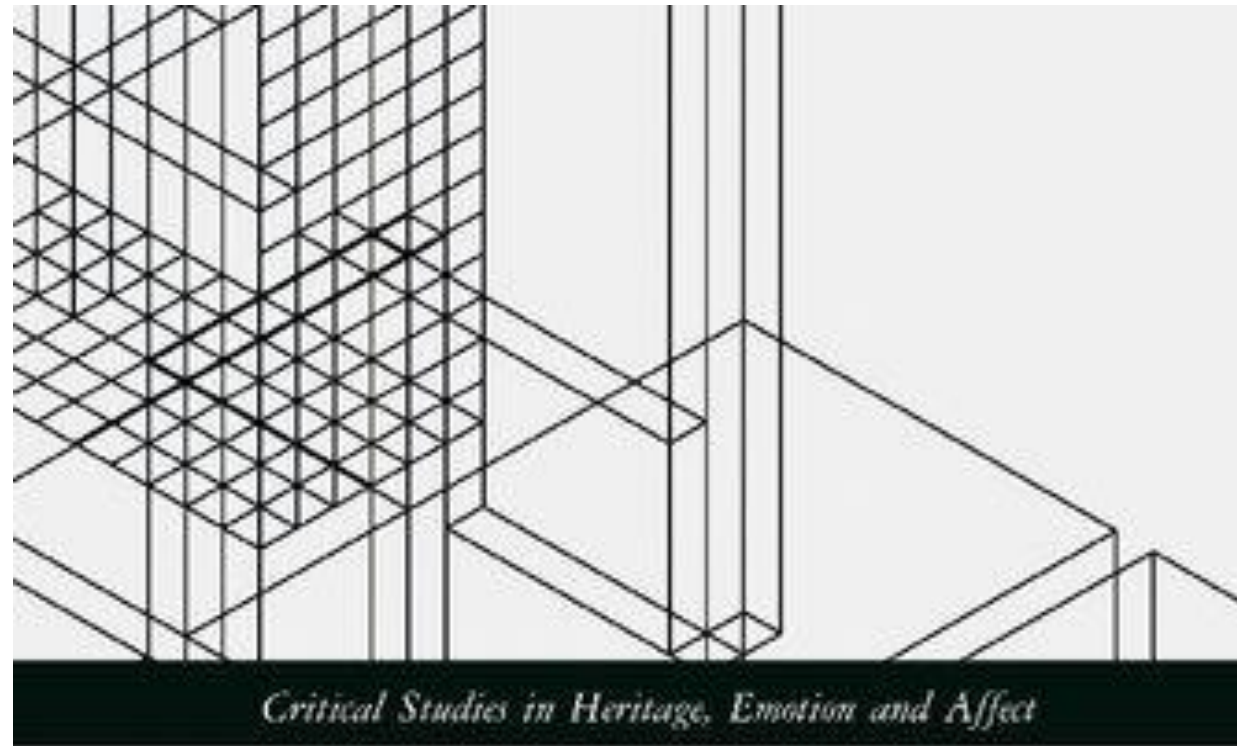
Una questione di
potere...

Cultural value is socially constructed, negotiated and contested – it is a matter of *cultural authority*

“Understanding art as socially produced necessarily involves illuminating some of the ways in which various forms, genres, styles, etc. come to have value ascribed to them by certain groups in particular contexts” (Wolff 1981, 7).

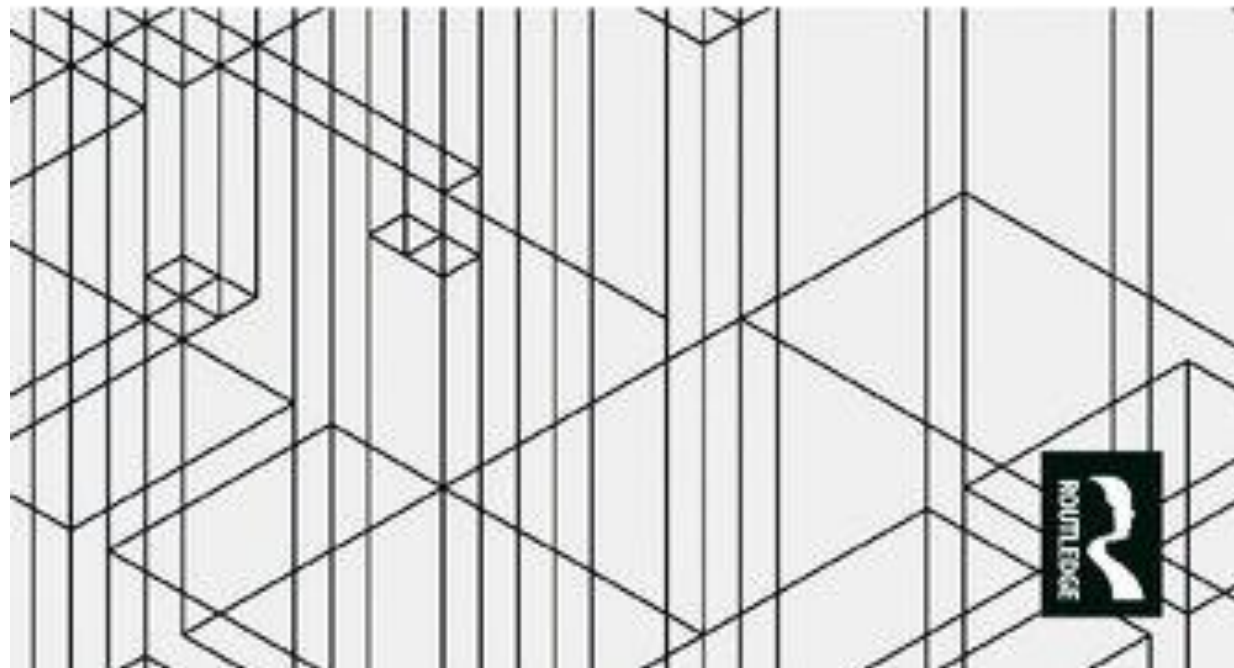
*I musei hanno avuto (e continuano ad avere) un ruolo **centrale** in questo processo di legittimazione e cristallizzazione della Cultura*





THE MUSEUM AS A SPACE OF SOCIAL CARE

Nuala Morse



“Despite the well-meaning intentions of staff to share power and hand over control, **the museum continues to exercise invisible power**, and so the experience of participants is reduced to **‘empowerment-lite’**, leaving everyone, the museum included, ‘generally dis-satisfied’ (Lynch, 2011b, 2014). Another aspect of this critique is a practice of engagement focused on **‘doing for’ rather than ‘doing with’**, in a way that is further **disempowering** for participants (Lynch, 2011b).” (Morse 2021, p.4)

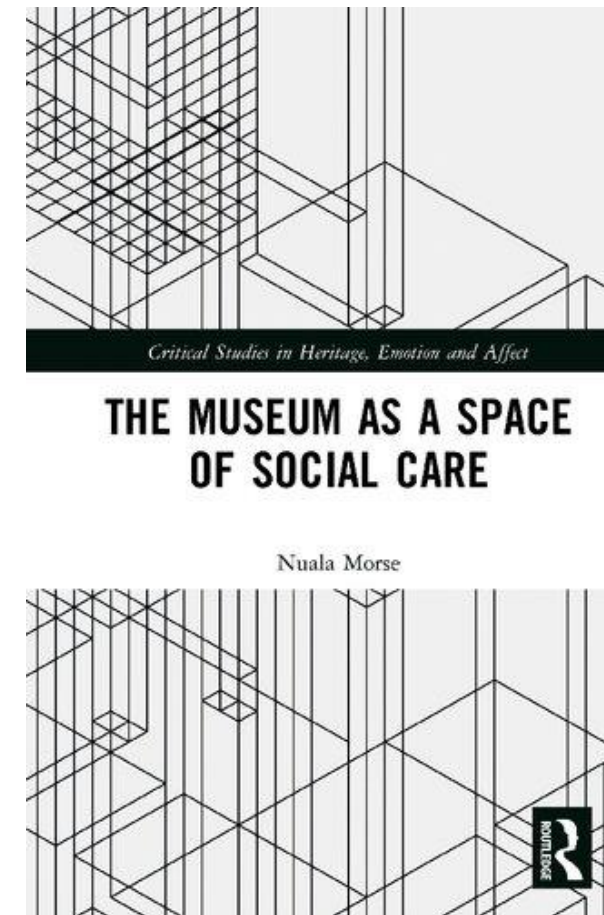
Her diagnosis:

The current understandings of participation are based on a **logic of contribution**:

“community engagement is focused on the contribution that people make to the museum, whether an object, a story or a form of interpretation, and discourse is concerned with the ideas of participant choice and control within the process”.

Case study: Tyne and Wear Museums (TWAM)

- “The paradox I want to discuss is found in my very earliest conversations with community engagement workers at TWAM, when they told me that **despite the prevalence of community engagement in the official language of the museum, they felt their institution was resistant to their work.** [...] I was struck here by how often staff spoke about the challenges of doing community engagement work as coming from within their organisation. **Community engagement workers clearly stated that they felt their practice was not understood, recognised or valued within the museum**” (Morse 2021, p. 5).



Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Whose cake is it anyway?

A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in 12 museums and galleries in the UK



Summary Report

By Dr. Bernadette Lynch

phf

Executive summary

In one of the study's workshops, a participant portrayed the museum as a cake, held by museum staff members as community participants formed an orderly queue to receive their allotted slice. The scene prompted one participant to ask, "whose cake is it anyway?"

If our museums and galleries are, as this metaphor suggests, owned, produced and distributed by staff to a passive public, decades of participation-targeted investment has not hit the mark. Communities remain, or at least perceive themselves to be, fundamentally separated from processes within these organisations: rather than engaging at every level of their work, they are relegated to mere consumption of museums' and galleries' 'products'.

Despite presenting numerous examples of ground-breaking, innovative practice, the funding invested in public engagement and participation in the UK's museums and galleries has not significantly succeeded in shifting the work from the margins to the core of many of these organisations. In fact, as this study demonstrates, it has curiously done the opposite. By providing funding streams outside of core budgets, it appears to have helped to keep the work on the organisations' periphery. This situation becomes even clearer now that external funding streams are under serious threat and museums and galleries are scrambling for alternative sources of short-term funding to support their public engagement work. Rather than further relegating participation to the margins, however, this could be an opportunity to mainstream this work and refocus on longer-term impact and solutions.

CONCLUSIONI:

- Il Museo Partecipativo come value-driven mission – non come tentativo di utilizzare l’impatto sociale come giustificazione per finanziamenti.
- Il Museo Partecipativo non è un museo tradizionale con un ambizioso programma di outreach o una ricca offerta educative. Il Museo Partecipativo è un nuovo tipo di museo che funziona in maniera nuova, e in cui potere e autorità culturali vengono ridistribuite, piuttosto che rimanere limitate a tradizionali figure professionali
- Lo scopo ultimo non è semplicemente la democratizzazione della cultura tradizionale, ma la creazione di nuove strutture per la creazione, curazione, e conservazione di forme culturali vecchie, nuove ed emergenti.
- Don't just decolonise 'THIS' museum, decolonise the institution of the museum...



Thank you!!