

<b>Institution:</b> Bath Spa University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 32 - Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Methodologies for Change: Developing innovative participatory curation practices in the visual arts		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2014 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Natasha Kidd	Subject Leader Art	1/9/2007 - present
Dr Ben Parry	Senior Lecturer in Curatorial Practice	6/6/2016 - present
Prof. Mike Tooby	Professor of Art and Design	2/11/2011 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014 - 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Kidd, Parry and Tooby have developed innovative participatory curation practices that have impacted on participants' understanding and appreciation of visual arts, expanded participants' engagement with their local communities, and developed and influenced discourse and practices in curatorial communities. The research projects have also questioned models of participatory practices where host organisations use visual arts initiatives in small-scale and short-term projects to create engagement, creating new, larger scale projects.</p> <p>The research undertaken between 2014-2020 in the UK and India are long-term curated projects centred on host organisations; they employ visual arts projects to engender change in their practices and their localities. The researchers developed methodologies for participants to become co-authors, who then use their own experiences and share with others – their new audiences. For example, <i>Journeys with "The Waste Land"</i> (2014-2018), Margate and Coventry, UK (Tooby) was a project where 100 participants contributed to the construction of a major art exhibition and created 50 outreach projects in their local communities.</p> <p>Audiences and host organisations in turn use participant testimony as a fresh way to address content, social ideas and working practices, developing more successful participation strategies to make positive impacts on people's lives. Within the <i>Compound 13 Lab project</i> (2015-2020), Dharavi, India (Parry) young people are placed at the centre of their own learning, to co-design and develop a bespoke 'living curriculum' that responds to their issues, addresses their needs and aids their future goals, such as increased literacy and access to new technologies realised through over 45 workshops, 8 participatory artistic residencies reaching over 150 young people. The research has also influenced host organisations and funders at a broader level, introducing new practices and approaches to making art through participatory research and creating new understandings of the relationship between curation and education.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>What can be achieved by challenging perceptions of participatory engagement? Participatory initiatives in the visual arts often involve small groups of people, meaning that the resulting impact can be limited to the participants and their immediate contacts. The research team's methodologies challenge perceptions of participatory engagement by creating large scale, long-term projects with major art galleries and established NGOs in the UK and India. NGOs and large venues have built a knowledge base around established strategies and targets; they 'reach out', but only once projects are under way, and in small scale, short term modes. Kidd, Parry and Tooby's research recognises that this may be the very cause of participant disenfranchisement, asking a central research question: how can research, development and delivery of large-scale visual arts projects be fused with public engagement and impact so as to express participants' sense of personal ownership?</p>		
<b>Making Choices</b>		
<p>The research team's projects introduced participants to newly formed methodologies that allow them to take key decisions and define research outputs from the outset. The researchers respond to and facilitate participants' goals as a project develops, ensuring successful delivery and 'reach'. In Tooby's <i>Journeys with 'The Waste Land' (JwTWL)</i>, (2014-2018; Turner</p>		

Contemporary, Margate; R1, 2), local residents formed a Research Group and developed the entire exhibition. The Research Group formed through an open call in 2015. Over 100 participants became involved, people from their 20s to their 80s. Through weekly meetings, talks, workshops, walks, research trips, studio visits and individual inquiry, the group developed their own methods for making decisions together and deciding on content. All the artworks in the exhibition, inspired by T.S Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*, were chosen by group members.

In *Inventory of Behaviours (IoB)*, (Tate Exchange and Tate Late at Tate Modern and Blip Blip Leeds; 2017-2019; R5), Kidd (working with Jo Addison, artist-researcher at Kingston University, as 'No Working Title') used an open call to ask 300 artists from all career stages to devise instructions on how to behave in the physical, digital, or psychological spaces in which they make art. These were enacted by visitors. They 'behaved' in response to the instructions received and through this process and by devising instructions for other visitors to respond to, shifted from the role of audience members to become active participants.

Parry's participative project *Rethinking Waste and the Logics of Disposability* (2015-2020; R3, R4) focuses on the knowledge politics of informal waste work in Dharavi, Mumbai, India. In collaboration with NGO ACORN, a long-term embedded approach to participatory action research links people and organisations through methods of co-production and peer-to-peer learning. A programme of artist residencies and the Lab establishes a creative, shared space for experimental design, exploration and dialogue, drawing on the resources and materials of the recycling industry to support young people in imagining alternative futures to build their hopes and aspirations.

### Outcomes

The projects offer distinct methodologies to art museums, galleries and public art settings for how cultural engagement, co-production and social impact is 'mainstreamed' in large organisations over a long timeframe, bringing people inside the processes that create positive impacts. *JwTWL* (R1, 2) was created as the result of 4 years of group discussion and personal connections between art, poetry and life. The process and methodology developed at Turner Contemporary was paralleled in a revised version in Coventry, at The Herbert and Coventry Cathedral. The sequential, iterative public events involved in *IoB* (R5) became a process for collecting, generating and analysing behaviours. Outcomes enhanced understandings of artists' creativity, and how to share these, creating new ways to communicate what artists do. Projects also had tangible, material outcomes. Supported by a series of GCRF grants, *Rethinking Waste and the Logics of Disposability* (R3, R4) has led to the creation of Compound 13 Lab (2018) a new state of the art building providing emerging technologies of the circular economy with those who would not normally have access to them.

The research tests the nature of leadership, facilitation and shared discussion by shifting the researchers' roles from 'guest expert' to being a role model and facilitator whose expertise lies in enabling participation. In sharing responsibility for management of production process and engagement, the researchers facilitate responses through the ideas of those normally seen as audiences or beneficiaries. Audiences realise that 'people like them' are responsible. As well as making specific new methodologies available to galleries and NGOs, the research team have opened up broader, new possibilities for the practice of participatory engagement.

### 53. References to the research

**R1** Tooby, M (2018) [Journey's with 'The Waste Land' \(2015-2018\) \[research portfolio\]](#). Additional project documentation available on [evaluative website](#).

**R2** Tooby, M (2020) ["Who me?": the individual experience in participative and collaborative projects.](#) In: O'Neill, M and Hooper, G, eds. *Connecting museums*. Routledge, Abingdon.

**R3** Parry, B (2016) ['Beyond aesthetics: poetics of Autoconstruccion in Mexico City.'](#) In: Kosmala, K and Imas, M, eds. *Precarious spaces: the arts, social and organisational change*. Intellect, Bristol, pp. 87-111

**R4** Parry, B (2020) [Rethinking waste and the logics of disposability: Compound 13 lab \(2014-2020\) \[research portfolio\]](#).

**R5** Kidd, N and Addison, J (2020) [The habits of artists \(2014-2020\) \[research portfolio\]](#).

**Funding**

- Kidd (Artist), *Inventory of Behaviours* (2018-2019), Freelands Foundation, total GBP19,400 (independent)
- Parry, *Resources of Hope* (Co-I, 2016-2018) and *Rethinking Waste* (PI, 2019-2020), AHRC, total GBP164,511
- Parry (Co-I), *Waste, Water and Wellbeing* (2019-2021), British Academy, GBP277,749
- Tooby (Artist), *Journey's with 'The Waste Land'* (2015-2018), funding from John Ellerman Foundation, Paul Mellon Centre and others (see E3), total GBP171,000 (independent)

**4. Details of the impact**

What happens when perceptions of participatory engagement are challenged and new methodologies, in new contexts, are formed that allow participants to take key decisions and define research outputs? Traditionally, participatory projects are small scale, with meaningful impact limited to a group typically of 10-30. Kidd, Parry and Tooby's research challenges this idea and demonstrates that participatory projects can achieve significant outcomes, with audience numbers including over 140,000 for long projects (*JwTWL* - 116,000 at Turner Contemporary 18,242 at The Herbert, 2,445 at Coventry events; E3) and 11,000 for focused events (*IoB*, Uniqlo Tate Lates, Tate Modern, 27 September 2019; E2), as well as extensive media and journal responses. While reach is important, the group's principal impact goals are focused on participants, audiences and participant communities, and practitioner communities. The relationship between these groups is important, with participants inviting new audiences to galleries and taking creative ideas out into their communities; this in turn effects institutions and curator communities who adopt new working methods. The evidence of the impact is also 'upcycled' into projects through iteration in decision-making, testimony, documentation, and peer mentoring, so that this testimony becomes part of the content of the projects.

**Participants: Increased understanding of arts processes and improved wellbeing**

The projects have significantly increased participants' understanding and appreciation of art practices and demonstrated to them how engaging with art can enhance their own well-being, increase life skills and inspire them to share this learning with others.

A wide range of people from different backgrounds took part in *IoB*, including primary and secondary pupils, trainee teachers, an ethnographer, a musician, a choreographer, and over 200 Fine Art BA students (E2). Over 360 primary and secondary pupils took part in *IoB* and participated in enacting artists' behaviours from the list of instructions. An art teacher expressed the understanding that their pupils had gained from *IoB*. "I think this experience helped us move away from ideas of the 'genius model' of artists, and think more about the graft of art, or the time spent with art in order to work creatively ... It helped dismantle some ideas of creativity ... as we remain in a society and culture that constantly espouses the traditional lone [often white male] artist as genius model" (E1). Young people were able to act like artists and interact with 'real artists', democratising art making. The traditional 'school visit' was subverted as a head teacher explained: "The pupils ... had never experienced anything quite like it! ... There was a buzz of excitement and openness from the pupils...Wearing a boiler suit - putting on a costume for the 'act' of being an artist was liberating ... Meeting 'real' artists' and activities that encouraged them to think freely (like an artist) within a space dedicated to art" (E1).

The act of taking part in *IoB* allowed visitors to become participants by contributing their own ideas to the research. A gallery learning curator who participated in *IoB* described an encounter with an older participant, who had showed her a "Commonplace Book, containing lists of interesting things he had read or encountered across decades – he then wrote an inventory instruction about how to keep one's own book, carry it with you, and read it in idle moments 'such as the supermarket queue'" (E1).

The website linked to *JwTWL* captured testimony of impact and change for individuals and audiences. One participant said that "this project has been transformational for me in many ways. It has taught me to be more inclusive, tolerant and thoughtful. In addition I have learnt to listen more deeply to others" (E3). As a result of the research, participants have expanded life skills and an improved ability to work collaboratively.

Participants also gained a new sense of the relational ownership of cultural venues. For example, as *JwTWL* Research Group participants came from an open call with no pre-requisite for joining. They then learn about project planning and local ownership becomes a consequent methodological problem: how do 'early' participants set criteria for new participants, also from the same community, to join later? Participants therefore gain insight and confidence in decision-making and share the task of communicating this within their community.

I have learned deliberation, negotiation and when to make a stand. I have made new friends, and discovered new skills, all generating new possibilities and opportunities for the future. I feel privileged to have been a part of such an experience. I now know my community better and it has kindled a desire to be more involved in that community (E6).

As a long-term project about waste, work and survival in Dharavi, Compound 13 Lab explores and tests out a creative, inclusive and innovative pedagogy that is learner-centred and participatory, to develop a sense of creative agency which provides opportunities for learning and support for families and children living in and around the waste work community. The Advisor to ART1ST, who also leads a partnership to co-produce a 'living curriculum' at the Lab which supports artist professional development, stated: "The Lab has become a significant site for publicly engaged cross-cultural and international arts practice, providing not only access to ideas, tools and technologies for underserved communities but also an important space for the training and development of young artists in socially engaged practice in India" (E9). One of the ACORN Foundation India trustees reflects on the value of a long-term partnership with the Lab: "For most young people growing up in families working in waste management in India, arts and media based learning would be completely out of reach for economic reasons. However, our programme amplifies youth voices, connects young people internationally, and connects them an audience of influential decision makers and executives" (E10).

### **Audience and Community: Inspiring positive social change in participants' communities and increasing audience diversity and numbers**

The innovative methods developed by the researchers foreground the process by which the participants' experiences can influence and engage with their local communities, using participant testimony in the public design of the projects. As a result the audiences for each project extends the traditional audience of the venue or location it is based. *JwTWL*'s independent evaluator commented: "Visitors recognised that this had been a community enterprise and felt that this made a positive difference to their experience. It appealed both to visitors who were very familiar with the poem, and those encountering it for the first time, with 91% of those interviewed by the research group saying that they had learned new things or deepened their understanding" (E3). The participants' input gives a larger audience access to new cultural knowledge and a connection with art process.

While large scale, the projects also impact positively and create new opportunities for social change within communities. Participation ensures that local impact works as an integral element. Through the establishment of a new intergenerational community resource, Parry's work in Mumbai has, for example, brought in studio-based technologies such as 3D printing to help people envisage practical alternatives to traditional plastic recycling methods (E8). Parry's work generates statements of impact by Dharavi participants, so that each iteration evolves from the previous one as participants co-design each phase. For example, when working with illiterate young people, the project must devise ways to build literacy into the next iteration, resulting in a positive impact on literacy education within the local community. The importance of the methodology was displayed during Covid-19 lockdown; ACORN's food ration programme reached out to over 350 families, while the project also facilitated online learning. ACORN was upgraded with smart TVs, computers, and high-speed wi-fi network, as part of the infrastructural investment made from the Compound 13 Lab project (E8).

*JwTWL* created 51 offsite outreach projects in 26 settings; the projects involved around 200 participants and the events they curated reached an audience of 13,000; these projects took activities out of the gallery and into communities. In this way, participants were able to use their new expertise to bring arts activities into their own locales to support wellbeing and strengthen community bonds. For example, recognising that Eliot wrote 'The Waste Land' in Margate while recovering a nervous breakdown, a Research Group member who was a mental health nurse

felt that users of her Mental Health Centre would respond well to creative engagement and organised an artist residency at the centre. The individuals who took part in this opportunity talked about its positive impact: “It was nice to do something off the ward that was completely different, this is the sort of thing I’d like to do more of, when I go home I’m going to carry on coming” and “The project has done wonders for me. Last weekend I was playing with my six grandchildren... I wouldn’t have been able to do that a couple of months ago” (E5). The methodology, set in motion by Tooby, supported Research Group members in the creation of new opportunities that made a real difference to the individuals and communities involved.

### **Practitioner Community: Contributing to participatory curatorial practices**

As a result of the research, galleries and venues have expanded their working methodologies. Participatory curation traditionally manifests itself in small scale projects. Venues are sceptical that participatory projects like Tooby’s can achieve the high audience targets needed by larger venues; however, the 116,000 visitors to *JwTWL* at Turner Contemporary demonstrate that high audience numbers can be achieved with participatory methodologies, exceeding the target audience of 90,000 (E3). The methodologies created for *JwTWL* have also been fundamental to subsequent projects by host organisations (eg Turner Contemporary’s ‘Margate Now’ offsite project, 2019, and the Coventry venues’ preparation for City of Culture, 2021-2022).

This work has also developed and influenced discourse and practices in curator communities. The success of Tooby’s work has contributed to CPD in the gallery and museum sector, including running a study day for Plus Tate (network of UK visual arts organisations, including curators from 35 organisations), while John Ellerman Foundation funded a retrospective website on *JwTWL* and use the project as a model of best practice, due to its pioneering methodology of “curating exhibitions that put local people at the heart of the process” (E4).

Methodologies created through Parry’s research have also influenced other projects. The Advisor to ART1ST said of the Compound 13 Lab: “Leading urban arts centre, G5A Foundation, on whose Advisory Board I sit, have adopted methodologies and techniques developed within the lab and applied them to their own work working with deprived communities in Worli Koliwada, supported by the Maharashtra Government” (E9).

Freelands Foundation commented on *IoB*’s impact on their own approach:

*The Inventory of Behaviours* has been extremely important in helping to shape the Foundation’s thinking in regard to models of support...[our] growing interest in discussing the role of actual space, especially in light of the extraordinary circumstances of the last year and the response to Covid-19, has been informed by the work of *The Inventory of Behaviours* and continues to be so (E1).

The research team have helped to change perceptions of what education within a gallery setting can be; the Chief Curator of Modern Art Oxford said that *JwTWL* “is a remarkable milestone in institutional curating in modern and contemporary art” because it “shows [that] the act of curating itself becomes a learning project for the institution and for the people” (E7).

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

**E1** *Inventory of Behaviours (2018-2019)*: reports from Freelands Foundation and participants.

**E2** *Inventory of Behaviours*: details of events and visitor numbers

**E3** *JwTWL* documentation including: evaluative website, participant testimony; reports from continuing projects by participants; venue testimonies; reviews and media coverage; examples of online responses; overview of audience numbers; Exhibition report; overview of funders.

**E4** [‘Museums and Galleries Fund’ Report, John Ellermann Foundation March 2019](#)

**E5** Project report for ‘He Do the Police / Inside The Waste Land’ project, report by Jemma Channing for Live Well Kent and ‘Porchlight’ mental health day centre, Thanet, Kent, 2018

**E6** Coventry *JwTWL* [participant blog post](#)

**E7** Testimonial from the Chief Curator of Modern Art Oxford discussing Tooby’s research

**E8** Acorn Foundation (India) & Women’s Research and Action Group (WRAG) Activity and Impact Record 2020-21

**E9** Testimonial from Artist and Advisor to leading urban arts centre, G5A Foundation, on the impact of Compound 13 Lab methodologies

**E10** Testimonial from trustee of ACORN Foundation India