A New Exploration of Artistic Participation by Local Residents of Barcelona: “Utopia House Museum” Community Arts Education Practice Project

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Abstract—Utopia House Museum is a community art education project. In the context of the growing worldwide emphasis on the concept of arts and cultural education, the current state of arts participation among local citizens in Barcelona is still not promising. To address this issue, the concept of ”Museum-House” is developed with the aim of bringing museums into the community and creating an outreach of museums in the community. However, it is more easily adapted to the needs of the community than the museum and radiates to the neighboring communities. Through an arts education program called Utopia House Museum, the community’s issues and needs are addressed through community collaboration on craft and creative arts activities. The physical space of this project is offered to the community not only as a museum space, but also as a community cultural space with certain living areas that change according to the needs of the neighborhood. This is a utopian museum project that emerges from the idea of home and adds new ideas to the current public participation in art and cultural practices.

Index Terms—Museums, community art, public education, constructivism, Barcelona

I. INTRODUCTION

In modern society, cultural and artistic education of a public nature is increasingly valued and they have become an important part of cultural life. The 2030 Development Goals issued by the United Nations, Goal 4 on education, suggest that education of the future should provide an inclusive and effective learning environment for all and affirm cultural diversity and sustainable development [1]. At a global scale, this goal emphasizes the value of cultural space and prosperity. And museums (including galleries) are undoubtedly the main institutions in which this process takes place. As defined by the World Association of Museums, the nature of a museum (including an art gallery) is that of a permanent, non-profit institution that serves society and is open to the public. It aims to acquire, conserve, study, present and disseminate the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity for the purposes of research, education and recreation [2].

There is also a clear preponderance of Eurocentric group communication from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as children of other ethnicities, immigrant women's groups, low-income people, transgender people, etc. This limitation prevents the ‘artistic rights’ of some community groups from being guaranteed.

Considering the above, this project is premised on the idea of home, a utopian museum has been designed. This project gives the local community the opportunity to participate in an autonomous, socially oriented art practice project. And this project provides an inclusive program for various marginalized groups in Barcelona. It also adds diversity to the arts education practice program in Barcelona.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia. It is an important cultural centre on the west coast of the Mediterranean and one of the major metropolitan areas in Europe. In recent years, the Departament de Cultura de Catalunya has also released a series of “sectoral programmes” aimed at promoting public art education in art institutions and public participation in the arts. In its integrated programme for the Visual Arts to increase the international presence of Catalan artistic production [3].

However, from a local perspective, the participation of Barcelona's local population in local museums has been inconsistent in recent years, and there has been a downward trend since five years ago. From the statistics of the Spanish EL PAÍS, the percentage of Barcelona residents visiting local museums was 10.5% in 2014, 17.3% in 2015 and 17.7% in 2016. It can be concluded that the participation of the local population in Barcelona's museums has been gradually increasing over this period. This is because several new museums were inaugurated at that time, such as the Museum of World Cultures and the Design Museum [4]. All these museums expanded the artistic and cultural offer of Barcelona's museums (the Design Museum for art and design, the Museum of World Cultures for non-European ethnography) and attracted many visitors. However, the number of visitors has been declining since then, at 17.5% in 2017 and 14.1% in 2018. The study includes visitor data from 16 Barcelona museums. The situation is even less positive in 2019. The number of visitors to the "Night of Barcelona Museums” event (a day when 84 cultural centres and museums in Barcelona and nearby towns are open for free) was 168,171, a drop of 34,889 compared to the previous year. This was also the lowest in the last four years [4]. As reviewed in EL PAÍS, the people of Barcelona are becoming less interested in their city's museums, whether for permanent

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collections, temporary exhibitions or group events.[4]. Joan Subirats, Barcelona's first deputy mayor and head of municipal culture, says: "The current museum system in Barcelona is no longer well adapted to the times and we must rethink the concept of the museum itself so as to attract locals who have already been to iconic museums and make them want to return to them again." [4].

In 2019, the Barcelona City Council launched the municipal project “Live Culture”. This is a community arts support programme that serves as an exploratory analysis of community arts practices in the city of Barcelona. The municipality of Barcelona says the project seeks to bring about changes on a social level and institutional level, to reshape the concept of the artist or cultural worker, and to extend the artistic field to spaces other than museums and galleries [5].

However, there are still many problems with the community arts education programmes in Barcelona. According to the team working on the Culture of Life project at the Barcelona City Council Cultural Institute, there is a regional imbalance in the community arts education practice projects in Barcelona. Of the 82 projects surveyed in 2020, the areas where the most projects can be found are Sants-Montjuic and CiutatVella or Sant Andreu (with 14 to 17 projects). These three regions account for almost 50% of the total range of 82 projects. On the other hand, there are regions where there are no projects (Sarrià-Sant Gervasi) or where there are only a few projects (for example: 2 in Horta-Guinardó, 4 in Gràcia and L'Eixample, 5 in Les Corts). In other areas, which are in an intermediate stage, there are around ten projects (e.g. 9 in Nou Barris and 10 in Sant Martí) [6].

In terms of the economic resources invested, Sants-Montjuic, Sant Andreu, SantMarti and Nou Barris received approximately the same amount of investment (between 15.7% and 13.7%). These four districts have a monopoly of 80.8% of the resources. Other districts have received very little investment, such as Les Corts (9%), L'Eixample (6.5%), Horta-Guinardó (2.1%) and Gràcia (1.4%) [6].

In the context of official support for community arts, community art practice projects in Barcelona have evolved and several representative projects have emerged, such as The Festival de les Arts Comunitàries de Catalunya [7]. The project began in 2020 and has been running for two editions now. The objective is to follow and recognize the path of numerous cultural proposals and to be a radical meeting point around cultural participation and community arts between neighbours, professionals, organisations, academics, institutions and students. The project Report on Living Culture Days 2019 took place in 2019 [8], aims to showcase, share and expand projects already underway, launch new ones, and reflect on, develop and articulate the challenges and potential of cultural democracy processes. As well as the Prototype of A Community Arts Workshop [9], as part of the workshop entitled How to Strengthen Community Arts in Barcelona, developed by its working group Artibarri on 11 April 2019, in the framework of the Culture of Life Conference. It proposes a possible programme or cultural policy and explores the working groups of community arts work institutions.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This project uses constructivist theory as a methodology. Constructivism is a scientific concept that has emerged since the 1980s and has become a contemporary trend in the social sciences with widespread international influence. Research in philosophy, sociology, education, and other disciplines have all used constructivism as a research method to guide specific practices. Constructivism proposes that each person mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes, i.e., constructs new understanding and knowledge through experience and social discourse [10]. It represents an epistemological perspective.

Throughout the constructivist theoretical system, there are a number of different schools of thought, such as “personal constructivism,” whose basic idea, proposed by the American scholar George Alexander Kelly, is that individuals construct knowledge alone by understanding recurring events; knowledge is individual and adaptive. Piaget emphasized the adaptability of cognition and the individual's construction of a model of the world. He believed that cognition originates from effective and continuous construction, and that objects are known only through the mediation of internal structures [11]. Piaget's “constructive” viewpoint led to the development of his structuralism into constructivism. This led to the development of the theory of personal constructivism." Radical constructivism, represented by Von Glaserfeld, believes that it is the individual's mind that constructs reality and that the acquisition of knowledge is the result of the individual's active construction. It places great emphasis on the role of the learner in constructing knowledge [12]. “Social Constructivism”. Vygotsky's theory of language acquisition is its important theoretical foundation. Social constructivism emphasizes the social nature of the subject’s knowledge of the object. Social constructivism, like other constructivist theoretical systems, recognizes Kant's epistemology as its source of knowledge, but in contrast it focuses on the social rather than the individual. It sees knowledge as a product of social practices and institutions, or as a product of interactions and judgments among relevant social groups [13]. As to how knowledge exists, social constructivism believes that knowledge is maintained by social processes and is closely related to social action. The social constructivism of the constructivist theoretical system will be used as the specific research method of this paper, combining the “social”, “contextual” and “inclusive” characteristics of this project.

In addition, in the previous analysis of the current state of community arts practice projects in Barcelona, it was mentioned that there is a problem of different levels of participation of various groups, such as: disadvantaged and marginalized groups. In order to address the issue of equitable participation, the project's approach is to create temporary, non-permanent, cross-community art practices based on regular activities that will specifically target disadvantaged and marginalized groups in the community (e.g. migrants, transgender people, children with disabilities). Their overall framework remains similar to that of the Utopia House Museum program, but they are a more streamlined, shorter-term version of the Utopia House Museum. In addition, these activities are based on existing conditions, such as existing community art spaces, existing community.
environments, and existing funding. They are dependent and attached to the Utopia House Museum project. Given their small numbers and fragmentation, they can be organized as a joint effort by multiple neighboring communities to facilitate community-to-community exchange. These activities can be adjusted, supplemented or abolished at any time depending on the situation.

IV. CONCRETIZATION OF THE “UTOPIA HOUSE MUSEUM” PROJECT

Within the framework of ‘Museum-House’, we have developed the community art education project Utopia House Museum. This section explains the concept, the overall structure and the specific content of the ‘Museum-House’ and the ‘Utopia House Museum’. In terms of their relationship, the concept of the Museum-House is a response to the current situation, and the Utopia House Museum is a practical implementation of this concept. Finally, the implementation of the Utopia House Museum project has been developed in four parts.

A. The "Museum-House" Concept

The “House” in the “Museum-House” concept symbolizes the living space of people. “Museum-House” is a way to connect museums with the public's living space and bring museums into the community. As a public art education program in the form of a “museum in the community,” it can be considered an extension of the museum, but it differs from the museum itself in that it can better integrate the specific conditions of the community and create a free art space in an autonomous and experimental way. While the museum is a centralized institution for the preservation and education of human knowledge. Thus, in terms of source, knowledge itself is highly relevant to society. On the other hand, Museums (including art museums) have knowledge properties, while living spaces have social properties. Therefore, this concept relates museums to the living environment, essentially combining knowledge attributes with social attributes. Thus, it responds to the cultural and artistic needs of the community; better disseminates knowledge; and helps community members construct their new perceptions and shape their social consciousness.

B. The Concept of the “Utopia House Museum” Project

This raises the question of how this "constructive process" is implemented. "Utopia House Museum is a specific community art education practice developed under the concept of “Museum-House”. “Utopia” stands for a state of perfection and idealism. “Utopia House” embodies the project's desire to create an idealised, artistic public space for the community. This will allow for the popularisation of culture and art in the community, addressing the practical problems of current local art education programmes in Barcelona.

The project involves the Catalan government and the public education departments of the main museums in Barcelona to find and use abandoned public buildings in urban neighbourhoods. In neighbourhoods where there are no derelict buildings, funds are raised by art foundations, donations from within or outside the community and state subsidies to build the site. In addition, the project aims to empower local residents with a new community art life through the concept of the 'Museum-House'. The project will be funded through the sale of works and artefacts produced during the activities, in addition to the Foundation, community donations and state subsidies as part of the costs. When the conditions are right, the project can be supplemented with fee-based exhibitions.

Once the project in that community is operational and has reached a stable state, a new project space will be opened in another community. The objectives and basic framework of the project can be replicated from the previous project. The content of the project will be adapted based on the experience of previous projects and specific research into the community. In addition, the project will be developed and expanded through research, monitoring, reflection and adaptation. In this way, the project will eventually cover all the communities in the Barcelona area. The project will be based on the principles of inclusiveness and equal participation, guaranteeing the right to participation of all groups in the community (including disadvantaged and marginalised groups), and offering practical arts activities for these groups where necessary.

C. The Relationship between the "Museum-House" and The Utopia House Museum

"Museum-House" is a macro concept based on the current context of art education in the world and the current state of art education in Barcelona. The concept of "Museum-House" is also the basic idea of the whole project. This is the basis for the development of the Utopia House Museum, a practical project that aims to build a link between the museum and the community and to provide art and cultural education for the residents of each community. It is a physicalisation of the Museum-House concept and 'Incarnate'. It focuses on problem solving, based on the realities of any community in need and focuses on communication between artists, craft teachers and community residents, on participation and on the process itself. It is flexible and adaptable. In general, the 'Museum-House' concept and the 'Utopia House Museum' concept are related in a systematic way from the abstract to the concrete.

V. THE “UTOPIA HOUSE MUSEUM” PROJECT IN PRACTICE

A. The Start-up Phase

In the first phase of the project, we set clear objectives. This objective has a more distinct hierarchy, divided into strategic and specific objectives. The macro-strategic objective is to increase the participation of Barcelona residents in arts and culture. This is in the context of the growing worldwide emphasis on the concept of arts and cultural education and the current decline in the participation of Barcelona residents in the region's museums and galleries. In terms of specific objectives, the project will propose a new plan to address the current problems of community arts practice in Barcelona in the context of the recent development of community arts practice programmes. (e.g. uneven distribution, distribution of economic resources, equitable participation of disadvantaged groups in the
community). The second phase of the project’s start-up phase involves the main museums of Barcelona in conjunction with the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. A community is identified for the implementation of the project (as a start it is possible to choose a community where there is no community art practice project yet).

B. The Planning Phase

The planning phase of the project is divided into six steps. The aim is to clarify the division of functions, identify the sources of funding for the project, identify community needs through various methods in order to develop a strategy and contact third party personnel. These tasks form the planning part of the project. Together they provide the basis for the subsequent implementation of the project.

The first step is to divide the tasks and functions of the job according to the purpose of the project.

1) Research Team: Responsible for conducting research in the community.

2) Coordination and content development team: Responsible for making curatorial, planning and management decisions. It provides the direction, vision, policies and ethics for museum practice and content.

3) Mediation team: This is responsible for liaising directly with the community and mediating between the community and the museum project, as well as leading the evaluation of the overall programme implementation.

4) Dissemination team: the main task of this work is to make the museum’s identity known and its activities visible through social networks and the media.

5) Volunteer and internship team: This is a self-convening sector that includes intergenerational residents of the neighborhood. They present their ideas in front of other departments and are trained at the museum to work in the future. When this team is formed and solidified, it helps the project to plan a new museum in another neighbourhood.

Step 2: Identify the sources of funding for the project: at the start of the first project a combination of local foundations, local communities, donations from outside the community and state subsidies will raise funds. Thereafter some of the works produced by the project can be sold or exhibited, and these revenues will also form part of the funds for the operation of the project.

Step 3: Research. In order to get the community more involved in the Utopia House Museum project, interviews, questionnaires, field visits, data collection and other qualitative research were used to find out what the community thought and felt.

Step 4: Proposal. By aggregating all the information and collating and analysing it in order to determine the state of the community, identify the needs of the community groups and propose specific programmes. The basic needs of some disadvantaged groups are to be fully considered in all the above processes. This is to provide an inclusive and equitable community arts space. The project will be supported by a collaborative approach with local authorities and community residents to investigate options for the renovation or construction of community spaces (mainly through the reuse of abandoned public spaces, or the creation of new spaces if such spaces are not available).

Step 5: Implement third party personnel for the project. In this specific plan, in addition to the staff whose functions have already been divided in this project, and the community residents, a number of third party people involved in this project need to be involved. They include: artists, craft workshops and community representatives. The team responsible for Mediation will need to identify and liaise with these people.

Step 6: Preparation. We will prepare the implementation of the art education programme "Utopia House Museum" according to the specific programme previously proposed.

C. Implementation, Monitoring Phase

Based on the previous specific planning for this project, a community specific programme has been developed. This phase will be followed by the implementation and monitoring of the project. At the same time, the monitoring process will continue throughout the implementation process. The duration of this phase is six months and is carried out in three steps.

It is important to note that project monitoring also begins in the first month and continues throughout the implementation phase until the end of the sixth month. Monitoring the project involves tracking, reviewing and reporting on the progress of the project in order to document the entire project implementation process. At the same time, issues arising during the course of the project are always rectified, and material is provided for the final summary and evaluation.

The first step (months 1-2): a meeting accompanied by a facilitator where community residents, artists and craft workshop leaders have an exploratory exchange. The aim is: to familiarise them with each other, to create an emotional bond and trust between the partners, and to get a general idea of the activities of the art education practice.

Step 2 (Months 3-5): This phase is an interdisciplinary creative process aimed at community residents. The objective is to plan art education activities together through the collaboration of the team implementing the project, the artists and the members of the craft workshop (3 hours twice a week is recommended, details to be agreed with the participants).

Step 3 (month 6): Exhibition, exchange, elaboration and evaluation. An exhibition is held in the community space where community members freely share their experiences and results of their creations and make suggestions for the project in order to improve it for future programme implementation.

D. Finishing Phase

In the closing phase of the project, the previous phases will be reviewed to ensure that all project work has been completed. On this basis, the project will be summarised as follows: 1). what theoretical and practical experience has been gained through the project; 2). what improvements can be made; and 3). whether the problems revealed during the project have been rectified in time. In addition, as this project is a self-replicating project in other communities, we will also use this experience to start early planning for our next work.
VI. ADDITIONAL PARTS OF THE PROJECT

A. Cultural Exchange Activities in the Home Countries of Immigrants

This activity is aimed at communities with a high number of immigrants and can be chosen to take place during festivals in the immigrants' home cultures, where immigrants can do some displays of their home cultures in community art spaces. The aim is to enrich the local culture and promote cultural diversity and internationalisation through cultural presentations in the home countries of immigrants from all over the world, and to alleviate the psychological marginalisation caused by the cultural differences that immigrants bring with them, helping them to participate actively in society and in the cultural construction of their communities.

B. Dance for Transgender People

This event is aimed at transgender people and other interested people in the community. Research is done in advance and the format is best to invite interested binary gender people (i.e. male or female) to form dance partners with transgender people. Dance is a physical art and an expression of personal emotion. Dance also serves as a means of communication and social cohesion. The dancers in dance embody confidence in themselves. For transgender people [14], on the other hand, their psychology is to a certain extent unsettling and sensitive. Transgender people often want their identifying gender to be respected. Dancing together is not only an expression of identity and respect, it is also a good showcase for trans people themselves. It helps to boost their confidence and the acceptance of the whole community.

C. Wall Painting

This activity is aimed at children with disabilities in the community. Not only do they face physical disabilities and injuries, they also face psychological pressure from society and themselves. They also face psychological pressure from society and themselves. This project aims to relieve their psychological stress through outdoor wall painting activities and to create a bridge between them and the community, showing their artistic understanding, dreams and imagination. It will also enhance the cultural atmosphere of the community.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper illustrates the overall structure of the Utopia House Museum's community arts education practice program. Based on the current situation of art participation of local residents in Barcelona, this paper forms the concept of Museum-House and specifies increasing the art participation of local residents as a strategic goal; and addresses the three problems of current art education programs as specific goals that constitute the project initiation phase. The next step was to implement the division of the project into departments and responsibilities during the planning stage. It also uses qualitative research such as interviews, questionnaires and field visits to understand the situation of community residents and to provide sufficient basis for planning specific programs. In the “implementation and monitoring phase” of the project, funding is obtained through various channels such as art foundations, social donations, and state subsidies, in order to renovate or build community art spaces and conduct interdisciplinary art practices. In addition to external financial support, the project can also be financed by selling the works produced in the project or by charging admission fees for curated exhibitions. Once the project is in healthy operation, new community art spaces can continue to be opened in other communities. Finally, in the closing phase, the focus is on concluding the project by drawing lessons and improving strategies.

The concept of “Museum-House” itself is a macro concept, and the art education program “Utopia House Museum” forms the practical part of this project. In addition to the above, the project can also be divided into temporary cross-community art practice activities for different groups, such as “cultural exchange activities for immigrants in their home countries”, “dance for transgender people”, “wall painting”, etc., as listed in this paper. “These can be developed as appropriate”.

For the project planners and implementers, they should pay attention to how to construct a “context” or design a “situation” in the context of the community (including the community environment, community history, community group characteristics, etc.) as a basis for the social construction of the participants. The “context” or “situation” here includes not only the physical space, but also the design and grasp of the theme, manner, medium, and time of the art activity, all of which are important elements that influence the participants' constructive experience. However, this context is not closed, it is not limited to a few themes within the community, and the community situation is the basis but not the goal of its planning. It can focus on all constructive themes. This process of constructing a context is therefore the first socially constructed practice of the project. Next, the participants of the project construct their own perceptions in this context, combining their own feelings, understandings and experiences, and making any kind of interdisciplinary artistic creation. This is the second socially constructed practice of the project. Finally, the community organizes an exhibition as well as the free sharing of the community's experience of creation. The process and results of the artistic activities they make will become part of a social and cultural phenomenon, and when placed in public space, they become a new social element. For the wider community not involved in the project, these elements will provide a certain reference for them to build a new cultural perception, which is the third social construction practice of this project.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study is based on the background of the concept of culture and art education in the world and in the region, combined with the current situation of public participation in art and cultural institutions in Barcelona and the actual situation of community art practice projects in Barcelona in recent years, and the compilation of data to derive the actual problems currently faced. On this basis, the concept of “Museum-House” and the practical project “Utopia House Museum” are proposed to solve these problems.

This research constructs a cultural and artistic consensus...
between the community, the artist and the craft workshop, using an interdisciplinary approach in the project practice that upholds the values of contemporary art. Facing the problem of uneven geographical distribution of community art practice projects, this project proposes that municipalities and museums act as framework institutions to renovate and reuse used spaces, which increases the selection of projects and adds a "local flavor" to each community’s art space. The project has the characteristics of "multi-point replication" in other communities, but this replication is not an exact copy, but an expansion with the local conditions of the community, while maintaining the macro concept and objectives, with the ultimate goal of covering all communities. Faced with the problem of imbalance in economic resources, this project proposes a combination of funds raised by the foundation/our community and donations/state subsidies from outside the community, combined with some saleable artworks generated by the community art space itself, and art exhibitions held by the community, from which benefits and impacts can be generated. This expands funding sources for community art practice projects, while reducing dependence on public finance and facilitating social monitoring. Facing the problem of insufficient participation or marginalization of disadvantaged groups in community arts practice programs, this project proposes to set up cross-community arts practice activities for different groups in the project plan. In addition, the project can continue to develop new programs based on it with flexibility and mobility, while also making the community arts and culture space more universal, social and diverse. The above are some of the reflections, research and exploration of local community arts participation and practice in Barcelona in this paper. In today’s information age, the Internet is increasingly expanding and has penetrated into every corner of human cultural life. So, it is still a question that researchers need to continue to think about whether the contextual construction, artistic creation, and exhibition and communication in community art activities all can be replaced by the Internet and achieve better results than in the field.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Xin Wei conducted the research: Xin Wei, Sijie Sun and Haoran Li wrote the paper. All authors had approved the final version.

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