

An autoethnography of a hearing-impaired researcher in museum-based participatory research

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Abstract

This presentation is an auto-ethnographic reflection of my participation as a hearing-impaired researcher and co-participant in a study of learners with sensory and intellectual access needs in six European museums. The fieldwork for this project is based in Spain, Austria and the UK, and the museums involved include the Victoria & Albert Museum (London), the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum (Madrid) and the Kunsthistorisches Museum (Vienna). The methodology used for the broader study is participatory research, which is a form of emancipatory and inclusive research methodology. Data collection methods include feedback from monthly and bi-monthly meetings, interviews with participants, participant focus groups, photographs of practice by the participants and of participants' practice, art making activities and participant diaries. The presentation aims to discuss the following questions in relation to my experiences of fieldwork in Madrid and London:

- 1. What challenges have I faced as a hearing-impaired researcher and co-participant in the course of this fieldwork?*
- 2. How can museums engage researchers who have impairments and access needs in participatory studies and practice?*

Issues to be discussed during the presentation are: power issues and tensions between myself and different groups of participants or individual participants; issues of communication between myself and participants with different communication needs; and cultural differences when conducting participatory research in different countries.