



Academics' perceptions of arts work in participatory settings

A report on research carried out as part of ArtWorks North East

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Executive Summary

1. Background and how the study was carried out

This report was commissioned as part of research into the scope of existing participatory practice across the North East region, looking at how artists learn to develop and what forms this learning takes.

The interviews aimed to gather information from a range of people working in the academic (HE) arts community about how they perceived artist /media practitioner engagement with arts in participatory settings in their own teaching, practice and research. The interviews took place between March and April 2012, with 26 academics across all five universities, and across the following five themes:

- Creative Writing
- Media
- Dance and Drama
- Visual Arts
- Music

Interviewees were drawn from all levels of staff, from Assistant Lecturer to Professor / Head of Department, and included staff whose teaching contained or focused on participatory practice as well as those whose teaching did not cover this subject.

During the interviews, the terms Arts in Participatory Settings (AIPS) and Participatory Practice (PP) were both used. The questions were formulated following the publication of the Audit of Practice carried out by Toby Lowe for ArtWorks North East, which provided definitions and typology.

2. What is meant by the term “participatory practice”?

There was a wide variety of explanations of the term, but not all participants were familiar with or even liked the term. Some academics felt very strongly that all their art work is participatory to some degree, and that trying to separate a passive involvement in art from an active one is a peculiarity of our culture. A common view was that there are few boundaries between public and individual practice, or between participatory and ‘socially engaged’ practice. There was a distinction drawn between collaborative practice – working with other professionals – and participatory practice – joint work between professionals and community members, as well as between PP and teaching. Within some themes, the perception of PP is of a very broad process of engagement with audiences and supporting their inclusion in participation.

3. Involvement in participatory practice and personal motivation for this

There is important work going on in the region in encouraging art work in participatory settings through teaching about PP. In all the themes, there are courses that are heavily weighted towards participative practice, some having been established in order to help artists to gain skills to work in participatory settings alongside performing skills, often following top level visionary decisions, with resources put in place accordingly.

For those interviewees who were involved in PP in some way, the motivation often came from a passion for involving people in the community in creative work, from a political commitment to enabling self-expression, or to facilitating change for local or other communities. For them, involvement and teaching in PP was seen as a natural way of life. In contrast, many people said that they had come to this way of working because they needed to earn money, often shortly after graduating. In each theme and in each university, there were lecturers who promote and actively seek to involve students in PP, but there were also examples of individuals who made efforts to work in this way but seemed rather isolated and out on a limb, even where there were other people who had a focus on PP elsewhere in the same department. There were also some academics who saw their art as an individual activity, and were more concerned about getting their work published and helping students to produce high quality work than teaching people to work in participatory settings.

4. What influences the approach and content of courses for PP?

The major influences on the content of courses in relation to PP were the establishment of courses with a heavy emphasis on skilling up students to work in participative practice as well as in performing in their chosen art form, appointing lecturers who had experience in and a passion for PP, and the way that some of the NE universities see themselves as being “located” within communities, with a responsibility to contribute to cultural and therefore economic regeneration. The importance of art work in regeneration in the North East was an important element influencing what is taught. One course sees learners as part of the “community of practice” with a journey to be taken throughout their course and career; every aspect of the course is used as an opportunity to gain skills and knowledge through reflection. Some lecturers made use of the idea of the continuum from artist-led to participant-led work and sought to ensure that students gained skills along the whole spectrum. However, some arts courses in the region aim to prepare students for working in mainstream parts of the industry, and this means that there is little time for PP.

5. Opportunities for students to engage in participatory work during the course

The different emphasis on the various courses in relation to PP is broadly reflected in the range of opportunities available for students. Some courses, such as those where gaining facilitation skills has equal weight with gaining skills as a performing musician, involve placements throughout the course. Other opportunities include whole class projects, master classes with visiting practitioners, summer placements, and internships. For others, opportunities are more likely to be dependent on the desires and interests of individual students.

6. Gaining the skills for working in arts in participatory settings

The full range of skills needed to facilitate art work in community settings is taught on courses where PP is a major element of the curriculum. In other courses, a minimum set of such skills may form part of professional studies, seen as transferable skills that any professional would require. Many academics valued the fact that these skills were taught from the start, but there was a minority view that students need to be more mature before they can work within different communities. Being able to observe other professionals (as performers or practitioners in participatory work) was also seen as an important factor for students, but it was learned that this can be difficult for some students in outlying districts. The role of regional agencies in promoting opportunities for all students – for example, in being able to see performances and arrange practical projects - was therefore seen as key.

7. Was the process of production of a piece of artwork through participation as important as the product itself?

There was general agreement that students must be skilled in their own artform, but that both process and product are important in PP. This was the case even where the department was focused on achieving mainstream employment and industry prizes for its students. When working with non-professional participants, it was seen as important for all involved to have a goal of aiming to develop a good quality performance or piece of art.

8. Barriers to success in delivering teaching about PP or to engaging students in PP

Interviewees identified complex reasons for those courses not focusing on work in participative settings to a great degree, including different university priorities, difficulties of recruiting people with experience of participative work in some areas, lack of demand amongst students for learning about PP, and a failure to recognise it as a specialism in some places. There were not always resources available for research based on practice or on participatory work, or for Continuing Professional Development for staff.

9. The importance of employability in courses focusing on PP

Responses on this issue varied widely across the five themes. Factors influencing this were that work in participatory settings had been seen by staff and students as second class in some themes, and that mainstream employment was seen as much more of a goal. For other themes, work in participative settings is a very common route for students leaving the courses in the region. It was noted that only a very small proportion of students go on to be full-time performers in the dance field, whereas both drama and music students may well already be performers whilst at college and will complement performance with teaching and work in participative settings throughout their careers. Accordingly, students are helped to access jobs by gaining the right skills and experiences during their academic courses.

Recommendations (in summary)

- 1. Increase awareness amongst university teaching staff and managers of the wide range of different definitions and practices of arts work in participatory settings**
- 2. Initiate change in the curriculum and promote good practice in teaching, learning and assessment**
- 3. Encourage departments to review existing programmes and design new modules and courses to focus on artists working in participatory settings**
- 4. Increase the status and self-worth of artists/lecturers working in participatory settings**
- 5. Encourage working in participatory settings to be seen as a career opportunity and employability focus**
- 6. Ensure that each University plays a role local and regional regeneration through its work in participatory settings**
- 7. Establish a regional umbrella body to provide resources for lecturers and students about arts work in participatory settings**
- 8. Develop ways of supporting practitioners who work in participatory settings**

Academics' perceptions of arts work in participatory settings

Introduction

This report was commissioned as part of research into the scope of existing participatory practice across the North East region, looking at how artists learn to develop and what forms this learning take. We were asked to interview a range of people working in the academic (HE) arts community-from part-time lecturers to professors- to look at how they perceived artist /media practitioner engagement with arts in participatory settings in their own teaching, practice and research.

During the interviews, we used both the terms: Arts in Participatory Settings (AIPS) and Participatory Practice (PP). From the outset we were informed by the 'Audit of Practice' carried out by Toby Lowe for ArtWorks North East which provided definitions and typology. As a starting point this study found that there were "*23 different terms for people who deliver the work, 23 different terms for the practice itself*" (p. 54)¹. So the context for research included respecting but sometimes challenging perceived notions of 'spectrums of practice' using the three categories identified by the Audit:

- Co-produced participatory art
- Artist-authored participatory art
- Talent/skills development²

Our conclusions and preliminary recommendations are intended for discussion amongst members of the ArtWorks North East Steering Group. Our recommendations are also aimed at managers and lecturers in HE institutions so that they have guidelines for strategic and practical measures to support artists and lecturers and improve the way arts work in participatory settings is delivered through courses and other initiatives in universities.

Methodology and nature of target group

The interviews were carried out by three people, using the same structured interview questions:

- Caroline Mitchell (Senior Lecturer in Radio, University of Sunderland, and independent community media consultant) – mainly conducted interviews at Newcastle and Sunderland Universities
- Sheila Spencer (Consultant, social welfare) – mainly conducted interviews at Northumbria and Teesside Universities
- Alex Lockwood (Senior Lecturer in Journalism, University of Sunderland) - carried out the interviews of creative writing academics
- Both Sheila and Caroline carried out interviews at Durham

¹Lowe, T. (2011) Audit of Practice. "Arts in Participatory Settings" Sunderland: Artworks North East

²Op.cit p.5

Caroline focused on media and visual arts, Sheila on music, dance and drama, and Alex on creative writing in order to analyse data and prepare the report. Caroline and Sheila collated the final report.

Interviews took place between March and April 2012 and took between 35 minutes and 1¼ hours. The questions had been chosen to follow themes that emerged from the audit of participatory practice conducted by Helix Arts, and were also informed by the focus groups, which included academic staff as well as practising artists.

In each university, and for each theme, the opportunity to take part in the research was widely advertised. E-mails were sent to heads of department and/or individuals, and usually followed up by phone calls. We made it clear that we were both interested in talking to a variety of staff, at different levels, and also those who were heavily involved in or aware of the role of artists in participatory settings (AIPS), and those who were not so involved in this type of work or did not include it in their teaching.

In practice, it proved difficult to get the message out in some establishments and within some themes but a representative spread of interviews was achieved. The boxes below illustrate the spread.

Of the 25 interviewees, sixty per cent had some recent experience themselves of working in participatory settings. Forty-four percent of the interviewees were currently involved in some form of teaching or support relating to arts in participatory settings, although the amount and nature of this work varied.

Numbers interviewed at each university

- Durham 2
- Northumbria 7
- Newcastle 4
- Sunderland 8
- Teesside 5

Departments:

- Visual Arts
- Fine Arts
- Performing Arts
- Music
- Film
- Digital and other media

The interviews:

- Total of 26 interviews
- 6 Creative Writing, 6 Media, 4 Dance and Drama, 5 Visual Arts, 5 Music
- 2 Professors, 5 Heads of Dept, 8 Senior Lecturers, 2 Lecturers, 4 Programme Leaders, 1 Fellow, 1 Reader, 1 Technician / Associate Lecturer, 2 Visiting Lecturers
- 14 men, 12 women

All interviews were recorded; notes were also made during the interviews and verbatim notes were written up immediately following the interviews. Transcriptions were not made. Once notes were gathered, the recordings were deleted.

Courses (at a range of levels) taught by the staff interviewed included:

- Architectural Glass
- Ceramics
- Painting
- Fine Art
- Art School Practices
- Contemporary Music
- Community Music
- Music Technology
- Music
- Performing Arts
- Music Top-up courses
- Digital Media
- Media Production
- Animation
- Graphic Design
- Illustration
- Film and Video Production
- Documentary Production
- Media Studies
- Creative Arts Practice
- Creative Writing
- Applied Drama (previously the Community Arts Programme)
- Dance Choreography
- Dance (previously Dance in the Community)

Notes:

There was not sufficient time in the project to interview staff from each university for each theme. Not all universities cover all 5 themes.

The interview with the Director of Culture Lab at Newcastle University has been included in the analysis of the media interviews but it is also referred to in the visual art section, since the work of the Culture Lab is clearly valued as important for the Fine Art department at Newcastle.

Despite efforts to make contact, no-one from Teesside University's creative writing courses responded to the project call.

It had been hoped to interview someone from the Newcastle University Folk Music degree course but this did not prove possible.

An interview was carried out with a practitioner who had previously worked as a lecturer in two of the region's universities.

Reports from the five themes

Introduction

The reports cover each of the 5 themes separately, following the same set of questions for interviews carried out under each theme. Conclusions from each have been collated in the next section of the report.

Creative writing: “Between academia and the writing life”

Alex Lockwood, Senior Lecturer in Journalism, University of Sunderland

1. Introduce self, job title and main areas of teaching , practice and research

All six interviewees were practising writers. Three were published novelists, two were published poets; three of the interviewees were engaged in writing across forms (e.g. poetry and novel, but also including the short story) and with two expressing a specific experimental approach to form. Two of the interviewees already saw working in participatory settings as central to their writing and teaching practice.

All six taught across the range of programmes and levels, from undergraduate to PhD, although with varying levels of accountability for curriculum content. There was one head of department with an overview of all curriculum design in that creative writing team, as well as three programme leaders/directors for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Postgraduate courses included single honours MA, MRes and PG Cert (distance learning) as well as PhDs in Creative Writing. There was one joint honours MA programme. Undergraduate courses included both single and joint honours creative writing programmes.

Three of the interviewees did not prioritise research or saw their own writing as their core research practice, despite the pressures on research output. At one university in particular the research agenda was much stronger and shaped the academic workload and perceptions of what was relevant in terms of output. One academic’s research interest was specifically focused on an analogous process to PP³ of ‘narrative advocacy’ using PP methods for political outcomes in terms of amplifying marginalised voices.

2. What do you understand by the term participatory practice (PP) in arts /creative/media work? Give one of two examples of PP that you are aware of that illustrates this.

Two respondents did not feel that they understood the term ‘participatory practice’—one of whom has not engaged with PP, and another who had done so, but not for a long while. Two more of the respondents articulated ‘writing in the community’ or ‘arts in the community’ as their understanding. Initial responses included:

- *No understanding of PP... so, you tell me. (Is it distinct from teaching?)*

³ We have used the shorthand of “PP” for “Participatory Practice” in this paper, a similar term to “Arts in Participatory Settings”, used in some parts of the ArtWorks research.

- *Do you want to define participatory settings for me?*
- *You mean apart from participation in the world? I understand the terms but not sure what the alternative would be—non-participatory practice? But shutting oneself away as a novelist is impossible; even as an academic.*
- *I've organised readings and events as well as delivered workshops in what is loosely termed the 'community', which can mean all sorts of things to different people.*
- *Broadly it's about art in the community but the type of work where people are actively encouraged in creating art, triggering people's creativity in settings.*
- *I suppose participatory practice means, for me, co-creation; it's collaborative practice if it's professionals working together, and participatory if it's one professional and non-professional members.*

What was striking was the broad application of the term 'participation' to creative writing practice. Two respondents felt that all teaching of creative writing in universities is participative in that it encourages self-expression and provides people with access to creative forms and the tools to develop a craft. One respondent felt that academic staff would all argue that readings of their work and discussion that follows is participative in that it provides people with engagement in a debate around art. Two others emphasized the productive essence of PP in helping people create something they would not have had the permission, means or confidence to create before.

3. How important is participatory arts practice in the arts/media for you individually? Is participation inherently seen as a 'good thing'?

All of the respondents saw the value of PP in the arts, while three expressed its value to them individually. Those who valued it individually to their own work, inherently as a good thing:

- *It is very important to me. I've been a cultural activist all through my life, both now and in South Africa, which is so different to here. People of my age or 10-15 years younger, for us all art was a commitment to a social and political situation. You naturally gravitated to doing things with your work. There were no rewards for it, but your neck was on the line for it. I come from that culture and background. It wasn't just the odd person going to a refugee group and running a workshop.*
- *I believe in it fully. We live in a society where we're not taught or allowed to be creative any more. It's political with a big P and a small p. I've always been interested in getting people to write. It's such a fundamental thing, and far more people would get pleasure from it, not for publication, but for self-expression, I feel very strongly about that.*

Those who did not see it as valuable to them individually generally did not receive enough creative benefit (either real or assumed) from the activity:

- *I identify as a writer rather than as a creative facilitator. I frequently collaborate with other professionals, but my role in PP is quite traditional, in workshops and classes, and when on projects it's mainly been with other writers. On residences I am there as a writer, not a facilitator. It is not 'creatively efficient' for me.*
- *No experience of it, haven't done any of it. Done writing groups, but in the sense of placements in community settings, no, I haven't done it.*

4. If you are not involved PP, why not and what could change that?

The majority of respondents said that **time** and **work pressures** were the key factors limiting their involvement in PP, because PP was not core to their academic responsibilities that focus on teaching, research and administration. The other key factor cited by three of the respondents was that **their own writing practice took priority**, which centred on two elements:

- the pressures of commercial and publisher deadlines
- the required isolation of creative work

There were a number of other factors limiting involvement, even where the desire was there:

- the disappearance of the adult education movement
- the bureaucracy of university administration to move projects/teaching forward
- less funding
- the fragmented and often isolated nature of the academic community, both as isolated from other academics, as well as separate from the PP arts community

For those without the desire to engage actively in PP, the key factor was concerning personal *creative* (rather than financial) gain from PP, so:

- *I've never been asked; never needed to financially; never had the kind of particularly strong desire to do it; my interest would depend on what it was, and what I would get out of it*
- *I would hope in the future to earn enough from writing to then be in a position to choose if I want to get involved in projects or not*

5. When and where did you first become aware of participatory practice as part of creative arts and media?

Four of the six respondents have been involved in PP for as long as they have been professional writers, if not as academics. For one of the respondents PP was something that was part of the writing community and activity gained through university and the practical learning of wanting to be a writer. For one, it was a vague concept that was being done by other writers, probably poets rather than novelists.

6. If you have been involved what/who motivated you to get involved in this area of practice?

For four respondents, political – small p and big P – motivations were the impetus and opening into PP in the arts. Awareness began in previous social periods or in other countries and included specific issues, such as the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, pacifist responses to UK military action (and associated asylum and refugee issues), drug rehabilitation programmes in a local community, and in the women's and alternative lifestyle movement of the 70s and 80s. So for example:

- *My motivation is that, for example, even while as a country we're waging wars on other foreign territories, asylum seekers come here after we've blown up their country, and we tell them to fuck off back to their country, and the services to help them have had their funding cut and there is no outcry because we don't know it's happening. So my motivation is to facilitate the participation for those people to get their voices heard.*
- *My motivation was because I care about writing and people writing. Back in the 1980s there was a course I was involved in called 'Finding a Voice' and it was for women to look at their own lives and write about it, and to get to the point where people are confident with writing about their lives, about validating their lives and building confidence. I care very much about that.*

Only one respondent had never been motivated to get involved in PP and for one respondent, individual motivation to play a facilitating role was almost purely financial. However, in a project management role of other artists, that same respondent felt a higher degree of motivation in ensuring that the project was well run and provided valid opportunities to those with less access to cultural art forms.

7. How much importance/time is given to developing arts in participatory settings on your course?

Five of the six respondents felt that not enough time or importance was given on courses to developing skills and opportunities around arts in participatory settings. Two of the three MAMRES courses did offer 'practical' life of writing / writing practice modules on their programmes, which focused on guest speakers such as literary agents or editors and skills such as pitching creative work. No-one knew of talks from participatory practice artists.

Respondents from one university emphasised the development of a broader set of concepts under the term **student enterprise**, which could include PP but also publishing, magazine editing and other vocational aspirations. Where courses were being updated, the focus was on providing more opportunity for this rather than specifically about PP.

The perception of students was that many were so focused on their own work that they sometimes did not even listen to the work of others as it was read out in class; so the step towards facilitating other peoples' narratives was not part of the mindset of the majority of students studying creative writing programmes.

8. Talk about different approaches to delivering arts in participatory settings – which are included on your courses?

There was not a great deal of focus on how the delivery of PP was included on courses; where it was included, it was based on writing projects rather than around other useful skills. The two clearest examples of where PP was taught or discussed on the courses were from the respondent who taught a series of two short-courses, offered to university students and to the wider general public, on Writing and Health.

In the first course, students wrote but with an appreciation of thinking about the writing, others' writing, and the exercises, in the community setting and using writing for therapeutic and self-empowerment of people with health issues or concerns. The second course went on to set tasks for students on the short courses to create trigger exercises to conduct in writing/health participatory settings. This respondent felt a need to address the political issues inherent in this lack of interest from students:

- *"Something about the time we live in that makes it very difficult to get current students to get to think about working in the community because people are now very individualistic, and students are only interested in getting their own work assessed. People on the Writing and Health short courses come with the idea of writing in the community already. Even in the Writing and Health module when they are looking at their own writing they are looking at it and thinking 'what is writing doing?' rather than it just being about their own writing. I'm not sure how you regenerate that interest in the community."*

This was echoed by other respondents, for example:

- *Biggest single culture shock for me about how formally conservative writers are here. I've always positioned art in a deliberately experimental/social way, but that hasn't always gone down well with the students.*
- *A lot of students here don't take advantage of what goes on here, including writing workshops with visiting writers, but students here are really lazy, and don't take the opportunities. Motivation is a skill you need as a writer*
- *Our MA community come here, all fee paying, to 'write the novel or script'. They're the group that is most shocked if you suggest using writing in a different way, and because, to be honest, it attracts a good intake, is a pleasant thing to teach, it does its job, so there's a place for what it does, but it will do, at one point, we will build that element in, but most of those people are working anyway...*

And from a respondent who 'wove' narrative advocacy into the teaching on that institution's MA programme:

- *"It's sort of a back door option, using MA students and me to do work I would do in the community anyway. It avoids the need for funding applications and ethical hoops to jump through and gives students grounding in narrative education, by forcing them to take on other peoples' narratives."*

A third respondent emphasised that the definition of PP was too narrow if it was only about working with other community groups and not self-selected students who had come to study creative writing to find their own voices:

- *We draw our cohort from the local area, and that is a traditionally under- and marginalised part of the British community, and we work to represent that output; it's very personally focused, borders on life writing (when not to do with vampires). Everything that comes out of this programme is part of a process of narrativising unheard voices.*

9. On your course what skills related to PP are perceived as important (in addition to core arts/performance/production skills)?

The general agreement from all respondents was that of the skills perceived as important in PP, very few apart from the core arts skills, were actually taught or provided. So for one respondent, as well as focusing on the **creation of trigger exercises**, there was some discussion about **managing groups**. Otherwise skills taught were working in groups, collaboration, publishing but not facilitation.

At one university there were placements with literary arts administration organisations, but nothing specifically around PP.

What was important to note in two of the three universities was the emphasis on the academic pathway into future careers, rather than the creative pathway which could include PP. At one institution the emphasis on the MRES was to help prepare creative writers for a career in the academy, delivering academic skills, e.g. running conferences. PhDs at those universities were seen as vocational, but for academic careers: *"why do a PhD unless to enter academic life? If you want a degree for writing a novel, that is a different hoop that just writing a novel."* So teaching training and provision, writing conference papers and articles, and progressing with research were all considered more important.

10. What kind of opportunities do students get to develop participatory practice?

For two participants the emphasis was on student enterprise and self-motivation. e.g. students publishing their own magazines and anthologies, which were supported.

The suggestion was that if students are interested in PP they would get support, but otherwise they would not be 'led' to do such work by the institution. Students could also theorise any PP work in their critical components of the programme.

One participant also spoke about his role as an external examiner and how that gave him insight into how these opportunities were structured into programmes at other universities outside of the area, but not in the North East: *"I've seen it done and see how it could be done. Useful as it's a placement so it's vocational experience."*

At one university, the respondent pointed to the extra-curricular centre for creative writing and literature that was part of the same department that offered paid placements, paid internships and voluntary opportunities, for people to help develop participation of audiences on a very broad spectrum, from attending readings to

reading books to attending groups right the way through to taking part in PP as creative writers.

Finally, one participant emphasized that the university ran extra-curricular classes that focused on the practicalities of being a writer: *"This university runs good classes. We do take our students and say that, yes, you are a writer, and this is what a writer does, including these are the libraries you go to, these are the readings you do, this is the pittance you earn..."* but this did not include PP.

11. Give examples of how activities that develop arts in participatory settings have been supported /promoted by your institution.

There was very little response to this question from nearly all participants. At one university it was admitted that support had been greater for this "but had fallen off" and partnerships with external organisations, which, while good organisations to work with, had "become moribund".

One participant focused on the tutorial relationship, where encouragement was made one to one to try things when students showed an interest but this was not as part of a taught module/programme.

One participant focused on the establishment of a project centre for audience participation development, which sometimes included PP elements but that most projects were focused on the benefit to the university community rather than the wider community; and this was right because the staff, students and university have a commitment to each other: *"Otherwise what makes it a university project, rather than just a community project?"*

At one university, a mini-writing residency was created for PhD students of creative writing to take part in residencies that either might or might not included PP - for example, running workshops - but this was to be student-led, or led by the partner cultural institution and what they wanted from a writer in residence. This project was not instigated by the university programme but was led by one of the PhD students who applied for AHRC funding for the project outside of the course. The respondent noted that the department gave support for this project but did not take on any administrative burden to help run it.

The sense that universities were too bureaucratic to develop programmes and placements in this area was pervasive, so for example one respondent said: *"Universities are really run to very bureaucratic lines, it's all very regulated according to these plans, and it would be great if you could, say as part of a final year project, do some schools work or something, but... senior manager reaction is that it is always too complicated."*

12. Do you think there is a need for a dedicated course in participatory practices?

Two participants agreed with this statement. At one university fortnightly curriculum design meetings were happening with the foundational commitment to ensuring an element of student enterprise was included on each module.

- *I think it would be a good idea, particularly if people are thinking about making writing their thing, their life, and at the moment lots of people just lurch into community based work without knowing how to handle groups.*
- *We are making space for a full module on this. However, the constraints of a joint honours degree make it difficult; these things need to be built in efficiently.*

Three disagreed. Two because of administrative bureaucracy, the pains of funding, the slowness of university changes, and also because it was not a central preoccupation for many of the students. One respondent who did not feel that more importance should be given on the programmes at their university felt that students did not currently take up opportunities on offer, and that training and development should go first to those who had already self-started in terms of developing a broad portfolio of skills for the writing life, including using PP. These individuals needed training and CPD first, considering such scarce resources available and time constraints.

13. Is working in participatory settings valued in terms of employability? How is this perceived by staff and by students?

All of the participants were aware of the 'employability agenda' although many were uncomfortable with it. One participant said:

"On all the things you used to fill in there's now a box for employability. It's difficult to see what we can do differently, because if we're doing our job properly, we're doing it properly, what else can you do? But I suppose the things we're talking about, giving people the chance to go out into the community, yes, I can see that, but otherwise it's all about money in the end and just feels like pressure from above, not really thinking about the education."

This was echoed by many of the other respondents. Most felt they were already providing a very good teaching experience for their students and that employability was a very narrow term. As stated above, one university refers to this as enterprise rather than employability.

14. Are the issues of 'quality' and 'professionalism' relating to delivering arts in participatory settings discussed on your course/s?

Respondents essentially felt that this was either neutral or negative in relation to what they felt was important for PP and the ways that their courses could provide skills and 'professionalism' for their students—that is, there was 'plenty more that could be done'. So, for example, respondents said:

- *Not so much. I don't think the practical modules teach the obvious things such as time management, being very prepared, good organisation. Being clear what you are doing with a group, because sometimes you can be a bit woolly with the group – working out what kind of group it is, what level they are at. You have to be extremely, highly organised. Managing groups mainly. If you're going to get people to feed back in a group, make sure everyone has the opportunity to if you advertised it as such, don't let people go home frustrated or disappointed. Just people skills, but you've got to be absolutely organised. One more thing is being clear about the*

boundaries. There has to be a boundary that is managed in an informal way, but it is important. But this stuff isn't taught directly."

- *We need to understand the need to make a writing life a paying life. Students aim at commercial modes too much though. The number of writers who live like that, though, is miniscule. The job is to work with partner organisations to put together options for how to make a writing life, e.g. from 'bits' e.g. from the academy, from engagement, enterprise, PP, etc / The right people given the space and asked to deliver the right things can do that, give our students the reality of what a writing life is about. All of this is in development.*

Again, the emphasis remained on the individual work as the output, the poetry or novel or script and supporting the student in the 'professionalism' of the writer's own narrative and reaching an audience, rather than PP.

15. What kind of support from your university/college to develop arts in participatory settings or teaching about arts work in participatory settings?

The overriding feeling from two of the three universities was that PP could be supported more if it could be seen as benefiting the university-wide research agenda, and particularly that of proving impact from research. For example, at one university, one respondent indicated that there were new research programmes supported by the university that would work with and engage with the local and regional communities but that this was mainly for research purposes, and for getting in money to support research staff activity. However, there was the potential for postgraduate students to get involved with this project. Teaching outcomes were not in any way a priority e.g.:

- *My role and passion is 'positioning creative writing properly in the academy'. It has been growing too fast; from no presence to beginnings of interest to an unbelievable rush. My job is to steer towards best practice, and I am hiring staff deliberately who have a life in the academy.*
- *Only if we can make community writing activities meaningful in a research landscape, then it will be easier to get into practice in universities; if it can be seen to have impact then there is a great payoff for it.*

One participant felt that this was extremely negative and that the REF⁴ was, "a waste of time. The government has essentially withdrawn funding for our subject area so why are we working on proving our excellence? Jumping through a billion different hoops. Funding is a way of stopping you from doing stuff. Research is functional, not the aim. It just happens with writing. This idea that you can only do something (interesting) if someone gives you money is rubbish. Just do it. Teach the students and worry about the research impact afterwards. Much more interesting is what people have to say, more interested in the students have to say than the research."

⁴Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions

For one participant, the university's support for 'participation' in its very broad form, not just arts in participatory settings, was very strong, in that their output was, *"all about audience, about including people who cannot get involved to access what we do. It's about being a part of a community, staff, students, also students who come to public-open short courses, etc. Our projects are about writing communities in the widest possible sense in terms of reaching a wide variety of people, how can we get the message out there to bring in different and diverse audiences. For example, we've been focusing on getting young people in to live literature events as part of an agenda to get people interested in and attending cultural events."*

Finally, there was also some benefit from the conversation to link the two together:

- *Discussions are more from point of view of thinking of impact in research, but now in course of talking to you then I'm thinking we should put those two things [research and teaching around PP] together.*

16. What kind of CPD have you been offered in the area of PP?

Five out of the six respondents had not been offered any training or CPD in the area of PP. Three had essentially self-developed through structured training courses, both recently and in the past, for example:

- *Back in the 1980s I did do a course on counselling and managing groups; the places I worked, such as a hospice, didn't really know what they wanted or what to do with me, so for example there was a time I had to get scribes in to write for the participants, and they were telling the participants 'oh, you can't write that, she doesn't want that' and I was thinking 'no!' that's all the things I want to get away from.*
- *I sent myself on an Arts Plan training day back in 2010 and it was a one-day thing with a view on creative facilitation for young people, and I got a Bursary for that, and heard about it through networks; in 2007 I went on Faculty Teacher Training, basically how to manage a group. And in 2010 I did a short course, which debated methods for engaging people. Again, I am sending myself on a course this summer, Accredited Teaching and Mentoring Skills for writers (NAWE and ARVON) and I see that a skill that I will use on myself, but also when working with other writers, and a knock on effect when working on projects.*

Two respondents also noted that they kept up with the literature on their subjects (writing and health, narrative advocacy).

Visual Arts

Caroline Mitchell, SL Radio and independent community media consultant

1. Introduce self, job title and main areas of teaching , practice and research

Interviewees included people at the levels of Reader, Principal lecturer/ Section Leader, a technician who is also an Associate Tutor and Senior Lecturer. All were practising artists and all had had some engagement in participative practice themselves although some preferred not to work in this setting in their current work. Examples of past and current engagement in participatory settings included workshops in schools, working with students and artisans in developing countries, large scale international collaborations with other artists, developing work with non professionals in public spaces including those that are not usually designated as art spaces e.g. hospitals and car parks.

Main areas of teaching include professional practice, painting, architectural glass, ceramics, studio practice, exhibition organisation/curation, fine art, sculpture, and museology.

2. What do you understand by the term participatory practice (PP) in arts /creative/media work? Give one of two examples of PP that you are aware of that illustrates this.

Four of the five academics recognised the term but all wished to discuss its definition and all were able to give examples of work. This revealed wide ranging definitions of PP.

One lecturer didn't want to use participatory art as a term as it was difficult to see where the boundaries lay between public and individual practice or between participatory and 'socially engaged practice'. Working in a generally participatory way is how students learn, develop and discover.

"In visual arts education that's how people do learn by being a participant within a larger community. Artists work in that way because it is experiential ... making work for audience and working as a community of artists and with organisations."

Two lecturers understood PP as collaborative work –between themselves as artists and for their students working in groups and interfacing with the public in some way. For artists PP was talked about as mainly artist-driven, in the form of enabling dialogue and establishing new networks, collaborating in residences with other artists from different disciplines or with other professionals. An example of the latter was working with scientists in a practice-based research project funded by the Wellcome Foundation.

Another form of collaboration perceived as PP was where art students work with each other and on projects outside the 'classroom'. Now that a significant number of graduates go to work in artist studio groups they need to be able to work with others, artists and graphic designers and so on. Two institutions described as PP work in the area of professional studies where students are encouraged to work together on a project that interfaces in some way with people outside their direct department or the

public. One group of students set up an exhibition in a public space (a car park) where 'homeless people' socialised although these people were not involved in any arts practice apart from coming to the exhibition.

This definition relating to artist engagement with each other and the public was developed further by an academic who as part of museology (study of how museums are organised) talked about PP as an inclusive practice. Artists make work specially for a public space, or display other art, or intervene in other ways, and 'non-artists' can also be involved in making the art, working out what to display and how. This inclusive practice means, '*abandoning demarcations and hierarchy of practice*'. The project given as an example of PP was where established artists, art school graduates, school pupils and university staff worked together in an organic and unstructured way to develop a themed exhibition. The teaching relating to this kind of project explores, "*what sustains students as creative practitioners and as citizens in any way without having to call it art.*"

One lecturer said that projects that he saw as participative included working on long term partnerships in schools and community settings in UK and abroad and instilling a legacy of enthusiasm and knowledge: "*the whole point is that they will carry on doing it on their own after I've left.*" He said that these activities were classed as by his university as 'knowledge transfer'.

A lecturer who had a lot of past experience of working in schools at the beginning of her career was clear that PP (which she mainly referred to as 'community art') involved more than the artists doing their work 'in situ', without proper planning, ongoing dialogue and collaboration with the target group: "*If you are going to do it then the more community participation the better. No point in having an artist there if they are only going to do what they want.*"

3. How important is participatory arts practice in the arts/media for you individually? Is participation inherently seen as a 'good thing'?

Linked to the range of ways that people perceived PP there was a spectrum of views about how important PP was for them individually.

One lecturer for whom working in community settings PP was central to his practice said that it was, '*very important and rewarding*'. After graduating he had taught in a range of community settings but after working in a studio/workshop in India he was inspired to set up his own studio and consultancy that combined creative production and community consultancy.

For some of our sample participation was a vital, core part of their work but it was also necessary to be able to have time to work as individuals. There was a sense of fine artists wanting to move out into the world with an idea of working inclusively and mutuality, along with other skills. "*No practising artist can function in isolation, or we become invisible!*"

One talked about the excitement derived from using his work to help people get involved with breaking out of their usual ideas and habits and changing the way they relate to exhibition spaces, *“everyone seems to learn from doing it”*. At the same time he saw the need to, *“go back into his studio and close the door”* and to have personal practice in order to teach and write.

4. *If you are not involved PP, why not and what could change that?*

The lecturer who had experience of participatory work in schools at the beginning of her career was clear that participatory practice required very distinct skills, and whilst she respected artists who did this kind of work because, *“[t]here are some excellent practitioners who are good at putting people at their ease, getting best ideas out of people”*, it was for her not compatible with producing high quality arts work and she now avoided commissions that indicated that PP was part of the brief. On occasion she has worked with someone who is much better at the community aspect and this has had a better outcome.

Another was not personally attracted to investing any energy in it, but sees it as important and values organisations like the WEA.

Having a large resource/organisation like Culture Lab (see page 43 for description) and ‘Life, Work, Art’, the professional development programme for fine art students at the University of Newcastle means that even if individual lecturers are not directly involved in PP they know where students can get information, support, partners and so on and can structure in these organisations at relevant points in the degree.

Where there is not this resource it may be harder for individual lecturers to include PP particularly if they do not have access to decision making processes to make changes at programme level.

5. *When and where did you first become aware of participatory practice as part of creative arts and media?*

Most people became aware of PP when they first left art college. For some it was as a result of needing to earn money that brought them into contact with a range of community arts activities, work in schools and hospitals and residences. This also had the effect of increasing their network of contacts through doing different pieces of work within different settings.

In the contemporary arts field there was turning point in the eighties when artists were finding alternative ways of operating including group studios and producing artist led shows. Over the last 15 years initiatives like AN (Artists’ Newsletter) and Culture Lab have grown up to be an alternative to the traditional gallery-led practice.

The experience working with community groups meant that one lecturer became more aware of diverse and different practices in teaching.

6. *If you have been involved what/who motivated you to get involved in this area of practice?*

The most common motivation for ‘falling in’ to this kind of work was earning a living. Another was when a particular work situation ‘clicked’ – examples given were the

use of the museum environment and working with artisans in a charity project in India.

One was inspired to go into teaching by her lecturer at college. Like him she prefers teaching people who want to be artists than working in community settings.

One academic noted that some schools of thought had in the past been against participation e.g. Royal Academy and Slade (these were considered less progressive than for instance, Royal College).

Perceptions relating to your course/teaching

7. How much importance/time is given to developing arts in participatory settings on your course?

Different courses have been established for varying lengths of time –Teesside's School of Arts and Media has only had all the arts courses for 5 years. So this needs to be taken into account when thinking about context of development.

At Newcastle it has been a gradual process where different ways of operating have become embedded in practice so the academic there thinks that is now a much broader range of what constitutes practice for students.

At other institutions people talked about PP as being outside the main teaching and learning of arts skills and practices and where it appeared at all it was within the area of Professional Practice, professional development, CV writing and placements in settings like hospitals and voluntary internships. These modules mostly appeared at each level of undergraduate courses. One academic noted that typically 10-15% of the module on professional studies is spent on delivering courses where people acquire transferable skills for different settings and different communities as an artist, and transferable skills are 20-25% of each module.

At one Glass and Ceramics course in the 3rd year they concentrate on the '*kind of practitioner you want to be and that is when people might think about becoming a community artist*'. One lecturer said PP is, "*touched upon*" in professional practice modules. As the only person centrally involved in this area he helps interested students with opportunities e.g. accompanying him on trips abroad and placement opportunities.

At PhD level there is the example of students involved in a partnership with the NHS where 6 students do research and activities involving doctors, nurses, and patients, to provide a programme of changing exhibitions at Hexham Hospital.

8. Talk about different approaches to delivering arts in participatory settings – which are included on your courses?

Teaching responds to students' ideas and where they get them from. So lectures will mention examples along the whole continuum, e.g. Gormley Field for the British Isles, rather than pushing a particular idea. One lecturer works with theatre groups where everyone works together, and this opens the doors to participative and collaborative work. There are examples given of projects by 2nd year students in

community settings, using art as a way of giving local communities a voice, students acting as agents for people to express themselves. Editorial freedom is owned by students.

- An example is the Gresham Road Community Project: houses were being compulsorily purchased and a photography exhibition gave local residents to offer their views about the area and their values

However there are fears there is now a lack of funding for projects and/or for staff time within other public sector organisations for projects like these (other than MA residencies).

One MA course includes residencies in health and art therapy or with other professionals, and many students go on to do MAs in fine art and politics, fine art and psychotherapy, etc. This is all seen as a natural progression from a studio practice course which is based on mutuality and inclusivity.

There was evidence of change from specialist undergraduate modules in contemporary arts practice /community arts to a fine art course which has some professional practice modules. Some students do collaborative work, out of their own choice rather than the way the course takes them.

Students will get different viewpoints on PP from practitioners who point out the difficulties of doing participatory practice (how time consuming it is for example). One course leader said of PP:

"It is important to show (community participants) the creative process and learn how difficult it is and what they have to aspire to and then let the artist get on with it because they have the skills".

On the same course they have the opportunity to visit and do placements at community projects and the associate tutor/technician has taken students with him on trips to India, Bolivia and Vietnam. He references his work regularly because it is part of his practice and he goes often.

9. On your course what skills related to PP are perceived as important (in addition to core arts/performance/production skills)? Open question but prompt with examples to draw out

There was some resistance to separating out PP skills from broader arts skills and knowledge':

"What's key is the sense of critical reflection which is the bedrock of participatory production. The reflection can be with yourself, with another person or within a group".

This practice is embedded in the 'Life, Work, Art' programme final year career development module, where students organise and managing a project outside the university:

“The project will involve some form of public interaction – e.g. with audience, external partners, students from other subject areas. Students will define the nature of that interaction – e.g. live art event, exhibition, website, public art project, socially engaged project.”⁵

At Teesside the following skills were seen as important:

- Critical appreciation of their trajectory
- Research methodology
- Inclusivity
- Setting up studio groups at end of course
- Inter-disciplinary arts work
- Ethics –ethical approval has to be signed off, and have to do a reflective case study in final year

At Sunderland it was acknowledged that skills taught on the professional practice module were focussed on careers that people were perceived to want to go into: gallery artist, self-employed or arts administration. Artists who are commissioned to do PP are often highly unskilled in that area: *“We all do it because we need the money but we don’t actually teach any useful ways to work with classes- we don’t teach how to teach!”*

At Northumbria skills for PP are more prominent in post-graduate work, where it includes

- research methodology e.g. how to run focus groups,
- ethics,
- working with different groups,
- working with the gatekeepers (e.g. teachers, hospital administrator) and commissioners (of research or a piece of art).

It was acknowledged that it was quite difficult to teach ‘people skills’ and ‘a passion for your subject’, both seen as essential in PP work. One lecturer said you needed maturity and to gain experience over a number of years to do this kind of work and he had found his own teacher training invaluable for working in community settings.

10. What kind of opportunities do students get to develop participatory practice?

All courses had examples of modules and activities which tended to be focused on students who by the final year of their course had made a choice to go into teaching or work in community/participatory settings. These included tailored mentoring and careers development advice, and support for PhD students in their first experiences of teaching and assessment and reflection to help them develop sense of their own practice.

Some Universities had good contacts with projects which specialised in PP for arranging placements but some of these projects had now folded and it was time

⁵ Source <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sacs/fineart/undergraduate/modules/>

consuming to make these links anew so placements tended to be in more mainstream organisations. There was information and encouragement to volunteer at festivals and craft fairs. Lecturers from two universities commented that they would like to see voluntary links with PP formalised and “step up” the amount of participatory engagement they do.

There were varying levels of visiting practitioners and some evidence of occasional specialists in working in participatory settings.

More detailed work could be attempted at post graduate PhD level. One University does a lot of training on research methodology e.g. how to run focus groups, ethics, working with different groups, and working with the gatekeepers (e.g. teachers, hospital administrator) and commissioners (of research or a piece of art), also cover fundraising a little, and CV writing. At MA level includes writing research proposals and bid writing.

11. Give examples of how activities that develop arts in participatory settings have been supported /promoted by your institution.

Support at institutional level was most evident at Newcastle who funded Culture Lab and had continued to support the ‘Life, Work, Art’ unit once HEFCE funding ran out in 2005.

Otherwise support centred on a small amount of placements and residencies (at Northumbria there is training relating to residencies). At Sunderland the University promoted and supported the work done by a technician/AT and his students with an international charity.

12. Do you think there is a need for a dedicated course in participatory practices?

There was mixed response here. Two respondents thought that it was already included as part of professional practice modules. At Newcastle although it would be ‘interesting’ the academic thought Culture Lab fulfilled this need:

“It’s an invitation for people with quite disparate means but have a commonality to applying the creative process to these different means. It’s somewhere they can work and be accepted.”

At Sunderland there was an interest in setting up a community arts practices programme but the lecturer was uncertain if it would be seen as viable in the current climate. There was a suggestion that there could be more focus on PP in the form of new professional practice modules

“to give people an idea of what to expect and how to approach working in community settings. You are as good as your own intuition when you first start. (You) need understanding of how people learn and approach art”.

13. Is working in participatory settings valued in terms of employability? How is this perceived by staff and by students?

Generally all agreed that students arrive with quite a fixed notion of what art is so courses should support a gradual opening up about what art is about. For those who don't want to be artists they can apply these skills to many other areas. There was some resistance to being 'a factory for artists':

"People seem to be obsessed with whether students can move into work. This is not the only function of HE. The study of fine art is about developing the psyche as fully as possible in order to move the person into society, not about getting a job."

One lecturer said that work in participatory settings had been seen by most staff and students as 'second class.' She has noticed that more students want to be teachers as there is more certainty in this area of work and teaching now has higher status. She thinks this may happen to community arts practice too.

If there is someone 'championing' PP in a department students become more aware of it as a potential career option and value it more highly through coming into contact with artists who work in this way.

14. Are the issues of 'quality' and 'professionalism' relating to delivering arts in participatory settings discussed on your course/s?

Where courses don't go into depth about PP, issues of 'quality' and 'professionalism' are not really discussed. When raised several interviewees said it would be good to discuss and have examples and case studies to draw on.

One lecturer said that the quality of the artist and their understanding of their art form/practice is a really big issue.

"You have a limited time period when you are doing community projects and you can walk away at the end of it, for that reason you get artists who will do it for the money and they can get away without doing it properly if they know a bit more than the clients."

Two lecturers said that it depended on the context of the work - product is important for some work but for other projects success is measured by the manner and quality of inclusivity, or may be about the degree to which the person has discovered their own potential.

For some projects, participation is the point especially if it covers experimental ways of opening up a space for further / wider activities.

For others, the product has got to be really good e.g. Edinburgh Festival / College of Art exhibition of plaster casts involves lots of different artists at all levels; the quality of the work is important because it is a showcase for the college.

At Newcastle the students have space to discuss these issues in an assessed evaluative report in the Collaborative practice strands in Life Work Art. If a project doesn't happen they can still reflect on why it hasn't happened.

15. What kind of support from your university/college to develop arts in participatory settings or teaching about arts work in participatory settings?

In areas where provision for PP came from part-time teaching staff, they felt that whilst their work 'ticks a lot of boxes' for the university in terms of employability, student experience, international work and knowledge transfer, and they were supported to do these things within the small amount of time they had. However they had little control over developing the curriculum, or increasing staff time/posts to do more PP oriented practice and research. The 'push' for more staff and resources may come from the fact that more students were looking at ways into teaching and education related employment.

Visiting tutor programmes in all but one University had generous support that a proportion of visiting speakers and tutors did come from a PP area. There was a sense that in the 'new' Universities even if the area of PP was quite small, developing arts in the region was valued as part of '*building a narrative*' about particular areas and promoted by the universities in terms of "*commitment for transformation through the arts.*"

Again University of Newcastle's Culture Lab and 'Life, Work, Art' projects were mentioned as evidence of University support and new research projects such as Venda Pollack and David Butler's Intersections programme which, aims 'to generate critical dialogue about public art practice and develop pioneering practice-based and theoretical research in this area' were testament to financial support for research relating to PP.⁶

16. What kind of CPD have you been offered in the area of PP?

People who have asked for support are encouraged to apply and have received money from community fellowship scheme and research beacon and professional development fund for PP work.

Training on ethics (in relation to work in hospitals) has been provided at one university.

On your courses is PP perceived as part of thinking about issues relating to building long term change?... personal and community sustainability?

Lecturers whose work is mainly PP said that their work is central to these kinds of ideas:

"They see that people are not just here insular in the ceramics world but it's being used in real life to real benefit. They can see that and they are volunteering to come with us".

Others who favoured more individualistic modes of working said that they did not address this area at all. She had come across such themes more from her friendship networks in social work rather in the arts world:

⁶ see <http://www.intersectionspublicart.org.uk/>

"People don't think about anything but their own practice. They don't really think about how they fit in with people and communities and what makes community development work."

Another lecturer said that although sustainability was very much an ethos pushed by the University and is an area that maps on quite well to visual arts it hadn't taken hold in their department.

How are social networking sites and other online tools (Twitter etc) perceived in developing participatory work-by yourself, by your students?

Not much awareness of this apart from general comments about universities, staff and students using websites and Face Book to promote their work. One lecturer specifically used his website to promote the PP work he was doing.

Is there a body of academic work (journals, text books, specialist research) about PP in your area that you can draw on? Please give examples

Three lecturers were not aware of what was available. One said that they would use contacts to supply references as necessary. Others said they were aware of what was available on Crafts Council website and educational reports about schools work and that this was probably included on Professional practice module guides but not in other modules.

There was reference to several sources of work in the community arts field, some on "arts-based methods" for sociologists and material on museum studies.

How important are national networks and international contacts re pp in your area of work?

Most felt international contacts, networks and case studies were very important in any contemporary arts practice and research Networks important overall for informing and distributing practice. *"It's good to bring in artists from other countries and go to other countries."* Regionally Isis Arts and Helix were mentioned as good contacts.

Media, Film, and Graphic design

Caroline Mitchell, SL Radio and independent community media consultant

1. Introduce self, job title and main areas of teaching , practice and research

Interviewees included people at the levels of Professor, Principal lecturer, Head of Department, Section Leader and Senior Lecturer. One is a practising video producer/filmmaker, one a documentary film maker, sound recordist and multimedia producer. We interviewed a senior member of Culture Lab who has research interests in music technologies and creative participatory activities for social inclusion (see section on Music for more discussion of this work). Two work professionally in graphic design and illustration and also have research interests in applied design and in the area of communicating science. One has mainly academic research interests in film studies and media employability. All had had some past experience of working in participatory settings themselves and three were currently engaged in this kind of work. Examples of their past and current engagement included educational workshops in museums, producing documentaries with Amber Films and Swingbridge Video, using animation as a therapeutic process with families affected by sexual abuse and developing interactive music systems with potential for democratising the creative process.

Main areas of teaching include:

- TV and video production,
- Sound for video production,
- Graphic design, illustration,
- Media studies,
- Professional Practice,
- PhD supervision for students involved in community / participatory practices
- Directing actors for film and video.

2. What do you understand by the term participatory practice (PP) in arts /creative/media work? Give one of two examples of PP that you are aware of that illustrates this.

Several people in this group had substantial experience of research teaching and practice work in participatory settings and some were in positions to be able to influence how working in participatory settings was promoted in their department. As in other groups people gave wide ranging definitions of PP from education work with organisations outside the university to PP as part of practice led research and projects at Culture Lab.

Working in participatory settings is seen as about practice and process:

“Acts of making and doing are as important as acts of thinking, they go hand-in-hand, and in the process of practice, participation is an important element”

It is about working collaboratively with partners or organisations outside the university setting:

“any work or forms of making where you are working outside the institution, or within the institution with different participants in co-collaboration.”

The nature and extent of this collaboration could be seen at different points along a continuum ranging from projects where participation was about activities to aid public engagement with design and to complement exhibitions to activities which enabled ‘non artists’ to have total control over making some kind of media production.

Influenced by the community arts/theatre movement (in UK and the United States) two of the interviewees defined their work as working with non-professional artists- *“with people not for them”* and about making sustainable relationships where participants work collaboratively in community settings and are enabled to represent themselves and gain skills for media representation in the longer term.

“the notion of participation as opening up the creative arts process to people who may not themselves be artists, not to turn them into artists but to improve the quality of their lives and open up their ideas through creative acts.”

One interviewee saw the work as ‘sustainable participatory practice’. *She works ‘together with people to find their voice, to enable people to be represented ...It’s just not in my bones to be anything other than collaborative’*. Collaborative working was seen by as important in opposition to individualist art practice. *“I came from a Fine Art course where the individual was all and I totally disagreed and worked against that ... the community is full of artists.”*

Two lecturers had worked in the film workshops Amber Films and Swingbridge and their philosophy was influenced by the ‘workshop approach’⁷

“an egalitarian approach to creativity, rooted in the craft skills of its members. It is committed to a long term engagement with working class and marginalized communities in the North of England”⁸

Here the work was about enabling participants to make film that ‘worked’ for them. It involved being aware of power relationships and thinking about the balance between the product and the process.

Within the area of design we found a spectrum of views of the definition of participatory practice. One interviewee said that working in participatory settings is not recognised as a ‘natural area’ for design students (*“I’m not sure what a ‘community designer’ is anyway”*); it was interpreted as being about enabling better communication between student and client in design briefs. It was acknowledged that there were some ‘softer’ areas of design –illustration and animation- where students might work more in community settings or use animation as part of therapeutic practice. In another University there was awareness of a ‘philosophy of participative design’, which engages end users in design (through workshops and focus groups) so

⁷ Based on the union agreement which meant that people could work collectively and across roles. See also O’REILLY, P(2009) ‘I Will Survive’: Forty Years of Amber Films and the Evolution of Regional Film Policy *Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network, Vol 1, No 2.*

⁸ http://www.amber-online.com/history_chapters/1968-1974

understanding their needs and desires can drive the specification of design, rather than designer inventing something and bringing it out into the world.

3. How important is participatory arts practice in the arts/media for you individually? Is participation inherently seen as a 'good thing'?

For several it was fundamental to their work, personally and politically, inside and outside University settings. Some had seen the benefits at first hand, for instance in a mixed theatre group with disabled and non-disabled people, which resulted in huge benefits to both cohorts in terms of quality of life, ability to integrate, confidence, awareness of others, inter-generational involvement, gaining skills as mentors, employment, and exploring issues through the medium of theatre.

For others it was an important as part of their work and the subject area in terms of public engagement and awareness that they needed to be closer to the community they were working in.

However the inherent belief that it was core to their work didn't necessarily mean that this view was shared by other people in the university.

"People don't see it as a good thing. Participation is written off as being worthy. It salves their conscience because they don't have to get involved."

When making films one lecturer said that often people didn't want a high level of participation in terms of production but did want consultation and editorial control at all stages of production, editing and distribution.

The importance of working in participatory settings in relation to the work with Culture Lab was seen as already being very developed because this organisation already had partners with participatory arts organisations like Helix Arts, Isis Arts and GEM Arts, and because those activities already exist in a large way in the region, so don't need to reinvent ways of doing this.

4. When and where did you first become aware of participatory practice as part of creative arts and media? If you have been involved what/who motivated you to get involved in this area of practice?

Most cited involvement in community arts, radical and political action groups, feminist and socialist activism, art school politics and membership of film making collectives in the 70's and 80's. They had been motivated by fellow students, tutors and one person was influenced by Arts Unions in Holland and had organised a conference called 'Arts, Politics, Theory, Practice' with the *Independent Filmmakers Association*.

Another had 'fallen into' this work in graduation when she worked with schools and youth clubs doing workshops and classes.

One person had been involved only recently, through supervising a PhD student working with kids on a film about their perceptions of life in a Northumberland town. Making the film helped them to reflect on their futures and the identity of the town.

"The politics of participation is relevant here: how design both informs and creates identity."

One lecturer who had come from outside UK had learnt about PP through research and interaction with the regional arts and culture sector. Understanding the landscape of the region, what cultural regeneration means and how important this is to regeneration, was new to him. He believed that the NE is special in that culturally it 'punches above its weight'; here, cultural activity reconnects back to people in the city and the region.

Perceptions relating to your course/teaching

5. *How much importance/time is given to developing arts in participatory settings on your course?*

Apart from at Culture Lab where *"activities are inherently participatory"*, media production and graphic design courses have very little time set aside for overt development of PP. One said that there was no learning outcome for the course that relates to PP, so there no formal support from the institution for this area of work. Two people mentioned that it was difficult to give time to working as PP when they were the only ones addressing this area: *"it's only me"*.

Some people noticed that there had been a change in the way they approached any inclusion of PP. In the past they may have made films for community groups who had approached the department now assignment briefs are more about reality TV and developing technical and creative skills. This lecturer was more comfortable integrating PP as part of production modules:

"I wouldn't call it participatory practice because they wouldn't know what it means. It's a hard thing to engage them in. It is more about how you relate to your subjects (e.g. interviewees). If the subject matter warrants it- for instance 'homelessness' then it is easier."

So PP can be contained in a very wide brief, for instance in group work or in a personal development planning module, or as a 3rd year production project:

"as long as people are working collaboratively then in some way this is a form of participation. ... students are a very mixed bag including large proportion of working class students so I am comfortable that I am empowering these students and helping them to find their own voices."

Two indicated PP can be addressed through tutorial work - some students were, *"responsive to suggestions and requests rather than seeking projects which are involved with participatory practice"*, another said, *"If they are interested then I will support them"*. Some students go on to use what they have learnt later in participatory and facilitating / teaching settings: e.g. one is a youth worker who uses technical and other skills she learnt on the course.

Where Design programmes were aimed at a clear target industry (Graphics, Illustration, Fashion Design) very little time is spent on PP. In the same department a staff member with specialist interest in using animation as therapy had developed a module called Applied Animation that contains guidance for PP and how you take skills and apply them in different context.

Like some other creative arts areas, students can arrive on media courses with very few craft skills so a great deal of time is spent developing these. This leads people to think that PP may be more relevant at MA level when students have developed skills – *‘if they don’t know the process themselves then it’s hard to show other people’*.

6. Talk about different approaches to delivering arts in participatory settings – which are included on your courses?

One approach followed Sherry Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation⁹ and applied it to participatory arts practice. This is not as simple as there being participatory or non-participatory acts, there are many gradations, and the ladder shows the different steps. Here there is artistic interaction with technology – computers, or social networking, digital media – to make creative works, so traditional roles of authorship and spectatorship are mixed up and blurred. *“Co-production is the key.”*

Several participants cited group work as being a key site for learning about participatory practice:

“Most work is in group productions so the students have to participate with one another. In documentary production they are working as a crew and have to find a story and connect with community in one way or another. Particularly MA students have made docs through partnerships with organisations like Age UK.”

The approach partly depends on the context, the participants and the media technology being used but usually production was about a partnership between artists and participant. Lack of knowledge or exposure to media technologies shouldn’t stop people being involved. A lecturer gave one example of where a woman had been given a computer as part of a government scheme and she didn’t know anything about it so in that case the work in a participatory setting was telling her how to open it, switch it on and answer every question she had about it to explain how it worked.

In a production management, theory and practice module it was hard to engage students in broader issues to do with PP but this was approached through the *ethics* of dealing with people, rights, control and so on.

In one design department PP was about the way that designers worked with educational partners- education officers and teachers.

⁹ Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224

7. On your course what skills related to PP are perceived as important (in addition to core arts/performance/production skills)? Open question but prompt with examples to draw out

Students do gain skills which are relevant for working in participatory settings: many skills that were mentioned as suitable for developing skills for participatory practice were also transferable skills/ skills for employability:

- Communication – including communicating with different groups and difficult groups / individuals
- Negotiating
- Group work and team work
- Organising events
- Working with people who are experts in their subject – they can become co-authors, as is often the case with PP
- Project management
- Seeking and receiving feedback.
- Fundraising and entrepreneurial skills
- Ethics (including legal and documentary making)

In most courses there is not specific time allocated for PP. There is little space for particular participatory methodologies like ‘active listening’¹⁰ to be taught.

“They need to know the ‘mainstream’ way of doing things to find space to do them in an alternative way. There isn’t any place to say OK, this is what you are doing but how would you do it with a ‘participatory head’?”

So some skills useful for working in participatory settings are ‘housed’ in production skills. In design it was thought that skills such as planning, nature of target audience, ways that people learn and respond to design are already integrated into modules. In media production dealing with, and valuing, the contributor was considered to be very important. This was classed by two interviewees as, ‘ethical communication skills’. So for instance if they are having difficulty relating to participants in a video one lecturer suggests they ask, ‘what is important to you?’ *“That very question alone makes them feel valued.”*

Another lecturer uses films that have been made in a collaborative way as examples and draws out issues to do with ownership, copyright and consent.

“For instance I show them a video I made with women in Kenton about drugs and I get students to think about how they would approach this as a filmmaker. How would they work with the women? How would they allocate editorial control? What if the BBC came along and offered them three grand would they be in the position to sell the film to the BBC? i.e. who owned it?”

At Culture Lab vocational skills for participation are not specifically taught, but they do teach the philosophy and ethos needed for open working methods which are

¹⁰ See Child Led Learning' as part of the RUMad project www.rumad2.org.uk/faqs/

inherently participatory. Skills needed include project management and collaboration; group work skills tend to be gained as students go along.

Basic skills of participation can and should be taught once this realisation came from one participant as he was doing the interview!

8. What kind of opportunities do students get to develop participatory practice?

Centres with staff and funding to teach PP cited a good range of opportunities including projects, master classes and visiting practitioners, mentoring – (through project supervision), and placements. Presentation and exhibiting provides opportunity for the public to engage with work and there is also engagement space outside Culture Lab, e.g. behind Central Station for 9 months.

Some student productions gave them the opportunity to work in participatory settings. Where lecturers were operating with little support and it was seen as a minority interest subject there were less opportunities. Working collaboratively as part of group productions was valued as was developing community contacts/relationships and stories in a sensitive way: *“as long as people are working collaboratively then in some way this is a form of participation.”*

Outside Culture Lab there were few media placements for PP, apprenticeships, mentoring or master classes and internships as the majority were from the mainstream broadcasting industry. There was some involvement in student/community radio and television stations. One lecturer said that they get offered a wide range of opportunities and some are community / participative but they have to be selective because many are just looking for ‘slave labour’.

In graphic design there was engagement with businesses (all years), and with charities, and other organisations. Illustration students may ask to do placement in a school or at *Seven Stories* (children’s literature project) if they are interested in Children’s Illustration. Some interested in Art Therapy who will do a placement in between degree and their MA. A small number in illustration and animation go into teaching.

Example: BT Big Voice, primary schoolchildren worked on an idea for a film for a particular issue, then worked with college and high school students to make the film. TU made 3 locally. The schoolchildren were the creative instigators and had the local knowledge and links, while the students provided the technical expertise, provided a more professional and honed product than would have been the case ¹¹

9. Give examples of how activities that develop arts in participatory settings have been supported /promoted by your institution.

¹¹

<http://www.btplc.com/Responsiblebusiness/Supportingourcommunities/Learningandskills/London2012/BigVoice/Competition/>

Small amounts of research funding have been received by some participants but there was a sense that PP was not really recognised as an area of research or practice in media departments.

At Teesside University there is a Community Officer, (whose background is as an artist), who does community projects as a full-time job, employed in Digital City Innovation. So PP is used as a way of linking with local groups and businesses- consistent with Teesside's ethos of a 'located' University where educational activities for the benefit of the area it is situated in. An example here could be work with digital archives of heritage in Loftus, done by local people assisted by students, and putting together a video to celebrate the *Mela* anniversary. The Assistant Dean at Teesside is currently bidding for a large piece of work related to PP.

This research was cited as an example of institutional support at Sunderland.

10. Do you think there is a need for a dedicated course in participatory practices?

A wide range of views were expressed here from not seeing a need for it for full support for courses involving PP. Several people mentioned that government and regional priorities seemed to favour this area: *"at the moment the big government buzz word is community cohesion, participatory practice has never been so on the agenda"*.

The negative responses were not against PP but wanted to see it fully integrated into courses and were aware that if it was an 'add on' it was vulnerable to being cut if student numbers on a course or module were low. *'I think it should be valued and embedded throughout, it's too easy to say 'that's that community art stuff over there and we're not interested'*

People realised that a separate course needed developed by more than one person it would have a firmer foundation: *"(if I could) collectively connect and collaborate with other academics to argue for a place for this in the curriculum I'd do it...but not on my own."*

There was interest in updating production management curriculum to look at contemporary practices influenced by PP, for example 'crowd sourcing'-raising money collectively for productions from general public using social media

People were uncertain about introducing new modules in what is seen as a minority area but some saw the potential for running a cross-disciplinary module on, say, facilitation skills, for people from across the arts courses – which is not covered at all on existing courses.

Where participatory practice was central to the course ethos the interviewee thought that they could *'frame participation and the skills for it in the teaching here'*.

In one institution it was thought that design students would be not be interested in skills for PP being included

"Most students wouldn't be interested-they have already made clear decisions about being a graphic or multimedia designer. We'd have a riot if we included a module on community practice. It would need to be a discrete programme or subsidiary pathway."

11. Is working in participatory settings valued in terms of employability? How is this perceived by staff and by students?

There was clear evidence that experience of PP has clear benefits in broadening perceptions about employability:

"(students) show they do not work in their own bubble, and that their work is meaningful not just as art for art's sake but as creative practice with potential for societal benefit. This is part of the ethos here."

In media production at the three 'new' Universities, PP is not seen as a central area for employability after their courses. People aimed for jobs in different industries, though are aware that many students do not work directly in media work (many end up in communication roles). The places that seek students to do internships / placements / summer jobs are not usually working in youth work or other participatory jobs, so students don't tend to get angled towards those sorts of jobs.

One lecturer noted that courses had an ethos focused on getting jobs in the mainstream broadcasting industry and they promoted the importance of entering for and winning awards (RTS, Radio Academy). This gears a student to a particular view of the industry and working in participatory settings.

Lecturers who were 'lone' supporters of participatory work in mainstream departments said that they had tried to raise other areas of work such as educational work, public information work as an area of work and for those students who are interested internships have been developed in this area (for example with Amber Films): *"Occasionally a student comes with an interest in this area or responds well to the kind of productions that I have been involved in and then I can work quite closely with them."*

Students in softer end of design (animation and illustration) more likely to fall into this kind of work as they develop their 'portfolio careers'.

The focus of the courses can be shifted by team members and managers. Where departments have mostly staff from mainstream journalism, PR, graphic design and broadcast media, this influences how students think and what jobs they look for.

12. Are the issues of 'quality' and 'professionalism' relating to delivering arts in participatory settings discussed on your course/s?

Process and product are seen as equally important, and is discussed in relation to different examples of student and professional work in different contexts and as part of pitching to commissioning editors or about how they respect and deal with contributors.

Some lecturers found it difficult to find time to discuss this specifically in the area of PP. Important areas for discussion included artists 'using a community' for the

artist's ends and making a high quality product at the expense of the experience: *"If the artist can't work with the group - forget it. It's fundamental"*

This is taught as part of students learning to reflect and articulate on their own practice, to go beyond own personal practice, to have a critical view *"since so much of what is done here is process-based, the experience is important, and one should lead into the other"*.

The quality of the interaction with the target audience is as important to reflect on and this can be taught as part of mainstream professional practice *"Designers won't get repeat work if they don't interact well with clients, so it is essential to reflect on how it went"*.

13. What kind of support from your university/college to develop arts in participatory settings or teaching about arts work in participatory settings?

Large differences were experienced in term of support for research and teaching. In one institution research and practice were highly valued in this area. In another there has been difficulty getting research time and funding for practice based research compared to media theory research was valued more highly: *'Really there is a culture against it in my department'*.

"It should be part of the corporate responsibility of the University. We should be embedding it. But it's not valued. Even this kind of research (the Paul Hamlyn project) has taken a long time to get acknowledged. At best it's hived off as being worthy and at worst it's charitable work that can go alongside your research and academic work."

There is an interest in having more formal structured opportunities for collaboration with universities and outside organisations

14. What kind of CPD have you been offered in the area of PP?

Again there was a variance in support depending on level of support at executive and management level for PP. Newcastle University has a mission as a civic university which includes high profile "societal challenge themes", this year focused on social renewal and participation is a key part of that. There are opportunities for academics within this, to bid into cultural programme, and propose projects of performance and other creative work. The member of staff interviewed acts as interface between higher levels of the institutional strategies and what goes on with academic staff, researchers, and students, and dynamics of culture sector.

In other universities support was non existent or difficult to get. One lecturer commented *'I don't ask for anything these days it's too much of a hassle.'*

Another lecturer found that sustainable PP is hard and time consuming and she focussed on teaching and her own work in own participatory settings rather than trying to get CPD : *'you can see the lights switch off' when you talk about work in the community'*.

Networking between potentially isolated individuals and organisations working in PP may be the answer here *(support) tends to be a bit haphazard,... would like to see more*

sharing between universities, and more formal strategic opportunities for collaboration with the university and organisations.'

Other issues

There was a variable response to how social networking sites and other online tools were perceived in developing participatory work.

Students use blogs but this is not necessarily connected to working in participatory settings. Students are adept at using online tools for information exchange, communication and as a social device. They can get a sense of community by working in groups but they are not necessarily aware of the huge gap in some communities where social media is not yet used.

There was also a mixed awareness of academic work about PP in the media area.

Some interviewees were not aware of any work in their area, others knew that there may be useful work but had not used it themselves. In video one had drawn on

community arts writings from the '70s and '80s, for example 'Street Video' by Graham Wade and the 'Alternative Media Handbook'. More recent work on sustainability and PP had galvanised one interviewee. There was mention of Jacques Ranciere (performance and PP), and Lucy Orta (art, fashion, and identity). Claire Bishop's work was mentioned by two interviewees: "The desire to move viewers out of the role of passive observers and into the role of producers is one of the hallmarks of twentieth-century art." ¹² The body of work in participatory design was also cited as important (e.g. J. Bitton, A. Cavaco, L. Gaye, B. Jones, G. Mearns, R. Richardson and A. Tanaka's 'Situating Community through Creative Technologies and Practice'¹³

Regional, national and international networks and are seen as important or 'crucial' by people are involved in PP for sharing best practice and to show how regionally specific issues can be broached by a common set of methods. Involvement in the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design has helped to create the link between design and health and well being agendas, and Design Council involvement in PP. Contacts made at European level are also seen as important: *'Participation is a key term used at the EU level – the European citizen, a socio-economic and cultural participation and there is funding for both.'*

¹² Bishop, C. (2006), Participation, Whitechapel).

¹³ In AHRC Connected Communities Report, 2011

Music

Sheila Spencer, Social welfare consultant

1. Introduce self, job title and main areas of teaching, practice and research

Interviewees included people at the levels of Professor, Fellow, Senior Lecturer and Lecturer / Head of Programmes. All were practising musicians / composers but not all were engaged in participative practice themselves. Those who were gave examples of their past and current engagement in PP, which included working within an organisation which had performance, organisational and participation programmes, putting on large scale works within a community, and outreach work within schools and FE colleges.

Main areas of teaching include composition, music theory and performance, arts administration, community and educational practice, and professional practice.

2. What do you understand by the term participatory practice (PP) in arts /creative/media work? Give one of two examples of PP that you are aware of that illustrates this.

Not all the music academics were familiar with this term, and some saw it as outreach work in schools or with other students. The composing course has little content that relates specifically to PP, and the lecturer there had no involvement himself with this area of work. His department had previously been involved in outreach work, notably involving schoolchildren in creating an opera, from writing through to performance, and carrying out workshops in schools to introduce children to contemporary music.

The other Durham academic saw outreach and participation work within the University as, *“bringing high quality music to Durham City for own students and wider population to enjoy what we have to offer”*, giving as an example the concert series *Musicon*, which is led by staff but run by 3rd year students. Through this series, they gain experience of setting up and publicising such events and finding performers. However, the participation is limited here to listening to the concerts.

Surprisingly, this view of PP echoes the way that the other two academics, both involved in courses which focus on engaging musicians in teaching and PP to a considerable degree, viewed the concept. Although the Community Music course, run by Sunderland University at The Sage Gateshead, is entirely focused on giving students the skills to enable participation, at all levels, this was seen to include listening to music as well as making and experiencing it. As one interviewee put it:

“There’s no art that doesn’t happen in a participatory sense. It’s about how you would want to curate that situation so you might want to position yourself ... within ideas to do with political/social issues and be more overtly participatory. I see writing music fundamentally about engaging people in some way so it’s a continuum from writing music –here I am writing a piece and someone will listen to it at some point - to being invited to do a project which is more formalised as a PP project”.

Another added:

“It [PP] is a culturally loaded concept. Many cultures in the world would not separate the notion of participatory practice from any other artistic practice. “

This interviewee also expressed the view that there is no distinction to be made between performing and other forms of “musicking”, which he described as primarily making music but also experiencing music as a performer, participant, listener or director. A similar view expressed by another interviewee was that there is little distinction between “so-called private practice and participatory practice”.

Supporting this view, the Community Music course recognises that

“the reality of life of a musician is that they do more than performing, have to have a wider portfolio for a well-rounded musician which entails teaching and composition as well as performing”.

It appears that a widening understanding of participation has resulted in the development of both community music and other participative music degrees, and also a number of institutions beginning to offer courses at other venues (The Sage and FE colleges). Other types of course are also now available, such as The Sage’s Creative Apprenticeships and Traineeships, which help people who have been practitioners to gain skills and qualifications in teaching and facilitation.

3. How important is participatory arts practice in the arts/media for you individually? Is participation inherently seen as a ‘good thing’?

To match the range of involvement in PP, there were different views about how important it was as a way of working.

At one end of the spectrum, one academic thought that:

it sounds important and people would think it was, if asked, but there is no framework for it on the course

Another noted that

“collaboration with others is a good thing” but it was important to him that he had the freedom to be able to compose in his own way

Others felt that PP was fundamental to them and their practice:

“I was involved in this going back to the 70s, pioneering work with arts in the region, new music and various forms of outreach.... A good thing but limited by time and money”

“PP is usually an inherent part of music, but as this is not always understood, we have to have courses called “community music”. But nowadays, most music courses do entail PP”.

However, it was pointed out that the separation between amateur and professional is a false dichotomy:

“amateur means “for the love of” which includes everyone who makes or enjoys music. There is no mythical point between making music for fun and making a living out of it, it’s a gradual progression, getting more formally involved, not crossing a line to suddenly being a musician.”

So being involved in music at The Sage means being part of a “community of practice” [CoP] in which:

“the artistic programme is equally weighted between performing and listening... it is a journey from being a beginner in the CoP to being more involved and economically active within it, can be slow and gradual, and transient. Often students here are already making money from music, and may go on to do that full time or not at all, though they may use music as a “language” [when they move on into employment].”

So whereas in some other disciplines, there appears to be a line between the participant (non-professional) and the teacher (professional / practitioner), it is clear that many musicians do not see this distinction. The vision and values of those who set up The Sage some 7 years ago established this centre of music-making with that in mind:

- We value all kinds of music equally, and are committed to including, inspiring and encouraging everyone through our programmes of performance and participation, learning and training;
- We are passionate about offering the best experience for all who work and play here, together building an invigorating, inspirational environment
- We aspire to be pioneers at the forefront of innovation and excellence, enthusiastically embracing new work, new trends and new thinking
- We aim for the greatest possible inclusion in the way we build meaningful relationships through shared experiences and creative journeys
- We are proud to use our national and international positioning to create new social, creative and economic opportunities for our region and for the communities we exist to serve

4. If you are not involved PP, why not and what could change that?

For the one academic not involved in PP at all, this was a result of a combination of funding decisions, the lack of a framework for PP, and the fact that composition and contemporary music can be alienating (the text *“Fear of Music: Why People Get Rothko But Don’t Get Stockhausen”*, was mentioned here.¹⁴) He thought that other institutions do try to get people engaged in contemporary music in a participative way, and that this whether this happens may be as simple as one lecturer being keen on this area of work.

However, consideration of what happens within the Culture Lab at Newcastle University provides a rather different view. Culture Lab describes itself as *“a world class research facility for experimentation in interactive media”* and combines cross

¹⁴ David Stubbs, 2009

art form practice in digital media with teaching, research, and engagement with academics, researchers, students and citizens:

“Culture Lab is a partner in Newcastle upon Tyne's vibrant cultural sector. Situated at the gateway to the city, we host a range of public events that include concerts in partnership with local organisers, poetry readings in partnership with the Newcastle Centre for the Literary Arts, and film screenings. We co-sponsor an artist in residency programme in partnership with ISIS Arts, and host a regular series of informal seminars open to the public, the Lunch Bites series. We hold open days for professionals from industry, international visitors, and local school children. With Culture On Site, we take the lab out into the city to engage directly with the citizens of Newcastle.”¹⁵

It would seem, then, that universities' involvement with PP can depend as much on the vision statement of the University as whether there are individuals leading and teaching on courses who care, not just about citizen engagement in music, but also about the ability of practitioners and other academics to move between practice and teaching / facilitation.

5. When and where did you first become aware of participatory practice as part of creative arts and media?

As with other disciplines, some of the awareness and involvement came about when people were first establishing themselves as practitioners, having left college. The Artists' Agency (now Helix Arts) organised residencies and other opportunities in the 1980s involving many artists in the North East. One interviewee, however, could not pinpoint when he first became aware of the concept:

“I can't imagine a point at which people are not engaged in formative experiences of music in order to develop as a musician. “

6. If you have been involved what/who motivated you to get involved in this area of practice?

In this group of interviews, not everyone could say what motivated them, but one or two were very clear about the driver for getting involved in PP:

“It was a passion of mine to see what universities could offer communities and vice versa”

Another's motivation was to:

“elide some of the traditional ways of conceiving of music - there is a default assumption that as a musician, what you really want is to be rich and famous and that's very pervasive. To pursue a freeing, liberating space that you find early on through passion and fun, to preserve that space means that you can try to avoid it being appropriated by other forces, including commercial imperatives’.

¹⁵ taken from Culture Lab's website, <http://culturelab.ncl.ac.uk/home>

To support that, he noted that it is possible to find a way forward as an artist by working with people and by having a point of contact with them as a musician.

Perceptions relating to your course/teaching

7. How much importance/time is given to developing arts in participatory settings on your course?

For the BA in Community Music at The Sage, this is a clear issue. Over the course of the 3 years, students gain the skills to be musicians who also teach and help a range of people to get involved in listening to, experiencing, and performing music, or teachers who are also perform as musicians:

“The BA is equally weighted between developing “musicianship” and “educatorship”, in parallel and an inter-dependent way. Activities involve both e.g. working within groups and ensembles provides rich learning opportunities for both, and developing skills as an educator means having to develop skills as a musician. There are separate modules but also a journey through the 3 years”

The course modules set a progression route through observing their teachers and visiting practitioners working with students in workshops and master classes, to trying out their facilitation skills with other students in small groups, to going out into short placements, and then taking on a major placement which runs for 13 weeks. At Level 2-3, there is a module on Creative Artistic Practice which is seen as relevant.

For other courses, such as Durham’s Music degree, there is no content which is specifically aimed at PP as defined here, but performances at and links with The Sage provides students with opportunities to gain skills in arranging concerts for others and, from time-to-time, in setting up workshops.

8. Talk about different approaches to delivering arts in participatory settings –which are included on your courses?

It is unsurprising that there is a range of approaches to delivering PP since the courses covered by the interviewees range from those which have little PP content to those which are entirely focused on developing artists who are also teachers and facilitators.

At Durham, examples included outreach work of an Arts Council-funded composer in residence, Trevor Wishart, a Fellow in electro-acoustic music. He composed a touring opera ‘*Sequence of Inner Heaven*’ based on recording the sound of people’s voices in the North East.¹⁶ Students were involved in this though not in the recording of the voices.

Other academics talked about different aspects of their approach. One referred to two pedagogical theories:

¹⁶ see <http://www.dur.ac.uk/music/about/events/?eventno=12236>

a) *“situated learning”*: in a community of practice, you start as a beginner, and move to be a full member. Wenger describes this as a *“legitimate peripheral participation”* – depending on where the learner is at, the teacher engages in a dialogue with the learner and constructs a learning experience which suits their place along the journey to help them to become full members of the CoP they belong to. This applies both to the students’ experience here and also what they do in their practice. You can describe each as the teacher/learner or student/ teacher - we are all learning together at same time.”

b) *“Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) – the difference between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve through collaboration with peers or a teacher with greater skills – often referred to as a scaffolding approach. To give an example: in learning songwriting, the learner needs to be familiar with lots of different processes to write a song. So you can’t say to a group with no experience of any of those things “just write a song”, it won’t be a satisfactory activity. You need to identify what they already know, to build on this so they can play a fuller part in the CoP.”*

Through the musicology modules of the Music degree, students are encouraged to think about the link between music and the real world, whilst the Community Music degree composition modules (Creative and Artistic Practice) encourage musicians to link with other art forms and practices.

Echoing an earlier point made about the way that music teaching is a shared experience within a “community of practice”, one person said that:

“Students are encouraged to work on something that they have an investment in and bringing that to group of people. They need to bring something of themselves to the work; otherwise they might as well be a general facilitator. To be completely artist-led doesn’t have to be authoritarian. It can be quite shared.”

This person sees the artist’s role as being interrogative and critical, and seeks to bring this out in workshops he does and encourage this with students. He sees his approach as:

“Countermeasures against the overarching ‘doing good’ kind of idea that can come out of the training in PP. You can be seen as serving the needs of other people but what are you drawing on in that service? I think it’s very important to establish creative and artistic practice modules so students could explore this and not feel that they were being indoctrinated into some kind of community ethos.”

Another person described their approach as:

“Helping people to be “choiceful” about the ways that they work - every leader is different and we are not trying to create a particular type of leader”

So in learning to be a facilitator, students on these courses are very much encouraged to bring their own personality and choices into the mix. The approaches taken by the universities seem to take little account of the idea of the continuum – from artist-led to participant-led experiences – which was proposed. Both teacher and student are creating and learning together during the experience of making “musicking”, and both are bringing something of themselves to that experience.

9. On your course what skills related to PP are perceived as important (in addition to core arts/performance/production skills)?

Common to all the courses are key skills for communicating with members of the public (audiences), and putting on events: booking venues, marketing and attracting audiences, and getting feedback on and evaluating musical events.

Other skills learnt on the Durham courses included:

- *Developing useful community skills, through working with a conductor in residence and brass bands, and skills of working with eminent visiting artists*
- *The module in Arts Management gives students a focus to become aware of these skills (also raising sponsorship and working with venues such as Gala Theatre) both through the course and through voluntary work in extra mural arts activities*
- *Implicit guidance for students to find something that they are talented at. “Although in the first analysis the skills are mainly musical and technical they’ve (also) got to learn how to think, how to evaluate, how to deal with complex problems and issues”*

Skills gained from the Community Music degree covered all bases:

- *In facilitating / training / teaching – the overarching skill is reflective practice, digging as deeply as possible, into semantic, cognitive and lived experiences to reflect on teaching and look for solutions*
- *Situational leadership and understanding the group process – being able to read a group and see when they need to be led from the front and what degree you need to be involved in order for them to learn*
- *Repertoire skills - choosing a specialist instrument and repertoire for that instrument, and also ways of warming up etc*
- *Practical skills – project management, risk assessment, H & S, budget planning, promoting and marketing*
- *Ethics – “we cover intellectual property rights (though could do more on this with community groups), but we do have dialogue, hear from the learner, whatever their ability, on why people are here, what they want to get out of the experience; this may merge into the work, and if they can’t communicate this, then we use support workers to help establish this”*

Interestingly, another interviewee thought that students did not need to be taught to work with groups:

“They need to have a certain kind of amiability and the ability to be in the same space as everyone else. It doesn’t need anything particularly deep - an ease with people. I am happy for them to be who they are –they don’t need to be anyone else.

He was wary of a middle class agenda driving this, but did accept that skills of interaction may be taught in other areas of the course, alongside other skills such as fundraising and project management.

10. What kind of opportunities do students get to develop participatory practice?

- Placement /project in community e.g. with partner group or other settings
- Master classes/visiting practitioners
- Mentoring
- Apprenticeship
- Internship

The Durham courses seemed to have fewer opportunities to develop PP than in previous years, since funding cuts had meant an end to both the opera work in schools, and also opportunities with Durham City Arts. However, there are some opportunities: in addition to the concert series, there is also a focus on ethno-musicology, and research on this is community-based and features a crossover between creative and academic work. An example was given of a Kenyan PhD student creating a system of notation for African drumming, working with local drumming groups. Other opportunities come through master classes, summer and term-time internships 'at home' and in the region e.g. at Northern Stage, Theatre Royal, Sage (getting involved with educational programmes) and informal mentoring from staff

A further example involves students contributing to the Sound 12 Project at The Sage, a 1 day festival of music performed by students from NE universities. To get onto the programme, students need to bid, go to a series of meetings, and then develop the publicity, the performance, and possibly workshops.¹⁷

The Sunderland Community Music degree contains a wealth of opportunities, permeated throughout the programme, which mean that students experience a diverse range of professional practice. Placements comprise half of the course, with placements in each year of the course:

Year 1: witness different practice and reflect on it, try it out with peers

Year 2: placements across the region

Year 3: establish, devise, and implement own PP in a 13 week placement module

Students also meet specialist practitioners and musicians in a wide range of fields including:

- *People who have expertise in working with different ages and groups (e.g. early years, people with disabilities)*

¹⁷ <http://thesagegateshead.org/tour-dates/sound-12>

- *Experts such as festival and other performers at the Sage - very often do master classes (sometimes through video link with people outside the country) and also bring students to work with them in their performances*
- *Key professionals working in community music – may do workshops with students if they are in the area*

The interviewee concluded that students are:

“being inducted into the actual work, not something like it”

They also have the benefit of being integrated within a major music establishment rather than just an academic institution, though they do have access to libraries and other resources at Sunderland University and, through a local arrangement, with Gateshead College.

The Sage also has its own apprenticeship programme. This is covered in the section below on support to gain employment.

11. Give examples of how activities that develop arts in participatory settings have been supported /promoted by your institution

Support is primarily given through funding for composers in residence (in Durham) and the wide range of experiences made available at The Sage, including visiting practitioners and performers, placement opportunities, and the chance to be part of the music and education programmes, both at the centre and in outreach work. At Durham, the current Vice-Chancellor wants to see the University Arts activities benefiting the local community. Although the point was not made explicitly, this does mean changing the current ethos of the University from one based on student-focussed activities to one where more activities are arranged with and for local communities. Durham has always been seen as a place where “Town and Gown” do not mix well, so this approach could be something of a challenge as well as a potentially positive experience for all concerned!

Both the Sunderland academics highlighted the vision that led to The Sage being established:

“There was a high level of support in setting up the degree. The degree was set up because there was a desire at the highest level of both organisations (Vice-Chancellor and the Chief Executive of The Sage) to set up a degree.”

“The Sage describes itself explicitly as a learning organisation – this was the vision from the outset”

12. Do you think there is a need for a dedicated course in participatory practice?

Opinions on this varied. The Durham lecturers did see the need for a dedicated course within their field but did not think it would be likely to happen at this point. One added that

"I like the idea that as part of the Music Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)¹⁸, students were able to take modules from other universities but current climate has made that impossible. Other collaborations are now possible - in the new degree structure, they can engage with other disciplines such as sociology, social work, languages, history, but they need to be made aware of these by lecturers."

The Sunderland degree is, of course, already a well-respected dedicated course. Interviewees from that University were, however, cautious about the development of further courses of this nature, either elsewhere in the region or as a cross-art form development. It was thought that this would be hard to do, and could dilute the particular disciplines unless skilled practitioners were involved:

"A course has to be canny...an area of practice can be colonised by 'the academy' with specialist courses, PhDs and so on, often at the expense of the artists' involvement and the artists driving these initiatives. In a Creative Partnerships/Arts Council type model where the 'authorial power' can be given over to middlemen - administrators rather than artists - the parameters of what is being said/funded may be established by the administrators rather than the artists."

These views emphasise the importance of the integration of active artist practitioners being involved in establishing and leading music courses which deliver teaching on PP to music students.

13. Is working in participatory settings valued in terms of employability? How is this perceived by staff and by students?

All interviewees agreed that employability is an issue for all arts courses, to be taken seriously. For the Durham courses, it was noted that the music department works hard to ensure that graduates are employable, and is pretty successful in this. Although the courses are academic and focus on research rather than particularly preparing people for PP, many do in fact go on to work in jobs such as arts administration and management, where they will need to be able to engage with members of the public, or indeed teaching. Only a tiny proportion of students get jobs as performers, and those other roles were equally valued by the University. Indeed, it was seen that encouraging people to go into music teaching is *"an investment for the future"*.

For the Sunderland course, consideration of what students might do after graduation was very much part of the thinking from the start, reflected in the skills that are covered during the 3 years. Lecturers recognise that PP may be part of a mixed portfolio for graduates:

"It's a realistic route compared with other areas of music that are not viable ('making it' as a band for example). There is certain longevity about this kind of work. This kind of work can be more valued in times of economic decline."

¹⁸ CETL in Music and Inclusivity, ran across the NE, involving The Sage and all 5 universities and the OU, from 2005 – 2010 see <http://www.cetl4musicne.ac.uk/homearchive.html>

It was noted that this year's graduates have been performing and working throughout their time at university, and are clear about which direction they want to go in, whether it is in performing, community work, teaching or higher study/qualifications.

The Sage has also created two levels of training for people coming in as beginner practitioners rather than through an academic course of study, through Creative Apprenticeships which are Government-funded apprenticeships at Level 2 & 3, focusing on community arts administration, management, and technical activities, and Community Music traineeships (has run for 11 years but not running currently). The result of all 3 strands is that there are now over 120 people employed at The Sage (full-time or part-time) in PP. The non-academic strands have taken people from

"being beginners to being full members of their CoP. Most of the musicians who teach here come through this route. This is the most distinctive feature of the workforce development programme; 8 or 9 people were originally involve as practitioners, now around 120 musicians are directly employed by Sage who also teach, and there is enough work for everyone! The work has been developed by the workforce themselves. In most other places they are freelance. Is this model unique?"

Employability is thus a key issue for both Universities, and involvement in PP as one strand or the main aspect of future careers is well-respected in both.

14. Are the issues of 'quality' and 'professionalism' relating to delivering arts in participatory settings discussed on your course/s?

There was no doubt amongst these 4 interviewees that quality of production is crucial for music students, but the issue of process vs. quality of product may come up indirectly. Whilst in a concert series, the quality of the musical performance is seen as paramount, it was noted that this may not be true for other aspects of musical education:

"Quality is important, without it there is no aim. You have to have a goal but if this is over-emphasised, it could completely ruin the experience. It can be difficult to achieve this balance, and students would be aware of this."

Another identified the quality vs. process issue for people who were teaching rather than performing:

"Some of the very best artists are the worst teachers... You might not need to be the best pianist to be the best teacher. Quality is important but before quality comes engagement, and if you don't have the right environment for engagement, all the other ideas are a waste of time. If the person comes in and has no understanding of the people or the region, it's a waste of time"

An interesting issue also picked up here is that some people are better at performing than creating music and vice-versa, and that it is important for students to realise

that this tension will exist, not only for them as a group but also for any groups they work with as teachers:

However, in creative and collaborative work with students, there is always a challenge because some people are better at performing than others or at creating music. So need to be careful not to place too much emphasis with students on performing. Students do not have as much experience pedagogically so this tension is important for them to realise as well, if they are working with members of the public, and we need to guide them without being patronising so that they can do the same in their practice."

For the Community Music degree, students benefit from a quality framework at The Sage that applies to everyone who works there, whether students, teachers or practitioners, a key requirement for the organisation which explicitly describes itself as a learning organisation.

"It's a reflective and dialogical process – we evaluate all projects, observe the practice of others, and understand what to look for as good practice. This means that assessment is based around the learning outcomes for the course, but is also informed by industry practice. "

Another Sunderland academic described the fact that students are not necessarily aiming to produce polished pieces of work, but to develop their own style, and learn how to make that work for any particular audience:

"As students they develop a piece and then discuss what needs to happen to make it work in the real world. They discuss the rigour needed to make the piece suitable for particular audiences whether it's for the concert hall or another setting. So the quality of the piece is discussed in this context. We understand that for a participatory methodology or ethic to evolve, it needs to embed a narrative to do with process within the work itself. Then it becomes a species of artistic practice. What you do, how and where you perform, the idiosyncrasies of the people 'speak'. There's a need for audiences to be able to understand and decode the material through that narrative."

To summarise, the quality of the performance may be critical for a concert performance, but what matters for both performance and participative activities is being able to reflect on the activity and determine whether it worked for that particular setting. The ability to reflect seems to be of equal importance to the ability to perform to a high standard.

15. What kind of support from your university/college to develop arts in participatory settings or teaching about arts work in participatory settings?

One interviewee could not answer this question as PP was not a key feature of their course, whilst another for whom PP is not a major feature, the support from their university was seen as a, "general ethos of support for work that is accessible for people in Durham and the region". This accords with the earlier note that about a shifting agenda for that university in the way that it connects with local communities, and it

was noted that the university has won awards for high level of staff participation in the community in voluntary capacities.

The Sunderland academics had already referred to the vision exhibited by their Vice-Chancellor in working with The Sage to establish the Community Music degree, and no further note on support from the university was felt to be needed.

16. What kind of CPD have you been offered in the area of PP?

Three interviewees did not respond to this question, two for whom PP is not a major feature of their work, and one other. The fourth felt that he was able to learn all the time as part of the Sage team, but is also given time to do practice-based research and is studying for a Professional Doctorate). He also noted that practitioners based at The Sage who are new to teaching are able to do qualifications for teaching adults and to look at other qualifications.

Supplementary questions

- ***On your courses is PP perceived as part of thinking about issues relating to building long term change?... personal and community sustainability?***

Two interviewees answered this question and considered that their universities were very concerned about this, for staff and for the sustainability of the region. One was concerned that his university was now the only one offering a PGCE in music, and had bid to be part of a regional organisation for musical teaching in schools (with Darlington). He noted the importance of this, both for schools and for PP. The other person felt that the link between The Sage and his university was important as a demonstration of his organisation's commitment to community/regional sustainability.

- ***How are social networking sites and other online tools (Twitter etc) perceived in developing participatory work-by yourself, by your students? Give examples***

Students were known to use Facebook for marketing activities, and it was noted that students need to be aware that music organisations need to have good design for websites and should be able to create their own blogs.

- ***Is there a body of academic work (journals, text books, specialist research) about PP in your area that you can draw on ? Please give examples***

Not everyone was aware of academic work for PP in their area, but some noted that this is an established field that has developed since the sixties, including organisations, journals on a world-wide basis.

"There has to be an evolution in thinking about the nature of what is called 'community music' (not a term I particularly like)"

- ***How important are national networks and international contacts re pp in your area of work?***

Only two people commented on this issue, but said how important it was.

"As a research-led university, this is absolutely crucial, and we aspire to a high level of international work. But this should not be at the expense of the work in the region."

Dance and Drama

Sheila Spencer, Social welfare consultant

1. Introduce self, job title and main areas of teaching , practice and research

Interviewees included two Senior Lecturers, one Programme Leader, and a lecturer. Teaching covered the following topics:

- drama and applied theatre
- community dance practice, workforce development, dance technique, choreography, improvisation, contextual studies, teaching methods, dance science and medical, and dance and technology
- choreography, improvisation, techniques, and other modules in Performing Arts across the board (such as contemporary performance), and a student-led project called Professional Directions
- introduction to dance, ballet, technique, and 3rd year module on analysis of choreography, site-specific dance project

All interviewees were practising artists, and two of the three current academics were also involved in research which was mainly linked to the teaching of PP. It is also worth noting that two of the 3 current academics also worked in other universities, in this country and abroad.

2. What do you understand by the term participatory practice (PP) in arts /creative/media work? Give one of two examples of PP that you are aware of that illustrates this.

There were varying receptions of the term 'participatory practice'. One lecturer did not like the term, and said that it has the danger of masking underlying difficulties about the question of who has the power, and whether participants really do have any control over what they do, and carries the connotation of an underlying middle class desire to make life better for some people. Nonetheless, a definition was given by this person as:

"Making participants feel that they own what they are being involved in. Working with groups who are excluded from mainstream arts provision."

It was also noted as part of the definition that people need to be comfortable in the theatre experience they are involved in, be able to critique it, or leave when they want to, and to have a good time, as well as find a commonality with the people they are working with.

There was a discussion about the difference between attending a (dance) class and PP with interviewees. It was concluded in this set of interviews whereas teaching a class assumes that the student is aiming for progression and attaining good technique is of the utmost importance, PP is

“non-judgmental work led by facilitator who supplies the structures, parameters and inspiration”

For this person, the most important aspects of PP are that participants could feel that they shared ownership and design, and are able to talk about what the experience of dance is doing for them.

Another interviewee compared a definition that was in use in this country – *“working within the community with all the different target groups, and creative arts with children and outreach projects”* - with those used commonly elsewhere – *“anything done with others is PP, includes approaches taken in teaching to get the best out of everyone”*.

Another put it even more plainly: *“To dance is to participate”* but noted that ‘community dance’ is the term used more often in dance circles, and means dance work outside structured education.

It seems, then, that there is a possibility that we may be thinking about participation in a rather narrow way in this country. With the influence of academics who work almost entirely in this field, both here and abroad, might we be able to stretch our understanding of the concept?

Examples of PP work in practice amongst universities in the North East included:

- Theatre work with young people in the Looked After system who wanted to tell their story about what it was like to be in the system, to influence other children they came across. They were able to get their voice came across very clearly in a funny and celebratory way by describing things that happened to them, then seeing these stories being turned into sketches performed by students. The sketches encapsulated the authentic voice of the children very well
- Applied theatre students working with older people with dementia at a lunch club, most of whom could not remember what was said at the last session. 2 young female students decided to use their theatre skills to reflect back what had been said, and ended up with a story about social dances and relationships that developed through the dances. This turned into a set of theatrical presentations for the older people, and several ladies showing students how to do the dances, giving great pleasure to all
- Dance students working with Tees Valley Dance to help people get involved in dance marathons
- Improvisation workshops with complete beginners working alongside experienced dancers
- A video of people dancing in the streets when asked to by students
- Opening up dance in a church hall for people who were not accessing dance in that area, such as older people, children, and regular church goers

3. How important is participatory arts practice in the arts/media for you individually? Is participation inherently seen as a ‘good thing’?

One of this group encapsulated the feeling that came from others as well but was not quite so neatly put:

"It's fundamental, it's how I learn my living" "what turns me on is seeing the fresh, original dynamic when you work with people who are not trained as performers, and are able to communicate something they have never been able to communicate before."

Another talked about the myth that the only dancer of value is one who performs. This used to begin right at the start, at school or in a dance class for children, but it appears that this is now beginning to change, so that people nowadays see the significance of dance as an art form that can be used for so many reasons:

"Dance and movement can be used as a vehicle to help people to learn so many other things – language, for example."

Research carried out for the Arts Council in 2009 found that of the 40,000 people employed in the dance sector in England, only 2,000 were employed only as performers¹⁹. So it is integral to the dance course at Teesside University, for example, that students are taught about other ways of working in dance, including PP.

Another interviewee felt that PP is essential, as long as the art form of dance is not forgotten, so that dance is not just seen as one form of keep fit. It was her aspiration that people can be touched by dance, whether as a social activity, something to watch, a skill to learn, or the chance to create a piece.

4. If you are not involved PP, why not and what could change that?

5. When and where did you first become aware of participatory practice as part of creative arts and media?

All four interviewees were involved in PP, but had got involved for quite different reasons. All but one had actively chosen this route, and only one had slipped into it to make a living.

One noted that the move into PP had stemmed from a belief that you can change things at the micro level which can change things at a macro level, and also referred to the idea of *"theatre being able to animate people to see life from their perspective, not from yours"*. Another interviewee had also chosen the route of PP, having seen at dance school that the options for a career path were not just to perform. She chose this route because it had the benefit of emphasising process, personal choice and artistic decisions, and enabled her to *"push the boundaries"*, with a wider notion of what dance can be than perhaps the traditional route allowed, such as the use of video, and other experimental forms of dance. In her teaching, she values the experiential, the sensation, personal reflection, and democratic structures,

¹⁹ *Mapping Dance: A Window on Dance 2004-2008*, Susanne Burns, Arts Council 2009

opportunities to share, personal discovery, and connecting with your environment that PP allows.

Another referred to training as a body therapist / gymnast, and how this took her into working with groups of dancers, and then to focus much of her teaching others how to work with others who may or may not be profession dancers.

6. *If you have been involved what/who motivated you to get involved in this area of practice?*

Motivation for this group of academics came mostly from inspiring individuals, some of whom founded schools of thought and practice relevant to PP: Boal and the Sheffield Crucible Youth Theatre Group for applied theatre; and teachers and dance instructors at school and college such as Rosemary Butcher and Miranda Tuffnell.

Perceptions relating to your course/teaching

7. *How much importance/time is given to developing arts in participatory settings on your course?*

For two of the courses, PP is entirely integrated into the course programme, since this is the main focus of the course. For example, at Northumbria's Applied Theatre course, *"the aim is that any drama graduate can go into any setting and work with whoever and whatever is there, to create performances etc."* A common thread throughout the course aims to help students to learn how to collaborate, negotiate, and find a common goal with groups of people who are *"not like them"*.

For the Dance course at Teesside, the whole philosophy is that PP is not separated from learning about technique, how to work with other artists, or how to teach, and all performances have educational packages designed to go with them.

By contrast, the choreography course at Northumbria is not focused on PP, and whilst there had been a module in leading and managing dance, this was cut because of funding decisions, and PP now accounts for part of the third of the course that is not focused on choreography or dance technique. To compensate for the loss of that module, extra workshops have been arranged with dancers who specialise in PP, such as Dance Artist for Change (a wheelchair dancer and Bare Toed (Dance City workshops and performances for under 5s).

8. *Talk about different approaches to delivering arts in participatory settings – which are included on your courses?*

For the 2 courses dedicated to PP, all approaches are needed at different times, and so all approaches are covered throughout the courses, but the key approach looked for co-authorship. A useful example was given of progression for the group of Looked After Children who, having been involved with theatre students for some time, moved from describing their stories to students who turned these into sketches to writing and performing their own stories. At the start of the engagement, they had neither the confidence nor the skills to do this, and it was stressed that it is important to recognise that levels of education are not equal, so it can take time to develop skills and elements of theatre for people without that experience.

In interviews with people from other disciplines, the Arnstein Ladder of Participation used by sociologists was a familiar theory²⁰. For students of dance, Jo Butterworth's Choreographic Framework follows a similar path: there are 5 steps, with an authoritarian approach at one end, where dancers have to follow instructions, to democratic approach where people are equal, and authorship and responsibility is shared, more democratic and feminist. However, it was also suggested by one interviewee that modules in PP started too soon, when people are not mature enough to be able to work in a participative way, and were not yet dancing at a high enough standard to get involved effectively in sharing the learning with others who were not professionals.

For students of choreography, it is thought essential to understand how to use different approaches, notably because improvisation requires a democratic approach with someone directing but not deciding on what form the dance will take.

9. On your course what skills related to PP are perceived as important (in addition to core arts/performance/production skills)?

The two dedicated courses covered most of the skills needed to work in PP within the theatre or dance sectors: facilitation, project management, collaboration, negotiation, devising with others, performing with others, working with and managing other people, health and safety, business planning, and ethics are key components of the two courses. Additional elements covered in the dance course were use of language (necessary for describing movement) and looking at what equipment to use with different groups. Fundraising had been covered as well, but had to be dropped because of space in the timetable.

In the choreography course, there is an emphasis on making choices, reflection, and writing artist and vision statements, developing materials needed, and marketing.

10. What kind of opportunities do students get to develop participatory practice?

Courses are carefully organised to provide the right opportunities to develop PP at the right stage. In the Applied Theatre course at Northumbria, for example, the course is organised as a series of stepping stones:

1st year: Devising, performing, acting, vocal and physical skills

2nd year: Facilitation skills, and approaches to devising social theatre – a show is done with an organisation (e.g. Seven Stories), as a structured experience with young people with a guaranteed audience who have chosen to be there

3rd year: Performance in Context – completing a project from start to finish each student has to choose a more difficult group to work with (i.e. a group with challenges, and not necessarily people who have chosen to be there), and devise the project from start to finish, conceive, manage, and produce the project. For the Professional Practice course, they then produce a literature review about their project, and present an evaluation

²⁰ Originally published as Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224, see <http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/ideas.htm> for explanation

A similarly structured experience is provided for Dance students at Teesside:

- 1st Year: learn how to teach other students in a safe environment from week 2, to create a choreography, teach one another, learn how to describe different movements and to demonstrate, teach a small class, and team teach
- 2nd Year: create a piece and teach a full class to do it, teach short exercises for different groups
- 3rd Year: Work-related context – placement as a full module, to manage it, and do all admin, in any setting e.g. with dance agencies, small companies, in schools, dance schools.

Other opportunities come from participating with Tees Valley Dance to support them to do dance marathons, for example, and work placements or shadowing during the holidays (though this is not a requirement as it is difficult to organise and to assess).

For the Choreography degree, there are opportunities to do placements which focus on PP as one of a number of choices.

Sessions with visiting practitioners were essential for the dance courses, along with residences. For the Applied Theatre course, it was felt that because the staff team had such a wide range of experience and current practice between them, the course could not justify bringing in other visiting practitioners.

11. Give examples of how activities that develop arts in participatory settings have been supported /promoted by your institution.

This ranged from hands-off support and encouragement to support to get involved in initiatives with the community, providing performance space, opportunities to discuss teaching of PP with other academics, and opportunities to present research or apply for research funding. Teesside University also involves the lecturers in Dance in discussions about research into the links between, for example, arts and sociology, art and Occupational Therapy, and arts and health, so that the position of artists within society is looked at from different perspectives as well as the teaching of arts subjects.

12. Do you think there is a need for a dedicated course in participatory practices?

Two courses in dance and drama were already dedicated to PP. Another dance course being developed in the NE region has significant input on PP.

13. Is working in participatory settings valued in terms of employability? How is this perceived by staff and by students?

Employability for arts students was seen as a driving force for two of the courses, particularly for sustaining a career. For the Applied Theatre course, for example, it is referred to throughout the 3 years, and students are reminded that the NE is peopled by graduates from the course in all sorts of settings.

For the Dance degree at Teesside, it was noted artists need to look for other ways to make a living, work in different and interesting ways, given that so few dancers are employed solely as performers. The ACE report had found that employers did not at that time think they had enough graduates who were fit for purpose; people could dance and create but did not know anything about fundraising, working with people

or managing people or the process. The report appears to have been influential in leading to courses being set up to focus on teaching and PP, amongst other roles for dancers, and the content of the Teesside course reflects this need to consider how sustainable careers can be built for dancers who do not want to take the performing route.

Courses also help students to find work in practical ways, with tutorials on professional development, professional conduct, and seeking work.

14. Are the issues of 'quality' and 'professionalism' relating to delivering arts in participatory settings discussed on your course/s?

Although one of the interviewees felt that this was not discussed enough in universities at the moment, responses from other academics in this group of interviews suggest that it is very much on people's minds when they are preparing course programmes and assessment frameworks. This entire group agreed that process and product must be given equal weight overall but that the balance between the two partly depends on the target group involved in the activity. One said that having a goal was vital in any activity:

"something has to be at stake, an end goal being worked towards, or things can become unstuck"

He qualified this, noting that this did not mean that there has to be a performance, but there does need to be a defined end goal which everyone is clear about. And in terms of quality, he pointed to the need for artists working in PP to be well-versed in theatre practice:

"A participatory artist has to know their art form, the rules for how it is made – not hard to pick up but quite difficult to put into practice ... [you need to] know what the fundamental ingredients of theatre are and how to make people feel comfortable, recognise when an idea is good and how to push it" "is it authentically representing the collective personality of that group?"

For dance practitioners, examples were given of how the course helps them to ensure that the process works well: the course considers professional conduct, how to behave in different environments, how to communicate, how to conduct oneself at class, etc. Students need to be aware of the different roles that they can play within PP, including leadership, team working, and administration.

There was some discussion about how the quality of the process can be assessed, in addition to the quality of the output. Some lecturers noted that they do not have enough time to go out to see the work of students during their placements, so do not see the process of working with a group, but some argued that the quality of the performance exposes the work that has gone into it.

15. What kind of support from your university/college to develop arts in participatory settings or teaching about arts work in participatory settings?

The two dedicated courses attract great support from their universities, but one interviewee felt that there was not universal support for PP in the North East.

16. What kind of CPD have you been offered in the area of PP?

This varied quite widely, from a view that there is strong support to do research and to make the case for extra resources and time, to the feeling that staff teaching arts courses do not get offered much time or support to do CPD. One academic noted that their course had a very high rate of contact time with students, and there was little time for research and very little funding to attend conferences or to present papers. There was, however, support for discussion between lecturers in different disciplines within the university, and some opportunity to collaborate on research at the local level.

Supplementary questions

- ***On your courses is PP perceived as part of thinking about issues relating to building long term change?... personal and community sustainability?***

Both Teesside and Northumbria Universities see PP as part of their contribution to sustainability and regeneration in the area they work in.

- ***How are social networking sites and other online tools (Twitter etc.) perceived in developing participatory work-by yourself, by your students? Give examples***

There is not a great deal of use of social media for these courses, although video and web-based choreography are both in use in dance teaching, as well as blogs as part of portfolio development.

- ***Is there a body of academic work (journals, text books, specialist research) about PP in your area that you can draw on?***

There is a considerable body of academic work for participatory work in both dance and drama, with a big expansion of this material over the last 10 years. One interviewee referred to a “great level of sophistication in the debate”.

- ***How important are national networks and international contacts re pp in your area of work?***

These were thought to be important to the teaching of PP in both dance and drama, but it is not often possible to develop the exchanges that could bear so much fruit, because of funding and time constraints. Some universities were fortunate to have built up partnerships with lecturers in institutions overseas, bringing the opportunity for students to attend summer schools or web-based master classes.

Amongst these interviews, there was significant concern expressed about dance students getting enough opportunity to see the work of touring companies. This was thought to be essential for inform and shape their knowledge of the art form, and also to network with other artists in order to share ideas, set up collaboration with other artists, and begin to explore ideas for work in the future. Some students are unable to seize the opportunity when dance events take place, unless colleges support attendance at dance performances around the region and elsewhere, given that they would have to travel to either Newcastle or Leeds.

Conclusions

Introduction

The conclusions are drawn from interviews across the five themes, and the first point to make is that there was a good deal of agreement between interviewees from across the five areas, and across all five universities.

The report also highlights differences in approach between the five themes, but does not make comparisons between the different institutions. We are aware that the interviews did not cover all courses based in the five NE universities which lay emphasis on teaching about arts in participatory settings, so it has not been possible to draw conclusions about how each university approaches the teaching of the topic.

The section starts by looking at the common issues arising from the interviews across all five themes, in relation to each of the main topics, and then draws out some overall conclusions.

What is meant by the term “participatory practice”?

Whether the term used is “participatory practice” or “arts in participatory settings”, some academics felt very strongly that all their art work is participatory to some degree, and one noted that trying to separate a passive involvement in art from an active one is a peculiarity of our culture:

- *There’s no art that doesn’t happen in a participatory sense*
- *It’s a culturally loaded and narrow concept - in other countries, [it] refers to any artistic work done with others, it’s taken as read that artists will work within their communities*

These views were particularly explicit amongst those working in the music arena, for whom there was also little in the way of a boundary between learning about, performing in, and listening to music, and fine artists. Taking this a step further, another saw little boundary between public and individual practice, or between participatory and ‘socially engaged’ practice.

Answers to the question “What do you understand by the term participatory practice (PP)” showed that not all participants were familiar with or even liked the term; it also elicited a wide variety of explanations, from those that saw the practice as “*abandoning demarcations and hierarchy of practice*” and co-creation, to those who saw it as more of a chance to showcase what the university had to offer: “*bringing high quality music to the city for our own students and the wider population to enjoy*”. Some saw the practice as a way of transferring knowledge and skills.

For lecturers in creative writing, the perception of PP is of a very broad process of engagement with audiences and supporting their inclusion in participation. This can include attending an event, engaging in a cultural form they feel or are in practice excluded from, to self-empowerment or empowering others, and through to co-creation for artists and productive purposes. The idea of community work is a significant but small part of this, for people involved in this theme.

For academics involved in the five themes, there was a general view that the practice can help people to create something they would not have had the permission, means or confidence to create before. There were those in each discipline who thought that all arts teaching in universities is participative in that it encourages self-expression and provides people with access to creative forms and the tools to develop a craft which they would not have had access to otherwise.

There were people in several disciplines who drew political inferences about this type of engagement with working class, marginalised, or excluded communities in the region. For academics teaching creative writing, one respondent added to this by stating that the definition of PP was too narrow if it was only about working with external community groups: it also needed to include the idea of working with students, often, in this case, drawn from local deprived or marginalised communities, who had come to study creative writing in order to find their own voices.

One academic drew a distinction between collaborative practice – working with other professionals – and participatory practice – joint work between professionals and community members. This was more likely to be the case in some media and design departments, where lecturers and students might collaborate only with other professionals, rather than with participating amateurs. Some visual artists, in contrast, saw working in a generally participatory way as essential in helping students to learn, develop and discover. Similarly, some media lecturers said that experiential learning was a critical factor, and saw participation as “*acts of making and doing*” which are as important as “*acts of thinking*”. Dance and drama lecturers also referred to a potential imbalance of power between facilitators and participants, and preferred to see participatory practice as involving everyone but sharing skills and knowledge between those with more and those with less experience. If participants feel that they own what they are being involved in, then that can apply to all who take part in creating a dance piece.

Involvement in participatory practice and personal motivation for this

The research was deliberately carried out with academic staff who were not involved deeply in participative practice or in teaching about it, as well those who were passionate about or specifically employed to foster participative ways of working. It follows then, that some respondees were scarcely involved in PP.

For those who were involved in PP in some way, the motivation often came from a passion for involving people in the community in creative work, from a political commitment to enabling self-expression, or a commitment to facilitating change for local or other communities. For many within this group, their involvement and teaching in PP was seen as a natural way of life. In contrast, many people said that they had come to this way of working because they needed to earn money, often shortly after graduating. For this group, it was often the case that the skills for doing this work had had to be gained on the job, and in a few cases, this had led to lecturers making sure that at least basic skills for facilitation were included in their teaching.

We drew a distinction between teaching and participatory work; holding a class for amateurs and helping people to gain knowledge and skills in a way that was seen as different to working together to create a piece that all could own, whether the artist had greater involvement (for example through choreography or writing a play) or whether all had equal parts (as in an improvised dance piece, for example). Several interviewees were involved in teaching within community settings, but not in co-creation or in developing any degree of participation beyond that of a student. Some, notably several creative writers, saw their art as an individual activity, and were more concerned about getting their work published than investing time in helping people who were not their immediate students to develop their work.

For the visual arts, all participants had some previous knowledge of, or engagement in, participative practice themselves, although some preferred not to work in this setting in their current work. In the case of most media production and graphic design courses, several courses in the region pursue an employability agenda which aims to prepare students for working in mainstream parts of the industry, and this means that there is little time for PP. In this theme, there were nonetheless individuals to be found in each university who promote and actively seek to involve students in PP, but often their need to collaborate with other practitioners outside their subject area was not supported by their institution and some seemed rather isolated and out on a limb in their efforts to work in this way, even where there were other people who had a focus on PP elsewhere in the same department. This seems to us something of a missed opportunity, to build capacity and opportunities where there are individuals with these motivations, interests, and skills.

In all the themes, there were courses that were heavily weighted towards participative practice, and indeed had been established in order to help artists to gain skills to work in participatory settings alongside performing skills. Other courses are geared towards academic learning or composition / choreography and go little beyond performing for local communities by way of involvement.

A key finding of the research was that there is important work going on in the region in encouraging art work in participatory settings through teaching about PP. In particular, the work being done by the Culture Lab at Newcastle, by the Dance course at Teesside, by the Applied Drama course at Northumbria, and by the Community Music course at Sunderland, all result in some highly skilled graduates going into participative work, as well as very interesting work being done within the communities where students have been involved. There are, of course, other courses and departments where interviews were not carried out but where there are courses with a high degree of innovative work on PP, so the examples given here should not be seen as the limit of excellence in relation to PP in the North East region's universities or indeed FE colleges.

What influences the approach and content of courses for PP?

Some academics thought that individual members of staff were most likely to influence whether PP is covered but we would conclude that the approach taken is more likely to be influenced by the way that courses were set up in the first place. Courses and departments where PP has a high profile tended to result from top level visionary decisions about PP being fundamental aspects of the courses, with

resources put in place to run them, and sustain teaching, research and practice to this aim. Collaboration between several university departments and with other partners is also a common feature of these courses.

The motivation of individual academics can have an impact on what is taught and what opportunities are sought for students. One visual artist, for example, has over many years developed a specialism which leads to him being involved with many art initiatives within community settings, and it was clear that this influenced both his teaching and the opportunities for student placements and individual study. Similarly, for media, drama, dance and creative writing themes, there were academics whose backgrounds were influenced by social activism, community arts and the documentary /workshop movement in the North-East or elsewhere, and there was a very simple connection between their own previous practice and the focus on PP within their teaching and the courses they taught.

A further factor was the way that some Universities see themselves as being “located” within communities. The flagship courses have in part developed as a way of meeting the need to be engaged with people in the local area and to contribute to regeneration and sustainability there. In these universities, courses have been developed so as to maximise involvement with local communities, and in many cases, the course structure reflects this. We also noted that, for one lecturer, gaining an understanding of the importance of the arts in cultural and therefore economic regeneration had spurred him on as an individual (but also as a course leader) to create opportunities for residents and people working in the local area to get engaged in arts activities, and this had also had an impact on his teaching.

Course content is influenced by the need to ensure that students gain both the skills to be experts in their own artform, and the skills to be good facilitators. The latter skills were commonly seen as transferable, and applicable to a range of types of employment as artists, not just as facilitators, but also as arts administrators, teachers, and beyond.

Lecturers in both dance and drama courses were aware of the need to help students to gain skills along the whole range of participatory approaches as described in the Sherry Arnstein Ladder of Participation, echoed in the Butterworth Choreographic Framework. Most courses which focus on PP teach across whole of this spectrum, from artist-led to participant-led, although not all lecturers were aware that they were doing so!

There was not a great deal of focus on how the delivery of PP was included on creative writing courses; where it was included, it was based on writing projects rather than around other useful skills.

For some courses, the approach taken is to integrate teaching on participation with teaching on performance and art creation. One course sees learners as part of the “community of practice” with a journey to be taken throughout their course, if not their career. Every aspect of the course is seen as an opportunity to gain skills and knowledge through reflection, and there was a sense of the degree of ownership by participants being accepted at whatever level, provided there is no barrier between

the teacher and the taught, and the possibility of being able to reflect on the learning experience.

Another issue that was drawn out through the interviews was the value of having an umbrella body which can provide resources for lecturers and students, provide access to opportunities, and stimulate interest in PP. This was also raised in the focus groups held with practitioners, who liked the idea of umbrella bodies which can hold databases of practitioners and promote high quality work in the sector. Such bodies can also bring together the universities and colleges in the region, and help to promote more even opportunities for students around the region, regardless of which institution they are based at or where.

Opportunities for students to engage in participatory work during the course

The different emphasis on the various courses in relation to PP is broadly reflected in the range of opportunities available for students.

For the courses where PP is an essential element of the course (such as the Community Music degree, where teaching facilitation skills has equal weight with teaching the student to be a performing musician), opportunities include community projects and placements which start from the beginning of the course, master classes with a range of performers and specialist teachers, and routes into mentoring, apprenticeships and internships following the course. Students benefit from being integrated within a major music establishment rather than just an academic institution. A similar range of opportunities exist within Culture Lab, as a unit set within a department providing musical, visual and digital art projects and performances involving residents of the area and others.

For courses which do not heavily focus on PP or community engagement, opportunities are more likely to be dependent on the desires and interests of individual students, rather than on arrangements made for all to benefit from. This might take the form of student enterprise placements, summer placements, or voluntary activities, though in one case, a lecturer who had developed work with communities overseas took with him a number of students who were particularly interested in moving into this area of work for a career, as an additional placement. Other academics noted that, as it can be very time-consuming to organise community placements, these have taken a back seat in recent years in favour of more mainstream opportunities. There was also some hesitation over some forms of placement which appeared to be *"slave labour"*.

Gaining the skills for working in arts in participatory settings

Those courses that focus on PP have significant elements of skill development for facilitation, often from the start of the course. In one course, for example, students facilitate a class with their peers within the first few weeks, and by the last year, a community placement forms one whole module. The full range of skills needed to facilitate art work in community settings is taught, including working with groups, understanding the needs of different participants, working with gatekeepers and commissioners, co-creation, the ethics of work within different communities, and helping people to give and receive feedback.

At the other end of the scale, some courses taught very few of the core skills perceived as important in PP, but might cover key elements such as communicating with different audiences, writing applications artist statements, fundraising, event and project management, and learning to reflect, seen as transferable skills that any professional would require, as well as being critical for work in participative settings.

Most academics involved in courses with a high PP element valued the fact that these skills were part of the courses from an early date, but other minority views came from one person who considered that students need to be more mature before they can embark on work within different communities, and another whose view was that anyone could gain these skills provided they were “*at ease with themselves*” and “*have a certain kind of amiability and the ability to be in the same space as everyone else*”. This latter view was largely driven by a concern that there is a middle class agenda driving the teaching of skills that ought to be part of the make-up of a person who is prepared to work in this way. The proportion of time devoted to helping students to gain these skills, and the difficulties reported by those academics who said they had “*fallen into*” work in participative settings without gaining the skills as students, would seem to suggest to us, however, that it is important to focus on these skills to some degree, and that, the very least, students and academics alike should be clear what expertise is needed if the job is to be done well.

Being able to observe other professionals was also seen as an important factor, whether as performers or practitioners in participatory work. We heard that this can be difficult for some students, where their college is based outside the main places where artists congregate. The benefit of umbrella bodies and agencies working across the region was emphasised here, but there may need to be some reflection on whether the benefits of agencies such as Dance City and designated arts bodies really do stretch into all parts of the region.

Was the process of production of a piece of artwork through participation as important as the product itself?

A key question posed to all interviewees was whether the quality of the product (the performance, production, or show) was as important as the process by which it was achieved. There was general agreement that students must be skilled in their own art form or the whole exercise is pointless, but that both are important in PP. One person said that “*one should lead to the other*”, a common view, whilst another talked about the importance of being able to embed their work in the context within which they were working.

Most departments acknowledged the importance of the process, even where they focused on the quality of the artistic product, or on achieving mainstream employment and industry prizes.

A common view was that there must be an aim to produce a good performance or piece: “*something has to be at stake, an end goal being worked towards, or things can become unstuck*”, and also that an essential element of good work in both participative settings and performance is being able to reflect on what has transpired, and to produce work that is appropriate to its setting.

Lecturers agreed that being able to assess the process is important, but whilst some regretted the fact that there is not always time to observe the process, it is often possible to see how good the engagement with the non-professionals has been by looking at the product. We would suggest, however, that courses which value participative work should give some priority to tutors having the time to observe the process as well as the final product.

Barriers to success in delivering teaching about PP or to engaging students in PP

Though we had not asked specifically what barriers there were to delivering successful teaching in PP, or to successfully engaging students in this aspect of the work, the interviews brought out these issues in a way that was instructive.

Interviewees identified complex reasons for those courses not focusing on work in participative settings to a great degree. These included:

- university priorities focusing on other issues, so that not enough time is allocated to this aspect of some courses
- a difficulty in recruiting staff into such work, given other priorities for managers and the additional burden it can place on both lecturers and administrators and management
- not being recognised as a specialism
- lack of demand for this area of work amongst students on some courses
- the desire from many students (notably in creative writing and art) to have time to develop their own writing and skills

Some lecturers also identified that whilst there was a heavy focus on research, the resources were not always there for research which was based on practice or on participatory work. The same could be true of resources allowed for Continuing Professional Development.

For some interviewees, it seemed that not having anyone on the staff team whose interest was in participative work meant that there was little or no focus on this in the courses taught there; however, as noted earlier, of more importance was the question of how the course had been established, and the overall aims of and vision for the course.

A further issue which applied to media courses more than others was that the drive to help students to be able to seek employment in mainstream parts of the industry means that there is less focus on developing courses for work in participatory settings. Another factor for creative writing was the erosion of adult education, leading to a fragmented academic community and connections lost for students within the community. With insufficient support for this type of work, extra-curricular courses for students within the community do not necessarily lead to placements for students on academic courses.

The importance of employability in courses focusing on PP

This was an area where responses varied widely across the five themes. All of the participants in the creative writing theme were aware of the employability agenda, but many were uncomfortable with it. The interviews lead us to a suggestion that more could be done to provide students with information about PP, so as to answer the question “How do I make a writing life?” where PP can be a source of income.

In the media and design sectors, there was evidence that experience of PP has clear benefits in broadening perceptions about employability, but for the main part, courses in the North East lead students towards careers in the mainstream industries, unless they already have an inclination to work in participative settings. This was slightly puzzling, given the number of agencies based in the North East whose philosophy was influenced by the workshop approach (Amber Films and Swingbridge Video, for example) and the fact that there are large numbers of digital and animation industries in the region working in participative ways and settings.

For the visual arts sector, work in participatory settings had been seen in the past by most staff and students as second class, and to some extent is still dependent on there being an academic championing this as a potential career. Newcastle’s CultureLab and Life, Work, Arts projects may be changing that as part of the student experience.

For drama and music students, however, working in participative settings is so likely as a route for students leaving the courses based in the North East that working towards employment in PP after graduating is considered throughout the courses. Even in more academic courses, it is acknowledged that a tiny proportion of students get jobs as performers, and other roles, such as arts administration, management, or teaching were equally valued. A considerable number of music and drama students have moved into work within the region which made use of skills gained in working with people in a variety of settings (and was said to have contributed to the regeneration of the region). Encouraging people to go into music teaching is seen as “*an investment for the future*”. However, what is significant about the music industry is that a very large number of performers also teach or get involved in participative work; tutors referred to the fact that many students are already accomplished performers by the time they come on their course and see no boundary between being a performer and helping others to learn to make music, all being part of a “community of practice”, regardless of their stage of the journey to become a performer.

In the dance sector, a recent report commissioned by Arts Council England highlighted the fact that there too only a very small proportion of students go on to be full-time performers. Courses set up in the last few years have responded to that lesson by focusing on helping students to broaden their appeal and become accomplished teachers and facilitators, as well as setting up their own companies, and so not focus solely on the narrow chance of being chosen to be a member of a well-known dance troupe.

Overall conclusions

Our first conclusion is that there is a need for a common language with which to define participatory work – or art work carried out in participatory settings – which all artists, academics, and students may understand. This could help to make connections between those working in this way, reduce the isolation and the barriers referred to here, and ensure that students have better access to some of the many exciting opportunities that exist for them to work in participatory ways and settings. Our research also suggests that there is a need for awareness of the topic to be raised within the region's universities, perhaps through the development of a guide to working in participatory settings, together with examples of courses, modules and opportunities for practice. The guide could also identify the distinction between collaborative work and participative practice to be drawn.

The range of motivations for artists working in participatory settings, and therefore the teaching about this type of work, is to be welcomed and adds strength and depth to the teaching of participatory practice.

For people who are teaching to any degree about art work in participatory settings, the continuum of artist-led to participant-led approaches is essential background knowledge, and its existence and application to teaching in the arts field could be better publicised.

The idea of seeing students as involved in a “community of practice” which includes practitioners, lecturers and other participants is attractive, and could be applied across all the themes, so as to underplay a rather false distinction which might be seen between the artist, the teacher and the taught.

Where there is an umbrella body which can promote art work in participatory settings, both students and academics can benefit, and this can increase the range of opportunities for placements for students, and opportunities for practitioners, as well as promoting high quality work in this field. This might also help to ensure that students at all colleges and universities in the region can access those opportunities and the chance to observe and mingle with practitioners in their artform.

The research suggests that the teaching of skills for participative work, some of which are applicable to other roles in the arts world, could be enhanced through the publication of a guide to the skills needed, and ways of working to pass on the skills to students across the various themes. Discussion about the curriculum needed for teaching about art work in participatory settings, the next stage of the North East ArtWorks project, will be welcome.

Other elements of research in the ArtWorks NE project have identified the need for practitioners to have the opportunity to reflect on their skills and stage of development in carrying out their work in participatory settings, and a number of gaps in training available for practitioners. (See for example, pages 60-61 of the Audit of Practice: gaps in training noted were opportunities for new graduates to get experience of participatory work, training on working with different audiences and in different contexts, refresher training and opportunities to reflect, for artists further on with their careers, and mechanisms to measure and therefore improve quality and

consistency.) Focus groups held with practitioners made similar points about the need for practitioners to meet together to reflect on and refresh their skills. There are various ways to meet this need, through networks for practitioners involved in PP, short courses, or perhaps the opportunity to do further study on this way of working.

The research also suggests that there is a need for more emphasis and resources for Continuing Professional Development and for research, for academics whose work focuses on teaching about participatory practice, to enhance the status of such courses and to build capacity for teaching on this area of work.

Work in participatory settings should be seen as an employment option for artists across all the themes. Both course design and placement opportunities need to open this up as a possible choice.

Finally, our research highlights the way that art work in participatory settings can contribute to supporting the role of a university within the community in which they are based. In some parts of the region, there could be more explicit recognition of the place of universities in supporting cultural and economic regeneration of the area, making better links between departments across the institution which work with local communities, and increasing the opportunities for work for arts students across the themes.

Recommendations

1. Increase awareness amongst university teaching staff and managers of the wide range of different definitions and practices of artwork in participatory settings

- Provide staff with opportunities to discuss this report and the Artworks NE Audit of Practice.
- Produce a guide to working in participatory settings including examples on the spectrum of artist-led to participant-led projects. Also include examples of courses, modules and links to existing resources in this area.
- Promote the idea of courses as “community of practice” where there is less distinction made about being an artist and helping others to learn to make art, between the teacher and the taught.

2. Initiate change in the curriculum and promote good practice in teaching, learning and assessment

- Highlight the full range of skills needed to facilitate arts work in community and participatory settings, including facilitation skills, working with groups, understanding the needs of different participants, working with gatekeepers and commissioners, co-creation, the ethics of work within different communities, and helping people to give and receive feedback.
- Identify the transferable skills for both mainstream and participative settings to increase graduates’ employability: communicating with different audiences, writing applications and artist statements, fundraising, event and project management, facilitation and learning to reflect.
- Provide range of examples of learning activities in each subject area and also include examples of working in interdisciplinary way.
- Disseminate relevant teaching and learning activities and case studies of practice that can be used when focusing on this area.
- Encourage discussion about balance between teaching facilitation skills and teaching the student to be a practitioner/artist.
- Circulate/promotion of key texts in this area, for instance Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation²¹, Butterworth’s Choreographic Framework²², Guennel’s Action Oriented Media Pedagogy.²³

²¹Arnstein, Sherry R (1969) ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation’ in Journal of the American Planning Association , Vol. 35, No. 4, July, pp. 216-224

- Develop guidelines for assessment to include best practice relating to reflection on process and product and tutors having the time to observe the process as well as the final product.
- 3. Encourage departments to review existing programmes and design new modules and courses to focus on artists working in participatory settings**
- Encourage review of learning outcomes in course documentation to include outcomes relating to working in participatory settings.
 - Circulate examples of modules relating to working in participatory settings. This could include work placements in community/ participatory settings, project work with specialist interest groups, modules that encourage peer to peer teaching, modules that explore praxis.
 - Develop new courses and support infrastructure - useful models of practice are Culture Lab at Newcastle, Dance course at Teesside, the Applied Drama course at Northumbria, and the Community Music course at Sunderland.
 - Encourage top level visionary decision making about working in participatory settings as this is fundamental to success of setting up new courses with resources being put in place to run the courses, and sustain teaching, research and practice.
- 4. Increase the status and self-worth of artists/lecturers working in participatory settings**
- Promote art work in participatory settings through teaching about participatory practices as a valued specialism alongside other more mainstream practices.
 - Allocate research resources to academics whose work focuses on teaching about participatory practice, to enhance the status of such courses and to build capacity for teaching on this area of work.
 - Encourage collaborative research projects relating to participatory arts work- in both practice and related theory.
 - Provide resources for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in this area.

²²See Butterworth J. (2004) Teaching choreography in higher education: a process continuum model. *Research in Dance Education*, Volume 5, Number 1, April 2004, pp. 45-67(23)

²³Günneil T., (2008) The 'Dual Role' approach: encouraging access to community radio
The Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media, Volume 6 Issue 2&3

- Encourage university marketing departments to promote participatory work done by staff and students –including quotations/case studies of ‘how I got started...’
- Develop ways of supporting lecturers already teaching in this area by encouraging the sharing of interests and skills within and across departments, building capacity and opportunities to work on joint projects and modules of study, and providing start-up funding for joint research bids.

5. Encourage working in participatory settings to be seen as a career opportunity and employability focus

- Broaden perceptions about employability emphasizing artists working in participatory settings can be a source of income/career choice. Expand the employment repertoire for artists so that they see opportunities as facilitators, arts administrators, teachers, and beyond.
- Include learning outcomes relating to employability in participatory settings in all relevant modules.
- Modify existing work placement/internship/live project guidelines to include setting up and supporting students on community placements.
- Include facilitation and group work as part of skills for employability.
- Raise visibility of this kind of work of in university publicity and careers materials to include case studies of good practice representing different arts areas.

6. Ensure that each University plays a role local and regional regeneration through its work in participatory settings

- Set up working group led by University Executive to look at how arts work in participatory settings can maximize cultural /economic involvement with local communities.
- Encourage opportunities for artists, residents and people working in the local area to get engaged in arts activities through university arts courses.
- Appoint nominated member of staff to initiate and co-ordinate arts projects in community settings (see example of Teesside University’s community engagement/arts co-ordinator).

7. Establish a regional umbrella body to provide resources for lecturers and students about arts work in participatory settings

This body could:

- Provide access to opportunities, and stimulate interest in participatory practices in the region and promote high quality work in the sector.
- Hold databases of practitioners, potential tutors/speakers and potential placements for new graduates and practitioners at different stages in their careers.
- Set up a network for practitioners involved in working in participatory settings.
- Encourage collaboration between the several university departments, colleges and other partners in the region.
- To promote more even opportunities for students around the region, regardless of which institution they are based at or where.
- Support and promote CPD activities including short courses and collaborative courses.

8. Develop ways of supporting practitioners who work in participatory settings

- Provide opportunities to reflect on and refresh their skills at different stages of development in carrying out their work in participatory settings.
- Provide opportunities for new graduates to get experience of participatory work and training to work with different audiences and in different contexts.
- Consider new postgraduate courses of study for arts work in participatory settings.

Appendix 1

List of possible case studies to be developed from research

1. Link between ceramic work and Traidcraft (*Sunderland*)
2. Animation as therapy (*Sunderland*)
3. Participatory video work (*Culture Lab, Newcastle*)
4. A Sound Surround piece based on speaking voices in NE (*Composer in Residence, Durham*)
5. Participatory work in arts and science (*Teesside and Sunderland*)
6. Relationship between policy, participation and process in public art projects within a regeneration context (*Culture Lab, Newcastle*)
7. Innovatory participatory methodologies and arts practice (*Prof of Criminology, School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham*)
8. Music and entrepreneurship (*Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, all 5 NE universities and OU*)
9. Influence of Folk and Community Music degrees on employment opportunities in NE and beyond (*Newcastle and Sunderland*)
10. Role and impact of a university-employed Community Officer with an arts background (*Teesside*)
11. Working in participatory settings, employability and Media Production (*Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside*)

Appendix 2

Delivering arts in participatory settings

Interview questions (February 2012)

These questions are for lecturers in Universities and Colleges in the North East of England where degree courses are delivered across the broad spectrum of arts, performance and creative media subjects.

We are exploring what academics think about the teaching of participatory practices (PP) in arts, performance and creative media subjects.

Interviews will be recorded on audio for transcription. We may use excerpts in reports and related productions but names of participants and their universities will not be attributed.

Your perceptions of PP

1. Introduce self, job title and main areas of teaching , practice and research
2. What do you understand by the term participatory practice (PP) in arts /creative/media work? Give one of two examples of PP that you are aware of that illustrates this.
3. How important is participatory arts practice in the arts/media for you individually? Is participation inherently seen as a 'good thing'?
4. If you are not involved in PP, why not and what could change that?
5. When and where did you first become aware of participatory practice as part of creative arts and media?
6. If you have been involved what/who motivated you to get involved in this area of practice?

Perceptions relating to your course/teaching

7. How much importance/time is given to developing arts in participatory settings on your course?
8. Talk about different approaches to delivering arts in participatory settings—which are included on your courses?
 - *Completely artist led/'authored'*

- *More input from artist than participants*
 - *Equal partnership/co-production between artist and participants*
 - *More input from participants than artist*
 - *Completely participant led/'authored'*
9. On your course what skills related to PP are perceived as important (in addition to core arts/performance/production skills)? *Open question but prompt with examples to draw out*
- *Teaching and training skills and approaches*
 - *How to work in conjunction with partner groups/organisations*
 - *Raising awareness of groups with different needs*
 - *Project management*
 - *Fundraising*
10. What kind of opportunities do students get to develop participatory practice?
- *Placement /project in community e.g. with partner group or other settings*
 - *Master classes/visiting practitioners*
 - *Mentoring*
 - *Apprenticeship*
 - *Internship*
11. Give examples of how activities that develop arts in participatory settings have been supported /promoted by your institution.
12. Do you think there is a need for a dedicated course in participatory practices?
13. Is working in participatory settings valued in terms of employability? How is this perceived by staff and by students?
14. Are the issues of 'quality' and 'professionalism' relating to delivering arts in participatory settings discussed on your course/s?
- a. If yes, draw out discussion about what is perceived to be most important...
- *The quality of the artist and their understanding of their art form/practice are critical*
 - *The final production has to be a of a very high technical quality to be acceptable*
 - *The ability of the artist to work with the target group is critical*
 - *The quality of the experience is more important than the quality of the final production*
15. What kind of support from your university/college to develop arts in participatory settings or teaching about arts work in participatory settings?
- *Draw out why it is supported/why not supported*
 - *Support*
 - *Time to do research/own practice in area of PP*

- *Special events*
- *Funding for visiting artists/practitioners*
- *Funding for attending conferences*
- *Funding for putting on conferences*
- *Relevant professional development*
 - *Lack of support*
- *No specialist staff available*
- *No materials available*
- *No room on timetable*
- *It takes up too much time*
- *Difficulties making links with community groups/general public*
- *No in-service/CPD training available*
- *One off activities but not integrated into course*

16. What kind of CPD have you been offered in the area of PP?

17. Supplementary questions (these issues may come up elsewhere)

- On your courses is PP perceived as part of thinking about issues relating to building long term change?... personal and community sustainability?
- How are social networking sites and other online tools (Twitter etc) perceived in developing participatory work-by yourself, by your students? Give examples
- Is there a body of academic work (journals, text books, specialist research) about pp in your area that you can draw on ? Please give examples
- How important are national networks and international contacts re pp in your area of work?