

The active museum of art

A new museum approach to increase neighbourhood asset through participation.

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Abstract

An Art Museum changes the local environment of its surrounding area. It can have a positive influence by developing neighbourhood assets but it also can lead to gentrification and displacement. To increase these neighbourhood assets, a museum should fully integrate art and culture into the daily lives of residents of the neighbourhood, which can be realized via participatory art. Participation in art is the transformation in art from object to subject/process. It breaks with the concept that art is this holy domain which should be protected from the everyday live. The measures of social impact resulting in neighbourhood asset depend on; the intentions, the social approach, the process, the final artistic result and the artistic value. Also, it can be concluded that not only participatory-art or community art, but also interactive art or art with a participatory element can lead to a more inclusive museum with regards to attracting a wider public.

Keywords: Art museum, neighbourhood asset, art-led revitalisation, participation, participatory art,

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Introduction

An Art Museum can change the local environment of its surrounding area. It can have a positive influence by developing neighbourhood assets. The museum can be seen as a place for informal learning. The visitor goes to the museum voluntarily and learns about what is displayed (Black, 2015). The museum contributes to the stimulation and development of creativity, imagination and cultural interest (Deeth, 2009). In addition, within contemporary art, current social topics are often brought to light in various ways.

Museums have clearly contributed to giving a dynamic and thus promising image to a city as a whole, and have become part of urban marketing policy. Museums are therefore often used as a tool within large urban renewal programs, with the aim of regenerating old underdeveloped industrial areas in the city. But this can also lead to gentrification and displacement. The effect of the museum alone on local economic and social benefits and neighbourhood assets, such as education, income, security and social assets of the local environment, appears to be less (Lusso, 2009). Especially for the contemporary art museum the direct effect is lower. There is often no connection between the art museum and the local community. Local people are not interested in the museum and visitors are not interested in the neighbourhood. The local resident is often neither the visitor of the museum nor a participant or employee (Lusso, 2009). This is partly due to the barrier between contemporary art and its interpretation. Jane Deeth (2009) for example, argues that contemporary art is often too difficult for the average public to understand. Several theorists argue that the barrier between contemporary art and interpretation can be reduced by a more active experience compared to a passive experience of contemporary art. Or a more participatory approach towards art and the museum.

In this thesis the effect of participation in art and the museum will be discussed in relation to an improved connection between the art museum and the local community to fully integrate art and culture into the daily lives of residents of the neighbourhood. A museum where locals be more encouraged to visit, and non-locals visiting the museum be more encouraged to visit the neighbourhood. The research question therefore is:

How can an active museum and participatory art improve the connection between (non-) local visitors, the museum, and the neighbourhood, resulting in increased neighbourhood asset?

The study searches for a new way of defining and position an art museum in the 21st century. It contributes to the research how an art museum revitalizes a neighbourhood but also on the theories of the social museum context, and participation in art and the museum. In the theory research the influence of a museum on the environment and participation in art are discussed. The first part focus on the museum and its environment. The second part focus on a theoretical framework on the social context and the transformation of art and the museum, referring to theories of Bourriaud (1998), Bishop (2012) and Deeth (2014). It then focuses on different studies and critics of participation in art, referring to theories of Bishop (2012), Trienekens (2020), Arnstein (1969) and Milevska (2006). Thirdly, some principles of participation in the museum are argued. Finally, in the conclusion an answer is given on the research question. Research on how this new museum should be embodied is done in the design research including site analysis, case-study analysis to create a frame of reference and some design principles. Different design techniques, such as; massing, modelling, drawing, stacking, layering, excavation, are used to embody and visualize the design principles and position.

Effect of museum on neighbourhood assets.

In this chapter the effect of an art institution or space on the neighbourhood is studied. Different scholars have argued this topic and it can be said that it can be concluded that art and the museum play a role in the development of the economies of a community.

According to Iusso (2014) a new museum is most of the time part of a large urban renewal program often leading to a positive city image. This results in attracting economic activities and new investments to the city. But the effect of the museum itself on the local economic and social structure is most often less convincing. Local residents visiting the museum, participation and local employment is lacking. Furthermore, it can be discussed that art-led gentrification as a policy instrument can result in positive changes to an area. Museums have a significant impact on city-development by attracting property development, jobs, new services, local economic growth, increasing real estate values and an in-migration of high-educated professional population. However, the many place-based advances and renovations also result in an exclusion and displacement of some local residents, and even the artists themselves. They are not able to pay the higher rent, or do no longer identify themselves with the neighbourhood due to the many changes (Grodach, et al, 2014).

Nonetheless, the arts can also be seen as an asset where the artistic work is artistic dividend and adds profit to local economies resulting in revitalization without gentrification. The art, the artist, and art groups generate economic improvement through the export of their work but also through offering their expertise to improve production in other business sectors. Also, it attracts visitors towards the neighbourhood, since the arts are place-based. These advances of artistic asset then result in neighbourhood assets and improvements (Markusen et al, 2006). Important to take into account is the distinction between fine arts such as performing arts companies, museums, and arts schools, which are more likely to relate to revitalizing neighbourhoods, and commercial arts such as film, music and design-based industries which are more related to gentrification (Grodach, et al, 2014).

In addition, Godrach (2011) discusses the community-based arts institutions and their involvement in neighbourhood revitalization. Community-based art activities include the production and consumption of art as a collaboration of specific populations based on geographic location or identity. Godrach states that community-based art activities indirectly support local economic development by enhancing interaction within and between communities, which in turn generates businesses, jobs and tourism. It can be concluded that these art spaces are involved in revitalizing the neighbourhood through the creation of tourism activities, community outreach, arts education, and artistic production. In addition, they offer opportunities to build and maintain social capital, peer networks, and a shared identity. Godrach (2011) has researched how art spaces can contribute to community and economic developments. The research results in five considerations to increase the desired impact.

First, art spaces are not generic entities - different types of art spaces have different types of communities and are better suited to fulfil different community and economic development goals. For example, artist cooperatives with a focus on stimulating interest in community involvement, or art spaces driven by public development or art education purposes. Or art institutions with the aim of helping the local artist. Second, the art institution cannot always be everything for everyone. The balance between community-neighbourhood, art-institution must be in balance according to display, open access, amateur vs artist community members. For

example, the primary focus should be on working artists rather than display work by any individual in the community. Also outreach or education program should not only be visual or performing art but also incorporates video audio and other digital arts. Thirdly, the importance of art spaces and locations according to temporality and sharing or flow of workspace. Fourthly, partnering with other public-, private- and non-profit organizations to reach a wider audience and build expertise. And lastly, art spaces can create programs that directly target cross-sectoral collaboration and employment (Grodach, 2011)

In sum it can be said that a museum has a large influence on the neighbourhood by offering artistic dividend and resulting in neighbourhood assets. Interesting are the difference approaches: an art museum as catalysator for city marketing and gentrification, or the art museum of fine arts as artistic dividend resulting in revitalizing the neighbourhood where the focus lies on participation and more community-based art. Fine arts and more community-art based spaces have the biggest change of creating these positive neighbourhood assets like economic improvement through export of art expertise and skills, attraction and creation of tourism activities, community outreach and arts education, and artistic production. In addition, they offer opportunities to build and maintain social capital, peer networks, and a shared identity. The next chapter will focus on the social context of the museum and art in regard to fully integrate art into the daily lives of locals of the neighbourhood.

Museum in the social context

In this chapter the role of the museum as a cultural institution in relation to integrating art into the daily lives of locals is further discussed. The focus lies on the social context of the museum and art. With regard to exclusion and inclusion, hierarchy in art practices and the relationship between spectator and creator.

Pierre Bourdieu discusses that the museum architecture is an exclusive domain of cultivated classes. It is a reproduction of hierarchies. The architecture of the museum played a role in this where architecture of the museum distinguished itself from everyday life and reality. An elite group feels connected to the building, but a large group of others feels excluded (Bourdieu and Darbel 1991: 112).

In contrast, museum architecture can be seen as a system of giving meaning to art. The museum visit became a social process and was positioned as a reality rather than an abstract art experience for the visitor (Jones & MacLeod, 2017). Alternatively, it is argued that the 19th century museum is a solution for disciplinary cultural structures such as politics or economics. Through transparency, the museum creates a space where citizens control each other, and the museum makes society transparent to itself. This raises questions that a one-sided perspective is emerging where the focus is only on the structural political context at the expense of active involvement in specific characteristics within the museum (Jones & MacLeod, 2017).

In his book *Relational Aesthetics* (1998) Nicolas Bourriaud described the shift towards arts which is based on human relation in the social context. *A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.* (Bourriaud, 1998; pg. 113). The relational aesthetic art practices set themselves against the traditional division between the museum as a physical and social space and the secluded artist's studio. Thus, also against the separation of viewing art and making art. The art is thematized by everyday practices rather

than objects removed from everyday context. The goal is to create social assets (Bourriaud, 1998). Bourriaud saw the artist as a promotor, more than maker. The artist gives the public the access to power and opportunities to create change in society. He argues that interactive settings in the museums relational work do not 'represent utopias' but actualise them, creating positive 'life possibilities' as 'concrete spaces' rather than merely fictional ones (Windsor, 2011).

Bishop (2012) criticizes Bourriaud's work. She argues that relational art is only limited to the museum visitor who still consists of a select elite. With that there is still exclusion and a distinction between the everyday and the art. It is now interesting to see why the excluded visitor does not come to the museum.

In the article *Engaging Strangeness in the Art Museum: an audience development strategy* Jane Deeth (2014) studied the relation between contemporary art museum and hesitating visitors that do not feel comfortable in the museum, since the contemporary art is strange to them. It can be said that in recent years museum practices have changed; visitor experience has become more important than transferring specialist knowledge. This relates to constructivist approach where knowledge is built through active participation in constructing knowledge instead of only transmitting knowledge. Learning is done best in a social context where there is no static arrangement in learning. It is assumed that one learns best by doing, and only looking at material or object is seen as insufficient. Engagement should therefore be seen as a focus point within the learning experience in the museum context (Deeth, 2014; p. 2). A common way of engagement is communication through audio tours, guides and discussions with the curator (Deeth, 2014; p. 2-3). The idea is stimulated the viewer to create their own route through the museum spaces and exhibitions forming their own interpretation and engagement with the artwork, resulting in the assumption that the viewer connects with what they like and feel comfortable in the museum. So, the museum becomes a more diverse space and attracts a wider public, even the public that previously would be hesitant to go. Deeth (2014; p. 6-12) stated that the engagement of the viewer with the art work is very important. However, this engagement through dialogue is most often resulting in others, the artist or the curator, sending the interpretation towards the viewer. There is still a certain hierarchy between the artwork, artist and interpretation. A less hierarchical art practice can be participatory art practices (Trienekens, 2020; p.127-135).

Conclusion

Ultimately, it can be concluded that there is a certain degree of exclusivity within the museum. The museum can be seen as a place that has its own community and is only visited by an elite. The museum is thus separated from the everyday life. There is certain strangeness and hierarchy in contemporary art and the museum. On the other hand, the museum can be seen as the place where art comes to life. To make the museum more inclusive and attract a larger audience, it is necessary to intertwine the everyday social context and the museum. Where the gap between exhibiting art in the museum and making art in the studio is narrowed. It appears that engagement in the form of education and communicating interpretation alone does not lead to the desired effect. However, participation in art can offer a solution. Therefore, participation in art is further explored in the next chapter.

Participation in art

In this chapter participation in art will be further discussed. By looking at the definition and different forms of participation. Furthermore, participation in art is often criticized and a small framework of the criticism of participation in art is given.

Participation in art can be described as art where the creation engages public participation. The viewers physical interaction is necessary for the art work to be completed. Since the 90's participation in art has gained more popularity. The earlier mentioned theoretical framework of Bourriaud (1998) already validated and discusses this turn. Different principles of participatory art practices are increasingly being incorporated into cultural policies and practices of cultural institutions aimed at audience development, education, communication and community art programs (Trienekens, 2020). The term of participation in art is very broad and sometimes misunderstood. Bishop (2012) argued that a good understanding of participatory art should focus on the social and artistic side of art. Where organizing, facilitating and co-authorship is part of the art. She also emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral practices within the art form, where there should be no strong division between education, social encounter, artistic expression and organization.

Another approach says that participatory art can be divided in practices including work created by an artist with a *participatory element*, *participatory art* or *community art* resulting in co-authorship and co-creation. The involvement of non-professional artists and the intention leads to different degrees of participation (Trienekens, 2020). A characteristics of participatory art practices is often that the process, audience and product are not predetermined. Also, bishop (2012) argues the temporality of participatory art. where in other art-practices the work is exhibited in a final state. This is not the case with participation in art where the process is just as important as the artistic outcome. Bishop (2012) therefore emphasizes the importance of documentation and inviting a secondary spectator. The recorded process can be played on, re-enacted or taken home. In this case the concept becomes more involved in the social context of everyday life.

However, participation in art is often discussed and criticised. To get a better understanding of participation in art, participation should be defined first. The concept of participation can be seen as a categorical term for civil power. It concerns a redistribution of power that ensures that, in the future, the citizen who is currently excluded from decision making processes is deliberately reintroduced into these processes. It is a strategy in which the excluded citizen participates in determining how information is shared, in determining goals and policy. There is a distinction between participating and actually having the power to produce a desired effect in the outcome of the process. Re-distribution of power is therefore seen as a fundamental part of participation (Arnstein, 1969).

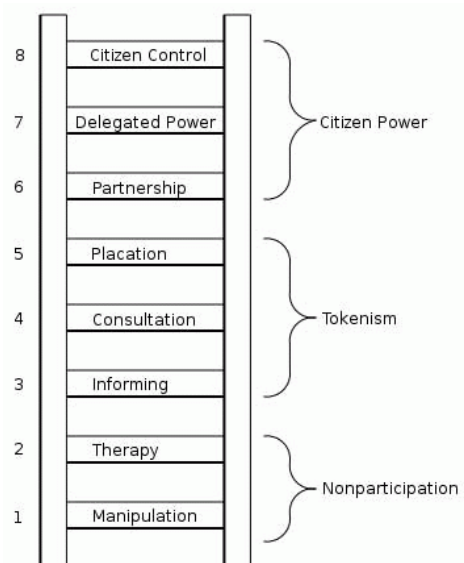


Figure 1. Ladder of participation; Arnstein 1969

Arnstein's (1969) *ladder of participation* distinguishes eight types of participation or non-participation. At the bottom of the ladder are the two levels that are characterized as non-participation (*figure 1*). The next three steps on the ladder belong to the level of "tokenism". The participant is involved and is allowed to make his voice heard. From the sixth stage, a switch occurs towards full participation and citizen power, whereby the citizen is increasingly responsible for the decision-making process. So, without the shared decision-making element in art practices, or if decisions are made by elected or appointed representatives, the art practice cannot be called participation but rather involvement (Milevska,2006).

Critic on Interactive art

Contemporary art with a *participatory element* is still said to be authoritarian. The artist has control over the concept, the planning, the organization and the fuelling of the initiative in which people are then invited to participate to certain measurements. This can also be described as interactive art (Trienekens, 2020; Milawka, 2006). In this case it can be argued that this art form deals with involvement rather than participation. Additionally, since the level of participation is often low, it is still hierarchical and therefore there is a degree of exclusion and strangeness from everyday life.

Yet, in the article: *Art of Interaction: A Theoretical Examination of Carsten Höller's Test Site*, Windsor (2011) analyses the interactive artwork *Test site* by Karsten Höller based on the theory of the earlier mentioned Bourriaud (1998) and Bishop (2012). *Test site* (2006-2007; *figure 2*) is a giant slide, which was meant to be a prototype for a new perspective of sliding through urban space. Where sliding is seen as a social experience, by watching someone sliding or experiencing the feeling

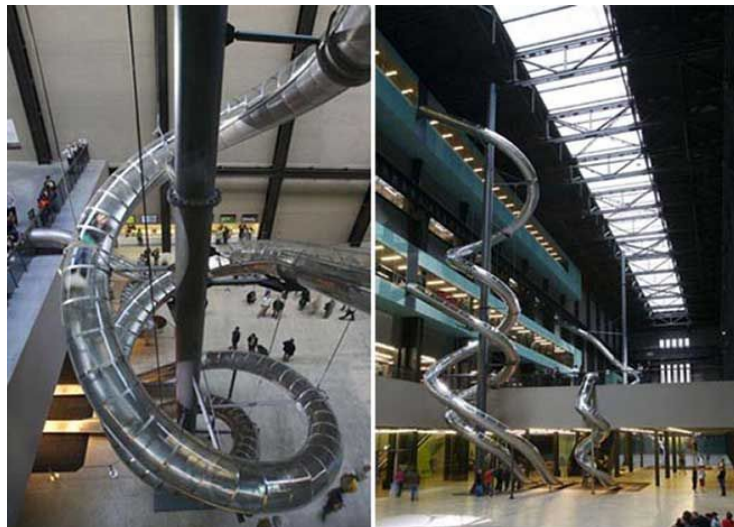


Figure 2. *Test site*, Karsten Höller, Tate Modern Art, 2006

of anxiety and excitement when sliding yourself. It can be concluded that the recipient is both involved in the formation of the work. They are not a passive but an active audience as a co-creator. The artwork is a game between Höller and his audience. The playful, almost childlike nature of the artwork suggests an opportunity to interact with each other in a more joyful and dynamic way. The work is interactive and does not distinguish between age, social status, occupation, etc. In addition, the work does not require any particular measure of public understanding and interpretation, with the result that the work is not considered strange (Windsor, 2011). This is in line with the previously discussed theory of Deeth (2014) about the interpretation and alienation of art and it can therefore be said that the work is interactive and inclusive and comes closer to the social everyday life, despite being exhibited in an institutional space.

Also, different forms of digital interactive art can change how people interact with one another and with the space surrounded. Interactive art can be understood as reactive or responsive art. Bullivant (2007) shows how playing with digital and physical art in the museum results in attracting a wider public (*figure 3*). She points out how digital art can make the spectator a performer by playing with the object, creating this relation between object and subject and testing social relations. Also, digital video art can be used as documenting tool for interactive project where the documentation shows the resulting social relations in everyday live. Digital interactive art can be related to the concept of imaginary geographies where (digital) interactive art practices are able to create different milieu's in regard to imagination. An interactive art work always takes place at a specific site, but this does not always have to be a physical space. It also can be an imaginary space and therefore, it simulates self-imaginary (Brown, 2014).

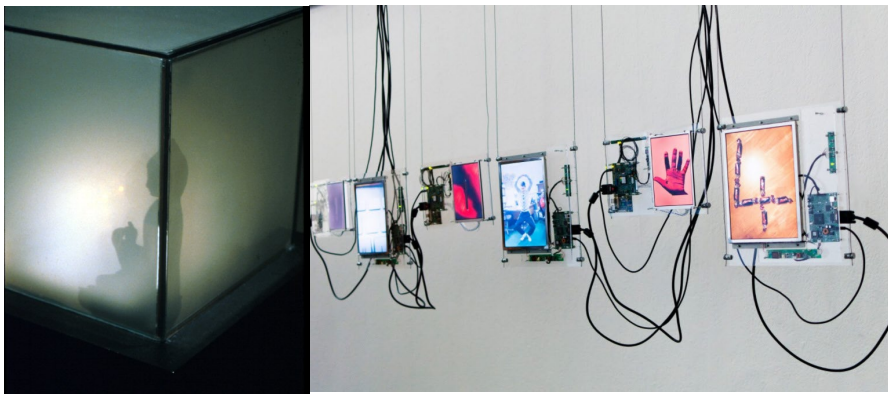


Figure 3. Digital interactive art example: (L) *Shadow (for Heisenberg)*, Jim Campbell, 1993: Moving closer to the object the image fades and is replaced by the shadow, showing what the observer can observe. (R) *Exquisite Clock*, João Wilbert A clock made of numbers taken from everyday life all over the world due to telephone application.

Critic on participatory or community-art

Participatory art is usually referred to the practices that connect professional and non-professional artists in co-creation (*figure 4*). The traditional relationships between artwork and those who view it, or production and consumption, are diminished. Art is something you *do* not something you *are*. *Community art* often refers to (human)rights and the pursuit of social engagement aimed at social change. Fundamental is the making of art (Trienekens, 2020; p. 37-38).

It is argued that participatory art cannot be considered as art for multiple reasons; it can be less aesthetic due to the lack of professional artist engagement and technics. Or it's not in line with current trends in the artworld (Trienekens, 2020). The origin of this criticism lies in the difference; art understood as an autonomous form of art in which the artist gives a critical reflection on society and holds up a mirror to it through the art product / object. The artist / art thus assumes an outsider role in relation to society. An opposite view is art understood as democratic and participatory in which the artist works together and is the producer of a situation in society. It is about a distinction between passive and active spectator, egocentric / collaborative artist, aesthetic complexity / simple expression and detached autonomy versus engaged community (Trienekens, 2020).

Furthermore Milevska (2006) discusses that participation in art is often criticised from a revolutionary perspective. Where participation in art is related to activism and is going to change political and social systems. Due to this approach, there is less space to criticise the actual occurrence. Nevertheless, it also can be stated that the occurrence of participation in art has a number of values. There is a certain measure of artistic and socio-political intention. Further, due to the collective character in the process and the artistic result and beyond, change

is brought closer to daily life. Also, there is a certain collective empowerment through which people gain control over the given themes and insights into conflicts and actions within and outside the project. In addition, participation evokes a certain feeling or affection in artists, participants, and the public, which encourages action or not (Trienekens, 2020). These values can very much differ with regards to different artistic practices, and this should be taken into account when criticising participation in art to prevent a one-sided approach as mentioned above.



Figure 4. Co-creation art example, (L) *Indiosycotisce knip machine*, Kristof Van Gestel.

Conclusion

Either way it can be said participation in art should be considered as just art but where the exploration of involvement of the public can be seen as an artistic practise itself. It is the transformation in art from object to subject/process. It breaks with the concept that art is this holy domain which should be protected from everyday life. Since the search of the relation between art public and life is inherent to art (Tienekens, 2020). Furthermore, the measures of social impact depend on: the intentions, the social approach, the process, the final artistic result and the artistic value. Also, it can be argued that not only participatory-art or community art, but also interactive art or art with a participatory element can lead to a more inclusive museum with regards to attracting a wider public.

Participation in the museum

Besides participation in art, participation can also be approached with regard to the museum and the institutional setting. Nina Simon (2010) points out some of the outcomes of participation in the museum

These outcomes include: to attract new audiences, to collect and preserve visitor-contributed content, to provide educational experiences for visitors, to produce appealing marketing campaigns, to display locally relevant exhibitions, and to become a town square for conversation (Simon, 2010; p.16).

In this case the focus lies more on active engagement of the public. A number of basic principles underlie activating the audience. First of all, the relate, provoke, and reveal of the audience form the basis of an active visitor experience. Second, self-reference, in which the environment relates to the daily life, interests, experiences and knowledge of the visitor (Black, 2015; p. 11-12) are important. Therefore, the museum experience should be changed (Black, 2015; Simon, 2014). In the most common way of exhibiting in the current art world, the curator creates a context with his exhibition, in which the visitor himself must look for meaning. Due to the position of the art, the route and the text, the curator provides tools to interpret the artwork. The subject of the exhibition is determined by the curator, nowadays these are often socially critical subjects or ideas, and it is up to the visitors what exactly they learn from this or what insights they gain (Deeth, 2014; Black, 2015, Simon, 2010). The focus of a traditional

museum lies on the design of experiences. In the participatory museum the experience economy focuses on the creative dialogue between supplier and customer instead of the supplier deciding what the customer wants. Through co-curating the public is creating an exhibition and telling a story of the more everyday life. Furthermore, according to Simon (2010) the museum experience can be compared to a game experience. Where people are getting a positive self-reflection when they have satisfying work to do, are being good at something, spending time with people they like, and are being part of something. A museum often functions as the broader context for people to spend time together as social activity. The museum can function as a third-space in society (Simon, 2010). Therefore, if the public is part of creating content or curatorial practices these requirements can be achieved.

Conclusion

It can be said that a museum has a large influence on the neighbourhood by offering artistic dividend resulting in neighbourhood assets. Fine arts and community-art based spaces have the biggest change of creating this positive neighbourhood assets, like economic improvement, trough export of art expertise and skills, attraction and creation of tourism activities, community outreach and arts education, and artistic production. They offer opportunities to build and maintain social capital, peer networks, and a shared identity. Furthermore, participation can also be seen as empowerment resulting in a positive self-reflection trough being part of something, being good at something and having satisfying work to do. Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that there is risk of a certain degree of exclusivity within the museum. The museum can easily be seen as a place that has its own community and is only visited by an elite. There is certain strangeness and hierarchy in contemporary art and the museum. In this case, the museum is thus separated from the everyday life. So, to give an answer on the research question:

How can an active museum and participatory art improve the connection between (non-) local visitors, the museum, and the neighbourhood, resulting in increased neighbourhood asset?

To increase neighbourhood assets and regenerate underdeveloped areas in the city, it is important to minimize gentrification and displacement. It can be concluded that to make the museum more inclusive and attract a larger audience, it is necessary to intertwine the everyday social context, art and museum, so the gap between exhibiting art in the museum and making art in the studio is narrowed. However, it appears that engagement in the form of education and communicating interpretation does not lead to the desired effect. Here, participation in art can offer a solution. It can be said that participation in art should be considered as just art where the exploration of involvement of the public can be seen as an artistic practise itself. It is the transformation in art from object to subject/process. It breaks with the concept that art is this holy domain which should be protected from the everyday live. Since the search for the relation between art, public and life, is inherent to art. Furthermore, the measures of social impact resulting in neighbourhood asset depend on; the intentions, the social approach, the process, the final artistic result and the artistic value. Also, it can be concluded that not only participatory-art or community art, but also interactive art or art with a participatory element can lead to a more inclusive museum with regards to attracting a wider public.

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