

Evaluating participation – how to measure a complex concept

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Abstract

As participation has been a highly valued objective in cultural policy, many cultural institutions and projects have also prioritized to organize participatory activities. However, the way in which the concept of participation is used, varies quite a lot. In this article, I propose a more rigorous conceptual use of the concept of participation and argue that this would strengthen our understanding of the values and dilemmas of participatory cultural activities. My proposal is based on the distinction made by media scholar Nico Carpentier between access, interaction and participation. I implement this conceptual framework on the case of Aarhus as European Capital of Culture 2017, a case that included many different approaches to participation. Aarhus 2017 as a case included both access, interaction and participation, which means that I can use the case to demonstrate how important it is to approach the three differently when evaluating a cultural project. The article thus demonstrate how the way participation should be evaluated depends on the way in which the complex concept of participation is used.

Keywords: participation, access, interaction, evaluation, cultural policy, European Capitals of Culture

Introduction

The concepts 'participation' and 'evaluation' have in common that they have been central to cultural policy, practice and research during the last ten to fifteen years. As a result, a variety of meanings, uses and values have been ascribed to both concepts that thus has become multi-faceted, ambiguous and complex. The consequence thereof is that the combination of the two in the question "how can participation be evaluated?" becomes anything but simple to answer. It requires conceptual precision and awareness of the various value implications associated with both concepts in the particular context in which the evaluation takes place. In this article, I present a framework for the evaluation of participation. I build the framework on current cultural policy research into evaluation, impact and cultural value. Based on this, I argue for the importance of an awareness of the specific values attributed to the specific form participatory projects and activities. Another issue to be addressed is Nico Carpentier's conceptual distinction between access, interaction and participation that I present as a useful tool contributing to conceptual precision. I demonstrate the use of this distinction for the evaluation of a cultural project. My example is the mega-project Aarhus as European Capital of Culture 2017 (Aarhus 2017). The case has been chosen in order to illustrate some more general challenges in evaluating cultural participation.

The purpose of the article is neither to present an evaluation of Aarhus 2017 nor an actual evaluation manual in how to evaluate participation in culture, but more a discussion of the aspects of evaluation that are worth considering and discussing when giving specific answers to the general question: How to evaluate participation?

These considerations are developed as a part of the process of evaluating Aarhus 2017, a process I was engaged in as Project and Research Manager from 2013 to 2018. The evaluation was carried out at Aarhus University and the ambition was not only to publish an evaluation report, but also to use it as a case for the development of conceptual and methodological approaches to, and understandings of, the process of evaluating culture. In this way, Aarhus 2017 is the starting point for this article as well, and I will thus begin the article with an introduction to Aarhus 2017.

European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017

In 2017, Aarhus and the Central Denmark Region were declared a European Capital of Culture (ECoC), a title that every year is awarded to two or three European cities by the European Commission. Aarhus and the region were designated in 2012 based on an application process that started in 2007 with Aarhus Municipality's decision to run for the title. Aarhus 2017 had a

total budget of approx. 460 million DKK, included all 19 municipalities in the Central Denmark Region and was based on the theme 'rethink' or 'let's rethink'. In 2012 the delivery organization The Aarhus 2017 Foundation was established. The foundation had the primary responsibility for the delivery of the ECoC -program, but only produced approximately 20 percent of the cultural program. The remaining 80 percent was produced by a wide range of cultural institutions, artists etc. who received partial funding from the foundation for their contributions to the program. This decentralized program structure contributed not only to a broad and varied program but also to a range of different interpretations of the aims of the Capital of Culture project.

One example is the theme of Aarhus 2017 – rethink – to which all parts of the program were expected to contribute. But the specific interpretations and implementations of the meaning of rethinking encompassed a great variety. From an evaluation perspective this is a challenge and we as evaluators needed to decide whether to apply a uniform set of evaluation criteria or to adjust the criteria to encompass the diversity of activities and objectives. In the evaluation of Aarhus 2017, we took an approach based on a broad range of criteria developed in close collaboration with practitioners. The dynamics between the overall project level and the specific activities is important to have in mind in the evaluation. In the following, I present the conceptual distinction between access, interaction and participation and demonstrate how this can be used in an evaluation of the different approaches to capture the variety of aims and values of both the overall Aarhus 2017 project and the diversity of activities it included.

Evaluation of culture

The evaluation of Aarhus 2017 was carried out at a time when the discussion of the value of culture and how it is measured was one of the central discussions in the field of cultural policy research. Two different research approaches can be observed. The first, in close connection with practice, is concerned with developing new models for evaluating culture. The second engaged more critically with the way in which evaluation and measurements are used in a political context and the consequences thereof for cultural policy. This tension reflects a cultural policy research field that encompasses both an applied and a critical research tradition (Scullion & Garcia 2005).

The first approach can be seen as a response to a growing wish for, or pressure from, political stakeholders for better documentation of the effect of cultural policy efforts. This request had led to the development of a number of different evaluation models, which typically have legitimation of or advocacy for public spending on (specific types of) culture. Evaluation must thus, as stated in the introduction to the Australian evaluation tool *Measuring the Quality of the Arts*: "... tell a better story, for both Government and the public, of the full value of arts

and cultural activities, to the public” (Department of Culture and the Arts 2014, p. 4). Methodologically, both this Australian and the closely related British Quality Metrics (Knell & Whitaker 2016) are examples of indicator-based evaluation models. The core of these models are a number of quantitative indicators that live up to the ideal of being SMART, (specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-related). This approach to the evaluation of culture can be linked to New Public Management which has led to target management, goal achievement and documentation of impact throughout the public sector (Krogstrup 2011, pp. 41).

New Public Management has been criticized for its focus on measurable results. As Van den Hoogen (2012) points out, the risk of target management is that the indicators used to document goal achievement risk displacing the focus from the target to the indicators. All evaluations have so-called constitutive effects, which means that every evaluation affects the project or activities being evaluated (what is being evaluated) (Dahler-Larsen 2004). The risk with especially standardized indicators is that actions and efforts are accommodated to scoring as good as possible on the chosen indicators, and that the compliance to the indicators in itself becomes the success criterion. The lack of indicators and evaluation methods for capturing more complex, long-term and hardly quantifiable objectives has encouraged a number of researchers within the first cultural policy research tradition to engage in the development of new and better evaluation methods and impact indicators. This is also the case in the area of participation, in which there has been a focus on the development of methods and methodologies as well as new and better indicators than the ubiquitous and easily collected audience count.

The second research approach is more critical of, in particular, the close link between evaluation and New Public Management. As MacDowall points out, evaluation is not only a methodological tool but also one with political implications:

The cultural value debate suggests that solving the technical operations of evaluation will not remove broader political and philosophical questions about value. Despite some techniques of evaluation offering a seemingly valuefree source of data and evidence that might elevate arts and culture beyond debate, questions about value are necessarily political (MacDowall et al. 2015, s. 5).

Most of this research is thus more concerned with a critical analysis of the ideological aspects of evaluation than with developing alternative evaluation models. However, there are exceptions: research projects that try to link the critical and the applied approach. An early Danish example of this is the so-called ‘divining root model’ (Langsted et al. 2003), which, through a qualitative and dialogical approach to the evaluation of artistic quality, goes against the quantifiable,

objective evaluation. The model consists of three parameters: will, ability and necessity and is presented as a 'conversation tool' rather than as a measuring instrument:

We call it the establishment of room for dialogue about artistic quality. (...) Our position is not that it the basis of these will be possible to establish a grading system or a checklist (Langsted et al. 2003, p. 143).

In particular, artistic quality as an objective demonstrates the limitations of a quantitative, measurement oriented approach to the evaluation of arts and culture. To address these limitations and maintain quality as a cultural policy objective that could be included in evaluation and assessment processes, the Norwegian Cultural Council initiated the research programme *Art Culture and Quality*. The final publication of the program *Quality Understandings* presents a variety of different approaches that can be used to evaluate artistic quality (Elliassen & Pryzt 2016). As with the divining root model, the approach is qualitative and thus offers an alternative approach to the evaluation of art projects and works. However, none of these approaches address the special challenges related to participatory art works or projects in which the distinction between producers and consumers and the borders between work and spectators are often blurred. I will address these challenges in the analysis later in the article.

Another contribution to the way in which we understand the societal value of culture can be found in the British research project *Cultural Value Project* (Crossick & Kaszynska 2016). Here they argue that the cultural experience should be at the center of the debate about, and evaluation of, the value of culture:

The starting premise of the Cultural Value Project is that we need to begin by looking at the actual experience of culture and the arts rather than the ancillary effects of this experience. (...) The value begins there, with something fundamental and irreducible, and all the other components in the framework might be seen, to a greater or lesser extent, to cascade from it (Crossick & Kaszynska 2016; p. 21).

Crossick and Kaszynska also argue for the need to develop new, especially qualitative methods, for evaluating the value of culture in addition to existing quantitative ones. Part of their critique is that there is too much focus on evaluation as legitimation and on economic impact and this has resulted in simplified and methodically dubious return-on-investment models. Instead they argue for the centrality of the experience, a focus that corresponds very well with the concept of a participatory culture and a more user-oriented focus taken in this article. Through empirical cases, they highlight the potential of arts and culture in the development of reflective citizens and societal engagement. An important point in their report is that participation in art and

culture has many different forms, and that there is a need to understand in more depth the value of different forms of experience and participation.

Access, interaction and participation

The concept of participation is used by many different actors in many different ways. The lack of conceptual rigour is problematic for the evaluation of participatory activities and projects. There is a diversity of forms of participation, questions regarding the types of participation and the objective that need to be answered in relation to a specific project in order to design a precise evaluation. Having the idea of constitutive effects in mind, it is crucial that the indicators, evaluation criteria and methods chosen to evaluate participation are based on an exact understanding of the objective of the specific form of participation.

Media scholar Nico Carpentier in his distinction between access, interaction and participation offers such a conceptual framework. He argues for the value of conceptual clarity and the distinction between participation and the two related concepts of access and interaction that are often used interchangeably. In a cultural-political context, Carpentier's distinction can be used to distinguish between a number of different but related objectives. I will, however, argue for a less normative use of the concepts. Instead I find the concepts useful in separating different types of activities and different sets of cultural policy objectives.

Access is a central issue in a cultural policy aiming for a democratization of culture (Langsted 1990; Duelund 2003), and has been at the center of the welfare-based cultural policy in Western Europe since World War II. By removing geographical and economic barriers, culture should be accessible to a broad and diverse public that will then engage in classical cultural activities such as theater and museum visits and reading literature. Despite severe critique (e.g. Bjørnsen 2011; Kawashima 2000, Hadley 2021) of this cultural policy strategy, the objective of equal access still has a prominent role in cultural policy, and it is widely recognised that this objective has not been achieved (Mangset 2020). Today, efforts and strategies in this area are often labelled as 'audience development' or 'audience engagement' in which the focus is on a broader range of barriers than the two classics: geography and price.

Carpentier's second concept is interaction. He emphasizes the social and communicative aspect of interaction, which he also presents as a broad concept. In this context, I see interaction as a concept relevant in relation to works of art or other artistic interventions where people engage actively either in the process of producing or in the presentation, e.g. in the form of relational works (Bourriaud 2002, Bishop 2006). When evaluating interaction, two different dimensions are central: the relationship between process and product and, by extension, a consideration of how to consider the quality of the work.

A key question in an evaluation of interactive and co-created works is to determine the objective of the activity: is it primarily to produce a high quality interactive artwork or is it primarily to engage participants in the process and to serve as an intervention in certain social contexts? Often, this type of intervention will have a number of social goals that are about what the producing participants get out of the process, rather than what the spectators get out of the final product. The relationship between process and product in the evaluation of interactive and co-created cultural projects challenges the classic division between professional art and amateur art. From a cultural policy perspective, professional art has aimed to give spectators artistic experiences, whereas amateur art primarily has aimed to give the participants a creative experience.

Carpentier's third concept is participation, which means that he uses this concept in a significantly narrower and more well-defined sense than in most contexts. For Carpentier, the concept of participation is directly linked to the question of power and influence:

Despite its conceptual contingency, participation is still very much defined by the concept of power (...) the difference between the role of power in access and interaction on the one hand and the role of power in participation on the other, lies in the emphasis on the equalized power position of privileged and nonprivileged actors in particular decisionmaking processes (Carpentier 2015, s. 1920).

The concept of participation is thus, in Carpentier's definition, restricted to decision-making processes and questions of the equalization of power in these processes. In the field of cultural policy, this is something completely different from access and interaction, which is clear in Jancovich's critical analysis of the implementation of 'participation' in UK cultural policy. The core of her critique is that participation rarely takes place at the decision-making level:

However the concept of coproduction and cocreation, within the arts, more commonly involves the public in the creative process only once the funding has been distributed and the planning stages have been completed (Jancovich 2017, s. 109110).

Jancovich argues that cultural professionals in particular oppose more participatory approaches to decision-making. Consequently, the hierarchy of power in cultural policy as well as in cultural institutional practice is maintained. According to Jancovich, only a very small part of the cultural policy initiatives initiated aimed to enhance participation through a focus on decision-making. Instead, priority was given to initiatives promoting access and interaction, neither of which give 'ordinary' citizens any democratic influence on cultural policy.

I consider Carpentier's conceptual distinction between access, interaction and participation may be key to the methodological challenge in evaluating participation-based

cultural projects. There should be a clear difference in evaluation criteria depending on whether the cultural project aims at creating access, interaction or participation. In the following, I will present Aarhus 2017 as a cultural project that combined and to some extent confused aims of access, interaction and participation. Through this case study, I aim to demonstrate that the conceptual clarity provided by Carpentier contributes to a clarification of evaluation criteria and the choice of evaluation methods.

Evaluation of access to Aarhus 2017

The overall ECoC-project gave high priority to access. In its strategic business plan, the Aarhus 2017 Foundation expressed the ambition that the Capital of Culture project “will be a year for everyone - young and old, city and country, east and west” (Rasmussen 2015, p. 5). In the same strategic business plan, the foundation formulated a number of key performance indicators (KPI) in relation to audiences and participants. In relation to audiences, the success criteria of the overall project was exclusively related to access:

a: In 2017, 12 Full Moon events will attract on average 15,000 participants.

b: In 2017, 4 MEGAevents will attract on average 60,000 participants.

c: 20% of the inhabitants of the region will have participated in activities in the Aarhus 2017 program (Rasmussen 2015, p. 19).

None of the KPIs were related to interaction or participation, and the first two indicators are simply audience numbers, which is the simplest possible indicator of access. As a success criterion, audience numbers has the advantage that they can – more or less – easily be calculated. In addition, it is unambiguous and simple to determine whether the set goals have been met, which is not without significance in a public context where there is a need for a legitimization of support for such a major cultural investment. But according to the above cited ambition, Aarhus 2017 should be ‘for everyone’, an objective not captured in the raw audience numbers. Being ‘for everyone’ in a region naturally includes the programming of large-scale events with a high attendance, but the risk of using KPIs as a way of measuring success is that the achievement of KPI itself becomes the aim and not just the indicator of the objective. In this way, indicators are likely to have so-called constitutive effects, causing the organization to focus solely on the indicators which are being measured. This is why the third KPI is interesting since it is concerned with who the participants are and thus also the breadth of participation. These types of objectives are quite widespread at a general cultural political level in which equality of

access to culture is a central policy objective. However, research into cultural participation from Pierre Bourdieu onwards evidences that socio-demographic differences in cultural consumption and preferences are extremely difficult to change. This means that those with limited education and people living outside the big cities are generally less frequent attendants at cultural events (e.g. Mangset 2012).

The inclusion of a broad section of the regional population can be directly linked to the objective of broadening access and thus differs from the first two KPIs. It is obvious that this third KPI is formulated in order to live up to the political priority of a cultural event that will include the entire region, an objective given high political priority and attention. This might also be the reason why it is regional distribution that was chosen as the only KPI not just counting audience numbers. Given that KPIs tends to guide the priorities and focus of the organization, this also means that the major challenges of engaging the so-called non-users was at risk of being forgotten in both programming and communication activities.

But in addition to the Aarhus 2017's own KPIs, rethinkIMPACTS 2017 conducted a broader evaluation in which two relevant sub-surveys addressed the question of broader access. An absolutely crucial purpose of these studies was to evaluate access Aarhus 2017's many events based on the socio-demographic parameters that we know are crucial for cultural consumption. An analysis across audience and population surveys was thus able to provide answers like: What does the regional distribution of participation in Aarhus 2017 look like? Are the audience for Aarhus 2017-events more frequent culture consumers than the population as a whole? What is the composition of the audience for Aarhus 2017 events in terms of gender, age, education, home municipality, etc.? How is this composition distributed across such different events as the fireworks competition for *Silkeborg Ildfestregatta*; an exhibition about the textile industry's origins at Herningsholm Museum; *Sport Tailgate*, where basketball, handball and football are held as a joint event, and the Royal Theatre's outdoor performance *Red Serpent* at the foot of the Moesgaard Museum.

In evaluating access these types of quantitative data brings us much closer to an answer as to whether Aarhus 2017 reached a broad audience and managed to reach out to citizens who do not usually seek out (certain types of) culture. These quantitative studies are able to answer whether the event was broadly accessible, whether it is geography, age, gender, level of education or other parameters that are prioritized.¹ This type of analysis thus evaluates whether the classic goal of a democratization of culture has been achieved or not. What the mere quantitative evaluation can not do is to give answers to the value of access for the individual citizen or the barriers that prevented equal access. This can be incorporated into quantitative audience surveys, but in order to include the value of access to the ECoC and perhaps also

¹ The evaluation of the way in which Aarhus 2017 gave access to a wide and broad audience is presented and discussed in the article "No impact on cultural participation? - An analysis of the objective of increasing and widening cultural participation in European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017" (Hansen & Degn, 2022).

looking at the impact of access in a long term perspective, other methods will have to be included in the evaluation design.

Evaluation of interaction in Aarhus 2017

Many of the Aarhus 2017-projects were interactive or user-involving thus including what Carpentier defines as the creation of socio-cultural relationships, where users influence the content. This influence can happen either during the process (what Carpentier calls production) or during the presentation (what Carpentier calls reception). This means that interactive projects must be evaluated on the basis of how the interaction is included in the overall artistic creation and reception process and how it is combined with the other objectives of the project. Overall, Aarhus 2017 did not aim to create interaction. Despite that, interaction was embedded both in the theme of rethink and in the core value 'democracy (one of three, the other two being sustainability and diversity). Many projects used this as a starting point for activities being interactive, user-engaging and / or co-created. However, there is a great difference in the forms and purposes of interaction in these projects which more generally indicates that an evaluation of interaction is in itself a complex matter. The complexity increases, in that it is also relevant to ask about the artistic quality of these projects.

Two examples that demonstrates the variation within interactive projects are Blast Theory's *2097 We Made Ourselves Over* and Aarhus Music School's *Stepping Stones*. Both projects used interaction as a core element, and both had an ambition to offer the audience an artistic experience. But where *Stepping Stones* primarily focused on interaction in the process, *2097 We Made Ourselves Over* was an interactive theatre performance. The purpose of *Stepping Stones* was to engage children in a facilitated creative process and thereby giving them a different and creative approach to musical practice. This was in contrast to conventional music school teaching based on practice and technical skills. *Stepping Stones* took a co-creational approach to the process, aiming at other learning outcomes through collective, creative processes. At the same time, the goal was to create a performance of a high quality, making it worthwhile as an artistic experience for a broad audience. The project culminated with the performance *Message to the Future* created by children and young people from Aarhus Music School in collaboration with both professional artists and a larger group of children and young people.

Message to the future was the official children's opening of the Aarhus Capital of Culture year performed on the largest stage in The Concert Hall of Aarhus. The aim was clearly to offer the many spectators a spectacular high-quality experience. Both the process and the final performance should thus be included in an evaluation of *Stepping Stones*, which presents a specific challenge. This begs the question: How can the quality of a performance mainly created

by ‘amateurs’ be evaluated? It would appear that the artistic quality will have to be evaluated on slightly different premises than those applied to professional art. A way to approach this challenge is to use the parameters of the divining root model: *will*, *ability* and *necessity*. Whereas the parameters of *will* (the engagement of the performers and the way in which they establish contact with the audience) and *necessity* (is the performance addressing issues relevant for the audience, is it a performance that links to societal challenges?) can be applied without difficulty, *ability* presents some difficulties since this focusses on the technical achievement of the production including the skills of the performers. Since the majority of the performers in *Message to the Future* were amateurs, this needs to be taken into consideration when evaluating the parameter of *ability*. If this amateur status is taken into consideration, it is then possible to evaluate the artistic quality of the performance. Since the premise of *Stepping Stones* was to give children with different musical competencies the opportunity to express themselves, an evaluation of the *ability* of the production should not focus on the level of musical skills, but on the ways in which children at different skill levels were able to contribute to the totality of the performance in a meaningful way. Did the framework allow the children's own expressions to be included in a respectful way and did the overall dramaturgy of the performance function as a coherent whole integrating the different contributions?

Where *Message for the future* called for a different approach to the evaluation of artistic quality, the performance *2097 We Made Ourselves Over* was clearly a professional performing arts production and can be evaluated as such. The way in which interaction was a core element of the performance thus became one of several aspects of the artistic evaluation. The performance presented a dystopian vision of a future society with total equality in which people were not allowed to own or become attached to material things. Equipped with headphones and GPS, the audience individually visited the place where it all started - preserved as a future archaeological memorial that should remind our future selves of the wrongs of the distant past (our present). The GPS allowed audiences to choose their own route around the place, and the story was thus told in a random order. At the end of the performance, people met a performer who, through a series of questions, invited the audience to consider for themselves what is worth preserving and bringing into the future. As a product, this performance can easily be evaluated on its artistic quality based on the divining root model. The interactive element will here be included as one of several elements in line with, for example, scenography and dramaturgy. Here, a core criterion must be an analysis of what communicative possibilities the interactivity of the performance offers the viewer.

These two examples demonstrate that there is a big difference between the interactive and co-created works that were part of Aarhus 2017 suggesting that an evaluation must be based on an understanding of the values and aims of the specific project. This also means that in the field of interactive works, a key point is that evaluation is not a simple and standardized task. Interactive and co-created cultural projects always exist in a specific cultural policy and

institutional context where certain values and objectives are at stake, and on which the evaluation must be based.

Evaluation of participation in Aarhus 2017

An evaluation of Aarhus 2017 based on Carpentier's narrow definition of the concept of participation must be based on the public's ability to influence the Capital of Culture project, i.e. on the citizens' democratic influence. In order to do so, the way in which democratic influence is understood, must be clarified (Eriksson & Stephensen 2015). Seen from the perspective of a formal, political decision-making process in a representative democracy, Aarhus 2017 was based on democratic participation, as the population through regional and local politicians decided to apply for the title based on the project as it was described in the application. From a broader perspective based on a deliberative concept of democracy in which democratic dialogue about the decision-making processes is at the center, an evaluation of the Capital of Culture project will look different. And here, it is important to distinguish between the entire Capital of Culture project and the specific projects.

Democracy was one of Aarhus 2017's core values; and it highlighted the way in which the whole project was developed in dialogue with the citizens as a manifestation of this. One example is Aarhus 2017's strategy for the years after 2017, the so-called legacy document, in which it is stated that: "Aarhus 2017 was built from an extensive democratic process of citizen engagement that showed a need for finding new solutions to shared challenges by 'rethinking'" (Rasmussen 2015, p. 7). This refers to the citizen engagement process that took place in the application phase 2009-2012, and which was precisely about giving citizens influence on the Capital of Culture project "based on a direct and inclusive model that does not just copy or strengthen existing (power) structures." (Aarhus Municipality 2011, chap. 1, p. 66).

During the application phase, an effort was made to include a broad range of people in the process of participatory decision-making. As the evaluation of Aarhus 2017 did not include this in the early stages and thus did not have data regarding the profundity or quality of the participation, it is not possible to evaluate the degree of co-determination in this process. For the later process of developing and delivering the ECoC after the designation, participatory decision-making processes were abolished and replaced by a more traditional hierarchical decision-making process (Jancovich 2016, p. 13). This applies to decisions on grant allocation and to the process of developing a legacy strategy. This strategy was developed in dialogue with a number of stakeholders, but the general public was not involved (Rasmussen 2015, p. 33).

Despite this overall change from the application process to the delivery process, specific Aarhus 2017 projects did sustain a participatory decision-making process. One example was the cross-municipal project *Rethink the village* that included experiments with participatory

budgeting. As a result of the possibility for direct influence, a new group of citizens chose to be involved:

The chairs of the community associations spoken to acknowledged that most village societies were usually run by the older generation, but when people saw that there was real money available, through this project, to realise their ideas, different types of people got involved, including both families and young people, who were not normally active in the village (Jancovich 2016, s. 11).

The Aarhus 2017 project *Rethink Your Audience* carried out by the theatre company Carte Blanche in Viborg consisted of a long, citizen-involving process with workshops and dialogue with various groups that culminated in *The Pop-Up Culture House* in Viborg's old town hall. The citizens contributed to several of the performances and productions that Carte Blanche staged as well as organized activities. This included both associations and individual citizens that used the culture house as place for their own events. The place was created by Carte Blanche, but with a clear purpose to invite to shared creation of a cultural community:

The underlying idea has been that we can change our culture if we are in continuous dialogue. A dialogue guided by questions to the project's actors about the values that are important for a cultural community. A cultural community created through a network structure that allows actors to become key co-creators of the project (Voss 2017, p. 4).

The Pop-Up Culture House organized a total of 71 unique events, of which Carte Blanche was the creator or co-creator of fourteen (Voss 2017, p. 6). The purpose of participation was to give people influence in the programme of this part of Aarhus 2017. The result was a broad range of cultural activities including a board game café, parkour, fencing as well as music, theatre etc.

Another example of a participation project is the *Democracy Baton*, which aimed to offer young people new forms of democratic participation (Hesselberg et. al., 2019). For this project, the way in which the initiation of and formulation of goals for the project was organized, made it difficult to fulfill the goal of giving young people a role as co-creators of the library as a public democratic room. From an evaluation perspective, it is worth pointing out two factors. First, the young people were only involved after the funds for the project had been applied for. Secondly, key objectives turned out to be conflicting. Two quantitative success criteria had been formulated in advance (among other things): that half of the activities should be generated by young people, and that 6,000 young people should take part in the project. Whereas the first objective was to create participation, the second was about access. As the libraries learned, the youth-generated activities were typically resource intensive and typically attracted a small

group of young people, who in turn gained a real influence. Parallel to that, the librarians themselves had to organize popular but far more traditional events attracting a high number of audiences that ignored the aspect of participation.

Conclusion

Evaluation is about valuing which means that the starting point for an evaluation must be to clarify the values of the project being evaluated. In this article, I have offered Carpentier's distinction between access, interaction and participation as a tool to distinguish between different values of some of the many cultural projects that claim to be participatory, collective, co-creational etc. As Dahler-Larsen has pointed out, evaluation criteria are constitutive and affect the activities being evaluated. For this reason, it is crucial that the indicators as well as the evaluation methods reflect the project's values and objectives. If they do not, the risk is that the project unintentionally may adapt to the evaluation criteria and thus focus on other aims than the ones intended. Because of this, it is also important that participatory cultural projects are evaluated based on a clear and shared understanding of the concept of participation. In this conclusion, I argue that the proposed distinction between the three concepts *access*, *interaction*, and *participation* helps to handle the different and partly conflicting goals and values. I will do this by returning to practice, where participation is used as a broad and loosely defined concept including access, interaction, participation etc. in various mixed and unclear ways. In practice, this is a challenge for the implementation of the conceptual rigour proposed by Carpentier.

Instead of insisting that practice adjust to academic rigour, my more pragmatic suggestion is that we distinguish between three different forms of participation:

- 1) Participation in cultural activities
- 2) Participation in art production (either in the production or presentation)
- 3) Participation in cultural policy or cultural institutional decision-making processes

As mentioned in the introduction, there are different values underlying the three different forms of participation, and I will conclude by summarizing how the three can collide because they contain potentially conflicting goals.

Participation in cultural policy or cultural institutional decision-making processes challenges the status quo by revealing that participation in art production often takes place on unequal terms, given that the artists or cultural institution more usually provides the

institutional and creative framework for the production. At the same time, participation in cultural policy and cultural institutional decision-making processes is also a challenge to rethinking participation in cultural activities, since it raises questions about which cultural activities should count in terms of what we as society see as desirable participation in cultural activities.

Participation in art production challenges the way in which we understand and value participation in cultural activities, partly because it questions who the participant is. Is it the museum guest or the citizen who delivered the museum object? And how do the outcome for the two relate to each other? As suggested by Ranciere (2011) and Bishop (2012), there is a tendency to value co-creative participation in art production higher than the participation of audiences attending professional performances. This is reflected in the dichotomy between 'active' and 'passive'. Whereas it might be possible to attract a large audience to cultural events, thus fulfilling the cultural policy objective of a large part of the population, participation in art production may be more exclusive by, for example, involving only a very small group of participants.

In this article, I have used Aarhus 2017 as a case study that demonstrates how the three forms of participation often are intertwined and may include supplementary and even conflicting values and objectives. As the analysis has clearly demonstrated, it is challenging to evaluate based on complex, intertwined objectives. This is hardly atypical of participation-based cultural projects, and I would not argue that it is necessarily a mistake to combine them. However, from an evaluation perspective, it is necessary to include a process of clarification of the values and objectives and to be aware of the way in which different goals work against each other. This means that apart from concluding whether the specific target figures have been reached, the evaluator needs to develop an understanding of the value and intention of the specific practice. The political consequence of undertaking a more situated and critical evaluation practice is that the evaluation becomes a more complex task. Such an evaluation practice is more in line with the critical cultural policy research tradition presented at the beginning of this article. In this tradition; the question of value is considered a political question rather than solely a methodological question. What evaluation can do in this context is to offer itself as a tool that offers a reflection on the relationship between goals, efforts and results based on a nuanced understanding of the intention and the values of a given culture project.

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