FEELING THE SQUEEZE AND DOING IT ANYWAY: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN ENGLISH MUSEUMS, 2013 - 2014

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Abstract

Austerity measures put in place by the UK government have been shown to have impacted negatively on England's museums, with cuts to budgets and service provision, job losses, and closures. Qualitative data collected from museum professionals has illustrated the pain that is being felt by workers and their pessimism about the future. The situation has been described by many as a 'crisis'.

My thesis attempts to take a look behind the statistics and negative press to explore what community engagement practices looked like in museums in England during the cuts in 2013 and 2014. Using qualitative data collected from museum professionals working in a range of roles and museums in England via semi-structured interviews, I argue the cuts have acted as a catalyst that museum professionals are using to develop their practice so community engagement can continue to survive – and thrive – in the current financial climate.

Key to the endurance of community engagement practice are museum professionals' and sector leaders' strong belief in the social role of museums, partnership working, organisational policies and ethoses that value community engagement, and local and national policies which enable community engagement practice.

I use a social-ecological system as a theoretical framework through which to explore and understand my findings, and suggest that resilient community engagement practice is achieved by having the above key factors in place. My conclusion includes potential strategies that could be utilised to ensure community engagement practice in museums continues to be resilient now and in the future.

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This thesis is dedicated to Nick, and also to my Mum and Dad.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The thesis is about what community engagement practice looked like in English museums between 2013 and 2014 at a time when austerity led to budget cuts. Locating the research during this timeframe enables me to consider the impact of these financial cuts on work done with community groups. During the course of my fieldwork, I carried out 15 semi-structured interviews with staff who worked at nine museums in the North and East of England and the Midlands. The study encompassed National Museums, a University Museum, a museum that is part of a Local Museum Trust, and a small Independent Museum. At the time of my research, four of the museums were Arts Council England (ACE) Major Partner Museums. Research participants worked in a range of roles and departments, including senior managerial roles, and community, learning and curatorial roles. All of them worked with communities as part of their role. Of the people I interviewed, all but one interviewee – who only received a modest grant from the local council which covered the costs of one member of staff - had experienced cuts to their museums through the loss of ACE grants and/or direct cuts from local and national government. One interviewee spoke in the knowledge that their museum was about to receive another significant cut. This real – in most cases - or potential threat to funding had led to all the interviewees working and thinking in a different way as they dealt with, or wanted to be prepared for, cuts.

Prior to conducting my fieldwork, I gained ethical approval for my research from the University of Leicester in line with the University's Code of Practice for Research Ethics[1]. Each participant who agreed to be interviewed for my research was given information about the research and completed a consent form prior to participation.

The names of the people who were involved in this study, and their institutions, have been omitted from the thesis to ensure their anonymity. Details that would enable the reader to identify participants, such as names of specific projects or partners, have also been omitted. Although most of the quotes in this thesis are accompanied by descriptors of the interviewee's role type and museum type, in order to provide some context, these details have been omitted on occasions when I felt that, owing to the content of the quotes, readers might be able to identify a participant. Apart from a small number of occasions, when I needed to summarise an interviewee's words to prevent them from being identified, I have used direct quotes taken from interviews so the research participants are able to speak for themselves and so the reader can gain a better understanding of why, when analysing the data, I came to the conclusions presented in this thesis.

[1] For more information, please see the University of Leicester Code of Practice for Research Ethics http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/ethics/code.

1.1 Research Context

"Funding cuts could spell the end of free museums and galleries'" (M. Brown 2015); *"Council cuts put free museum entry in doubt"* (Youngs 2015*); "Could Budget Cuts Finish Off London's Smaller Museums?"* (Fitzgerald 2015).

These headlines comprised the first three articles that came up as a result of a Google search for 'museum cuts' on 2 November 2015. The nature of articles were reflective of the view expressed by many in the museum sector, via news and journal articles, blogs and social media updates, during this time and the years since the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010 and the consequential cuts to museums. In the mid-2010s, the view of the museum sector that was evident in such articles was of a sector in crisis.

These articles, and others like them, were perhaps unsurprising. The 2014 Museums Association (MA) Cuts Survey (MA 2014), for example, found 43% of respondents experienced a budget cut of more than 10% in previous year and 9% of respondents reduced access to sites by closing whole or parts of sites.

The language used to describe the effects of the cuts on museums is pessimistic, suggesting a sector in 'crisis', even when that word is not specifically used by authors and commentators. For example, articles describe museums as being in a state of deterioration and as 'victims' of the cuts (Kendall 2015a; Kendall 2015b). The 2011

Cuts Survey includes a warning that the cuts had "relegated" some museums to "merely repository status", by leading them to reduce budgets, staffing and services, and that this will have a negative impact on the publics they serve (Newman and Tourle 2012, 298). When I carried out my fieldwork between 2013 and 2014, this view seemed to be part of the given discourse on the effect of the cuts upon community engagement; indeed, my own research, as I describe later in this introduction, began with this assumption.

Although it is clear the cuts had negative impacts on museums, I wanted to gain an understanding of whether this was true for community engagement practice in museums. Despite containing many negative and frustrated quotes from respondents, the 2014 MA Cuts Survey (MA 2014) cited above, for example, found 35% of respondents were confident the quality of their services would improve over the following year – although some said they would have to reduce the quantity of their services in order to maintain quality. Some referred to new ways of working, new business models and others talked of the confidence and dedication of staff members. Furthermore, 44% of respondents said they intended to focus more in 2015 on encouraging participation, suggesting that community work was, for some at least, still a high priority at this time. The findings of this, and other, Cuts Surveys, tentatively suggested community work might be thriving, despite the financial cuts. My research provides an in-depth exploration of this issue.

1.2 Research Aims and Research Questions

My research aims to take a look behind the statistics and numerous articles about the negative impact of the cuts to explore what community engagement practices in England looked like during the economic climate of 2013 – 2014. By 'community engagement' I mean museum work that aims to bring about positive impacts for individuals and communities. This encompasses a wide range of practice linked to social inclusion, health and wellbeing, and participation, and includes a wide variety of relationships and interactions with a range of individuals and groups. Community engagement practice varies greatly between museums depending on variables such as museum type, location, funding streams a museum receives, make-up of the local community, expertise of the local staff, and priorities of the museum.

Although a wealth of literature about museums and community engagement exists, there is limited understanding of how community engagement can be sustained during times of economic difficulties. The financial crisis provided a unique opportunity to explore this under-researched area. By exploring how and why community engagement took place in museums between 2013 and 2014, my study contributes to the research around community engagement.

My primary research question was:

- What did community engagement practice look like in museums in England from 2013-2014?

My secondary questions were:

- What is the impact of the knowledge culture on community engagement?
- What effect has austerity had on community engagement?
- What effect do organisational and local and national policies have on community engagement?

As the area I studied was under-explored, I utilised grounded theory, which requires researchers to build theory from the ground up by collecting data from interviewees and secondary texts rather than approaching the research with a fixed hypothesis. My own position on austerity and the cuts is not neutral. I am personally politically opposed to the ideology of austerity. My experience of working in the museum sector places me as a 'practitioner researcher' (Kennedy-Lewis 2012), a position which affords me two perspectives on the issues I am researching, both as a museum practitioner working inside museums and an external researcher looking in on the sector. In discussing teacher-researchers, Kennedy-Lewis (ibid, 109) argues this

position aids a researcher to better understand and interpret nuances, but warns that the shift from practitioner to researcher working with theories can be difficult as research findings can conflict with views that were held prior to commencing research.

My role as practitioner-researcher was helpful in that my contacts in the sector helped me recruit interviewees. In addition, participants were able to talk me as a fellow practitioner who had a good working knowledge of the museum sector, which helped to create a comfortable environment and establish rapport. However, it was necessary to adopt a reflexive approach to the research as this enabled me to move from the political and emotional position I had as a practitioner to the more impassive position that is required of a researcher, whilst still acknowledging it was impossible to completely set aside my beliefs and values when undertaking the research. This approach requires the researcher to recognise and consider how one's own biases, beliefs and experiences play a role in knowledge creation and to monitor these in order to minimise bias (Berger 2015, 220). It is important to be reflexive through all stages of the research from creation to completion (Bradbury-Jones 2007). In adopting this approach, I ensured I did not talk about my own practitioner experiences during interviews; undertook semi-structured interviews which allowed me to ask the same questions to each interviewee, with some flexibility to be able to further interrogate lines of enquiry that helped answer my research questions; and discussed my findings and conclusions with my supervisor and university colleagues, which allowed me to consider different perspectives and challenge my own thinking.

At the start of the fieldwork stage of my research, I thought the data I collected would fit with my worldview of the cuts; that austerity was having a negative on community engagement in museums. It was clear, for example, interviewees were frustrated at the impact of the cuts on their work and their tone and content of interviews often came across as being negative. However, maintaining a reflexive approach allowed to me look behind the surface of the data to consider other meanings in the data. As my research and ongoing data analysis progressed, to my surprise, I found I was gaining unexpected insights into community engagement practices during the financial cuts in that, behind the immediate upset and frustration, lay a commitment to community engagement, a strong belief in the social role of museums, and a determination to continue to work with communities to try to impact positively on people's lives. I tested this theory by continually reviewing the interviews and contemplating both the words of each interviewee and what they might mean. As time progressed, I became more confident and certain in the interpretation of the interviews that is present within this thesis as I noticed strong patterns between each interview which drew me to my final conclusions. That is not to say reaching these conclusions was wholly comfortable. Indeed, the difficulties described above by Kennedy-Lewis (2012) around shifting from practitioner to researcher reflected my own experiences of conducting research for this thesis. I had expected my research would strengthen my strongly held opinions about cuts to the museum sector, yet the research journey saw me question and challenge these views. As I write my final thesis, I still hold the view that cuts to the museum sector can be damaging, but I accept the picture is more

nuanced than the one that is often presented in the press; certainly, the cuts have caused pain to people and resulted in museum closures, but my research provides evidence that the sector is also resilient, innovative and passionate about trying to positively impact on people's lives.

As my research developed, I added two further secondary questions to explore topics that were becoming more important:

- Why do people practice community engagement?

- How might resilient community engagement be characterised?

Firstly, as it became clear that community engagement in museums was still thriving despite the cuts, my research led to me also consider *why* this was happening; why were museum professionals, in a period when the sector was suffering from the cuts, continuing to carry out community engagement?

Secondly, the study led me to reflect on how museums might be resilient in continuing community engagement practice despite having lost some or all of their public funding. My research suggests it is vital that the museum sector embraces a holistic view of what it means to be resilient so it can face future financial issues with confidence and remain a strong sector that continues to practice community engagement.

1.3 Types of Community Engagement Practice in English Museums, 2013 – 2014

The findings of this thesis suggest community engagement practice in English museums in 2013 and 2014 was largely rooted in social inclusion and bringing about positive social outcomes for individuals and communities. Health and wellbeing initiatives also appear to have been increasingly significant in community engagement practice. This appears to have been the result of a desire to diversify funding streams by accessing government funding by responding to policy around health and wellbeing; for example, one interviewee discussed how work their museum was doing for people with dementia was, in part, in response to David Cameron's 2012 challenge on dementia. The focus on health and wellbeing work found in my study also potentially hints at a greater interest in pursuing health and wellbeing work by the museum sector. Museum workers have been aided in carrying out health and wellbeing work by forming partnerships with organisations working in the health sector. The brokering of such partnerships suggests museums are considering how to better 'speak the language' of health partners and advocating for the impacts of museum work on the health and wellbeing of individuals. However, the sector still has some way to go in order to evaluate and advocate for this work to partners and potential partners. This is considered further in Chapter 7, together with a wider discussion of partnership working. Participatory practice was also found to be part of community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014. The discussion in Chapter 7 reflects on levels of participatory practice that were evident in the museums in my study by looking at work such as Arnstein's 1969 'ladder of participation' (Arnstein

1969 cited in Lithgow-Schmidt 2004), and suggests although the nature of some community engagement practice in these museums became less intensive due to the financial cuts, participatory practice uncovered in the course of my research empowered community members and was less tokenistic and more sustainable than practice before the cuts.

As well as considering the type of community engagement practised between 2013 and 2014, the thesis also considers the type of communities museums worked with during this time. The research finds museum staff in my study tended to work with their local geographic community, and partner organisations located in their geographic community, suggesting community engagement practice in museums in 2013 and 2014 partially worked on a definition of community where community members are linked through a shared geographic location, such as the geographic communities described by scholars including Crowther and Cooper (2002, 344), Crooke (2007, 31) and Graham, Mason and Newman (2009, 3). In addition, by enabling community groups to create content for museums, museum workers are perhaps creating communities via 'acts of mobilisation' and specific circumstances (Crooke 2007, 27).

1.4 Resilient Museum Practice

If museum professionals working in the museums in my study 2013 and 2014 were doing much to counteract the negative impact of the cuts, it is useful to ask why the

predominant narrative that surrounds the cuts was, and is, one of crisis and a fight for survival. A possible answer to this question is the definition of, and language that is used to describe, resilience in the museum sector, which is sometimes focused – with the exception of the work of scholars such as Janes (2009, 121) and sector publications including *Making adaptive resilience real* (Robinson 2010) - on resilience as money, or, having enough money to undertake community engagement and other museum services. Whilst I accept museums need money to operate, the view of resilience as money is problematic as it assumes money is the only, or predominant, means for survival. Furthermore, considering resilience to solely, or largely, mean money, or funding, fails to take into account truths about museum funding in the UK. There is evidence to suggest that, even in future economic booms, spending on museums would not increase. Despite the steady increase in funding as a percentage of total economic output under New Labour, this period was not a 'golden age' for museums, which received less than 1% of GDP for most of New Labour's time in Office (Stanziola and Méndez-Carbajo 2011, 254). In addition, Woodward (2012) suggests museums should not expect increased government funding, at least in the current financial climate.

A further reason why the narrative around the cuts is that of a sector in total crisis could be museum professionals' personal views about the cuts, which could be a result of negative experiences of the impact of the cuts, or the existence of political ideologies like my own. I do not want to underestimate or be unsympathetic to the pain caused by the cuts - for example job losses and increased workloads due to

colleagues' redundancy which can be devastating for individuals. However, although voicing concerns over the cuts and advocating for increased funding for the sector is understandable, this research suggests it is important to take a realistic and nuanced standpoint; it is possible to advocate for museums whilst also considering what the sector must do if funding for museums does not increase or even decreases further.

The research suggests there is a need to look for new ways in which to define what 'resilience' means in the museum sector, moving away from the economic model of resilience, an approach suggested by Janes (2009, 142) who warns the museum sector needs to reconsider its current growth model that is centered on money – building projects, expensive projects, operating costs etc. This approach is not intended to ignore the importance of funding and other forms of income generation, for money is, of course, essential to carry out a range of functions, not least paying staff. However, this research advocates for a new approach when considering resilience in museums. Reducing 'resilience' to mean only 'economic sustainability' is reductive and potentially assumes an increase of public money will become available in the future - if this does not happen, it is surely unacceptable for museums, as one of the guardians of culture, to cease to exist? This narrow definition of resilience also assumes that, in times of economic boom, vast amounts of public money is spent on museums – Stanziola and Méndez-Carbajo (2011, 254) have proven this view to be flawed.

The study focuses on areas which might be helpful when reconsidering how to define resilient community engagement practice as a multi-faceted term, rather than

narrowly focused on money: individual museum workers' and sector leaders' strong beliefs in the social role of museums; partnerships with community organisations which help enable community engagement to take place; organisational ethoses which value community engagement; and local and national policies which enable and provide funding for community engagement. Although this study is dedicated to exploring community engagement in particular, some of the practices highlighted within the research could potentially be utilised in other museum departments too. Focusing all efforts on trying to raise more funding for the sector may prevent museum professionals from undertaking other practice which could support museum resilience; whilst advocating for funding is important, the sector must consider how to implement non-monetary approaches to resilience.

1.5 The Social-Ecological Model: A Theoretical Framework

The thesis adopts the social-ecological model as a useful intellectual tool via which to conceptualise museums' resilience in relation to community engagement practice and explain how museum community engagement practice is being adapted so this area of work can continue despite the cuts. The study frames community engagement practice as a social-ecological system and looks at the factors scholars have suggested improve resilience in social-ecological systems. A resilient social-ecological system is one which has the capacity to adapt and reorganise during a regime shift, disturbance or crisis in order to retain or restore its core functions or continue to carry out desired services (Walker et al 2004; Cote and Nightingale 2012; Kerner and

Thomas 2014). A resilient system has transformability – the capacity to create a fundamentally new system when ecological, economic, or social conditions make the existing system untenable (Walker et al 2004, 1). Whilst there are many ways in which the data collected in this study could have been presented, the use of the social-ecological model provides a helpful framework via which to illustrate and theorise issues I encountered during the course of the research. The social-ecological model also aids reflection on alternative definitions for 'resilience' - beyond that of 'economic sustainability' - and provides a way in which to take a look behind the language of 'crisis' to find demonstrable ways in which museums are adapting to the economic climate.

The social-ecological model, which has been used in several academic disciplines, including sociology, psychology and health, considers how individuals' behaviour affects and is affected by a range of factors. In 1988, McLeroy et al (cited in Winch 2012) suggested that, in a socio-ecological model, multiple factors influence behaviours, and an individual's behaviour both shapes, and is shaped by, the social environment. Social-ecological models enable exploration and understanding of the range of factors that are at play between the individual (including characteristics that influence behaviour) and their personal networks, the community, organisations, and public policy.

The model, in which each factor is displayed as an overlapping ring, or level, demonstrates how factors at different levels influence each other - for example, a societal factor might impact on the behaviour of an individual.

1.6 Thesis Outline

This thesis is structured into 12 chapters. This introduction, Chapter 1, summarises the context of the research, the research itself, and the theoretical context of the research.

Chapter 2 sets the context for the research through an in-depth look at relevant literature. The topics covered reflect the research process. I commenced my research by looking at work around community engagement, including what this means for museums, new museology, New Labour's effect on community work, and 'real' and 'symbolic' community engagement. I also looked at literature on the age of austerity and its effects on the museum sector at the beginning of my research. As my research developed, I looked at the concept of 'meaningful work', organisational values, partnership-working, the professionalisation of the museum sector, and evaluation and advocacy. My research also led me to exploring the concept of resilience; through this, I discovered the social-ecological model which helps explain my work and conclusions.

Chapter 3 describes how I designed this qualitative piece of research which explores a subject about which fairly little literature exists. I chose to undertake grounded research and to collect qualitative data via semi-structured with museum professionals working across a variety of museums and in differing roles.

Chapter 4 explains some of the influences on my decision to adopt ecological, systems thinking, offers an introduction to social-ecological models, and provides an explanation of how I have used a social-ecological model to explain the findings of my research.

Chapters 5 to 10 present my findings, taking a detailed look at the responses of my interviewees and drawing together the data to present the main conclusions from my research. The chapters are ordered in relation to the social-ecological model, beginning with the Individual, and progressing to Interpersonal, Community, Organisational, and Local and National Policy.

Chapter 5 explores the personal history factors that increase the likelihood of individuals undertaking, and seeing value in, community engagement. The chapter argues individuals' behaviour is an important factor that is at play in resilient community engagement and in ensuring community work continues to take place in times of austerity. The research suggests people are drawn to the museum sector because they want to do meaningful work which 'helps' others, and that museum workers can hold strong beliefs in the social role of museums. This chapter also

considers the influence of Museum Studies qualifications and museological literature in encouraging influence sector professionals to adopt a community focus in their work. The chapter suggests the knowledge culture has an impact on community engagement as knowledge about community engagement is transferred from students of Museum Studies, and others, to organisations, which potentially builds an organisational culture which values community engagement. The wider museum community may also now have a knowledge culture that has an understanding of, and values, community work. Finally, the research suggests new museology has become embedded in museum practice.

Chapter 6 considers the sector influencers that shape individuals' behaviour. Museum directors, and other senior staff, set the direction of a museum and create an enabling environment for community engagement.

Chapter 7 focuses on partnerships museum workers create and maintain with community organisations that are based in the same locality as their museum. The chapter suggests partnerships have a range of benefits for museums, including providing specialist expertise, helping museums reach communities, and are an important influence on community engagement practice, enabling practice to be more sustainable and embedded and setting a direction for the type of community engagement that is practised. The research also found funding cuts led to more strategic and sustainable partnerships in 2013 and 2014.

Chapter 8 considers the informal and formal organisational policies, and organisational ethoses, that enable community engagement to take place. As well as formalising community engagement work, policies can also set a strategic direction for community work that support museum staff to focus on specific community work, rather than trying to spread their work too thinly; the thesis argues undertaking more focused community engagement practice is a more sustainable and less tokenistic way of working with communities.

Chapter 9 looks at local and national policies which guide and enable community engagement work, including local government policies and national policies, such as those of ACE and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Chapter 10 considers what resilient community engagement practice looks like and brings together findings from Chapters 5 to 9 to conclude that resilience is about having a number of factors in place which support community engagement to take place, even in times of reduced funding. A social-ecological model has been used to provide a visual explanation of the factors which my research suggests support resilient community engagement practice.

Chapter 11, the conclusion, draws together each of these main findings, and provides some suggestions for the implications of this research on future community engagement practice in museums. In addition, it considers the limitations of the

research and makes suggestions for further research which might be carried out to test and broaden my research.

Now, I turn to Chapter 2 of my thesis, which sets out the theoretical context for my research, considering community engagement practice in museums and the effects of austerity on museum practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

First, a reminder about the main aims and objectives of my thesis. The thesis aims to explore what community engagement practice in museums in England looked like between 2013 and 2014. Secondary research questions look at the impact of the knowledge culture on community engagement practices, why people in the museums sector practice community engagement, what effect austerity had on community engagement in museums, what effect organisational and local and national policies have on community engagement in museums, and how resilient community engagement in museums might be characterised.

This chapter reviews literature relating to community engagement in museums and the effects of austerity on museums. I do not present an exhaustive review of all the literature on these topics but discuss the texts which are most relevant to this thesis. The purpose of undertaking the literature review was to identify key theories about community engagement, including what community engagement practice in museums looks like, why museum professionals carry out community engagement and what criticisms have been made about museums' community engagement practice. In addition, the literature review enabled me to explore the effect austerity had on museum practice. Although I looked for, and refer to, Morse and Munro's 2015 study which deals with the effect of austerity on community engagement practice, the majority of the literature on museums and austerity I found during the course of the

literature review, and that are presented here, consider how funding cuts may have affected wider museum practice.

2.0 Introduction

This literature review reflects the fact I began my research exploring theory around community engagement and museums. The review includes themes pertaining to this broad topic in an attempt to contextualise my research and show how my research fits within academic and museum sector thinking around community engagement. As my research advanced and I developed my theory, I read more widely to understand and make sense of the data I was gathering. The reading I did around these themes is considered in Chapters 4 to 10 and is used to explain and consider my findings. One of these themes, the impact of the knowledge culture upon community engagement practices, will be discussed in Chapter 5. This secondary research question was formed during my fieldwork as it became more apparent the knowledge culture is a factor which influences community engagement. As this theme did not emerge until I carried out my fieldwork, it has not been included in this literature review. Another theme, that of meaningful work, also emerged in the course of my fieldwork and, as such, will be discussed as part of my analysis in Chapter 5. In addition, the literature review only touches upon resilient museum practice. Again, this is because the theme of resilient community engagement practice only emerged in the course of my fieldwork.

The literature review is structured in two sections, each providing useful contextual theories and viewpoints about community engagement practices in museums and the effects of government-led austerity on museums in England.

The first section of the literature review explores community engagement in museums. I focused the review on topics which highlight significant themes that are raised and explored in my research. Studies I include consider how the wide-reaching term 'community engagement' is defined by museum scholars, the historical background of community engagement practice in museums, new museological theory, political and ideological reasons why museums work with communities, and types of community work in museums. Finally, I explore scholars' criticisms of community engagement, such as concerns around the short-term nature of some community practice, tokenism, and the concern that community work is on the margins of museum practice rather than at the core.

The second section of the literature review examines austerity and its impact on the museum sector in England. First, I explore the concept of austerity as a moral imperative that urges living within one's means. I then discuss how austerity worked in practice during the first years of the coalition government, that is via spending cuts, some of which directly affected museums. I then consider articles from the press – including both specialist and non-specialist publications – that offer views from those working either in the museum sector or in the press on the effect of the cuts upon museums, and look at results of Cuts Surveys carried out by, and on behalf of, the UK

MA between 2011 and 2014, which provide some data on the impact of the cuts on museums. Following this, I explore academic writing about austerity and museums. From here, I review literature relating to how other organisations and sectors have undergone change as a result of austerity and how crisis can lead to change. This section of the literature review is important as it offers a view around the potential of crisis to lead to positive outcomes which is often missing from literature about the effect of the cuts on museums. Next, I explore literature around partnerships as a response to austerity, and consider literature relating to partnerships, for example, benefits of partnership working, how partnerships are formed, and difficulties that can be encountered in partnership working. Finally, I consider texts that discuss museum resilience, specifically, how museums might be more resilient in the context of austerity.

2.1 Towards a Definition of Community Engagement

For the purposes of my research, it is helpful to explore definitions of community engagement; this will support me to understand what community engagement looks like in museums and what community engagement practice to look for during my fieldwork.

'Community engagement' is not always defined by scholars, which perhaps alludes to the breadth of this term and the multitude of practice it can cover. Even scholars who offer a definition of community engagement at times put forward a definition which

alludes to the breadth of community engagement. Onciul (2013, 82-83), for example, opines that engagement is a broad term used to describe the range of relationships museums can have with communities and individuals and the multiple ways in which communities and individuals can participate in museums. Lynch (2011, 7) also alludes to the wide-ranging nature of community engagement, stating there is no standardised solution to engagement that every museum will be able to practice as every organisation's circumstances and communities are different.

Morse and Munro (2015, 2) offer a more specific definition of community engagement as "museum programmes that usually involve individuals or groups who do not or cannot use museums, and that may take place both in museums and in a range of community spaces". Morse and Munro's article (2015), *Museums' community engagement schemes, austerity and practices of core in two local museum services*, locates community engagement within the sphere of care, which supports the notion museums are institutions that provide help to individuals and communities.

Munro (2014, 55) takes the notion of the caring role of museums further, claiming, "community engagement often represents the most radical facet of the drive towards inclusion in museums". This suggests community engagement is strongly linked with social inclusion work in museums, an area that is given further consideration in this literature review. The author suggests that, although community engagement may well include small-scale interventions, these interventions have the potential to have positive social impacts (ibid, 55).

Studies which do not offer a fixed definition of community engagement also appear to consider community engagement to be work that aims to produce positive outcomes for individuals and communities (Black 2010, 131 Hooper-Greenhill 2007, 81-82). One author whose work describes community engagement, without offering a fixed definition, for example, is Black (2010, 131), who claims the "best museums inspire, excite, empower, give confidence and help individuals and communities to grow" and asserts museums are essential to the wellbeing of their local communities.

The role museums have to play in making a positive difference to people's lives is emphasised in studies which deal with community engagement in museums. Indeed, authors who write on the subject appear to take it as read that museums have a variety of positive social impacts. Watson (2008, 1-2), for example, suggests there is an expectation on public sector museums, in particular, to,

> *"foster inclusivity, address social problems, confront past and present wrongs, encourage positive role models and values, support self esteem and pride amongst the marginalised in society, and encourage community identity and cohesion and, more recently, foster British nationalism."*

In addition, Stephens and Tiwari (2015, 99) and Long (2013, 42) also discuss the role museums can play in making positive difference to people's lives. Whilst acknowledging community projects may not generate sustainable outcomes, Stephens

and Tiwari (2015, 99) suggest community projects may empower individuals who are living in poverty and support communities to be more cohesive. Long (2013, 142) writes of the benefits of community engagement both to communities, in addressing their specific needs, and to museums, in generating income, increasing visitor numbers, and overcoming negative perceptions of the museum from community members. Benefits of community engagement to the museum are also acknowledged by Black (2010, 201), who argues that playing a role in civil engagement supports museums to build long-term audiences and prove their relevance to the bodies which support museums financially.

Although it seems the term is difficult to pin down, literature on community engagement in museums largely shares the notion that this practice is rooted in work which aims to bring about positive impacts for individuals and communities. Community engagement encompasses a broad range of practice which is linked to social inclusion, health and wellbeing, and participation, and includes a wide variety of relationships and interactions with a range of individuals and groups. This definition of community engagement will be utilised for my research. This broad definition is helpful because it takes into account the fact community engagement looks different in different museum services, as asserted by Munro (2014, 55). Furthermore, this definition enables me to consider the expansive range of community engagement activity that took place in different types of museums across England between 2013 and 2014, which supports me to better answer my primary research question.

I acknowledge using such a broad definition of community engagement means I am not applying judgement to the types of interactions the museums in my study classify as community engagement and the experiences of the people who participate in this engagement, including the extent to which they feel empowered through this engagement. Understanding the experiences of participants is an important area of work which has been studied by scholars such as Lynch (2011), and which I will touch upon in this literature review. However, interviewing participants was beyond the scope of my research, which explores internal museum community engagement practices rather than their specific impacts or effects. In addition, as this thesis is about the impact of the cuts on museums themselves, it was important to investigate as many museums as I could in the time available. Focusing on the visitors and the impact the cuts might have had on them was not, at the time, what I wanted to research.

2.2. The Concept of Community

In order to research what community engagement practice looked like in 2013 and 2014, it is helpful to explore the notion of community; this supports me to consider the types of communities with which museums were working in the time period of my study.

One body of literature on community engagement discusses the nature of community. The idea of community has a "significant impact" on museums (Crooke, 2007, 22), given that community "runs through every level of a museum service shaping collecting, display and museum programming" (Crooke 2010, 17). Waterton and Smith (2010, 5) add to this, posting that community is present in policies, grassroots projects and professional practice, and there is an "obsession" (ibid, 5) with community by heritage scholars.

Community is a complex concept (Watson 2007, 1; Little 2002) and difficult to define (Little 2002, 3; Crooke 2010, 16; Blackshaw 2010, 1-2). Onciul (2013, 81) deems a term which is problematic, describing a multitude of relationships and groups. Community is also a constructed concept which changes depending on the context (Crooke 2010, 16) and, in terms of community engagement, could be various social, cultural and political factors (ibid, 16). Crooke (ibid, 19) argues applying the word 'community' to a group of people is "a label that has been created for expediency and purpose" (ibid, 19).

However, despite this being a complex term to pin down, a large body of literature about community suggests the concept of locality is a significant and identifiable aspect of community (Crowther and Cooper 2002, 344; Crooke 2007, 31; Graham, Mason and Newman 2009, 3). P. Davis (2011) suggests that geographical locality can support a shared identity via shared religions, culture, interdependence and ideas of what a community is amongst members. P. Davis (ibid, 15) goes on to posit that the

heritage is one factor used to construct narratives for communities as it can define what is distinctive about a place, and create an identity for a place that can benefit local society. These narratives, he argues, are constructed via a process of selection – using specific themes and stories to explain the significance of objects, heritage and places (ibid, 15). My research found museums in my study tend to work with communities that are geographic, being based locally to the museum.

Many theories exist regarding how and why communities are created. Delanty (ibid, 123) and Crooke (2007, 27), for example, suggest communities are constructed via acts of mobilisation. In addition, Crooke (ibid, 27) posits communities are created via specific circumstances, and not formed organically (ibid, 31). Communities can form because of geographic proximity, religion, or shared characteristics – for example, a leisure group (ibid, 31). No matter how or why communities are created, they are powerful and felt as a very real thing by their members (Delanty 2003, 194) aiding "a sense of solidarity and purpose" (Crooke 2007, 32). My research discovered that, by enabling community members to work together to produce exhibitions may help members of the group to form a specific community that is working together to a specific end, which can be viewed as an act of mobilization.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is useful to touch upon how communities might interpret their own heritage in museum spaces, such as community access galleries. This is because several of the people I interviewed worked with communities in this way. Graburn (2007, 131) argues communities are included or excluded depending on

who controls the exhibition. Graburn likens museums to 'guidebooks' which represent the area in which they are located, be this a city or a nation, and his argument assumes a dominant representation of the city or nation will be displayed; he states these museums allow visitors from out-of-town to understand "..what the *local authorities consider to be* [my italicisation] of historical value, worth knowing and visiting.." (ibid, 129). In discussing community access galleries – spaces in which groups are able to display exhibitions about their heritage - Witcomb (2007, 136) suggests such galleries are a means to support the representation of communities in their local museum. Witcomb highlights the efforts of the Western Australian Museum where museum staff teach communities professional museum skills so they can produce exhibitions which present their group well. The author argues this approach sees the Museum and group as "co-producers in the imagining of the community" (ibid, 136), thus making it clear that, though the community is being given power to represent itself, the process of exhibition creation still results in an exhibition which presents a specific representation of the community, rather than an authentic representation. Wood (2013, 219) argues exhibitions that are "drawn from local needs and interests, and builds on collective ownerships and that of the museum, its resources and collections" can increase connections between a museum and its community. These articles support the reader to consider co-created exhibitions in a nuanced way, considering the benefits of such exhibitions – for example, supporting connections between a museum and the community – but also the potential issues arising from co-created exhibitions, including the argument they provide only one representation of a community that is perhaps not authentic.

2.3 Setting Community Engagement in Museums within an Historical Context

Given the research considers community engagement within a very specific and limited timeframe in some of the early years of twenty-first century, it is not within the scope of this thesis to consider the historical context of community engagement in museums in great detail. However, it is useful to acknowledge this area within this literature review in order to help contextualise modern day practice; there are links between current and past practice and it is important to demonstrate that current community engagement is not a new innovation but part of a larger history of museum practice that has developed over time.

Amongst those who make the link between the past and the present are Newman and McLean (2004, 170) and Sandell (1998, 408) who argue social inclusion initiatives in museums in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as influenced by New Labour policies – a subject which is touched upon later in this literature review – were reminiscent of the nineteenth century notion that museums could be used to bring about positive social outcomes, such as social cohesion. The Museum Act of 1845, referred to by Newman and McLean (2004, 170) "enabled certain municipal authorities to establish museums and galleries for the benefit of local people". Bennett (1995, 66), who has written widely on this topic, argues museums were places that were intended to educate and civilize the population. O'Neill (2008, 293) also writes of the educational and social function of nineteenth-century museums, suggesting

approaches to displays were designed to support the education of visitors.

The mid-twentieth century is described by the literature as a time when awareness of the social role of the museum once again became prevalent in museum thinking (Newman and McLean, 2004, 170, Watson, 2007). Watson (2007, 13) links this thinking to the emergence of radical politics in the 1960s. Hatton (2012, 134) argues that the roots of museums in the current age, with their multiple missions of collecting, research, exhibition making, interpretation, educating, and providing enjoyment, recreation or refreshment, began at this time.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the notion of the social role of museums became known as the 'new museology' (Newman and McLean, 2004, 171), an issue addressed in the seminal text, *The New Museology* (1989), edited by Vergo. The new museology saw a shift in focus from museum methods to the purpose of museums (Vergo 1989, 3). In critiquing this text, P. Davis (2011, 61) acknowledges the thinking of scholars who contributed to *The New Museology* but believes the articles contained within it are too focused on how the presentation of museum objects allows institutions to communicate with their visitors.

P. Davis (2011, 61 and 63) claims new museology was born out of a dissatisfaction with old museum thinking which focused on methods rather than the purpose of museums, and led to museum staff to try to relate their institutions to communities and engage with their communities. Similarly, McCall and Gray (2014, 20) suggest

new museology was borne out of a desire for change that would recast the elitist museum of the past, concerned primarily with collections and curatorship, as institutions which have a social and political role to play within society, which strive for increased access and broader representation of communities (ibid, 20-21). McCall and Gray (ibid, 21) also point to the changing role of the museum professional, a role which is increasingly focused on visitors.

The literature suggests new museological thinking continues to influence the sector, which is relevant to my research which looks at community engagement practice in the modern-day; it is helpful to consider the extent to which new museology influences the sector. For example, Newman and McLean (2004, 171) link new museology with New Labour policies around social inclusion in museums, which saw the introduction of national government policies designed to address social issues. In addition, Hatton (2012, 137) explains that the 2007 definition of a museum offered by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) also acknowledges and promotes the social role of museums by stating that museums serve society.

A 2014 study by McCall and Gray explores the extent to which new museology has been achieved in practice in museums across Great Britain. The authors investigated this question via qualitative interviews with 112 museum staff working in varied roles – for example, managers, curators, retail staff, outreach staff – in 23 publically funded museum services across England, Scotland and Wales, and via a series of 32 days of observations (McCall and Gray 2014, 23). The authors discovered that, whilst the

new museology is a “useful tool” for museum staff (ibid, 31-32), it “has had less practical effect than the museology literature might anticipate” (ibid, 31-32). The degree to which new museological thinking was evident in practice in the museums that formed part of the study were found to have been influenced by a multitude of factors, including whether individual staff members have museum qualifications, staff members’ roles within the museum, and organisational policies (ibid, 23). The authors found museum workers are the most important factor in the extent to which new museological thinking is implemented in organisations and that the effectiveness of this implementation is linked to how much workers believe in this philosophy (ibid, 31). McCall and Gray argue that, although policy influences museum workers, the ambiguous nature of these policies results in a variety of “interpretations at ground level” by workers themselves (ibid, 28). Due to the key role the study found museum workers have to play in implementing new museological practice, McCall and Gray conclude that, “the extent to which the ‘new museology’ can be seen to have become embedded within individual museums and museum services is as much a matter of the subjective judgements of museum staff themselves as it is a matter of objective external assessment” (ibid, 31).

McCall and Gray call for further research to explore the extent to which museums have embedded new museological thinking. My research offers something of a reply to this call; whilst I consider the broader concept of community engagement, rather than new museology specifically, my thesis provides an exploration of whether this type of thinking was being practised in museums in England in 2013 and 2014.

Interestingly, despite my research being carried out at the same time as McCall and Gray's study, we come to different conclusions about the extent to which new museology was played out in museums in 2013 and 2014. However, it is important to point out both studies point to the importance of individual workers – who believe in the philosophy of new museology, or community engagement – in ensuring this work is practised in museums.

The two studies come to different conclusions in relation to the extent to which new museology has only been partially achieved in museums in Great Britain (ibid, 19). McCall and Gray argue the extent to which new museology has been implemented in museums has been limited by a number of factors, including individual museum workers' practice being drawn from "personal ideologies and historically inherited, professional ideals" (ibid, 25), managerial structures that can encourage museum workers to develop "defensive strategies around traditional preservation and collections-based roles, in reaction to the perception that management were targeting the decision-making power and professionalism of museum staff" (ibid, 27), and museum workers drawing on their own professional and personal values – which did not always align to the principles of new museology - to interpret policy and implement it at ground level (ibid, 28). Although, like McCall and Gray's study, my research found the personal values of staff were key to influencing and implementing community engagement in museums, my study differed from McCall and Gray's study as it found the museum workers who I interviewed strongly believe in the social role of museums. One reason for this difference in findings is potentially because my

study is more limited than McCall and Gray's study; I interviewed far fewer people in the course of my research due to the timescales to which I was working. Had I interviewed a much larger sample of people, it is possible I would have come to different conclusions than those which feature in this study.

In addition to the disparity in the number of people I interviewed in comparison to McCall and Gray, I acknowledge my research was influenced by the interviewees with whom I spoke, all of whom were undertaking resilient community engagement work. Although I did not specifically go out to find interviewees with positive views towards community engagement and the social role of museums – and was not aware of the personal views of the interviewees prior to undertaking my fieldwork - the people who I interviewed were all passionate about community engagement in museums, which led to me concluding that community engagement practice was embedded in the museums in my study. It should also be noted the curators I interviewed, who occupy what are traditionally collections-based roles, shared the positive view of community engagement other interviewees expressed. However, I acknowledge that, in interviewing people about the topic of community engagement, there was an increased probability the interviewees I spoke with were more likely to feel strongly about community engagement. I would not wish to assume everyone working in museums feels the same way; indeed, the study by McCall and Gray provides evidence that this may not be the case.

It is important to note I did not specifically speak to people working at museums with

a reputation for prioritising community engagement; rather I looked at a range of museums and was led by searching for interviewees who could contribute to, and advance, developed categories that emerged from the data (which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3). When conducting the interviews and analysing the data I collected, I was somewhat surprised interviewees had such strong views about community engagement, and this became a primary finding of my research.

My research provides a snapshot of practice at nine museums in England, and I cannot say for certain my findings would have been similar had I explored community engagement practice at more museums or different museums. I hope, however, that, in looking at a variety of museums, and interviewing people in different roles at those museums, I have provided a nuanced snapshot of community engagement practice that may shed some light on wider sectoral practice.

2.4 Why Museum Workers Practice Community Engagement

Studies which consider why museum workers practice community engagement are of particular use to my thesis. Firstly, I am specifically exploring this question – in relation to community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014 - through my research. Secondly, it is helpful to look at the reasons why community engagement is considered to be important in museum practice.

2.4.1 Moral Imperative

Articles about the historical context of community engagement, as reviewed above, allude to the idea there is seen to be a moral imperative for museums to engage with communities, providing education and social outcomes for visitors and, in terms of new museological thinking, making museums more accessible and relevant by becoming more visitor focused. O'Neill (2008, 292-293) makes a link between Victorian notions of museums and present-day practice, arguing some current sector workers continue to believe museums should have a social impact. The idea heritage organisations have a moral imperative to address and tackle inequalities, increasing accessibility to, and the relevancy of, heritage is still discussed in very recent literature by scholars such as Johnston and Marwood (2017).

The idea museums have a moral imperative to practice community engagement is linked by some scholars, such as Brekke (2013, 189), with issues around human rights. Brekke (ibid, 189) explains several international conventions, such as the UN convention on human rights and the UN convention on the rights of the child, highlight rights to access and participation and argues museums have a responsibility to actively enable individuals to fulfil these rights and that, in doing this, museums act as "agents for social justice and positive change" (ibid, 189). Supporting individuals to access culture is considered to be important because, as authors including Ashley (2014, 262) and Newman and McLean (2004) explain, it is felt this does not only build cultural capital, but can also improve an individual's wellbeing, increase civic

engagement and support social cohesion; thus, the benefits are felt by the wider community as well as individuals.

My research found this moral imperative to practice community engagement was present in the views and values of the museum workers I interviewed. This finding is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

2.4.2 Political Imperative

The literature on social inclusion in museums strongly emphasises New Labour's role in setting a socially inclusive agenda for museums. It is helpful to look in some detail at this issue as my research has the potential to shed some light on the extent to which social inclusion is practised in museums in 2013 and 2014, three years after New Labour left Office; in other words, does my research suggest New Labour's prioritisation of social inclusion in museums left something of a legacy in museums today?

There is discussion in the literature as to the impact of New Labour's policies at the time and the legacy of these policies. Newman and McLean (2004, 176) and West and Smith (2005, 279), for example, assert these policies were somewhat vague, which led to uncertainty amongst museum professionals at the time as to how to implement policy on the ground. Certainly, the language used in *Centres for Social Change* bears testament to this; as Tlili, Gerwitz and Cribb (2007, 272 and 278)

suggest, this document asks that museums should prioritise social inclusion but does not give guidance around which groups museums should work with nor how to approach such work. There is a disagreement amongst scholars with regards to the legacy of New Labour's emphasis on social inclusion in museums. McCall and Gray (2014, 30), for instance, claim the ambiguous nature of policy means museum workers have space to pursue work that is of interest to them and not necessarily related to policy. In addition, Gray (2016, 120) found how museum workers follow policy is influenced by their professional backgrounds; policy is not implemented in the same way by everyone. However, other scholars believe New Labour's policies have had a lasting legacy on museums, such as Scott, Dodd and Sandell (2014, 10) who argue, for example, the cultural legacy of New Labour is still present in the sector.

In order to give some context, let us briefly look at museum policies that were introduced by New Labour. The Labour government – or New Labour as the Party was branded at the time - was in power between May 1997 and May 2010. New Labour, however, positioned museums at the heart of their social inclusion agenda and encouraged the museum sector to engage with, and provide support for, disadvantaged people within society (Tlili, Gewirtz and Cribb 2007, 128; O'Neill 2008, 298). During New Labour's time in Office, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published a range of policy documents, such as *Museums for the Many* and *Centres for Social Change* which required museums to "promote social inclusion, tackle issues of deprivation and disadvantage, and reach the widest possible

audience" (Sandell 1998, 403). This new way of looking at museums was in alignment with the broader policies of New Labour, which promoted social inclusion and aimed to support opportunities for all by developing a knowledge economy which would give people at all levels of society access to education (Beel 2011, 79).

In 2000, during New Labour's time in Office, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) was set up – originally under the name 'Resource'- a "a non-departmental public body and registered charity in England with a remit to promote improvement and innovation in the area of museums, libraries and archives" (MLA n.d.). A year later, the Regional Museums Task Force created *Renaissance in the Regions: a new vision for England's museums* (Resource 2001). The report makes clear museums have a role in tackling social exclusion (ibid, 5) and recommends social inclusion should be a priority for museums (ibid, 43). Writing in 2012, the MLA note the recommendations made in the report led to a great investment in the *Renaissance in the Regions* initiative, which was established in 2003 (MLA 2012, 4) and saw the MLA spending over "£300 million on targeted investment and the cultivation of local, regional and national partnerships" (ibid, 4).

It is helpful to look at the policies brought in by New Labour as this gives historical context to my research and the current situation in the museum sector. My research suggests that, although New Labour's policies do not appear to have had a significant influence on community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014, the strong emphasis this government placed on museums' role in the social inclusion agenda may have left

a cultural legacy in the sector which appears values community engagement practice.

After taking a look at New Labour's time in Office, it is important to now briefly describe changes that occurred from 2010 - when the coalition government took power - to 2013, when I commenced my fieldwork. In 2010, then Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt announced that as part of a review of Arm's Length Bodies which was part of a national government drive to cut costs, the MLA would be abolished but the government would continue to support museums, libraries and archives. On 1 October 2011, ACE took on responsibility for museums and libraries from MLA (DCMS 2011). The move saw ACE take on areas including "museum accreditation, library development and the Renaissance programme" (ibid).

Fifteen months later, in January 2012, ACE announced the 16 recipients of their Major Partner Museum funding, who, collectively, received £20million a year in funding from April 2012 – March 2015. This represented the first time that "major Renaissance grants [were] awarded for a three-year period via an open application system against published criteria" (DCMS 2012). Not all applicants for MPM status were successful in being awarded this funding, including museums that had previously been recipients of Renaissance funding (Davies and MA 2012). This is of particular relevance for my study; one of the museums in my study was directly affected and, in addition, it could be argued this very visible public cut to museum funding in England added to concerns about austerity and the cuts in the sector from museum workers and sector bodies. Davies and the MA (ibid) certainly express

disappointment for the museums that lost funding at this time. In summer 2014, ACE allocated funding for 21 Major Partner Museums (MPM) to cover 2015 – 2018, which increased the number of MPMs by five (Atkinson 2014). However, despite this increase, and an increase of overall funding for MPMs from £20.3m to £22.6m, some existing MPMs received cuts (ibid); again, the announcement of this as I was conducting the latter part of my fieldwork may have added to worker and sector concerns about cuts to museums.

It is helpful to look at ACE's priorities at the time I was conducting my fieldwork; four of the museums in my study were MPMs at the time of my fieldwork and all the interviewees at these museums discussed the influence of ACE's priorities in relation to their work. In 2013, in order to reflect ACE's new responsibilities for museums and libraries as well as the arts, ACE published a second edition of its ten-year strategic framework. Entitled *Achieving great art and culture for everyone 2010 – 2020*, this was an update of ACE's original 2010 strategy, *Achieving great art for everyone*. The 2013 document emphasises the role the arts, museums and libraries have to play in supporting children and young people, including supporting learning and development, and enabling exploration and understanding of the world (ACE 2013, 35). In addition, the document sets out ACE's five goals, which were updated in order to reflect its new responsibilities. These goals were:

1. Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries.
2. Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts,

museums and libraries.

3. The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable.
4. The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled.
5. Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries (ibid, 39).

The emphasis ACE put on work with children and young people was evident in my fieldwork as I interviewed those working at MPMs who discussed the importance of aligning their work with ACE goals. This is discussed further in Chapter 9, which explores the influence of national policy on community engagement practice in museums.

2.4.3 Cultural Sector Policy Imperatives

It is helpful to look at wider cultural sector policy initiatives which were prevalent at the time I carried out my fieldwork as, during the course of my research, I found these – in particular HLF policy – can encourage museum workers to undertake community-focused work.

In July 2013, the MA published *Museums Change Lives*, its "vision for the impact of museums" (MA 2013, 1). The document, which was written in the context of austerity, argues the funding cuts provided more urgency for museums to play a

social role (ibid, 3). The MA's aim for *Museums Change Lives* was to "enthuse people in museums to increase their impact, encourage funders to support museums in becoming more relevant to their audiences and communities, and show organisations the potential partnerships they could have with museums, to change people's lives" (ibid, 3). As a large membership body which aims to lead museum sector thinking, it is useful to know that, at the time of my fieldwork, the MA was actively encouraging museums undertake socially impactful work as this advocacy and influencing may have affected sector practice

The literature suggests the HLF helped change the discourse around museums, encouraging museum practice to become more focused on making a positive difference to individuals and communities, and, in addition, providing grants for community groups to pursue heritage projects. As Rees Leahy (2007, 705) notes, by 2004, HLF funding was connected to national government policies around cultural access, education and diversity, and prioritised participation (ibid, 706). The HLF's strategic plan 2002 – 2007 emphasises 'involvement' – engaging more people in heritage, both as consumers and decision-makers (HLF 2002, 3), and commits to prioritising development resources in areas that had "received least funding and fewest grants from us, and which are in areas of high social and economic deprivation" (ibid, 5).

The HLF's next strategic plan, *Valuing our heritage Investing in our future*, 2008 – 2013, sets out a clear commitment to inclusive, and people-focused, practice; two of

the HLF's three priorities at this time were concerned with people: 1) helping "more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part and make decisions about their heritage" and 2) "help people to learn about their own and other people's heritage" (HLF 2008, 4).

The HLF's strategic framework in place at the time of writing this thesis, *A lasting difference for heritage and people*, 2013 – 2018, reaffirms the HLF's commitment to funding projects that make positive, and lasting, differences to heritage, people and communities (HLF 2013, 10).

It is important to note the strategic direction the HLF has taken with regards to community engagement. The HLF is a major funder of museums, and hasve provided funding for museums in my study. It can be assumed projects funded by the HLF would at least have some element of community engagement within them because, without this, these projects would not have successfully been awarded funding. My research found evidence that, in requiring projects to include community work, the HLF influenced and helped enable this work to take place, as detailed in Chapter 9.

2.4.4 Financial and Value-based Imperatives

The notion that engaging with and supporting communities, and widening access to culture, better enables museums to demonstrate their value to society is dealt with by scholars such as Perkin (2010). Scholars often link the idea of value to financial

value. For example, Newman and McLean (2004, 173) claim being viewed as "agents of social policy" can help museums to acquire funding and resources. In an article about museum funding, Woodward (2012) suggests the imperative to provide social impacts not only sets strategic direction in museums but is also a "powerful force" (ibid, 17) used to help justify public investment in museums.

Museums which directly receive public money through national or local government are also considered to have a responsibility to deliver social impacts. Perkin (2010, 120), for example, states organisations – not just museums - that receive public funding "have a responsibility to actively engage with and add value to communities in a meaningful way." Drawing on one museum in particular, (Turakhia 2013, 167) argues the Science Museum must play an "active role" in society given that it receives public funding.

The issue of undertaking community engagement work in part to attempt to obtain funding (and diversify funding streams) is covered in my research in Chapter 9. I found two museums in my study had in the past, or were, undertaking work – in these cases, work with people living with dementia and work with speakers of other languages – in part because contributing to national government agendas can be a way to unlock funding.

2.4.5 Reasons for not Practising Community Engagement

The literature suggests some museum professionals have not engaged with social inclusion issues, particularly in texts dating from the late 1990s to the early 2010s, which point to a reluctance, or even vehement objection, among some museum professionals to the idea that museums should engage in social issues (Sandell 1998, 411-412; Dodd and Sandell 2001, 3; Sandell 2003, 51; Beel 2011, 3). It should be noted Sandell and Dodd, in particular, are strong advocates of social inclusion practice in museums, hence why they may have been frustrated by a perceived lack of interest in this issue by some working in the sector.

Fleming (cited in Dodd and Sandell 2001) suggests a number of reasons as to why some museum professionals have not engaged in this work, including a concern social inclusion work will stop them caring for collections (Fleming cited in Dodd and Sandell 2001, 14), a reluctance to engage with this work because they are not experts in the field and are unfamiliar with issues of social inclusion (ibid, 24), and a fear of 'losing the 'golden age' of museums when scholars reigned supreme' (ibid, 14). In addition, West and Smith (2005, 279) posit that, at the time, social inclusion may have been a low priority for museum workers who were faced with several demands, including caring for and digitising collections, and creating exhibitions (ibid, 280).

My research, which was carried out nearly ten years after West and Smith's article and over a decade after Fleming and Sandell's studies, found no evidence of a reluctance to engage with social inclusion, which provides evidence to suggest views around the importance of such work are changing in the museum sector.

2.5 Types of Community Engagement

In this section of the literature review, I explore different types of community engagement as this helps further my thinking on what community engagement looks like, a question which is a key part of my thesis.

2.5.1 Social Inclusion

As noted earlier in this chapter, the promotion of social inclusion by museums became a priority when the New Labour government was in power. Academic literature relating to museums and social inclusion demonstrates there are a range of ways in which museums can respond to social inclusion agendas (Sandell 1998, 415; Dodd and Sandell 2001, 6). Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the multitude of ways in which museums can promote social inclusion, museum professionals are undertaking work which achieves a variety of outcomes which tackle different dimensions of social exclusion (Sandell 1998, 415). The broad nature of social inclusion work mirrors the wide-ranging definition of community engagement work which was discussed earlier in this chapter. This is helpful for my research as it reiterates the

point community engagement can take many forms and, given this, it is useful for me to not to be too prescriptive when looking for examples of community engagement practice in the museums in my study.

Literature about social inclusion in museums appears to show a growing interest in the subject by practitioners and academics from the early 2000s to the present day. In the decades since the articles I previously reviewed – such as the work of Dodd and Sandell (2001, 3) - were written, there appears to have been an increase in the amount of academic texts about the role museums have in supporting social inclusion and social justice – for example, articles by scholars such as Paquet Kinsley (2016), Ng, Ware and Greenberg (2017), and Taylor (2017). In one such article, Modest (2013, 101) argues collaborative practice is the norm in many UK museums. It seems from the literature that museums are becoming more engaged in socially inclusive practice, an observation also borne out in my research.

Despite the rise in academic texts about social inclusion, at the time of my fieldwork, there was evidence to suggest some individuals working in the sector did not prioritise the social role of museums. In response to the MA's Museums Change Lives initiative, for example, some anonymous contributors on the MA website argued, for example, "posts that include words like "Community Engagement", "Community Curator", "Outreach", or "Partnership" are a "fad or fashion". Anonymous"; "The essential fact is that a museum is a collection of objects and the preservation of those objects is the curator's job" (Davies 2013a). It is important to

acknowledge this as it echoes McCall and Gray's (2014) finding that not everyone in the sector is committed to community engagement. As stated in the discussion around McCall and Gray's study, I acknowledge my findings may have been different had my research uncovered interviewees who were not positive about community engagement work.

Interestingly, the apparent disinclination of some museum professionals working in the 2010s to engage with the social inclusion agenda is mirrored by parts of the wider British public. As part of the consultation for the *Museums 2020* discussion paper, the MA commissioned the agency BritainThinks to research public attitudes towards the future of museums and their possible impact (BritainThinks 2013, 1). Researchers wanted to discover participants' attitudes towards museums, as well as what participants felt were the purpose(s) of museums. Data collected in the workshops demonstrated that, while people felt museums should educate everyone in society equally, they felt helping the vulnerable, including outreach with vulnerable groups, was a low priority task, as this sort of work should be carried out by agencies such as social services and charities, rather than museums (ibid, 21). This industry-led paper is helpful to my research as it provides evidence there is work to be done if the museum sector is to advocate for the benefit of socially inclusive work to the public, particularly in difficult financial times when public support is crucial for museums. This research is relevant to one of the findings from my study – that more advocacy is needed to those not working in the museum sector in order to foster an understanding of the social role of museums so it is easier to build partnerships with organisations

outside of the sector.

2.5.2 Participation

The literature shows participatory practice is a form of community engagement in the museum sector. Simon (2010, ii), for example, discusses participatory practice in museums, defining a participatory cultural institution as one "where visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content". This includes visitors contributing their own ideas and objects to a museum, discussing, remixing and redistributing the things they see and make during a visit to a museum, and socialising with staff and other visitors (ibid, ii).

Bienkowski (2016) and Arnstein (1969 cited in Lithgow-Schmidt 2004) offer insight into participatory practice. Both authors are advocates of participatory work and, therefore, write positively about this practice. My research does not take a view on the effectiveness of participatory practice, or the level of participation offered at the museums in my research and; these authors are presented to give a flavour of participatory practice and not to critique this practice.

Employing learning gained during the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's *Our Museum* programme, which ran between January 2012 and December 2015 and supported participating UK museums and galleries to embed community participation, Bienkowski (2016) considers how museums and galleries might become more

participatory. The author argues participatory museums should inform and respond to community needs, including working with partners to carry out this work; embed communities at the core of the organisation, its strategies and structures and enable them to have active dialogue with museums and shared decision-making powers; help build community skills, capabilities and creativity and support people to engage with their communities; and embed reflective practice in their work (ibid, 12). My research also found partnership working is an important factor in embedding community engagement practice. Differences between Bienkowski's conclusions and my own findings are likely to, in part, come from the fact I did not specifically research participatory practice, which may have led to an emphasis on participatory strategies such as shared decision-making; rather, I researched the broader concept of community engagement.

Arnstein's work on citizen participation provides one means of considering participation in museums and empowerment of community members. Arnstein (1969 cited in Lithgow-Schmidt 2004) developed a 'ladder of participation' to illustrate eight levels of participation. The bottom two rungs of the ladder, manipulation and therapy, are described by Arnstein as 'non-participation'. Rungs three, four and five of the latter are 'informing', 'consultation and 'placation', in which citizens are enabled to "hear and be heard" but lack the power to make sure their views will be taken notice of; these rungs are described by Arnstein as 'tokenism'. Rungs six, seven and eight are 'partnership', 'delegated power' and 'citizen control' and are described by Arnstein as 'citizen power'. Partnerships mean citizens can negotiate with power

holders, whilst delegated power and citizen control see citizens acquiring "the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power".

It is helpful to consider what participatory practice is considered to look like as this supports me to identify such practice when it is discussed by research participants. My research found evidence that, in one case, a reduction in funding led to more participatory ways of working (see Chapter 7) and that participatory practice was a key part of community engagement practice at the time of my fieldwork despite the financial cuts.

2.5.3 Health and Wellbeing

Ander et al (2011, 238) note research commissioned by the MLA and undertaken by the Burns Owen Partnership (BOP) in 2005, was the first instance of the use of the term 'wellbeing' in UK museum policy and strategy. Since then, literature about community work in museums increasingly places some focus on the ways in which museums can support and improve people's health and wellbeing and add to health wellbeing agendas (Ander et al 2011; Camic and Chatterjee 2013; Scott, Dodd and Sandell 2014). Tlili, Gerwitz and Cribb (2007, 278), link health and wellbeing practice to policy, suggesting this area of work is advocated for by policymakers and academics, which explicitly state museums can make a unique contribution to health agendas. Evidence for this can be seen in literature by ACE (2007, 16) that advocates for the benefits of "using the arts in health".

The BOP research mentioned above assumed museums' contribution to wellbeing would be focused on supporting mental health issues (Ander et al 2011, 238) but the literature suggests museums are undertaking work which tackles a range of healthcare and wellbeing issues, including mental health problems, dementia and cancer through in-house and off-site activities and programmes (Camic and Chatterjee 2013, 66). It does appear, however, that BOP's assumptions have been borne out to some extent as literature about museums' contribution to wellbeing often refer to museums supporting those with mental health issues and dementia (Scott, Dodd and Sandell 2014; Camic and Chatterjee 2013).

It is helpful to understand the work that the literature suggests museums are undertaking around health and wellbeing as this supports me to explore the extent to which such work was happening in the museums in my study. The increase in literature around this topic suggested I might find examples of this practice in the course of my fieldwork and, indeed, my research found health and wellbeing initiatives were present in the community engagement practice of the museums I studied, a finding which is discussed further in Chapter 7.

The literature suggests museum programmes and activities relating to health and wellbeing can lead to a range of benefits, including, as suggested by Silverman (2010, 51), promoting relaxation; benefiting individuals' physiology, emotions, or both; supporting introspection; and increasing public awareness of health issues. Mitchell

(2008, 36) suggests arts participation can have positive impacts on self-esteem and self-confidence, contribute to empowerment, and decrease social isolation. The benefits noted by these authors provide further weight to the argument that community engagement in museums – taken in a very broad sense as I have done in my research and embracing all types of community engagement including health and wellbeing initiatives – is connected to 'helping people' and providing benefit to individuals.

Camic and Chatterjee (2013, 66) posit the work some museums are doing to support tackle health and wellbeing issues has possibly not been noticed by the healthcare sector. Furthermore, the authors suggest few museums have created partnerships with health and social care services (ibid, 68). This is relevant to my thesis as I found partnerships are a factor that supported health and wellbeing work, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

If the work museums are doing around health and wellbeing is not, as Camic and Chatterjee (ibid, 66) suggest, being noticed by healthcare professionals, there is perhaps a need for increased advocacy to this group. Ander (2011, 237) suggests a lack of tools via which to measure the impact of health and wellbeing work is a barrier to collecting the evidence necessarily for such advocacy to health professionals. My research found there is a need for more and further advocacy from the museum sector to healthcare professionals in order to persuade them to participate in museum initiatives; tools that could help sector staff to measure wellbeing impacts,

such as Thomson and Chatterjee's (2013, 3) Generic Wellbeing Outcomes, could provide a simple way via which to at least collect top-level data that can be utilised in advocacy exercises.

2.6 What Factors are Needed to Embed Community Engagement

It is useful to explore the factors which might support community engagement to thrive in museums as this enables me to consider whether these factors were at play in 2013 and 2014.

Hooper-Greenhill et al (2000, 45) and Sandell (2003, 51-56), academics who are supportive of social inclusion practice in museums, describe factors they feel support and enable such practice. The articles are in broad agreement about these factors – those of leadership, advocacy for the importance of social inclusion, consultation with audiences to involve them in the work of the museum, partnership working with external agencies, and flexibility to work in new ways. The article by Hooper-Greenhill et al (2000, 45) also points to the importance of an organisational policy and philosophy around social inclusion and Sandell (2003, 51-52), who has been critical in the past of what he believes are the negative attitudes shown by some in the museum sector towards social inclusion, calls for a change in attitude in museum workers. Both studies are helpful for my research as they consider the factors the authors felt were necessary for more effective social inclusion work in the early 2000s, at least a decade before I carried out my fieldwork. My research suggests the

sector experienced change in the ten years between these articles and my own fieldwork, not least in the attitudes of museum workers, which my research found strongly believed in the social role of museums in 2013 and 2014.

The assertion by Hooper-Greenhill et al (2000, 45) that organisational policies and philosophies around social inclusion work are key to effective social inclusion practice are echoed in articles by Sandell (1998, 415), Long (2013), and Ashley (2014, 261). Each of these articles suggest museum mission statements that set out the intention to undertake community engagement - or specifically, social inclusion work in the case of Sandell and Long - promotes and sets out an organisational commitment to this practice. Long's (2013) article provides practice-based evidence that mission statements can be used to set the direction of travel at a museum. My research found evidence that backs up this argument, a topic that is explored further in Chapter 8.

A further study helpful to my research is Davies, Paton and O'Sullivan's 2013 research around organisational values in museums, which posits organisational values affect the behaviour of museum workers (Davies, Paton and O'Sullivan 2013, 346). The authors' 'Museums Values Framework' which is a central feature of this work, is designed to support museums understand the mode in which they are working at any one time (ibid, 351). These 'modes' are:

- The club mode, which aims to secure its collections through the support of its

members, for example, via volunteering.

- The temple mode, in which museum workers are the experts and interpreters and visitors merely observers and listeners.
- The visitor attraction mode that priorities visitor needs and visitor satisfaction.
- The forum mode, which prioritises social impact and encourages visitor participation and debate (ibid, 351-353).

Another study helpful to my thinking is Hatton's 2012 research on the purpose of individual museums which considers how the purpose of a museum affects its work. The 'locally oriented museum', for example, meets the needs of its local communities and "operate[s] more as a service than as a destination" (Hatton 2012, 132).

The studies by Hatton and Davies, Paton and O'Sullivan support my research by helping me consider the modes in which the museums in my study were mainly operating in terms of their community engagement practice. I found museums in the study were largely in 'forum mode', and 'locally oriented' which I discuss briefly in Chapters 5, 8 and 11. These lenses were a helpful way through which to consider the impact of organisational culture on community engagement practice and may, too, be helpful in exploring the extent to which organisational culture affects other areas of museum practice.

2.7 Evaluating Community Engagement Initiatives

As discussed, both Hooper-Greenhill et al (2000) and Sandell (2003) assert that advocacy for (what they believe is) the importance of social inclusion work and creating partnerships with external agencies are important factors in embedding and undertaking effective community engagement work. The latter is aided by the former; without advocacy that is based on evidence of the impacts of community engagement practice, it can be difficult to bring partners on board with community initiatives. Evaluation of the social impact of museum work helps provide evidence that museums are able to fulfil a socially inclusive role (Newman and McLean 2004, 175), which helps museums to advocate to bodies such as government and policymakers about the role they can play in bringing positive benefit to people's lives (West and Smith 2005, 281).

Articles by authors including Newman and McLean (2004), West and Smith (2005), Munley (2010), and Preskill (2011) discuss the importance of evaluation in demonstrating the social impact of museums. However, as West and Smith's article (2005, 281) notes, measuring such impact can be difficult as benefits of this work to individuals, groups and communities are not always tangible. The difficulty of evaluating community work is borne out, to some extent, in sector literature, such as articles by Sullivan (2015a, 12) and Stephens (2017, 4) that express concern museums are not advocating as effectively as they might for work they do that brings about positive social impact. Sullivan's and Stephen's articles, both of which appeared in

Museums Journal, were written at a time when the financial cuts were having an impact on museums and, in this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that the authors – both employees of the major UK museums' membership body - call on those in the museum sector to get better at collecting evidence of social impact and advocating for this work as a means to demonstrate public value in the face of ongoing financial cuts.

The challenge of carrying out evaluation during austerity, when finances are limited, is discussed in a study by Chadwick, Tyler and Warnock (2013). The authors argue evaluation should be robust and ongoing (ibid, 850), but acknowledge that lack of capacity and resources due to austerity can make undertaking evaluation more difficult. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that museums that have experienced funding cuts, may well find it challenging to collect evidence of social impact that is so important for advocacy. Although only one small study, Chadwick, Tyler and Warnock's finding around the challenge of undertaking evaluation during austerity is borne out in my research, which found that, although evaluation is important in financially constrained times to support advocacy to politicians, museum staff are prioritising other work tasks they perceive as being more important to their roles.

2.8 Criticisms of Community Engagement

So far, the literature review has broadly looked at texts by authors who write positively about community engagement in museums. For balance, it is important to

look at texts which offer more criticism of the practice. This is not to say the authors of the work I discuss below are against the idea of undertaking community engagement in museums; indeed, they are advocates of the practice, which is reflective of the views of authors represented in the majority of literature about museums and community engagement. Rather, I have chosen works that offer criticisms of how community engagement is carried out in museums and issues which can arise in the practice of community engagement, including tokenism, short-termism, and issues relating to power relationships between museums and external partners. It is important to include these criticisms in my literature review so I can look for such issues in the practice that I explore during my fieldwork.

Scholars such as Lynch (2011), Modest (2013) and Butterfield (2002) offer critiques of community engagement practice. Lynch's 2011 text, *Whose cake is it anyway?*, for example, offers an extensive discussion of issues that may be present in community engagement practice. Lynch's report, which was commissioned by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, looks at community engagement practice in twelve UK museums through conducting research with museum staff and community partners. The museums in the study were of different sizes but each one was viewed as being committed to public engagement practice (2011, 3). It should be noted that, as can be said for my own research, basing research on a small number of museums could give rise to conclusions which would not have been arrived at had the dataset been larger. However, the in-depth qualitative nature of Lynch's research, and the collection of data from those representing partner organisations – which gives an alternative look

at community engagement practice outside the viewpoint of museum workers - offers a nuanced and helpful critique of community engagement practice across a range of museums.

Lynch found, for example, that rather than taking participation to the core of museum practice, the funding that has been invested in participatory projects has kept this work on the margins of practice (ibid, 5). This is, asserts Lynch, because the funding which makes this work possible is itself outside of core budgets (ibid, 5) and can lead to 'short-termism', or short-term projects that are not part of core work. Lynch argues reduced opportunities to gain external funding for participatory work could be an opportunity to bring this work being brought to the core of museum practice (ibid, 5).

Lynch also discovered museum workers expressed disillusionment at the perceived lack of strategic planning for community work, the short-term nature of projects (ibid, 6) and the issue of short-term projects not leading to long-term impact (ibid, 6). In addition, Lynch found evidence museum workers did not view community work as being at the core of their practice (ibid, 17). Butterfield (2002, para 3) echoes the concern about short-termism, suggesting a "project mentality" leads to museums reacting to funding cycles rather than practising community engagement in a holistic, strategic manner. Butterfield argues that, if museums must deliver short-term projects, they should be part of a long-term strategy (ibid, para 3).

In the analysis and discussion of my data, I reflect often on Lynch's research as I

found the museums I explored were going beyond the short-termism and tokenism that was evident in Lynch's study and, rather, bringing community engagement from the margins to the core of practice. This was a major finding of my research and one that helped lead to my conclusions that community work is more embedded in museums than it once was.

Concerns about tokenistic practice are likewise raised by other scholars of museum practice. Onciul (2013, 92) and Turakhia (2013, 66), for example, both argue community engagement practice may become tokenistic if relationships developed with partners are not continued in the longer-term. Ng, Ware and Greenberg (2017, 143) offer a practice-based example of this, criticising the practice of a US-based museum that they assert focuses on white audiences every day apart from during one education programme for Dia de los Muertos, for which the museum targets Latinx audiences. The authors argue this practice does not lead to inclusion and, rather, perpetuates historic oppression (ibid, 143). I agree such practice appears to be tokenistic and, moreover, has the potential to give museums power over communities by suggesting the day-to-day museum experience is not 'for' specific groups. My research found some concern amongst interviewees about tokenistic practice, which they were attempting to prevent by forming long-lasting relationships with partners.

The literature offers some insight into how museums might go beyond tokenistic practice. Paquet Kinsley (2016, 484), for example, champions the use of museum community advisory committees - made up of community members - that have

responsibility for the curation of exhibitions and share decision-making around exhibition development with museum staff. The author suggests such committees, made up as they are of non-museum staff, offer a challenge to the traditional role of the expert curator (ibid, 484). Although, in practice, some museums are unlikely to have the resource or capacity to develop such a committee, meaning it is doubtful as to whether Paquet Kinsley's recommendations could realistically be implemented at every museum, the idea of developing long-term relationships with community members and partners in order to attempt to go beyond tokenistic practice is a sound one; this view links with those expressed by Onciul (2013, 92) and Turakhia (2013, 66) in relation to advocating for the development of long-term relationships between museums and community partners.

Modest (2013, 99) offers a helpful theoretical lens through which to view the issue of tokenistic and more sustainable collaborative practice between museums and communities - that of 'real' and 'symbolic' engagement. 'Real' engagement practices, suggests Modest, should be embedded into a museum's ethos, benefit community partners as well as the museum, and be sustainable. The notion of 'real' and 'symbolic' engagement is relevant to my research as I explore which of these concepts best applies to community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014 and come to the conclusion the museums in my study practised real, rather than symbolic, community engagement.

The issue of power relationships between museums and community partners is

frequently discussed in the literature by authors such as Golding (2009, 4; 2013, 20), Chirikure et al (2010, 31), Lynch (2011, 5 and 14), and Excell (2013, 139). These scholars take the view museums are the dominant partner in the relationship, with more power than partner organisations. Lynch's research, for example, discovered that community partners in her study felt like they were positioned as consumers of museums who merely 'receive' or 'consume' engagement work rather than being equal partners who share decision making, and are on equal terms, with museum workers (Lynch 2011, 5 and 14); museum workers were not willing to let go of their authority, even if their work aimed to share power with communities (ibid). Excell (2013, 139) and Golding (2013, 20) suggest successful community work is impingent on groups feeling 'part' of a museum and not as though they are the weak partner. This work is helpful for my research, particularly my exploration, in Chapter 7, of partnerships between museums and external organisations, which argues such partnerships help enable community engagement practice to take place. My research found partner organisations can be the stronger partner if museums come to rely on them to deliver community engagement work. My research did not, however, include data collection from partner organisations as Lynch's did and, had I included partners in my study, I may have come to different conclusions about power relationships. Power dynamics between museums and external partners are discussed in more detail later in my literature review when I explore literature on museum sector partnerships.

The final criticism of community engagement discussed in the literature that links to my research is the debate amongst scholars as to whether community engagement

work should be the remit of one member of staff, or a team, or the responsibility of all the staff in an organisation, a subject about which there is a disagreement amongst scholars. Whilst scholars such as West and Smith (2005, 279) and Turakhia (2013, 179) posit community engagement work is best carried out by specialist staff, others argue that, in order to be effective, community work is the responsibility of staff across a museum (Crooke 2010, 17; Fleming 2012, 74; Nightingale and Mahal 2012, 14; Long 2013, 143). Modest's (2013, 102) work also adds to this debate by suggesting learning staff tend to deliver community engagement initiatives and that curators are rarely involved with such projects. This debate is of relevance to my research as I explore what community engagement practice looks like in museums in 2013 and 2014. I found that staff across a museum have a role to play in undertaking community-focused work, a factor which helps to embed community engagement practice at institutions.

An exploration of criticisms of community engagement practice that are present in the literature has uncovered concerns about the practice being on the margins of museum practice, at times tokenistic and short-term in nature, and suffering from perceived power imbalances between museums and community partners. Although my research does not cast judgement on the exact types of community engagement being practised at the museums in my study, it is helpful to understand the factors understood by scholars to lessen the effectiveness of community engagement, relegate community engagement to the edges of museum practice, and take away power from partner organisations, so I can better understand the community engagement practice

discussed by interviewees in my study. As Lynch, in particular, asserts short-term funding for community engagement is factor in keeping this work on the margins of museum practice, my research offers a look at whether a reduction of funding, or the threat of this, helps bring community engagement to the core of practice or whether a reduction in funding prevents community engagement from taking place. My research points to the former, as is discussed throughout the thesis.

2.9 Museums and Austerity

My research considers what community engagement practice looked like in museums during 2013 and 2014. It is essential to consider the economic situation that was present at this time and the extent to which this may have had an effect on such practice. This section begins by looking at the austerity ideology adopted by the coalition government in 2010 and then presents the tangible effect austerity had on the museum sector – that of funding cuts to bodies such as DCMS, ACE and local authorities. Next, I explore reactions to perceived impact of the cuts on museums in the national and sector press and delve into the findings of the MA's annual Cuts Surveys, which present data relating to the effect of the cuts on the sector. I then present the small amount of literature available that specifically looks at the impact of the cuts on community engagement practice in museums, before ending this section with a look at literature on the relationship between museums and the UK economy.

In May 2010, following a UK General Election which delivered a hung parliament, with the Conservative Party having won the most seats but not enough to win an overall majority, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, under the leadership of David Cameron and Nick Clegg respectively, formed a coalition government. This government set about delivering an emergency budget for deficit reduction (Lee 2011a, 15), which identified £40 billion more savings by 2014-15 than those that had been planned by Brown's New Labour (ibid, 15). 80% of these savings would be made via cuts to public expenditure (ibid, 15). In addition, the coalition government delivered a full Spending Review in October 2010, which "envisaged the tightest squeeze on overall public expenditure since 1945" (ibid, 15). Furthermore, the government cut funding for local government by 27% in real terms between 2010 – 11 and 2014 – 15 (Lee 2011a, 16).

Given the focus the coalition government put on implementing the austerity agenda, it is perhaps no wonder scholars including Morse and Munro (2015, 6) and A. Evans (2012) suggest austerity was a central tenet of the coalition government. Although scholars such as Minford (cited in Beech 2011, 272) believe that austerity was necessary, others, including Lee (2011a) and Beech (2011) take a different view, asserting austerity was a choice made by the government. However, my research does not seek to make a judgement as to the financial soundness of the government's decision to adopt austerity; rather, it looks at how this decision affected community engagement practice in museums.

It is important to discuss the notion of austerity as something separate to direct spending cuts; austerity is an ideology, whereas spending cuts are the tangible manifestation of this ideology – a means by which to reduce public expenditure. The coalition government's spending cuts affected the museum sector with cuts to DCMS (outlined in more detail further on in this section) and reductions to local governments which provided funding to local council museums. However, the literature suggests austerity is more than simply spending cuts. Although austerity can be defined in purely financial terms – for example, A. Evans (2012), describes austerity as "a process of significantly reducing the budget deficit, predominantly through spending cuts rather than tax rises" – and, as Schui (2014, 2) points out, the term is often used to discuss spending cuts, the literature tends to position the concept of austerity as an ideology that is tied to ideas of morality and sacrifice (ibid 2014, 6 – 9; Stanley 2014, 10), in which individuals and the state decrease, or cease, consumption for the benefit of us all (Schui 2014, 1). In his 2014 thesis, which explored public feelings about austerity, Stanley asserts austerity is the "idea of *living within one's means*" (Stanley 2014, 10), a moral imperative that is separate and distinct from fiscal consolidation and spending cuts (ibid, 10).

This idea of austerity as the government living within its means is found in literature about austerity (Afoko and Vockins 2013; Stanley 2014). Antoniades (2016, 1) refers to "the narrative of austerity" when discussing the idea austerity means living within our means, suggesting austerity is more than simply spending cuts or the act of reducing the deficit; it is a powerful idea and story sold to the British public by the

coalition government as being a difficult but necessary response to the public debt (Afoko and Vockins 2013; Stanley 2014). Stanley (2014) and Afoko and Vockins (2013) – using data gathered from YouGov polls that looked at British attitudes towards austerity from 2010 – 2013 (Afoko and Vockins 2013, 15) - found the austerity narrative was very powerful, which was effective in supporting the belief amongst sections of the British public that the cuts were necessary. Stanley (2014) states this narrative of austerity as a moral idea that can be understood as living within one's means enables this "vague notion" to become a powerful message that resonated with public mood at the time (ibid, 1). Aditya Chakrabortty, the left-leaning *Guardian* journalist, spoke of the power of this narrative in a 2013 New Economics Foundation report on the framing of austerity:

> *"Austerity economics has become the prevailing dogma. You read it in the papers every day, it's said without any fear of contestation; any counter argument almost has to begin on the backfoot, by addressing the pro-cuts argument…"* (Chakrabortty in Afoko and Vockins 2013, 14)

Although the political leanings of Chakrabortty and his negative views of austerity should be kept in mind when attempting to interpret this, when combined with sources such as Stanley's 2014 thesis and the YovGov polls reported in Afoko and Vockins' 2013 report, there is certainly a suggestion in the literature that the narrative of austerity as a necessity was a powerful one at the time I conducted my fieldwork. This is important to note as it is within this context I spoke to research participants

who were working at a time when austerity was high on the political agenda and had some backing from the British public; this contributed to a feeling that austerity, and the cuts, were not suddenly going to disappear from the political agenda and were a reality to be negotiated by museum staff.

In addition, in 2013, as I began my fieldwork, stories in the national press suggested austerity would be continued. For example, Morris (2013) reported in *The Independent* that David Cameron believed "the squeeze on public spending should continue and result in a permanently slimmed down public sector". Here, Cameron's views perhaps provide evidence for an assertion made by Beech in 2011 (Beech 2011, 276) that Cameron's 'Big Society' – a political ideology around "empowering communities, redistributing power and fostering a culture of volunteerism" (BBC 2010), which was criticised for mask the effects of the cuts to public services (ibid 2010) - was one of the ideologies behind austerity and was a rolling back of the welfare state which Beech felt would threaten the existence of free at the point of delivery public services, staffed by professionals. The news that Cameron and Osborne's ongoing commitment to an austerity agenda may have added to concerns of museum professionals that the financial situation for museums would not improve, at least in the short-term.

What did austerity mean in terms of spending cuts for museums in England at the time of my research? As a result of the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, the DCMS received a 24% budget cut, and ACE a 30% cut. Cuts to local authorities, as

set out previously, also affected the museums they support. Regional museums received a cut of 15% funding and other DCMS funding for non-national museums has been withdrawn (Newman and Tourle 2012, 296).

Articles in the mainstream press provide a sense of the challenges that were considered to be facing museums from 2010 – 2014. In a 2010 article for *The Guardian*, for example, Jones likens the cuts to "an act of vandalism" (Jones 2010). In 2012, an article in *The Economist* suggests local history might be lost with the closure of small museums due to the cuts (n.a. 2012). A year later, Beattie (2013), in *The Mirror*, reports on cuts to the National Rail Museum, National Media Museum and Museum of Science and Industry and airs concerns these museums might be lost[2]. A 2014 article in *The Telegraph* by Mendick (2014) reports that, due to cuts to local government finances, museums and other public services – such as libraries and parks – would need to be run by unpaid volunteers, a hark to Cameron's Big Society. However, these articles do not specifically focus on the effects of austerity and the spending cuts on community engagement practices in museums; rather they tell broader narratives about the difficulties faced by museums, and perceived to be faced by museums, because of the cuts. My exploration of the impact of austerity on community engagement practices provides a look at a very specific element of museum practice that is rarely, if ever, discussed in the press. In addition, articles in the mainstream press are not always particularly nuanced as journalists aim to write articles that sell newspapers, which is more likely to be achieved by writing bold

[2] At the time of writing in 2018, all three museums are still open.

opinions; these bold articles are not always detailed enough to provide nuance. The articles presented here offer a negative view of the state of museums under the cuts. However, had the journalists undertaken more in-depth research, looking at day-to-day activity in museums across England, it is likely they would have found stories of good practice and museums surviving despite the cuts. After all, at the time of writing, the vast majority of museums have not closed nearly eight years after the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Articles in museum and wider sector press at the time of my fieldwork were largely concerned about the potential effects of the cuts on museums and the arts. The author of an article in *Arts Monthly*, for example, which was written the day of the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010, expresses concern about the announcement of a 29.6% cut to ACE (n.a. 2010). Articles in the MA website and *Museums Journal* also offer an insight into views about the cuts that were expressed by some of those working in the sector around the time of my research. The cuts were rarely discussed in these articles in anything but negative terms. For example, Kendall (2012)'s article, *Closing time*, reports on some museums that have permanently closed following the cuts. In an article five months later, Davies argues that, "The good times aren't coming back any time soon" (Davies 2012a), a discouraging and gloomy outlook that is perhaps made starker by the fact that, at the time, Davies was in a senior position at the MA, which adds weight to this author's voice and may be discouraging to those in the sector who look to the sector bodies like MA for guidance. It is not surprising the MA tends to report on the cuts in negative terms; as

a large museum membership body in the UK, the MA perhaps feels a duty to advocate for the sector, particularly in challenging financial times, in order to try to persuade funders and policymakers to keep providing funding for its members and the wider museum sector. The MA may also have taken a position sympathetic to the views of its members – individuals and organisations in the museum sector – some of whom will have experienced first-hand the negative impacts of the cuts through, for example, reduced operations and job losses. That is not to say the MA's reporting of the cuts is completely inaccurate; the evidence suggests the cuts clearly had, and have, negative impacts on museums, but it is important to view MA articles as sources that may have been biased by the views of their authors, whose writing suggests are largely unsympathetic to the cuts.

The MA does provide a little balance to its many negative articles about the impact of the cuts on museums. Davies (2012b), for example, in an article with a different tone to the article outlined above, argued museums will "continue to get better", making a positive difference to the world, despite the cuts and other issues. The next year, Davies (2013b) notes that, though the cuts have had negative impacts, including the closure of sites, it could appear museums are thriving, with high levels of public participation, evidence that museums are having great social impact, and high levels of public trust. Davies (ibid) argued the "skills and commitment" were supporting museums to become more audience and community-focused. From these articles, it is clear Davies views the cuts negatively and is concerned about their impact on museums, but concedes there is evidence to suggest museum work is resulting in

positive social impact and argues this work is due to museum workers' abilities and commitment. The two positions taken by Davies – those of both despair and hope for the sector – provide some insight into the complexity of the impact of the cuts on museums; it appears that, whilst the cuts can be devastating, there is evidence museums have responded to the cuts and are still undertaking community work in the context of the cuts.

It is important to note the narrative of continuing austerity and the perceived threat to museums and other public and cultural services were prevalent during the time I conducted my fieldwork. It is highly likely this narrative, combined with museum workers' direct experience of cuts to their museums or even the threat of cuts and articles in the national press and sector press about the negative effects of the cuts, led to a prevailing mood in the sector of concerns around the effect of austerity on museums; indeed, the people who contributed to my study all expressed concerns about the cuts overall. Some museums had already faced direct cuts from local and national governments and from funders such as ACE, and all museums were operating in a time when everyone was told to 'tighten their belts' and in which the future of museum funding was uncertain.

This uncertainty around continued public funding for museums was perhaps exacerbated by suggestions from government that museums and other cultural sector organisations would need to move further towards a culture of philanthropy and income generation to make up for the reduction in funding (n.a. 2010; Hope 2013).

Maria Miller, for example, who took over from Jeremy Hunt as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in September 2012, suggested private giving should be pursued in order to tackle the further cuts to museums and arts in the 2013 Comprehensive Spending Review (Hope 2013). This focus on developing a culture of private giving led to initiatives such as 'Catalyst: Endowments', a funding programme as part of a partnership between the HLF, ACE and the DCMS, which made awards in 2012 and 2013, and aimed to support museums and heritage organisations to build capacity and skills around fundraising (HLF n.d.).

Museum professionals working in different types of museums and in different geographic areas were working in this austerity-focused context, which can impact on short and long-term planning and practice. Certainly, the people I interviewed all talked of their work in the context of austerity. All but one interviewee – who only received a modest grant that covered the costs of one member of staff and was their only source of regular museum income - had experienced cuts to their museums through the loss of ACE grants and/or direct cuts from local and national government. One interviewee spoke in the knowledge that their museum was about to receive another significant cut. This real – in all but one case - or potential threat – in the other case - to funding had led to all the interviewees working and thinking in a different way as they dealt with, or wanted to be prepared for, cuts.

Alongside articles in the national and sector press which give a flavour of the prevailing mood around cuts to museums, the MA Cuts Surveys offer a useful insight

into the impact the cuts had on museums during the time of my research. The MA has commissioned several national surveys to explore the impact of the financial cuts on museums, including staffing levels, budgets and services, through the collection of quantitative and qualitative data from museums of all types and sizes and in different locations. The respondents are self-selecting. The first of these surveys was conducted in 2011. From 2012, the surveys asked respondents to comment on what they think the next year will look like for their organisation. The results of surveys between 2011 and 2014 are of particular relevance to my research as this enables me to look at how the cuts affected overall museum practice, and museums, before and during the period of my research.

It should be noted the Cuts Surveys are intended to be political advocacy tools, evidence for which can be found in Davies' (2013c) article – entitled 'Help us fight the cuts' – which clearly states the objective of the Surveys is to, "get people to sit up and take notice….[and]..reignite people's interest in the state of museums" (ibid). Data from Cuts Surveys have, according to Davies, been presented to the government and have been used in advocacy in the national press (ibid). It is unsurprising the MA, as a large museum membership body in the UK, would undertake such an exercise; after all, it is within the power of the MA to advocate for museums and make the case for more, or continued, funding. However, it is important to recognise the Cuts Surveys are biased sources, deliberately intended to provide data that aims to put the challenges faced by museums in the spotlight via the national press and to advocate for funding for museums. In addition, the fact respondents self-select may give rise to

bias as it possible respondents are more likely to be those who have experienced cuts to their museums and/or have stronger opinions on the cuts than non-respondents.

Newman and Tourle, academics commissioned by the MA, conducted the 2011 Cuts Survey, which was completed by 140 museums across 200 separate sites, with museums of different sizes, locations and types being represented (Newman and Tourle 2012, 297). Although the authors assert the sector had been resilient (ibid, 301), a point that is perhaps somewhat lost amongst the negative elements of the study, the article paints a bleak picture of the sector in 2011, providing evidence for budget cuts and reductions in staffing levels and operational issues such as opening hours (ibid, 297). Of particular relevance to my research is the authors' finding that "money for new community projects is reduced or non-existent" (ibid, 298). The more cuts a museum has to absorb, the authors argue, the more "basic elements of its business…it can no longer afford" (ibid, 298). The authors (ibid, 298) warn the cuts have "relegated" some museums to "merely repository status", by leading them to reduce budgets, staffing and services, which inevitably has an impact on the public they serve. Indeed, many respondents echoed this view, feeling the cuts had led to a reduction in the quality of the service they offered (ibid, 300). This survey, which was undertaken just two years before I conducted my fieldwork, offers a bleak view of the future of museums and, of particular relevance to my research, opines that community work could decrease and museums themselves become lifeless entities, more akin to warehouses which open and close when necessary, than vibrant, audience-centered institutions. Importantly, the study suggests community work could suffer in part

because funding for community projects was decreasing; this does not acknowledge community work happens outside of projects and can be a core element of museum work.

The 2012 Cuts Survey was more positive, finding that, although the cuts were having negative impacts on museums, many museums in the sample were adapting to the new economic situation (G. Evans 2012, 2). The cuts appeared to have had the most negative effect on budget levels, staffing levels and, via the forced closure of all of part of sites, public access to sites (ibid, 1). Of particular interest to my research is the finding that 45% of respondents said they would focus on audience development in the next year, compared to 22% of respondents who aimed to do more collections research, suggesting museums were aiming to prioritise audience-focused work (ibid, 12). This focus appears to have been partially caused by the economic climate, with museums reporting they wanted to be more audience-focused and show greater relevance to the community (ibid, 15).

The 2013 Cuts Survey reported very slightly reduced levels of budget and staffing cuts compared to the previous year's survey - 51% of respondents reported budget cuts in 2012 compared to 49% in 2013 and 42% had reduced staffing levels in 2012 as opposed to 37% in 2013 (G. Evans 2012; Evans 2013). In addition, 7% of respondents had closed all or part of their site in 2013 compared to 22% in 2012 (ibid; ibid). Once again, this demonstrates that, amongst the museums surveyed, the cuts seemed to be having a particularly negative impact on operations and staffing.

Similarly to the 2012 survey, this survey found more respondents – 47% - were going to focus on audience-focused work – in this case 'participation' rather than 'audience development' – rather than collections-focused work (ibid, 17).

In 2014, the survey found 52% of museums in the sample had suffered a cut to their overall income, the highest percentage – by a very small margin - of respondents to report such a cut since the survey began (MA 2014, 5). Museums had also experienced staffing cuts to a greater extent than in previous years – 53% had cut full-time staff (ibid, 5). However, the survey showed there was still a big focus on community-focused work, with 44% of respondents saying they wanted to spend the next year encouraging participation, and 26% intending to decrease this work (ibid, 5).

The Cuts Surveys provide evidence the financial cuts had a negative impact on a range of museums – at least those included in the study – particularly in relation to operations and staffing. However, it is important to note the 2012 to 2014 surveys all found at least 44% of respondents were prioritising community-based work more than collections-focused work. This is a significant finding for my research as it suggests that, even in years when museums were negatively impacted by the financial cuts, there appeared to be a strong commitment to community-focused work, be it participation, audience development, or work that particularly aims to deliver social impact. My research complements the Cuts Surveys by exploring the personal views of museum workers in regard to community-focused practice and finding, like the

Cuts Surveys, that they have a deep passion for, and belief in, community work.

Although the Cuts Surveys provide some evidence of a commitment to community-focused work during the time of my fieldwork, sector and national press articles and academic studies about the effect of austerity on the museum sector largely ignore the specific effects of the financial cuts upon museums' community engagement practices, instead tending to focus on the wider impact of the cuts, particularly operations and staffing – for example, reporting on museum closures or budget reductions. However, the issue of the effects of austerity on community engagement practice is discussed by a handful of scholars, including Lynch (2011), Weinstein (2012), and Morse and Munro (2015). Lynch (2011, 448) suggests, for example, stretched resources ultimately mean museums cannot spend as much money on public programmes that seek to alleviate social exclusion, particularly if museum professionals do not view the promotion of social inclusion as core work, as this view may disincline people to spending their limited – and, in some cases, shrinking – resources on such practices. Like Newman and Tourle (2012), this view suggests community work is often funded via project or programmes and is not necessarily resourced as core museum work. Weinstein (2012) also discusses the negative impact of the cuts on community engagement, noting the cuts have led to some organisations streamlining or, in the case of English Heritage, abolishing, their outreach departments (ibid) and that, as museums decide what their focus is (ibid), they may consider working closely with local communities in this way to be an unnecessary drain on resources. In pointing to the eradication of English Heritage's outreach

department as evidence to suggest a decline in community work, Weinstein's work also suggests community practice is not necessarily embedded in institutions and, rather, is the responsibility of staff working in specific roles. Although it is logical to assume community work could suffer if a team of outreach workers is purged, it should be noted that, if, as scholars such as Crooke (2010) advocate for, all staff across an organisation have a responsibility for community work, abolishing one department may not lead to the complete abolition of community work.

A 2015 study by Morse and Munro explores the topic of the effects of austerity on community engagement work and is the closest research to my own study I have uncovered during my literature search. The paper places community engagement within the concept of care, looking at how caring is done in museums' community engagement work through research in two museums, a municipal museum and a regional museum. Morse and Munro's study is helpful for my research as it provides useful research around the impact of the cuts on community engagement practice with which I can compare and contrast my findings.

Morse and Munro's study has three main findings. First, that the cuts have led to museum workers developing new partnerships with local social service agencies and voluntary organisations (ibid, 3). The authors note, however, that some community partners have also lost funding as a result of the cuts, which has also had a negative impact on museum workers as key contacts have been lost, partner organisations focus on core activities at the expense of cultural or creative programmes, and some

community organisations have folded (ibid, 13). Second, the study finds the identities of museum workers are key in shaping their responses to austerity. Although the authors found those working in museums do not view themselves as "social workers" (ibid, 12) they understood their role as one that utilised heritage and creative programmes to support social care and community development (ibid, 12). Museum workers who were interviewed by Morse and Munro stated their background influenced their community engagement practice (ibid, 12), for example, some had worked in roles such as social work and in the care sector (ibid, 12). Finally, the authors frame museum professionals' attempts to create spaces of care as an act of resistance to austerity. The authors describe 'spaces of resistance' as those "where new relationships, partnerships and collectives could flourish" (ibid, 13). One such 'act of resistance' is reported as being the development of partnerships with social care services, in part as a response to previous dissatisfaction with the short-term nature of projects that may have had limited social impact (ibid, 13). The authors caution, however, that changes to practice should be considered to be "uncritically progressive" (ibid, 16) and there was a feeling amongst staff in both museums that their community engagement work "was not necessarily recognised, understood or valued by other departments or senior management" (ibid, 17-18).

Morse and Munro's study found austerity led to a change in community engagement practice but that community engagement was still taking place in museums and was valued by those who practised this work. This is relevant to my research as it provides some evidence that austerity has not led to the demise of community engagement.

Viewed with evidence from the Cuts Surveys around museum workers' priorities at work, this literature starts to build a picture of a sector that values, and is committed to, community work.

Research undertaken in the West Midlands as part of the Aspire programme (a business skills programme for Human Resources and Organisational Development professionals) in relation to the local government sector is helpful in exploring how organisations outside the museum sector are practising meaningful community engagement work in the context of austerity. The authors found four characteristics supported this work to take place (In austerity, what is it about organisational culture that supports meaningful community engagement?, n.d.). The first of these characteristics is bravery – being prepared to take risks and try new practices (ibid, 21). The second is having trust between officers and leaders – "that officers will do the right thing at the right time [and] officers must trust leaders that when taking risks and finding innovative solutions" (ibid, 21) whilst accepting that both can make mistakes (ibid, 21). The third is flexibility - enabling staff to use their initiative, being able to adapt practice to different situations, and creatively co-designing services with communities (ibid, 21). The fourth is passion, being "willing to go the extra mile" (ibid, 21); this is viewed by the authors as being absolutely key to achieving engagement that is meaningful (ibid, 21). This report is helpful to my research as it provides some evidence community engagement is possible during austerity with the right factors in place.

This literature review has looked at the ways in which community engagement has been funded in museums, for example, through government policy initiatives and short-term funded projects. In addition to this, it is also helpful to consider literature about the broader relationship between museums and the economy. Stanziola and Méndez-Carbajo (2011) conducted a study that explored how cultural organisations respond to changes in economic growth and government expenditure. The research found that, though the New Labour era led to a small increase in cultural sector funding, for most of the period studied, spending on culture was below 1% of GDP (ibid, 254). The authors suggest this means the supposed 'Golden Age' of funding at this time was merely an 'Age of Adequacy' (ibid, 254). Second, the study found "no evidence that the economic growth cycle drives public spending on cultural organisations" (ibid, 254) and that, given this, cultural organisations should be aware an expanding economy in the future – if such an event occurs – will not necessarily lead to increased spending on culture (ibid, 254). Woodward (2012, 25) also makes it clear museums should not expect increased government funding, at least in the current financial climate. Stanziola and Méndez-Carbajo, and Woodward's, arguments would appear to suggest that, whilst the sector might lobby for greater funding, this, or even any, funding should not necessarily be expected. Instead, it appears the sector must find alternative ways to survive in austere times and beyond. This literature is important to note because it provides evidence museums cannot rely on government funding either in times of austerity or otherwise. It seems the museum sector would be wise to consider ways in which it can function without guaranteed ongoing funding and in uncertain financial circumstances. Although my research did

not look to respond to these studies, my finding that community engagement was thriving in museums in 2013 and 2014, in the context of the cuts, provides some evidence that museum professionals are indeed working in different ways in order to continue to practice community engagement in a time of austerity.

Stanziola (2011, 115) recommends cultural sector organisations must attempt to diversify funding streams in order to support financial sustainability which may be a concern when institutions within the sector are so dependent on government funding. On the issue of funding, Camarero, Garrido and Vicente (2011, 262) conclude that, though receiving public funding supports museums to achieve social outcomes, too much dependence on either public or private funding can lead to museums finding it harder to work in innovative ways (ibid, 262). This provides further support for the view that museums need to diversify their funding streams. In recent years, one way in which to diversify funding and counteract austerity, that the government and sector funding bodies have advocated for, is through philanthropic donations (Babbidge 2015 in Morse and Munro 2015, 7). The issue of diversifying funding is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 of my thesis as I found some of the museums in my study were looking for ways to diversify funding for community engagement practice.

Literature about how museums might protect themselves from economic fluctuations emphasise advocacy as an important tool that should be utilised. Lindqvist's (2012) study, for example, considers what actions museums might take to ensure their long-term financial sustainability by making them less exposed to fluctuations within the

economic cycle. Advocacy that demonstrates the role museums have to play in society "reinforce[s] their legitimacy" (ibid, 9). Lindqvist argues museums looking to be less vulnerable to economic fluctuations should strengthen their relationship with, and better advocate to, stakeholders. This might include lobbying, diversifying funding streams, and work with friends' associations and donors (ibid, 9-10). In addition, Lindqvist argues for political lobbying as a long-term approach to securing future funding (ibid, 7). Stanziola and Méndez-Carbajo (2011, 244 and 254) note that, although there is often an assumption that budget cuts lead to a reduction in activities, there is evidence to suggest other factors, such as voter preferences and political cycles, also influence how the government allocates its resources. This suggests that, in advocating to organisations and individuals outside the museum sector, museums might influence future government spending on the sector. The Cuts Surveys show us the MA has undertaken comprehensive work to collect data from museums that they can use to advocate for museums; clearly this body considers advocacy crucial as a means to support museums in times of financial difficulty.

The literature about austerity and museums provides evidence the prevailing narrative of the cuts during the time of my fieldwork was one of negativity and concern about the effects of the cuts on museums. The fact such studies as the MA Cuts Surveys were in existence at this time, along with articles in national and sector press, are evidence the narrative around the cuts was amongst the top – if not the largest – and most discussed issues in the museum sector as I conducted my fieldwork. Outside the museum sector, austerity was one of the dominant features of government policy at

the time and political leaders, including Cameron and Osborne, had suggested austerity would not be coming to an end soon. At the time when I conducted my fieldwork, the fact research participants were dealing with (largely) real or threatened cuts and were working at a time when austerity was a dominant narrative, came through strongly in interviewees' answers, which led me to consider that the austerity mindset – that museum workers had to consider what their practice should look like in austerity and how to deal with austerity – was apparent amongst the interviewees. The timing of my thesis enables me to take a look at community engagement practice at a time when the financial cuts had already taken effect in museums. It is important to carry out work that looks at practice under financial constraints because, if scholars such as Stanziola and Méndez-Carbajo, and Woodward are correct, the museum sector should not assume that government funding will suddenly begin to flow into the sector and, therefore, there is a need to consider how to function – and if it is possible to function - with potentially permanently reduced funding.

The literature demonstrates the financial cuts had a negative impact on some museums, particularly, it seems, in relation to operations and staffing. Much of the literature, particularly sector and national press, expresses great concern about these negative impacts, however, this literature sometimes lacks nuance, preferring to lead with pessimistic headlines and stories that do not always look for complexities. My research fills a gap in the literature by looking at the extent to which austerity has affected a specific area of museum practice – that of community engagement – which, to date, has been under-researched. My thesis also takes a look behind the headlines

and quantitative data - such as the amount of funding that has been cut - to attempt to uncover the experiences of museum professionals working during the cuts in 2013 and 2014. It is important to collect this qualitative data, that speaks of people's on-the-ground experiences, because these can be lost amongst headlines.

2.10 Organisational Responses to Austerity

A look at how organisations respond to austerity - or a reduction in financial resources - is relevant to my research as it explores the idea of austerity as a force for change. My research found austerity led to changes in community engagement practice in museums, therefore, it is important to understand why this might have happened.

An example of funding cuts leading to change in the museum sector can be found in Janes' 2014 study that describes changes which took place at Glenbow Museum, Canada, in the 1990s which happened as a result of significant reductions in the museum's budget. Janes argues such huge reductions meant staff had to "renew Glenbow by increasing [their] capacity for change" (ibid, 144). The author goes on to describe six strategies implemented at Glenbow that aimed to improve effectiveness, increase income and decrease expenditure; these are: developing non-commercial partnerships with other non-profits, changing the structure of the organisation, creating new ways to serve the public – including understanding more about audiences through a new public advisory group of people who do not visit the site and

more research and evaluation, streamlining business processes, deaccessioning certain objects, and carrying out commercial activities (ibid, 144-145). Although commercial endeavours are suggested as being part of the solution, it is interesting the museum focused on ways in which it could better connect with, and understand, its audiences, and developed partnerships with non-profits, suggesting that community-focused work can be a means by which to respond to funding cuts.

Literature about the public sector offers an insight into how public sector organisations responded to austerity (Lowndes and Squires 2012; Diamond and Vangen 2017; Griffiths and Kippin 2017). Griffiths and Kippin (2017) explore how austerity at the time impacted on public services and argue policymakers have three options to take regarding how to respond to austerity: 1) "doing the same with less" money, 2) doing less with less money, or 3) "doing things differently" (ibid, 418-419), the third option suggesting that a change in practice is a strategy that enables organisations to continue to survive during funding cuts. Lowndes and Squires (2012, 401) and Diamond and Vangen (2017, 48) posit that another strategy for survival during times of austerity is collaboration with other organisations, with Lowndes and Squires (2012, 401) suggesting partnerships can decrease the impact of external 'shocks' – such as austerity - on organisations, a concept they describe as a "buffering effect" (ibid, 401). The suggestion partnerships can support organisations to survive in times of austerity mirrors Janes' work at Glenbow and the views of scholars such as Morse and Munro (2015).

The studies that have been presented here are helpful to my research as they offer evidence austerity can lead to changes in practice – that adaptation to financial challenges is possible - and developing partnerships with external organisations can be successfully utilised by organisations in response to funding cuts. My research complements these theories by similarly positing austerity has led to changes in community engagement practice in the museums in my study, and that developing partnerships was a strategy which has been adopted by museums partially as a response to austerity.

2.10.1 Museum Sector Partnerships

As the literature suggests that partnership working is a useful strategy to pursue in times of austerity, it is helpful to explore texts about museum sector partnerships and wider literature about partnership working. Working with partners has been part of museum, and wider cultural, sector practice since the 1930s (McCall and Rummery 2017, 59). However, literature tends to emphasise the role of national government policy under New Labour as a key catalyst for partnership working (Lawley 2003, 82; Tlili, Gerwitz and Cribb 2007, 13). Tlili, Gerwitz and Cribb (2007, 130), for example, argue that, as well as being required to decrease barriers to access and attract under-represented audiences, museums at the time were also expected to work in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector organisations to address societal issues, such as regeneration and health care (ibid, 130). My research offers a look at practice which took place after New Labour's time in Office and finds that partnership

working is a factor which helps embed community engagement in museum practice. I did not specifically look at the reasons for partnership working under New Labour so it is difficult for me to comment on this research but my own study found partnership working was a vital ingredient in museums' community engagement practice at the time of my research. From my dataset, it is difficult to comment on whether or not this was kick-started by New Labour, but this type of working appears to have become more prevalent as a result of the cuts and a desire amongst museum workers to undertake more embedded, less tokenistic practice.

A recent article by McCall and Rummery (2017) discusses 'welfare partnerships' between cultural sector and local societies and groups, such as mental health and dementia groups (ibid, 61). The authors conclude effective partnership working is a way to prevent the tokenism which can be present in short-term funded projects, where museums connect with groups as a box ticking exercise (ibid, 63), that partnerships are a means by which to work with hard to reach groups (ibid, 63-64) and to diversify funding (ibid, 69-70), findings that align with my own research.

Like Lynch (2011), McCall and Rummery (2017) discuss power relationships between museums and partner organisations, but, in contrast to Lynch, conclude museums have less power than partner organisations partner as museums do not generally have much control over the relationships (ibid, 67) and as they are dependent on partners to support them to deliver core functions of their work (ibid, 69). My research echoes McCall and Rummery's research, finding that museums can

be dependent on partner organisations as it is within the power of partner organisations to refuse to work with museums.

Much of the literature on partnerships includes discussions around what authors believe are the elements of successful partnership working (Zien 1995; Lowndes and Squires 2012; Interdependence Network 2014; Kinge 2014; McCall and Rummery 2017). It is helpful to look at these factors as the research participants in my study often discussed their views on the effectiveness of partnerships and what they believe needs to be in place in order to undertake successful partnership working. The elements of successful partnerships which are present in the literature can broadly be categorised into individual behaviours, organisational behaviours, and joint behaviours of each partner. Firstly, the literature asserts partnerships are more successful when a motivated individual is driving the partnership (Lowndes and Squires 2012, 405; McCall and Rummery 2017, 70). According to the Interdependence Network (2014) - a community of practice that is interested in fostering social inclusion in communities for people with disabilities and so has some on-the-ground experience of developing partnerships - individuals also have a role to play in acting as a 'gatekeeper' who is a bridge between an organisation and the community (Interdependence Network 2014). Organisations can bring about more effective partnerships by giving partnerships adequate time and resource (Zien 1995, 18-19; McCall and Rummery 2017, 59). Finally, the literature suggests partnerships are more successful when they further the missions of each organisation (Zien 1995, 19), produce tangible outcomes (Kinge 2014, 857), benefit each partner (ibid, 858),

and when both partners are committed to the partnership (Zien 1995, 18-19).

A term that was helpful to my own research is Zien's concept of "structurally innovative partnerships - those which focus on developing permanent new structural relationships - relationships that fundamentally improve the participants' ability to serve socially diverse constituencies in the long run; rather than product-driven partnerships" (ibid, 20). Such partnerships, argues Zien, interact often, disseminate the activities of the partnership, share administrative resources, co-operate in multiple ways, make their facilities, resources and programmes accessible to audiences, and regularly consult with each other find out how to "incorporate one another's concerns into prospective programmes and services whilst they are still in the development phase" (ibid, 20). In my work around partnerships, which is discussed primarily in Chapter 7, I conclude the partnerships as described by my research participants echo those of Zien's 'structurally innovative partnerships', which suggests the partnerships I explored were more than partnerships of convenience, but were robust, considered, and integral to practice in the museums I studied.

The theme of partnerships emerged as a central theme in my research, which was perhaps unsurprising given that the literature suggests partnership working as a way to respond to austerity and to undertake effective work with communities. My research offers some discussion on how partnerships can, as McCall and Rummery (2017) suggest, prevent tokenistic practice and diversify funding, and also adds to the

debate on both who has the power in partnerships and what are elements of successful partnership working.

2.11 Crisis and Change

This chapter has demonstrated, using secondary sources, that there is some evidence austerity can lead to changes in practice, such as an increase in collaborative working. If the austerity has led to crisis in the museum sector, it is prudent to also explore literature that looks at whether crisis can lead to change.

The literature suggests that, though responding to crisis is not easy - Goldstein (2012a, 5), for example, argues that, in order to respond to crisis, workers may need to challenge "closely held institutional and normative commitments" – crisis can act as a transformative catalyst (Goldstein 2012b, 359). Goldstein posits crisis can lead to experimental practice that may, at other times, have been disregarded or opposed (ibid, 359) and that, in times of crisis, this new practice may succeed where traditional approaches fail (ibid, 359). This echoes Janes' (2014) suggestion museums facing change should experiment. Goldstein warns, however, that experimental practice can fail because of "pressure to restore prior conditions, even if they were unjust and unsustainable" (Goldstein 2012b, 359). The author argues that making the most out of opportunities during a crisis depends on being able to identify "causes of vulnerability" and respond accordingly (ibid, 359). Crider (Crider and Widmann, 2012) also argues that crisis can lead to change, especially if organisations are

committed to “actively manag[ing] change” (ibid). Widmann (ibid), however, disagrees with Crider, suggesting crisis can slow the change process and that great change is more possible when it happens steadily.

There is evidence within the literature to suggest that crisis can lead to change, with crisis acting as a catalyst for this change. My research suggests austerity did lead to changes in community engagement practice amongst the participants in my study, but it is limited by the fact it only looks at a two-year time period; without going back and carrying out further research at the museums – a subject I discuss in the Epilogue – I cannot know for certain the practice I uncovered has remained stable. Nevertheless, the data I collected suggests the practices I explored – such as developing more sustainable partnerships – were embedded in museum practice to the extent that they may well still be apparent at the museums in my study.

2.12 Museum Resilience

The age of austerity has led to more industry-led research about how museums might be more resilient in the context of the cuts, which is unsurprising as sector bodies may well feel a responsibility to provide support museums, and other cultural organisations, to survive during this time of uncertainty and financial cuts. Indeed, the 2012 BOP report, *Heritage Organisations and Resilience*, clearly states the commissioners of the report, English Heritage and the HLF, wanted to support the sector in light of the funding cuts and to achieve resilience (BOP 2012, 1).

The Association of Independent Museum's (AIM) Hallmarks provide a useful framework that brings together the key characteristics and behaviours that the organisation asserts make "heritage organisations prosper and thrive" (AIM 2016, 1). The framework helpfully draws inspiration from practical museum experience and resilience and sustainability theories (AIM 2015), combining academic theory with real-life, on-the-ground, experiences of museum workers. The Hallmarks are:

- Purpose
- Leadership and culture
- Governance
- Innovation and risk
- Finance
- Collections
- Visitor focus
- Awareness and networks

  (AIM 2016, 1)

Although I did not uncover evidence of all of these factors in my research, which is unsurprising as the Hallmarks relate to the whole of museum practice and not just community engagement, I found that:

- Having a strong organisational mission that prioritises community engagement is important (relating to the 'Purpose' Hallmark).

- Leadership has a part to play in encouraging and enabling community engagement, that museum workers were trying new things.

- By prioritising community engagement, museums were demonstrating a visitor focus.

- Museum staff were forging new and sustainable partnerships with organisations.

The Hallmarks were influenced by several texts about resilience in the museum sector, which were also written in the context of austerity. One of these, Robinson's (2010) *Making adaptive resilience real* report, which utilises social-ecological thinking, is discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis together with other texts which use ecological thinking in relation to the museums and wider cultural sector. Another text that influenced the Hallmarks was BOP's 2012 report, *Heritage Organisations and Resilience* (BOP 2012). The authors of this report, which is designed to improve understanding of resilience in the heritage sector and how organisations adapted to austerity (ibid, 1), note resilience is often linked to internal organisational conditions. The report suggests that as well as serving, and having an understanding of, an organisation's core purpose (ibid, 5), organisations might become more resilient by

improving their management style and organisational culture (ibid, 15), including recruiting leaders and trustees with appropriate skills and experience, prioritising business planning, ensuring management structures get the most out of staff, and considering the strengths and weaknesses of their organisation (ibid, 15). The finding that having a strong core purpose aligns with my research, to some extent, which suggests a strong organisational ethos around community engagement is a factor of resilient community engagement practice. My research also asserts leaders and organisational culture has an impact on the resilience of community engagement practice. The other findings of the BOP report are less relevant to my research as they look at broader organisational practices that are not linked to my research topic. The timing of the BOP report is relevant to my research as it provides evidence that, in the year preceding my fieldwork, there were signs of resilient practice in the museum sector in the face of austerity.

The 2015 report *Research to understand the resilience, and challenges to this, of Local Authority museums* (TBR 2015) considers how Local Authority museums might be more resilient in the wake of the cuts. The research was commissioned by ACE, with the aim of understanding the challenges facing Local Authority museums and explore the future resilience of such museums as they were at threat from further cuts (ibid, 1). It should be noted the report was published in the year after my fieldwork, so does not offer a view of the sector at the exact time my research was conducted, and nor does it focus on community engagement practice or make a judgement as to the resilience of community engagement practice. However, it does

suggest Local Authority museums should build and maintain links with their communities (ibid, 18) in order to inform the development of the service and encourage local communities to advocate for museums when funding cuts are threatened (ibid, 18). The suggestion there are economic reasons for museums to engage with communities, and that this is a strategy that can be adopted in order to respond to the cuts and try to lessen the cuts to individual museums, is relevant to my research and perhaps adds weight to my conclusion community engagement is able to continue, and even thrive, in times of austerity.

The authors argue that, although financial resilience is a key element of organisational resilience, this is problematic given that museums are "particularly vulnerable to cuts in funding" (ibid, 1); this links to my research, which suggests resilient community engagement practice is impingent on a range of factors that go beyond funding. The report advocates for responses to austerity being specific to individual museums and their circumstances; museums demonstrating their relevance to their local authority, public services and communities; increasing income generation activities; and effective, proactive leadership (ibid, 2-3). In addition, the authors argue that developing an entrepreneurial culture is key for a resilient museum service (ibid, 2). Although this report looks at organisational resilience rather than resilient community engagement practice, it is interesting that the factors the authors assert support resilience are similar to my conclusions about the features of resilient community engagement practice, such as leadership, diversifying funding (which links to TBR's

suggestion that Local Authority museums should increase income generating activities), and advocacy.

The authors warn of the risk to Local Authority museums of further public funding cuts, particularly if these are implemented at short notice as well as "changing local authority structures and local authority attitude and behaviours" (ibid, 2). My research is not about local authority structures, so it is difficult for me to comment on the threat of this to Local Authority museums. However, I acknowledge that, in the year after my fieldwork – when this report was published – there was increasing concern that future cuts would have damaging effects on Local Authority museums and this may have potentially had an effect on community engagement practice in Local Authority museums. Further research, that brings my fieldwork up-to-date, would help uncover the extent to which this has been realised. It is important to note, however, that whilst further reductions in funding may have had an effect on community engagement practice, particularly if many staff have been lost or, of course, if museums close entirely, the data I collected provides evidence that resilient community engagement practice is about much more than money; if the factors that make up resilient community engagement practice are present, it appears from my research that it is possible to practice community engagement despite funding cuts.

Industry-led research that explores how museums might be made more resilient, and looks at examples of this on-the-ground in museums, in the context of austerity is helpful in considering the factors that make up resilient museum practice.

Interestingly, although my research only looked at a specific area of museum practice, many of these factors, such as leadership, advocacy, and organisational purpose/ethos, cited in the research align with my findings.

The existence of such research provides evidence of a concern within the sector about the effect of the cuts on the resilience of museums and, indeed, TBR's rather stark report sets out some of the issues faced by Local Authority museums in 2015 as a result of the cuts. It would be naive to think the cuts had no negative impacts on the museum sector and my research does not suggest that this has been the case. None of these reports looks specifically at how the cuts have affected community engagement practice in museums. My research fills a gap in this literature by looking at this specific area of museum practice and suggesting ways in which community engagement practice - in particular - might be made more resilient.

2.13 Conclusion

It appears from the research undertaken above that, in recent years, community work has become increasingly important in the museum sector. Although the political imperative to undertake socially inclusive work may not be as strong as it once was during New Labour's time in Office, ideological ideas around museums' duty to be inclusive institutions appear to have gained more traction in the sector. This helps answer the question of why people in the museum sector practice community engagement.

Community work also seems to have broadened its remit, and includes social inclusion, participation, health and wellbeing, though practice is still centered on the idea of 'helping people'. This does not mean community work is not without issues, including short-termism and tokenism. My study explores this broad range of practice at a range of museums and suggests working with communities and 'helping people' is indeed a notion that is particularly important to museum workers. Individual museum staff, who have a strong belief in the social role of museums, changed their practice to protect community engagement, as much as possible, from the cuts.

I also posit austerity has led to changes in practice that have started to lead to more embedded community engagement work that is not short-term and, to use concepts put forward by Modest (2013, 99), is perhaps more 'real' than 'symbolic'. That is not to say austerity has been a positive force on English museums but that it has been a catalyst to make museum workers consider their priorities and to take a more strategic, focused approach to community engagement.

Secondly, it appears that, although there is evidence to suggest local and national policies have an effect on community engagement practice, some scholars claim these policies do not always trickle down into practice as workers can ultimately choose whether to follow them or not. My thesis will explore the extent to which organisational, local and national policies have on community engagement, and will suggest that they can and do impact upon community engagement practice by

enabling and influencing individuals' practice.

Thirdly, there is some evidence to suggest austerity may have led to change within the museum sector, including - thinking about Munro and Morse's (2015) work - to community engagement practices. This change can be viewed as part of the museum sector's response to the 'crisis' that is austerity; the literature review has shown crisis has the potential to lead to change in the museum sector and beyond. My thesis further explores the effect of austerity upon community engagement practice and posits that austerity has, indeed, led to changes in practice and, furthermore, to the embedding of resilient community engagement practices. Related to the idea of crisis and change, the literature suggests the forming of partnerships is one tactic that can be deployed as a response to crisis. Partnerships are a major theme in my thesis, including how and why they are formed and sustained.

Finally, while it is clear the cuts have had a negative effect on the museum sector in terms operations and closures, in particular, very little has been written about the effects of austerity on community engagement in particular. My thesis has the potential to fill this gap in the literature. My study will also enable me to take a look behind the strong, emotive language that is sometimes used in the press in relation to the effect of the cuts on museums to explore the on-the-ground experiences of staff who worked in museums between 2013 and 2014.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.0 Introduction

In Chapters 1 and 2, I set my research in context and illustrated the negativity that is present within many articles about the impact of the current and recent cuts on museums. In this section, I will explain why I used qualitative methods within a grounded theory framework to research English museums' community engagement practices in the economic climate that was present in 2013 and 2014. Utilising a grounded theory approach was appropriate as I explored a topic about which little work has been undertaken, while collecting qualitative data from current museum professionals allowed me to discover whether what is happening 'on the ground' in museums reflects the negative rhetoric that is often found in sector and press articles.

3.1 Research Question and Objectives

My research question changed throughout the course of my study. Although my work has always centered on community engagement, initially, I wanted to discover how museum professionals decide with which hard-to-reach groups they should work. As I carried out my fieldwork in 2013 and 2014 in the context of austerity, when the prevailing narrative was one of how the cuts had negatively affected museums, I was particularly interested to find out the extent to which austerity and other potential influences, such as organisational policies, were affecting decisions regarding which

groups museum decide to work with and interviewees' museum practice. After undertaking each interview, I transcribed and coded them and, using the principles of grounded theory, looked for categories in the data. It became increasingly clear, from discussions with the interviewees as well as the ongoing analysis I was undertaking, that the core theme of the interviews was that of community engagement practices under the cuts and, rather than rigorously stick to my original research question, I decided to pursue this new, intriguing line of enquiry. I feel this new research question better represents the data that was collected during the interviews, which, led by interviewees' responses, encompassed discussions about wide-ranging community engagement practice and how the financial cuts were affecting practice at the time. My research question changed accordingly to become,

- What did community engagement practice look like in museums in England from 2013-2014?

My research objectives were:

- To explore is the impact of the knowledge culture on community engagement.

- To explore the impact that austerity has had on community engagement.

- To consider the impact that organisational and local and national policies have on community engagement.

- To explore why museum professionals practice community engagement.

- To consider how resilient community engagement might be characterised.

- To build upon, and contribute to, the body of literature relating to museums and community engagement.

3.2 Research Data

In this section, I will explain why I chose to collect qualitative data and why the data I collected was appropriate for discovering the answer to my research question.

I have undertaken qualitative research, carrying out semi-structured interviews with a range of museum professionals across England. The research question calls for qualitative research for a number of reasons that are highlighted by Ormston et al (2014, 4). Qualitative data collection allows researchers to effectively answer analytical research questions such as mine by providing rich, complex data that offers more detail and depth than can be achieved by quantitative research and enabling nuanced analysis that finds similarities and differences between data. To my knowledge, when I carried out my fieldwork, there was no work in existence that aimed to answer a similar research question to mine so I knew it was likely my research would involve building new theories; a qualitative approach supported this

by enabling me to explore emergent issues via the analysis original, rich data[3]. Finally, I wanted to understand the lived experiences of the participants, and qualitative research supported this aim by providing data that was in participants' own words and representative of their unique, individual perspectives.

In order to discover the answer my research question, I decided to undertake 15 semi-structured interviews with staff at nine museums in the North and East of England and the Midlands. At the time of my research, these were National Museums, a University Museum, a museum that is part of a Local Museum Trust, and a small Independent Museum. Four of the museums were ACE Major Partner Museums. Of the people I interviewed, all but one interviewee – whose museum only received a modest grant from the local council which covered the costs of one member of staff - had experienced cuts to their museums through the loss of ACE grants and/or direct cuts from local and national government. One interviewee spoke in the knowledge their museum was about to receive another significant cut. This real – in all but one cases - or potential threat to funding had led to all the interviewees working and thinking in a different way as they dealt with, or wanted to be prepared for, cuts.
As well as involving a range of museums, I also interviewed staff at different levels of organisations working in a variety of roles: directors/managers, curators, community engagement staff, and learning staff. As I explain later in the chapter, I used a theoretical sampling approach to choose participants for the research, meaning

[3] To my knowledge, Morse and Munro (2015) are the only other scholars who have specifically looked at community engagement practice in the context of austerity, but this study was published after I had carried out my fieldwork.

I looked for interviewees who could contribute to, and advance, developing categories that emerged from the data. However, I also used elements of convenience sampling, interviewing people who were willing to take part in my research and with whom I was able to make contact in the time available for my fieldwork.

I chose to collect interviews as primary data for several reasons. First, undertaking interviews allowed me take an in-depth look at community engagement practices in a variety of English museums in 2013 and 2014. Second, collecting original data from staff who were working in museums presented an opportunity to hear in-depth views from people who practised community engagement at the time of my fieldwork and in the context of austerity. Since the cuts commenced, articles and news items written by those in the museum sector have covered the impact of the financial climate upon the work of museums, often portraying a bleak image of museum closures and limited operations. Talking to people 'on the ground' allowed to me discover whether the negative narrative of the cuts masked the reality, and to explore working methods that staff adopted in order to deal with the effects of the cuts. Third, I collected data from people working in a variety of roles across different types of museums in a range of geographic locations because this allowed me to undertake a nuanced analysis of the data to discover comparisons and contrasts between data sets and reasons for these. Finally, on a practical level, collecting data via interviews was a feasible approach to use; interviews only require 30-60 minutes of participants' time, meaning my research did not interrupt their working lives, and I was able to collect the data fairly

easily by simply travelling to each museum and carrying out an interview, thus the process was manageable within the time I had to undertake fieldwork.

3.3 Research Procedures

Prior to collecting data, I sent my research proposal to the School of Museum Studies' Ethics Officer in order to gain approval to commence my fieldwork. All potential interviewees were sent a summary of my research proposal prior to agreeing to participate in the research. Interviewees completed a consent form which gave them the opportunity to ask to remain anonymous, for their institutions to remain anonymous, and for their words to be summarised rather than directly quoted. The participant information sheet can be found in Appendix A and consent form in Appendix B. These documents reflect my original research question but, as discussed previously, while the core questions I asked of interviewees mentioned hard-to-reach groups, the responses they gave offered a much broader picture of more wide-ranging community engagement practice, including work with groups that were not considered to be hard-to-reach. Guided by the interviewees' responses, I probed this new line of enquiry, which gave me a much richer picture of community engagement practice in museums, showing that working with hard-to-reach groups was only one element of community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014.

As several people who participated in the study wished to remain anonymous, I have chosen to anonymise all the findings in this thesis. Participants were made aware they

were free to withdraw from the research at any time. To further ensure confidentiality, interview recordings and transcripts were encrypted and printed transcripts kept in a locked cabinet.

3.3.1 Theoretical Sampling

I utilised a theoretical sampling approach to choose participants for the research. This method is a central tenet of grounded theory (Breckenridge 2009) as the researcher aims to find a sample that reflects a number of perspectives and concerns remaining open to possibility (Gibson and Hartman 2014, 123). In employing a theoretical sampling approach, as far as possible, I sought out interviewees who could contribute to, and advance, developing categories which emerged from the data (Breckenridge 2009; Greener 2011, 66). For example, when the theme of ACE funding setting a direction for community engagement work began to emerge, I looked for interviewees working for museums that received ACE funding and those that did not, including a museum that had recently lost ACE funding. These museums are not identified in the research in order to maintain participant confidentiality. I also ensured I collected enough data to reach the point of 'saturation' when no new data appears and theories are developed - Glaser and Strauss suggested this amounted to at least ten interviews – whilst not gathering so much data that it became unmanageable and impossible to analyse in-depth (Ritchie et al 2014, 116; Silverman 2014, 46). Collecting detailed responses from 15 people enabled me to explore the issues in-

depth, reaching ‘saturation’, whilst maintaining a manageable dataset that was possible to transcribe and deeply interrogate within the time available.

To some extent, I had to balance theoretical sampling with project practicalities in that I was only able to interview people who were willing to be involved in my research and who I was able to make contact with, thus, I conducted theoretical sampling with elements of convenience sampling. I approached potential interviewees in a number of ways: I directly emailed nine interviewees who I already was aware of through my professional networks; three interviewees were recruited as a result of my research being included in the NWFed’s regular e-newsletter; I recruited two interviewees at a conference I attended; and I approached the remaining interviewees via a former colleague of mine who has wide cultural sector networks. However, I remained true to theoretical sampling principles by only approaching people who I felt could contribute to the developing themes of my research.

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

I decided to use one robust method of data collection in line with Silverman’s suggestion that focusing on a single method can help to produce concentrated research (ibid, 45). Semi-structured interviews with open questions were chosen primarily as I felt this was the best method to use in order to effectively answer my research question by collecting different perspectives and understandings in participants’ own words (Greener 2011, 5). Semi-structured interviews elicit

personalised responses as researchers pose questions based on who they are, rather than asking every interviewee the same set of strict questions (Turner 2014, 755). A copy of the topic guide which I took into each interview can be found in Appendix C. The topic guide reflects my original research topic around how museum professionals decide which hard-to-reach groups to work with, but the guide demonstrates I was particularly interested in how austerity and other factors, such as organisational policies and funder policies, had affected and influenced this work. It is important to reiterate I conducted semi-structured interviews which meant that, while the core questions that are featured in the topic guide served to focus discussions, I was able to ask each interviewee many further questions that were prompted by their unique responses. This method enabled me to build a more nuanced picture of community engagement practice in museums that went further than simply looking at work with hard-to-reach groups; I feel this strengthened my research.

I also took a lead from previous studies that have attempted to understand the relationship between museums and community by collecting qualitative data via interviews (for example, Sandell 2003; Ross 2004; Smith and Fouseki 2011) and, in addition, chose to conduct interviews because this method allows for the collection of in-depth information about individual's perceptions and experiences of a topic (Turner 2014, 754). Ross (2004) and Smith and Fouseki (2011, 9) conducted semi-structured interviews with staff from a variety of museums who worked at different levels of the museum hierarchy and in different roles to explore sector-wide attitudes towards museums and community work.

The interviews took place in interviewees' museums in order to cause as little disruption to them as possible. Conducting the interviews at museums enabled interviewees to point to specific community engagement activities they had undertaken, such as showing me co-curated exhibitions in situ. In addition, this helped me gain a better understanding of the very different environments in which each interviewee worked, both in terms of location and museum type.

During the interviews, a topic guide allowed me to adopt a consistent but flexible approach to data collection (Arthur et al 2014, 149); I asked all the participants the same core questions, but asked further, tailored questions to each participant that were prompted by their responses. As a result of this, guided by participants' responses, I had more wide-ranging discussions about the nature of community engagement in museums during a time of austerity than simply about work with hard-to-reach groups, which led to the evolution of my research question. Utilising semi-structured interviews was a great help in ensuring each interviewee was asked the same core questions, whilst giving me the opportunity to probe deeper into topics when relevant. I adopted an enabling technique of asking participants to give specific examples of their work to illustrate their points, which Arthur et al (ibid, 160-162) suggest is a useful way of supporting interviewees to generate thoughts that add depth and richness to an interview and helps the researcher get below the surface of what is being said.

Whilst conducting the interviews, I asked one question at a time and took a fairly passive role avoiding imposing my ideas (Greener 2011, 46). To help participants feel relaxed and express themselves, I developed rapport by starting with straightforward questions to give people time to 'warm up' before asking more complex questions (Greener 2011, 8; Arthur et al 2014, 151), practising good listening skills, and trying to understand their perspective of the world (Silverman 2014, 122). My work as a museum practitioner prior to commencing my research was also useful in helping me develop rapport; participants were able to talk to me as a fellow practitioner who had a good working knowledge of the museum sector, which helped to create a comfortable, relaxed environment.

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours, depending on both time constraints set by the interviewee and the length of interviewees' responses. Utilising semi-structured interviews ensured research participants who were interviewed for a shorter amount of time were able to provide useful, relevant data that added in a meaningful way to the dataset and enabled me to continue to build theory from the ground up.

3.3.3 Research Participants

I collected data for my research via semi-structured interviews with 15 museum professionals working in a range of museums. Due to participant confidentiality, I am not sharing the names of the institutions that interviewees work in, but these museums

include – at the time of my research - four ACE funded Major Partner Museums, three National Museums, a University Museum, a museum that is part of a local Museum Trust, and a small Independent Museum. All the museums in my study except one had received cuts as a result of cuts to local and national governments and through the loss of grants, or a combination of these. The museum which had not received a direct cut only received a modest grant from a local council that covered the costs of paying one member of staff – and nothing else. The museums have a wide geographic spread. I decided to include a range of museums in order to look for comparisons and contrasts between the practices of institutions that are funded and managed in different ways. I included different types of museums in a range of geographic locations in order to attempt to draw out similarities and differences to generate theory and to attempt to illustrate a more general picture of practice across England. A diverse sample illuminates the researcher's understanding of an issue by highlighting similarities and differences between data sets (Ritchie et al 2014, 116). Limited funding and time meant I could not involve museums in all geographic regions of the country – indeed, I had to focus on the North and East of England because I lived in these areas during the course of my fieldwork – however, including a variety of museums and English towns and cities has allowed me to portray a robust snapshot of museums' community engagement practice that could be tested at other museums that were not part of the study to find out if my findings are representative of the wider sector.

The interviewees working in museums represented a variety of roles: curatorial (3 people), learning (5 people), community (4 people), director/manager/senior manager (3 people). I mainly collected data from participants who work in learning and community focused roles as these staff practice community engagement as a core part of their jobs, however, knowing that staff in curatorial and management roles also work with communities, or direct this work, and being keen to hear a multitude of voices to allow for a detailed and nuanced look at community engagement practices, I decided to interview curatorial staff and directors/managers as well. Research participants had to be involved in making decisions about which hard-to-reach groups their museum targets but did not have to work in a specific role in the museum. In the thesis, the interviewees are only identified by their broad job role – for example, 'curatorial' or 'learning' rather than giving exact job titles – and the type of museum that they worked for at the time of being interviewed. In a small number of circumstances when the content of the quotes may have made it slightly easier for a reader to potentially identify an interviewee, I have not included any information about the interviewee.

Fieldwork commenced in December 2013 and my final interview was conducted in September 2014, meaning that I collected a time-limited snapshot of community engagement practices towards the end of the coalition government's term in Office.

3.4 Data Analysis

Silverman points out the importance of choosing the best theoretical approach to one's research; it is essential to not simply force data into fitting a particular theory (Silverman 2014, 41).

I adopted a grounded theory approach to analyse the data. Developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, and one of the first systematic approaches to analysing qualitative data (Saldaña 2013, 51), this inductive approach to research, which has its origins in sociology (Gibson and Hartman 2014, 5), requires researchers to build theory by moving between data that has been collected, their emerging ideas and relevant literature, a building process which 'grounds' the theory in the research setting (Breckenridge 2009). Grounded theory has several characteristics, as described by Gibson and Hartman (2014, 110):

- Researchers using this approach should try not to bring pre-conceived ideas to data collection and should collect diverse data that might illustrate new categories that had not previously been considered. Remaining open means the researcher does not force categories and interpretations onto the data, but lets the data speak for itself.

- Categories that are produced should be interrogated to find relationships between them. The theory that is generated must explain the relationships

between the categories that have emerged from the data and participants' views.

- New data that is collected should give more information about categories that are emerging in order to build a stronger theory.

- Researchers must take an interactive approach to data collection and analysis: data is collected and analysed to produce concepts, more data is collected, further concepts are created and, through this cyclical process, a theory is created.

The grounded theory method suited my research because very little existed about my specific research topic and the method supports new areas of research by building theories about phenomena. I was not setting out to test a hypothesis; rather, I wanted to build a theory based on data collected from participants. Grounded theory allows the researcher to look for participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon (Ormston et al 2014, 14), a principle I felt fitted well with my aim to discover participants' unique experiences of community engagement practice in the current financial climate. In addition, the method allows researchers to generate statements from the data that can be generalised (Gibson and Hartman 2014, 123). Although I acknowledge my sample may not be representative of the wider museum sector in England, I felt it was important to draw conclusions from the data that attempt to reflect wider museum sector practice.

Furthermore, the method aided me to collect data as objectively as possible as I tried not to impose my pre-conceived ideas on interviewees. I did, however, incorporate existing theoretical ideas from the literature when categorising data (Greener 2011, 95-96). Incorporating existing theory is somewhat of a contentious issue, with Strauss believing the approach should solely build new theory, and Glaser arguing existing theories and concepts could be used in the development of new theory (ibid, 96). Although grounded theory was, at first, meant to do the former, the latter, more pragmatic, approach takes the view that it is useful to build theory which is, in part, influenced by pre-existing theories and, indeed, I believe that taking Strauss' approach would have been impossible in my research as, at the time I conducted my fieldwork, so much had already been written about the broader topics of museums and community engagement and the impact of the cuts upon museums.

3.4.1 Coding the Interview Data

Each interview was transcribed verbatim because the literature suggests full transcripts that include speech patterns such as pauses and repetitions which help make speech distinctive, are durable documents that can be robustly analysed therefore allowing the researcher to look beyond broad themes (Greener 2011, 88; Silverman 2014, 201).

I decided to manually code the data rather than use coding software as this technique can help give the researcher more control over their work without the distraction of software (Saldaña 2013, 26). I marked phrases and units of analysis and applied a code to each unit.

Before coding the data, I read through the transcripts to get a stronger feel for what each interviewee said, a process Spencer et al describe as 'familiarisation' (Ormston et al 2014, 282). Following the principles of grounded theory, I analysed the data by coding them. This was a two-stage process; firstly, I utilised initial coding to help me break down, and reflect upon, the data, then I utilised focused coding to find the most significant categories (Saldaña 2013, 100, 103 and 213). Codes are short phrases that capture the essence of data and explain the meaning of what has been collected; they allow the researcher to go beyond the raw data and generate ideas (Gibson and Hartman 2014, 91; Saldaña 2013, 3, 8 and 12). Categories are developed when codes are grouped together according to similarity or regularity, and it is by categorising data and looking for relationships between the categories that the researcher moves towards developing theories (Saldaña 2013, 3, 8 and 12). To assist the coding process, I asked questions of the data such as what is happening?, whose point of view is being represented?, what interactions are being portrayed?, what are the consequences of these interactions? (Gibson and Hartman 2014, 83). Using the grounded theory approach, I created memos that supported me to consider hypothetical relationships between categories in order to build theory (Saldaña 2013, 52; Gibson and Hartman 2014, 73). As new codes emerged, I recruited new

participants who I felt could add to emerging categories, following a cyclical system of coding, writing memos and recruiting participants. I stopped collecting interview data when I felt there were no new insights to gain from the data (Silverman 2014, 72).

Once I had coded my data, I utilised a technique suggested by Foss and Waters (2007, 75-91) to interrogate the codes and manually arrange them into categories, then keep re-arranging these categories to penetrate the data and look for surprising relationships between them. Following this process allowed to me go beyond the expected and draw original conclusions.

3.5 Self-reflection

This section discusses how the position I take as a researcher impacted on the way I collected my data and how I interpreted the data.

I took an emotionalist approach to data collection which influenced the way in which I conducted the interviews and, therefore, the data I collected. Silverman (2014, 174 and 199) describes this approach as the researcher trying to find the subject behind the person by 'seeking to overcome presumed power balance' between them and the interviewee. An emotionalist interviewer departs from the interview schedule to allow participants to tell their stories in an attempt to support them to create content and provide their unique perspective of a phenomenon. Topic guides are used in order to

achieve consistency between interviews, but questions are not necessarily asked in a fixed order and interviewees are allowed to raise their own issues and suggestions. I chose this approach as it helped me establish rapport with participants, which supports interviewees to trust the researcher (Yeo et al 2014, 185). I felt creating this position of trust was important as, although my research was perhaps not entirely controversial, the subject had the potential to be sensitive; the cuts have impacted enormously on museum staff – for example, some have seen colleagues lose jobs, some have seen budgets slashed. Given this, I felt more comfortable undertaking interviews in the knowledge that my approach was a gentle one, allowing participants to tell me about their experiences, however difficult these experiences may have been. I also feel this approach worked well with using a grounded theory approach as it ensured I did not bring my pre-conceived ideas to interviews; rather, the data represents participants' unique views told in their own words.

Criticisms have been made of the emotionalist approach. Firstly, that interviewer's presumed passivity may make it difficult for participants to know if what they are saying is relevant. Secondly, that interviews might not discover an authentic reality as participants may say what they think an interviewer wants to hear; answers become predictable as participants answer in ways they think it is appropriate to as they respond to agreement from the interviewer (Silverman 2014, 176-179). I believe my interviews did discover an authentic reality as the data I collected did not match my expectations of what I would find. I thought interviewees would be overwhelmingly negative about life under the cuts, when, in fact, they were fairly positive, not about

the cuts themselves, but about how community engagement practice is thriving despite the difficult financial climate.

It is also important to note that my three years of practical work in the museum sector - which included a large amount of community engagement activity - prior to undertaking my research, put me in the position of 'practitioner researcher' (Kennedy-Lewis 2012). As a practitioner researcher, I held two perspectives – that of practitioner working inside the museum sector and external researcher looking in on the sector. It was important to adopt a reflexive approach to the research as this enabled me to move from the political and emotional position I had as a practitioner to the more impassive position that is required of a researcher, whilst still acknowledging it was impossible to completely set aside my beliefs and values from the research. This approach requires the researcher to recognise and consider how one's own biases, beliefs and experiences play a role in knowledge creation and to monitor these in order to minimise bias (Berger 2015, 220). In order to adopt a reflexive approach throughout the research, which Bradbury-Jones (2007) suggests is necessary, I did not talk about my experiences as a practitioner during the interviews and, in addition, discussed my findings and conclusions with my supervisor and university colleagues in order to challenge my thinking.

While a practitioner researcher can be better placed to understand nuances, moving from practitioner to researcher can be difficult as views that were held as a practitioner may be challenged by research findings (ibid, 109). I had this experience

during my research when I found funding cuts had been a catalyst for a shift in community engagement practice that had helped to embed this practice and make it more sustainable, and that the cuts had not had the devastating effect on community engagement I thought they might. I feel this has made my research stronger as I challenged myself to be led by the research, rather than my preconceived views, and was able to look beyond the prevailing negative narrative of the cuts to explore a more nuanced picture of community engagement practice in English museums in 2013 and 2014. In addition, I feel this research has strengthened my work as a practitioner by enabling me to better understand the characteristics of resilient community engagement practice and what I might do, now and in the future, to strengthen the resilience of my own community engagement practice.

Chapter 4: The Social-Ecological Model: A Theoretical Framework Through Which to View My Research

4.0 Introduction

I became interested in ecological thinking and its application to the museum sector after reading a 2011 article by Jung about the art museum ecosystem. Through exploring ecosystems in more depth, I discovered social-ecological systems and found this model was an interesting and helpful way in which to explain my research; the levels of the social-ecological model mirror the themes I found in my research. The model also emphasises the influences on individuals' behaviour, which provides me with a framework through which to consider why museum professionals practice community engagement. In addition, social-ecological thinking is a useful way of understanding the resilience of museum community engagement practice during the financial cuts.

Duit (2016, 370) argues social-ecological systems resilience literature often uses social-ecological frameworks to confirm scholars' theories, rather than to consider cases which did not match scholars' hypotheses, but I have not used a social-ecological model in this way; indeed, I only came to social-ecological theory once I was in the analysis phase of the research and had already uncovered some key findings. This theory was therefore used to help me understand some of the sometimes unexpected and rather confusing results of my research.

It is important to note that, although I have used social-ecological thinking to consider the findings of my research, I acknowledge that, because this is not a scientific paper and I am not analysing a social-ecological model within the natural environment, I do not try to explain my research using scientific ecological thinking. Rather, I take my cue from the use of social-ecological models in the social sciences, which are used to explain individuals' behaviours and how individuals interact with their environments, consider how behaviours can be influenced, and look at the complex relationships between the different layers of the model.

4.1 Influences on my Work

Jung's 2011 paper draws on Gregory Bateson's ecological writings to put forward the concept of the ecological museum model. Bateson (2000, 493 cited in Jung 2011, 324) argues that the human mind is related to communities and natural ecosystems and that *"individuals, societies, and living organisms are…situated in a context, interacting with other parts of the world"* (Jung 2011, 325). Jung (ibid, 331) applies Bateson's theories to put forward the concept of the 'ecological museum', where the museum is a community space and in which staff work collaboratively and collect feedback from the community (ibid, 331) and where *"staff members, departments, collections, mission statements, visitors, and other cultural and educational institutions are linked together, influencing and being influenced by each other"* (ibid, 321). Jung argues museums function like ecosystems (ibid, 327) as "all human

and non-human elements of the museum are interconnected and interdependent" (ibid, 327) - for example, a museum's mission guides the production of exhibitions by staff members, and the exhibitions are received by audiences (ibid, 327). Audiences then provide feedback about an exhibition that can influence future practice (ibid, 327). Jung argues the ecosystem can be damaged when one of these elements becomes disconnected - for instance, if staff do not collect feedback from audiences, they will not know what other audiences want from the museum (ibid, 327-328). Jung also describes the connections a museum has with the wider community and society as a "large web" (ibid, 328) and argues these connections benefit a museum; not being connected can mean museums are "isolated and unbalanced" (ibid, 328).

This type of systems thinking – that looks at connections and interactions between the components of a system - has influenced my approach to my research. In addition, Bateson describes how living organisms within a system "work toward conservation of the status quo" (ibid, 325); the idea of adaptation and survival seems particularly prescient to my research as my analysis reveals the ways in which museum workers are changing their practice to ensure that community engagement practice continues in museums and is protected, as much as possible, from the financial cuts.

I am also aware of the work of Taylor (2017) whose recent article utilises a systems approach to consider how museums might become more inclusive, specifically through the creation of more inclusive work cultures (ibid, 156). Like Jung, Taylor looks at the museum as an ecosystem (ibid, 156). The author argues systems thinking is helpful when considering museums because it supports the "examination of

museums as whole institutions rather than separate parts" (ibid, 156-157), thinking about inclusion work at different levels – individual, group/team, organisation and marketplace (ibid, 156-157). In Taylor's model, the individual level is concerned with individuals' work and how individuals develop inclusive behaviours (ibid, 157). The group/team level looks at the "experience and treatment" of different groups within the organisation (ibid, 157). The organisational level is concerned with how organisations might develop visions that lead to inclusive practices (ibid, 157). Finally, the marketplace level is about "what is visible to the external constituents", for example, how a museum works with marginalised groups and how it might improve perceptions about the value of its work amongst these groups (ibid, 157). Taylor argues using systems thinking can support museums to embed inclusion in their work by changing their internal practices (ibid, 160).

In addition, I am aware of the work of Janes (2010, 335), who uses an ecological metaphor to consider the relationship between museums and their wider environment. Janes argues museums have 'survived' by being at the same time dependent – for support – and independent in terms of being reticent to have their practice scrutinised, for example, being unwilling to have their performance measured (ibid, 335). The author posits museums must move from this model and calls for museums to become interdependent; as Janes says, "recognize that the broad web of societal relationships is essential for successful adaptation in a complex and increasingly severe world" (ibid, 335).

Robinson's (2010) *Making adaptive resilience real* report for ACE also provides useful thinking around social-ecological thinking, resilience and the arts sector. Robinson, who was influenced by Hollings' theories of resilience thinking, uses the theory of adaptive resilience, which he describes as "the capacity to remain productive and true to core purpose and identity whilst absorbing disturbance and adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstance" (ibid, 14). Robinson argues change is a central element of resilience (ibid, 14); fixed systems are more vulnerable to risks (ibid, 14). The author (ibid, 18-19) notes the adaptive cycle is a central tenet of resilience. The adaptive cycle has four phases: Growth, as organisations experience a high demand for products or services and develop networks; Consolidation, as resources become fixed. Organisations may become vulnerable to disturbance if they become too fixed or do not pay attention to the external environment; Release, which tends to start when a disturbance creates the need for change; and Reorganisation, the renewal and redesign that happens after 'Release'.

Robinson (ibid, 6-7), whose work influenced the Association of Independent Museum's Hallmarks, describes the characteristics of resilient arts organisations as,

> "Resources
>
> - a culture of shared purpose and values rooted in a strong organisational memory avoiding mission-drift but consciously evolving

- predictable financial resources derived from a robust business model and a range of activities and ‘customers’, allowing some financial flexibility to be retained
- strong networks (internal or external), with an absence of ‘silos’, and collaboration at all levels to make the organisation vital and connected
- intellectual, human and physical assets used to maximise impact in pursuit of core purpose, with appropriate investment in the creation and exploitation of new assets

Adaptive skills

- adaptive capacity: innovation and experimentation are embedded in reflective practice; with change seen as natural and actively prepared for
- leadership, management and governance provide clarity internally and externally, with clear roles and responsibilities and strong improvement focus
- situation awareness of environment and performance, with good gathering, sharing and consideration of intelligence and information to inform decisions
- management of key vulnerabilities is regular and integrated into planning and preparation for disruption”

My study also found that purpose/mission/ethos, strong networks, adaptive capacity, and leadership are amongst the components of resilient community engagement practice. Robinson (ibid, 27) argues organisations and sectors require resources and adaptive skills to be resilient, so, for example, having strong networks but none of the other characteristics will not lead to an organisation being resilient.

Other scholars have also utilised ecological thinking to consider and examine the cultural sector. Holden (2015, 6), for example, claims that ecological systems thinking – considering the "wholeness and interconnectedness" of the cultural sphere - can support those in the cultural sector to become stronger. Loach, Rowley and Griffiths (2017, 192) argue sustainability principles can be applied to cultural heritage management, including having an understanding of how cultural, economic, social and environmental systems are connected and, therefore, how cultural heritage management decisions may impact on other systems (ibid, 192).

The existence, and increasing use of, ecological systems thinking in studies about the cultural sector demonstrate such models can be a helpful way in which to explain and illustrate concepts relating to cultural sector practice. My research links with these studies, providing further evidence of the benefit in looking at resilient practice in museums through the lens of a social-ecological model.

4.2 Social-Ecological Systems

Social-ecological systems, which look at individuals' "interactions with their environments" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2015, 1) have been used since the 1970s by scholars across a range of subjects, including "sociology, psychology, education and health" (ibid, 1). Cote and Nightingale (2012, 476) argue interest in social-ecological systems rose in the 1990s owing to the work of scholars at the Beijer Institute in Stockholm. The model considered the "interactive dynamics between social and ecological systems" (ibid, 477).

The social-ecological model is an analytical, "theory-based framework for understanding the multifaceted and interactive effects of personal and environmental factors that determine behaviours" (UNICEF n.d., 1). The model explains different factors that shape an individual's behaviour, acknowledging that behaviour is not affected by one factor alone (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2015, 1) but a range of factors. In addition, the model suggests interventions can be made at multiple levels in order to influence behaviour, and that multiple interventions are more likely to be sustained than single interventions (ibid, 1).

There are five layers in a social-ecological model, these being:

1. Individual
2. Interpersonal
3. Community

4. Organisational
5. Policy

(UNICEF n.d., 1)

In a social-ecological model, each layer of influence is drawn as a series of concentric circles, with the Individual level in the middle circle and the Policy level in the outer circle. The Individual level relates to an individual's characteristics, for example, knowledge, attitudes, history. The Interpersonal level are the formal and informal networks that an individual belongs to, including peers, friends, family and colleagues. The Community level is relationships between organisations. The Organisational level is organisational policies, rules and structures. Finally, the Policy level relates to local and national policies (ibid, 2). It should be noted different versions of the social-ecological model are in existence, using alternative classifications (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2015, 1) and/or not including each of the five levels, depending on the behaviours the model is attempting to explain. The social-ecological model in my thesis includes each of the five levels and uses the classifications described above. Later in this chapter, I provide further discussion of the model I am using in the thesis.

The model is utilised by organisations that are looking to understand factors that influence individuals' behaviour and determine future organisational practice and/or interventions. UNICEF (n.d.), for example, uses a social-ecological model to determine the individual, interpersonal, community, organisational and policy factors

that support health promotion and then to consider interventions at each level of the model that might contribute to public health prevention and control. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015) uses a four-level model (that omits organisational factors) to understand how violence might be prevented by considering the factors that put people at risk of violence or protect them from experiencing or perpetrating violence". Interventions suggested include education and life skills training for individuals to promote a change in attitude, beliefs and behaviours (Individual level intervention), peer programmes that promote healthy relationships (Relationship level intervention), and reducing social isolation (Community level intervention). Furthermore, Duit (2016) considers how research into social-ecological resilience might inform future public administration practice. The author concludes social-ecological thinking is useful in public administration studies as it helps one consider: 1) how organisations can "handle and adapt to surprises and disturbances" (ibid, 373), 2) how to create resilient governance, and 3) how public organisations can maintain stability despite disturbances to the system as well as how such organisations can handle unforeseen disturbances (ibid, 373-376).

Individuals "exist in a social-ecological system" (UNICEF n.d., 16). Given this, to change the behaviour of an individual, an "enabling environment" (ibid, 16) must be created, where the multitude of factors at each level of the system that impede change are removed (ibid, 16). UNICEF (ibid, 16) give an accessible example of how this might work in trying to increase the number of children who are immunised. First, parents and caregivers need to understand the importance of immunisation. Second,

they must be able to access information about immunisations in their local community. Third, local health workers must be able to immunise children. Fourth, communities must fully support immunisation and "create a social norm around immunisation" (ibid, 16). Social norms are "factors that determine how a person behaves in a particular context" (ibid, 13).

Duit (2016, 368) describes the four principles that underpin social-ecological models. The first principle is that behaviour is influenced by multiple factors. Second, that the "variable nature of environments has a direct implication on what happens in a particular place". Third, that "human interactions with environment can occur at individual, small group, organisation, community or population levels", meaning any interventions can be targeted at different audiences, for example, the whole population or an organisation. Finally, that "the interrelationships between people and their environment are dynamic"; each level of the social-ecological model can affect another.

Duit (ibid, 368) adds that social-ecological systems have to be "analysed as a whole" because they are underpinned by the assumption "that natural and social systems are interlinked". Although this is particularly relevant to social-ecological systems that relate to the natural environment, Duit's text is helpful for my thesis as it underlines the importance of considering the model I have put forward holistically; each level of the model is related and interlinked – the behaviour of individuals affects other levels of the model just as other levels influence individuals' behaviour. In my research, the

behaviour of museum workers and sector leaders, for example, affects organisational policies and ethoses; the people who work in a museum write the organisational policies and can create organisational ethoses that value community engagement. Another example of where individuals in my research influence other levels of the model is museum workers actively creating and maintaining partnerships with community organisations which, in turn, help increase the resilience of individuals' community engagement practice.

Resilience thinking can be utilised to consider the management of social-ecological systems (ibid, 364). Walker et al (2004, 1) note the resilience, adaptability and transformability of social-ecological systems "determine their future trajectories". These three attributes are described by the authors thusly,

> *"Resilience (the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks)….Adaptability is the capacity of actors in the system to influence resilience (in a SES, essentially to manage it)….Transformability is the capacity to create a fundamentally new system when ecological, economic, or social structures make the existing system untenable."* (ibid, 1)

Resilience and adaptability relate to a system's dynamics, whereas transformability is about altering the system (ibid, 2). Within my research, it is interesting to consider the

resilience of community engagement practice within English museums in terms of the extent to which community engagement has been able to deal with the 'shock', or disturbance, of austerity. Innes and Booher (2010 cited in Goldstein 2012, 19) argue a resilient system "can withstand shocks and surprises, absorb extreme stresses, and maintain its core functions, though perhaps in an altered form".

Social-ecological systems that have not developed transformability may become "locked in and unable to transform until it is too late" (Walker et al 2004, 6). Given this, the thesis will consider whether community engagement practice in museums developed such 'transformability' during the financial cuts. This is important because it enables an understanding of whether the financial cuts led to changes in community engagement practice (in social-ecological terms, these would be changes to 'the system'); I argue that individuals in the sector indeed altered their practice to protect community engagement from the cuts as much as possible. This apparent 'transformability' of community engagement practice is a positive finding as it suggests practice is not only resilient but that museum workers, in part, have the power to keep community engagement going in times of crisis.

4.3 Why Social-Ecological Theory is Helpful for my Research

There are a number of reasons why I believe it is helpful to apply social-ecological theory to my research as a way to consider and understand my findings.

Cote and Nightingale (2012, 477) claim social-ecological thinking supports a "holistic approach" that "embraces complexity". My research fits this description as I take an in-depth look at the many factors that influence community engagement practice and consider the complex nature of community engagement in museums. I believe utilising a social-ecological systems approach to my research has enabled me to better identify and interrogate the multitude of factors at play in community engagement practice and to look beyond the much talked about aspects of policy and funding to consider other factors that shape and enable community engagement in museums.

The model's emphasis on the factors that influence individuals' behaviour as well as the interactivity between each layer of the social-ecological model is helpful. My findings suggest individuals' behaviour is influenced by a range of interpersonal, community, organisational and policy factors and that individuals' behaviour influences other levels of the social-ecological model I am putting forward.

Social-ecological models include an emphasis on policy (Duit 2016, 369). This emphasis is relevant to my research as much of the museological literature around social inclusion in museums is about, or includes reference to, New Labour policies which required museums to tackle social exclusion. Over a decade after the publication of documents such as *Museums for the Many* and *Centres for Social Change*, it is interesting to take a look at the extent to which policy influences community engagement practice in museums, and whether other local and national policies influence practice. The research finds policy is, indeed, an influencing factor

but that other factors are also significant. In the conclusion of this thesis, I will suggest future policy could be utilised to continue to influence community engagement practice.

As this thesis will suggest, the museum sector appears to have been able to protect community engagement from the shock, or disturbance, of the economic collapse and austerity. The idea of the sector having experienced a crisis felt very pertinent; resilience is, after all, about "disaster management" (Duit 2016, 367), how well an entity is able to "recover from a shock *after* it has occurred" (ibid, 367), and how well an organisation can learn lessons from the shocks it has suffered so that it implements necessary changes to support future survival (ibid, 367).

The concept of adaptability in social-ecological systems – the capacity of human actors to manage resilience and to influence the resilience of the system (Walker et al, 7) - is very relevant to my thesis. According to Walker et al (ibid, 3) the people who manage a social-ecological system are key to its resilience,

> "*human actions dominate in SESs… Their collective capacity to manage resilience, intentionally, determines whether they can successfully avoid crossing into an undesirable system regime, or succeed in crossing back into a desirable one."* (ibid, 3)

The research shows the ‘system’ – in this case, community engagement in English museums in 2013 and 2014 – was resilient during the financial cuts. Individuals changed their practice to ensure the community engagement absorbed the ‘disturbance’ of the cuts and maintained its resilience; moreover, community engagement appears to have become more resilient during this time owing to these changes in practice. Given this, it seems museum workers have shown they have ‘adaptability’. Although museums still require funding, the actions of museum workers – in actively creating partnerships and taking a more strategic approach to community engagement – have, at least to some extent, transformed community engagement practice. Whilst I am not suggesting the funding cuts would have made community engagement ‘untenable’, they potentially could have had a significant, negative impact on community engagement in museums. The actions of museum workers seem to have helped ensure this has not happened. Museum professionals in my study have changed their practice in order to protect community engagement from the cuts because they have a strong belief in community engagement, a belief that has been influenced by all the factors in the social-ecological model presented in this thesis. I hope in highlighting the importance of individuals in the museum sector to the resilience of community engagement has a positive impact on the sector in demonstrating to those working in the sector that they have the power to work in ways that makes community engagement as resilient as possible now and in the future.

Discussing social-ecological thinking in relation to the natural environment, Cote and Nightingale (2012, 478) argue this thinking enables better consideration of available responses to management of the system rather than focusing on the "quantitative availability of resources". Using a social-ecological model in my research supports nuanced consideration of how the sector responded to the financial cuts in 2013 and 2014 and may support those in the museum sector to gain a better understanding of what future interventions may needed to support resilient community engagement practice. This thesis does not simply attempt to take a look at how museum community engagement practice 'survived' through the financial cuts, but also attempts to consider what the sector can to do increase future resilience in terms of community engagement practice. The social-ecological model is particularly helpful as it supports one to consider how community engagement practice can become as resilient as possible and able to withstand any future 'shocks' to the system, such as further financial cuts. As Kerner and Thomas (2014, 673) argue, looking at uncertain and unpredictable systems from an ecological systems perspective can help such systems to appear more manageable. Kerner and Thomas (ibid, 673) suggest an understanding of what enhances or reduces the resilience of a system is important as this enables managers to "build and maintain resilience". By learning from what has happened to community engagement practice as a result of austerity and using this knowledge to make changes to museum practice so future shocks do not lessen the resilience of the system, museums can practice "adaptive resilience" (Duit 2016, 367). By highlighting the factors that influence community engagement practice, the findings of the thesis have the potential to support any museum to improve the

resilience of its community engagement practice. The authors also note it is important to understand the factors that weaken and strengthen resilience (ibid, 377). This is also a key consideration for my thesis as understanding what weakens and strengthens the resilience of community engagement practice in museums could enable the sector to address any weaknesses and engage in more of the factors that strengthen resilience.

4.4 Community Engagement Practice in English Museums, 2013 and 2014: A Social-Ecological Model

I will now present the social-ecological model I have created as a way to illustrate the findings of my research and to provide a theoretical framework through which to understand my research and conclusions.

The inner, Individual level relates to the personal history factors of individuals that increase the likelihood of them undertaking, and seeing a value in, community engagement. These factors might include individuals' attitudes towards the museum sector – having a perception of museums as places where meaningful work is done and believing in the social role of museums, and individuals' academic and work histories. The second, Interpersonal level relates to museum directors and senior staff who set the direction of a museum and create an enabling environment for community engagement. The third, Community level relates to the partnerships between museums and community organisations and includes, for example, community

organisations that work in partnership with museums and funders outside of the museum sector, such as health bodies, that are supporting community engagement work in museums. The fourth, Organisational level relates to the informal and formal organisational policies museums have in place that enable community engagement to take place, and organisational ethoses that values community-focused work. Finally, the outer level – Policy – relates to local and national policies that guide and enable community engagement practice, such as local government policies and the policies of ACE and the HLF.

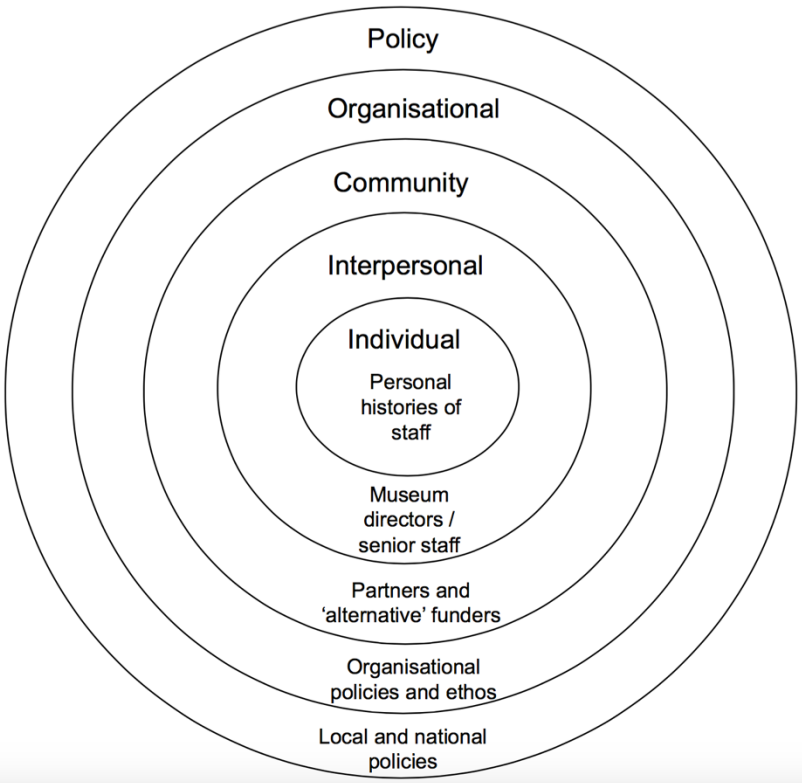

Figure 1: Social-ecological model to illustrate the factors that influenced community engagement practice in English museums, 2013-2014

In the conclusion, I ask what the museum sector can do at each level of this social-ecological model to influence individuals' behaviour in relation to community engagement practice. To use the UNICEF example I made reference to earlier in the chapter, if community engagement is to be embedded in museums, the factors that would support this staff valuing and carrying out community engagement work; leaders in the sector must believing in the importance of community engagement; museum university and training courses, and museological literature, including information about community engagement; museums creating partnerships with organisations who can support them to undertake community engagement and to reach diverse audiences; organisational policies and ethoses supporting community engagement; and local and national policy makers and sector leaders - for example, ACE, the HLF and the MA - advocating for community engagement and create a social norm around working with communities.

By putting the factors that influence community engagement practice into a social-ecological model, rather than just listing them, I am better able to look at and consider the resilience of community engagement practice during the financial cuts. The thesis posits that each of these factors contributes to the resilience of community engagement practice and that community engagement practice was resilient between 2013 and 2014. The latter appears to be true because community engagement practice seems to have absorbed the 'disturbance' that was the financial cuts and individuals working in the sector have adapted their practice to ensure community engagement

was resilient throughout 2013 and 2014. In addition, the research suggests that, by adapting their practice, individuals were able to transform community engagement so that this element of museum work survived the financial cuts. The resilience of community engagement practice will be considered in more detail in Chapter 9.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter explains the thinking behind social-ecological models that have been used across a variety of disciplines, including social sciences and health. Social-ecological thinking provides a holistic way in which to analyse the factors that influence community engagement practice and to consider the resilience of community engagement practice in museums. The model also supports me to consider interventions which could be utilised to retain resilient community engagement practice in the future. These will be discussed in Chapter 9.

In the following chapters, I will look at each level of the model in detail, starting with the Individual level and finishing with the Policy level. In doing this, I will explore what community engagement practice looked like in English museums between 2013 and 2014, the impact of the knowledge culture on community engagement, why people practice community engagement, what effect austerity has had on community engagement practice, the effect of organisational, local and national policies on community engagement, and how resilient community engagement might be characterised.

Chapter 5: The Individual Level

5.0 Introduction

This chapter explores why people practice community engagement and looks at how individuals might add to a knowledge culture in museums and the wider sector. It discusses the effect of people's personal histories and looks at interviewees' desire to do 'meaningful' work and belief that museums are places where meaningful work is done.

In a social-ecological model, the inner layer relates to the individual - for example, personal histories and characteristics which influence behaviour. In the model put forward in this thesis, the Individual level includes the personal histories of museum staff, their desire to do 'meaningful' work, and their belief museums should serve a social purpose.

Within my model, the Individual layer is important as individuals working in the sector have to actually carry out community engagement work on the ground, to support this work continues during times of financial difficulty. The research found the attitude of the museum workers in my study, who strongly believe in the social role of museums and are determined to undertake community engagement despite working with reduced funds, is one of the factors that makes up resilient community engagement practice. Interviewees demonstrated an enormous personal and emotional

commitment to undertaking community engagement and carrying out 'good', or 'meaningful' work. They clearly felt museums are places where 'meaningful' work takes place and, therefore, spaces where they can fulfil their personal passion to help people. The reason why interviewees appear to have developed this view is tied up in their personal histories, for example, knowledge they learnt on Museum Masters courses and from new museological literature, and previous jobs they have held that have involved working with communities and vulnerable groups. The importance of individuals in ensuring the resilience of community engagement practice is in line with Walker et al's (2004, 7) theory that the capacity of human actors in a social-ecological system to manage resilience and to influence the resilience of the system is key.

5.1 Personal Histories of Museum Workers

The research suggests the personal histories of museum staff in my study were an important factor in influencing their community engagement practice and in them ensuring that such work continued in 2013 and 2014. The research supports the work of Morse and Munro (2015, 12) in finding the backgrounds and identities of museum workers influence their community engagement practice.

It seems that, in answer to one of my secondary questions, the knowledge culture has had an impact on community engagement in museums. Although none of the interviewees directly referred to new museology itself, the data suggests this thinking

has had some influence on the community engagement practice of museum workers, particularly those people in my study who received academic training after the emergence of new museological thinking.

A useful definition of knowledge culture can be found in a 2006 study by Oliver and Kandadi which defines the concept as, "A way of organisational life that enables and motivates people to create, share and utilise knowledge for the benefit and enduring success of the organisation" (Oliver and Kandadi 2006, 8). Scholars agree this *creation* and *sharing* of knowledge is important in knowledge cultures (Holsapple and Singh 2001; Walczack 2005), as is the application of this knowledge (Walczack 2005; Oliver and Kandadi 2006).

Much of the literature about knowledge culture comments on the factors that are believed to best aid knowledge transfer, or the sharing of knowledge in organisations (du Plessis 2006; Oliver and Kandadi 2006; Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi and Mohammed, 2007; Girdauskienė and Savanevičienė 2007; Ekore, 2014; Dilmaghani et al 2014; Park and Kim 2018). The discussions within this literature are summarised here:

- Individuals in organisations are key to the knowledge transfer process (Ekore 2014; Dilmaghani et al 2014). Indeed, Ipe (2003, 345) asserts the commercial value of knowledge means the knowledge individuals possess can be their main value to an organisation (Ipe 2003, 345) and Chang and Chang (2006, 18) suggest employees are the "main asset of organisational knowledge

management". In addition, Dilmaghani et al (2014, 18) found the characteristics displayed by workers is key to developing a strong knowledge culture; staff "who believe in learning, creating, co-operating and sharing knowledge and experience…" are the primary asset of knowledge management in an organisation and Girdauskienė and Savanevičienė (2007, 41) suggest that knowledge culture is enhanced when workers identify with the organisational culture and when employers recruit the right people and bring them into the knowledge culture. Given this, employees should recognise the value of knowledge sharing (Oliver and Kandadi 2006; Dilmaghani et al 2014), be empowered and motivated to create, share and apply knowledge (Oliver and Kandadi 2006), and must be encouraged to accept that sharing knowledge is an "appropriate behaviour" (Debowski 2006).

- Knowledge transfer is enhanced in organisations that encourage co-workers to work together effectively, and to collaborate and share (du Plessis, 2006: 6; Girdauskienė and Savanevičienė 2007, 41) and in which there is trust between co-workers workers (du Plessis, 2006: 30-31; Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi and Mohammed 2007; Girdauskienė and Savanevičienė 2007; Park and Kim 2018) and open communication between staff (Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi and Mohammed 2007; Girdauskienė and Savanevičienė 2007; Park and Kim 2018).

- A leadership that values and promotes knowledge sharing is believed to be an important enabling factor in supporting knowledge transfer (Oliver and Kandadi 2006; Girdauskienė and Savanevičienė 2007, 41; Dilmaghani et al 2014; Park and Kim 2018). Oliver and Kandadi (2006, 11) suggest leadership behaviours of, for example, empowering subordinates, trust, and advocating for knowledge management, all support a culture of knowledge sharing.

- Furthermore, offering recognition and reward to employees for sharing knowledge (Ipe 2003, 345-6; Oliver and Kandadi 2006; Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi and Mohammed 2007; du Plessis 2006, 33) also encourages knowledge sharing, as does providing opportunities for co-workers to share knowledge (Ipe 2003, 349).

My research did not take an in-depth look at the organisational cultures and knowledge sharing activities within the organisations at which the research participants worked so it is difficult to come to a conclusion about the extent to which these were effective knowledge sharing organisations with strong knowledge cultures. However, as will be discussed in this chapter, my research did find that the research participants who had undertaken Museum Studies Masters appeared to have taken knowledge learned on their Masters courses – in the case of my research, knowledge about community work in museums – and transferred this to the workplace, which provides evidence for J. A. Davies' (2011, 43) assertion that the knowledge transfer process is enacted when graduates transfer learning from Museum Studies courses to

the workplace changes museums. If individuals have a key role to play in knowledge transfer across organisations which develops organisational knowledge cultures, as suggested by the literature, it is possible to see how the knowledge these individuals have gained on formal courses may be transferred to colleagues and become part of the organisational knowledge culture. Similarly, knowledge from those who have read museological texts about community engagement, and those who bring with them experience of community engagement from previous roles, all add to the knowledge culture that is present in museums. It would be interesting to carry out further research that takes a more in-depth look at organisational cultures in museums that enable knowledge sharing and transfer amongst individuals.

Of particular relevance to my research is a 2006 study by Oliver and Kandadi (2006, 14), which found research participants believed that communities of practice – which the authors define using Lave and Wenger's 1991 description of "an activity system that includes individuals who are united in action and in the meaning of action has for them and for a larger collective" (Lave and Wenger 1991 cited in Oliver and Kandadi 2006, 14) - strengthen organisational knowledge cultures. These communities of practice can go beyond organisational boundaries and can include members from other organisations and countries (ibid, 14) via, for example, virtual communications or conferences and meetings (ibid, 14). Museum sector staff could be such a community of practice that ascends organisational boundaries through professional interactions and discussions online – for example, via Museum Hour, a weekly discussion for museum workers and volunteers on Twitter, and via local, national and

international museum conferences. In this case, organisational knowledge cultures in individual museums could be strengthened and influenced by this larger community of practice, which includes sector bodies, such as the MA and the HLF, both of which value community engagement. Given this, it could be posited the more people who enter the sector with knowledge of community engagement practice through Masters level study or previous employment, for example, the more the sector may develop a professional knowledge culture that understands and values community engagement. Certainly, the presence of sector-wide campaigns such as Museums Change Lives, and the commitment of museum workers to community-focused practice that was evident in the MA Cuts Surveys, suggests the desire to carry out work with communities is one of the more dominant elements of museum sector knowledge culture.

Five people I interviewed did a Museum Studies Masters degree which included learning about community engagement, or socially-engaged practice, such as - but not limited to - the Masters degrees at the Universities of Leicester and Newcastle. The presence of community engagement on Museum Studies curricula reflects the findings of studies by MacLeod (2001, 58), Candlin (2012, 28), and Duff, Cherry and Sheffield (2010, 363), which suggest that Museum Studies students are likely to be introduced to ideas around community engagement - or, more specifically, in the case of MacLeod (2001, 58), social responsibility - during the course of their study. I do not wish to assert every person who undertakes a Museum Studies Masters, whichever institution they attend, automatically takes on the belief community

engagement work is an important area of museum practice; every student is different and will interpret their learning in a multitude of different ways. However, the interviewees in my study, at least, who have a Masters in Museum Studies attribute some of their passion for community engagement to the knowledge they gained whilst studying.

The research found that studying for a Masters that included a focus on community work had influenced the practice of these interviewees by encouraging them to value work with communities and increasing the likelihood of them undertaking community engagement once working in the sector. One person said, for example,

> *"I did the Museum Studies course and I opted for the Social History specialism within the course and actually, one of—I did the Newcastle course….so it's [community work] been very early kind of—not ingrained in me—but seeing the value of it." (Curatorial, National Museum)*

J. A. Davis (2011) explores how knowledge that has been learnt on Museum Studies courses in Canada was transferred to the workplace by graduates. The author uses Eraut's definition of learning transfer, "the learning process involved when a person learns to use previously acquired knowledge/skills/competence/expertise in a new situation" (Eraut 2004, 212 cited in J. A. Davis 2011, 461).

This is not to say that every person who develops an interest in community engagement through studying for a Museum Studies Masters, or similar academic

qualification, will go on to practice community engagement when working in the museum sector, even if they come to gain an appreciation for community engagement. J. A. Davis' (2011, 473) study found that capacity for the transference of knowledge to the workplace is diminished if organisations are not receptive to the ideas brought by graduates; knowledge transfer is shaped by both individual agency and workplace factors. The author (ibid, 473) gives an example of a graduate who was interested in community engagement not being able to wholly use this knowledge in the workplace because her organisation was not receptive. Similarly, one interviewee in my study discussed the contrast between the ideas and knowledge they had gained around community engagement during their Masters studies and their experiences of the museum sector as an employee. The interviewee, who manages a small independent museum, said,

> *"Manager: This is my first museum job and then before that I did my Masters...*
>
> *Laura: Did your experience [during your Masters studies] ....shape your interests?*
>
> *Manager: I must admit, when I first arrived [in my present job] I did want to find out what users we have and what we don't, and the kind of area we're in…so under-represented groups etcetera."*

The interviewee went onto say that time and financial restrictions had prevented them from undertaking as much community engagement as they had wanted to when first arriving at the museum from university. This extends J. A. Davis' (2011, 473) theory that Museum Studies graduates are sometimes unable to transfer knowledge from their course to the workplace because new colleagues are unreceptive by suggesting that day-to-day practicalities and resourcing issues may be another reason why knowledge is not always transferred to museum practice.

It is impossible to say whether my findings around the potential transfer of knowledge from Museum Studies Masters to the workplace, and the possible impact of this on organisational knowledge culture, would have been similar had I talked to a larger number of research participants; as with data across my research, I am presenting a snapshot of evidence from a small number of interviewees and museums that cannot necessarily be extrapolated out to reflect the sector in its entirety. However, the data collected from interviewees in my study provided evidence of knowledge culture in museums, and the wider sector, being influenced and impacted by the knowledge that is being brought into the sector by those who, through formal study, have come to believe community engagement is an important element of museum practice.

One interviewee who has an academic Museum Studies qualification and who, a number of years after graduating from university, continues to read museological literature, also talked about the role of such literature in shaping their practice.

Discussing the origins of a community co-curation project they had instigated, the interviewee said,

> *"It was actually something I was reading in Julian Spalding's book, 'The Poetic Museum', about the way in which museums kind of hand over that kind of responsibility of knowledge and communication to the community and rather than museums being the sort of oracles of all knowledge and actually trying to tell everybody what we know, it was about telling people what we don't know and I actually found that's been really a quite exciting kind of way of looking at our displays and how we talk about our collections by actually admitting to the fact that museums don't know everything, don't even know everything about their collections." (Director, Local Authority Museum)*

It is important to acknowledge museological theory is not simply learnt via Museum Studies Masters, but is accessible, through academic texts, to anyone who has an interest in museological theory. Such texts enable those working in the museum sector to continually update their knowledge and have the potential to impact on museum practice. In this case, Spalding's book had challenged the interviewee's thinking and inspired them to initiate a participatory project that attempted to share power with members of the community and challenge traditional views of the role of the museum 'expert' (Paquet Kinsley 2016, 484). In addition, museological texts offer a way in which knowledge about community engagement practice can be

transferred to the sector and organisational knowledge culture.

Literature about knowledge culture often discusses two types of knowledge – tacit and explicit knowledge (Ipe 2003; Travica 2013; Ekore 2014; Rathi, Given and Forcier 2016). The latter type of knowledge can be codified, explained and written down (Ekore 2014, 4) – for example, manuals and databases (Rathi, Given and Forcier 2016, 26) and can be "transferred across time" (Ipe 2003, 344), whilst the former is intangible and intuitive, comes from a person's experiences, reading, learning, and background (Ekore 2014, 4), and is harder to convey to someone else (Rathi, Given and Forcier 2016). An example of tacit knowledge is the ability to speak a foreign language (Rathi, Given and Forcier 2016). Knowledge that is tacit can be harder to share across individuals in an organisation (Ipe 2003, 344). Although my research did not specifically look at how tacit and explicit knowledge is shared between individuals in museums, it is worthwhile to briefly consider these two types of knowledge in relation to my research. Perhaps the transfer of ideologies around community and audience-focused practice, such as new museology, have been supported by the numerous books and articles around this subject that enables this explicit knowledge to be more easily transferred to scholars of Museum Studies and museum workers who read museological texts. Further study into the transfer of knowledge across museums would be helpful in exploring this hypothesis.

Other interviewees without a Masters degree had often come into the sector from community-focused backgrounds, including art and youth work, because they want to

work with, and support other people. An interviewee who came into museums from an art background, for example, was motivated to enter the sector because their art practice had included a focus on sensory work and access.

> *"I did an art degree and initially I was going to do either art therapy or social work… Why I wanted to go in[to museum work] initially was for access reasons. The art work I was doing at the time was sensory, how can you make visual arts more accessible for people who are visually impaired using sensory?…that sort of aspect, you wanted to make it more accessible." (Learning, National Museum)*

Some interviewees talked about the influence of previous work in museums on their current practice.

> *"I think the strongest influences on how I feel about museums' role in society have been [working in previous roles in the museum sector]. [The museum's ethos was]… much more about how can we make people's lives better and how can we use this collection to genuinely let people see what their place is in the world and learn about history and their own heritage and why it's important.." (Curatorial, Local Authority Museum)*

The experience of this interviewee, inspired by their early work at a museum that prioritised achieving social outcomes, suggests organisational values can continue to

influence a person's behaviour in the long-term, following their departure from that museum. The importance of community-focused organisational values will be discussed in Chapter 6. The quote also suggests that experiencing a community-focused working ethos can inspire an individual to believe in this ethos.

This data suggests if those working in community-focused roles in, for example, youth work or community development, perceive museums to be places where they can make a difference to people, they might be encouraged to join the museum sector, bringing with them specialist skills that would support community engagement work. If those working in the sector value community engagement and perceive it as being important, it is more likely they will prioritise this practice. Chapter 5 will include discussion about the need for the museum sector to better advocate to those working in community organisations.

5.2 Belief in the Social Role of Museums

One of the most noticeable points from the data was interviewees' belief in the social role of museums, or that museums have a social responsibility. Interviewees felt museums are places where 'good' is done, that help people to change their lives, benefit people, and support people's needs.

The concept of community engagement as social inclusion was prevalent in the interviews. Discussing work with hard-to-reach, or vulnerable, groups, interviewees

believe that people in these groups can benefit from museum interventions. One interviewee said,

> *"We are yet another great place to skill people up, so that other side of things, that I was talking about earlier, building services, front-of-house, cafe, public speaking. You know, all those things that they might learn in another venue but this is also—these are great venues to learn them in and there is a wow factor about the museum which you don't get from [non-museum venues]." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

This interviewee holds up museums as special places that can help people learn skills in inspirational settings. Though the interviewee accepts other venues can also teach skills such as public speaking and customer service, they feel museums are particularly powerful places in which to learn.

One interviewee talked about other benefits museums can provide,

> *"..even just a social thing, coming in to have a cup of tea, seeing something, meeting somebody…to be honest, if we get someone to do that, that's great.." (Learning, National Museum)*

The interviewee feels being in the museum space, socialising and undertaking small acts like tea drinking can all have positive benefits for hard-to-reach or vulnerable

groups. This echoes Silverman's (2010, 51) assertion museums can support wellbeing through relaxation – 'coming in to have a cup of tea' – and Mitchell's (2008, 36) claim arts participation can decrease social isolation.

It is interesting these interviewees did not talk about how collections can be used to support hard-to-reach, or vulnerable, groups (with the exception of 'seeing something'); rather they discuss non-collections related skills that people can learn through participating in museum programmes. This suggests a change in attitude from when Fleming wrote, in 2001, that some museum professionals at the time were concerned that engaging in social inclusion work would stop them caring for collections (Fleming cited in Dodd and Sandell 2001, 14); indeed, collections were absent from the discussion. That is not to say museum workers do not focus on collections; of course, collections are still central to museum practice, but it does suggest community work is a core focus of museum workers, and there is an acknowledgement amongst museum workers that social outcomes can be met through other means than collections-based work.

Another interviewee talked about wanting to help hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups,

> *"…there's usually reasons why they're harder to reach, anyway, different sort of needs, social needs, fiscal needs, mental health needs, and you want to be able to connect and help with that." (Learning, National Museum)*

The idea of museums being well-placed to help tackle a range of needs is not only reminiscent of New Labour's focus on social inclusion and its requirement for museums to contribute to this agenda, but also of nineteenth-century notions of museums as places that could be used to bring about positive social outcomes (Newman and McLean 2004, 170). Indeed, one interviewee referred to this tradition in museum practice, arguing museums have always had a social responsibility,

> *"I think there has been a long tradition of museum as being about social inclusion and social justice if you go right back to the kind of founding principles of museums. Those values were paramount really and especially as a lot of museums are publicly funded in one way or another, then clearly you have a duty to kind of address those issues." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

5.3 A Sense of Duty

Interviewees talked about the moral duty they believe museums have to support people to access culture. Indeed, one interviewee, who works in a learning role at a Local Authority Museum, used the term "moral duty", clearly stating they believe museums have a moral imperative to undertake community engagement work and make museums accessible to everybody,

"I think we have a moral duty to work with everybody." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)

Another interviewee felt strongly museums have a duty to enable people to enact their cultural rights and that not undertaking work with communities denies people this right,

"….you could say well, is it permissible for people to be denied that right to be able to exert their cultural identity and…to engage in cultural activity and heritage? I would obviously say, 'no it's not permissible for that'."
(Director, Local Authority Museum)

The use of the word 'obviously' is interesting as it suggests this interviewee feels those working in positions such as theirs would also feel that people should be able to engage in cultural activity, or that it is right someone in their position would feel as they do about museums' moral imperative to help people enact their cultural rights.

The moral imperative to work with communities and to fulfil a duty to support people to access culture is evident in these quotes and links with the idea museums have a moral imperative to engage communities. The language used, particularly in the second quote, brings to mind the international conventions that highlight rights to access and participation that Brekke (2013, 189) argues gives museums a responsibility to actively enable individuals to fulfil these rights.

Interviewees felt a sense of responsibility to the public is one of the reasons community-focused work continues at their institution with even less money, or no funding at all. One curator, who used to have a large budget which had been slashed - when I interviewed them, they said, *"I used to have a huge budget, and now I have very little budget, and last year I spent about £300"* - acknowledged that, because of the vast reduction in funding, their community engagement work has changed from working with people more intensively - for example, delivering community workshops alongside collecting objects from community members - to consulting with community members,

> *"[Our work now]..it's kind of consulting people rather than working with them, at the moment, I think, how you get their advice about what to collect and their own kind of relationship with objects or relationships with the theme, it's collecting people's experiences. Yeah, consulting, getting advice and finding out a bit more about why we're collecting things and what we're saying about those…" (Curatorial, Local Authority Museum)*

Although, here, it is clear the financial cuts to this museum have meant a change in community engagement practice from curatorial staff working more intensively with communities and delivering activities, I would argue that, in consulting with the community and, significantly, asking for their advice about what to collect and discovering community members' connections with objects they are donating to the

museum, the community engagement that is being practised here is not merely "the empty ritual of participation" (Arnstein 1969 cited in Lithgow-Schmidt 2004); community members are being given power to affect which objects are collected and how they will be displayed in the museum. This is more than the consultation on Arnstein's ladder of participation, where those who are consulted lack the power to be heard (ibid); rather, community members are partners with the power to negotiate with museum workers as to what objects and stories are collected. In actively seeking community advice and stories, this interviewee and their colleagues seem to value the expertise, knowledge and experiences of community members and seek to share authority with the community. Although community members here are not quite equal partners who share decision making (Lynch 2011, 14) – they do not have a role in curating the exhibitions or making decisions about exhibitions, it seems to me this practice is designed to genuinely connect with community members and give them a voice. The practice is in line with Chirikure et al (2010, 31) argument that community participation must give power to communities rather than merely 'engage' them.

Working with communities in this way demonstrates this interviewee and their colleagues value community engagement; whilst they might not undertake the same amount of work with communities as they used to before the cuts, they have changed their practice to ensure they still work with communities. This new way of working is perhaps less tokenistic than previous work because it is more sustainable – the practice is possible even though funding has been cut, unlike the workshops that curatorial staff used to deliver which could not be resourced following the cuts – and

is embedded into the museum's practice; the 'consultation', as the interviewee described it, happens as a matter of course when collecting objects from the community. This practice is reminiscent of Modest's 'real' engagement (2013, 99) and goes beyond the tokenistic box-ticking that has been criticised by scholars such as Lynch (2011), Modest (2013), Paquet Kinsley (2016) and Ng, Ware and Greenberg (2017).

Asked what they felt would happen to their community engagement practice in the case of future funding being cut completely, one interviewee said,

> *"[Without funding] I think [community work] would [still happen], though I think it would be harder at times to….because you still have that ethos, you would still do it, you would do your best to do it and you would find opportunities where you can to do that." (Learning, National Museum)*

This interviewee appears to have a pragmatic approach as to how a future without funding would affect their community engagement practice. Whilst accepting the financial situation would make this work more difficult, they show resilience and optimism, stating they would continue to find opportunities to work with communities and 'do their best' with limited resources. This quote almost sums up my research, demonstrating that the attitude of museum workers, determined to undertake community engagement no matter what the financial situation because of a deep commitment to this work, are a key factor in resilient community engagement

practice in times of austerity. Museum workers have shown they are able and willing to adapt their community engagement practice so that this work continues in a difficult financial climate.

Some interviewees who worked at National and Local Authority Museums specifically linked the public funding their museum receives with a responsibility to make their museums as accessible as possible to everyone and to undertake work that delivers social impacts. This data provides support for Perkin's (2010, 120) view that publicly funded museums have a responsibility to undertake meaningful work with communities. When I asked one Director of a Local Authority Museum about this, for example, they said that Local Authority Museums which fail in their duty to be inclusive are in danger of not being supported financially, suggesting the duty they feel is both to members of the local community, who they want to feel included in the museum, and to the Council for whom they work,

> *"….can public funding be justified if museums don't serve their communities?...museums [are] places that can actually have a social impact and that's something which—If they don't have a social impact, [we could] ask the question, what is the role of the museum in a community? If we can't even fulfil that……then we're clearly failing to have a social purpose and I would suggest failing to have a justifiable remit in the community that doesn't commit some kind of fulfilment of those people as well." (Director, Local Authority Museum)*

The interviewee went on to say,

> *"I think it would be complacent and it would be socially irresponsible for a museum - and one that is publicly funded - to say we are not committed to addressing the social inclusion issues of the community."*

Here, the interviewee states publicly funded museums must address the specific needs of the community that it serves. This echoes Hatton's (2012, 132) locally oriented museum which acts as a service meeting the needs of its local communities. Interestingly, this interviewee worked in the sector during the New Labour government; it is possible this may have influenced their current emphasis on social inclusion – rather than more general community engagement - and tackling social issues in the local community.

An interviewee working in a learning role in a Local Authority Museum said,

> *"If museums are funded by the taxpayer, then you need to make sure that you are giving a good service…..we are duty-bound as a public institution." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

The use of the word 'duty' implies this interviewee feels a distinct obligation to provide a good service for everyone; this is more than performing a social role

because it feels like the right thing to do but because they are duty-bound to perform this role.

That said, interviewees did not simply undertake community engagement because they felt they should. As this quote demonstrates, interviewees continued to talk about their absolute belief that museums have a social responsibility,

> *"It's public taxpayers' money, we're national, we're not just looking after these collections for our communities that we serve and that's not paying lip service; we absolutely do believe in that approach." (Senior Manager, National Museum)*

Although evidence for this is limited, it suggests publicly funded museums may feel under pressure to undertake community engagement work in order to continue to receive public funding.

5.4 A Desire to do Meaningful Work

The research found people who are drawn to work the museum sector want to 'make a difference' and strongly believe museums will enable them to achieve this impact. Indeed, one person, who works in a large museum, expressed some frustration they cannot 'help people' as much as they would like to because of bureaucracy in the organisation.

The research discovered those working in learning and engagement roles, in particular, are drawn to the museum sector because they want to 'make a difference' and believe museums will enable them to do work that achieves this. Whilst this study does not suggest those working in other roles are not motivated by the idea of doing 'meaningful' work, this theme did not arise in interviews with those working in other roles.

Meaningful work "is the way we express the meaning and purpose of our lives through the activities (work) that comprise most of our waking hours" (Chalofsky 2003, 73). The undertaking of meaningful work enables individuals to feel a sense of fulfillment and supports them to reach their purpose in life (ibid, 73 and Michaelson et al 2014, 77). The need to carry out personally meaningful work is amongst the highest valued outcome of work (Chalofsky 2003, 74) and can bring "meaning, enjoyment and satisfaction" (ibid, 74) to our lives. This view is shared by Michaelson et al (2014, 77) who report that, "for the past three decades, Americans have consistently identified meaningful work as the most important feature that they seek out in a job, ahead of income, job security, promotions, and hours". Research suggests museum workers find their work to be meaningful. A study of Museum Studies graduates who are now working in museums in Canada (J. A. Davis 2011, 468) found the graduates strongly stated the work they were doing was meaningful.

The opportunity to undertake meaningful work in the museum sector was found to be a motivating factor for taking up employment in the sector. An interviewee working in the Learning team of a University museum said, for example,

> "*I suppose what motivated me is working…I wanted to work with people, I wanted to work with learning or engagement or participation in the broadest sense, and I enjoy the learning opportunities museums provide." (Learning, University Museum)*,

whilst an interviewee working in a Local Authority Museum explained they are motivated by "helping people", in particular how they can help young people access museums,

> *"What young people want out of museums, that's my bag and, you know, how we can make the museums more user-friendly." (Community, Local Authority Museum)*

The interviewee went on to say they, *"think it's incredibly important that young people should own this collection, which is theirs"*.

This interviewee ended their interview by saying providing quality experiences and helping young people get on in life is their greatest motivation for doing their job as it aligns with their core values, and they believe the work they do in museums is

meaningful. This supports the view meaningful work is highly valued and satisfying. There also seems to be a moral element to this interviewee's motivations; they feel it is absolutely right museums should be more accessible to young people and are motivated by work that helps achieve this in practice. This chimes with research undertaken by Bunderson and Thompson in 2009 (Bunderson and Thompson 2009 cited in Beadle and Knight 2012) in which they found, during research with American zookeepers, that the zookeepers felt that they had been 'called' to the job and felt a "strong occupational and moral identification" with the role (Beadle and Knight 2012, 443).

> *"I think because that's kind of my passionate sort of world view, it has to come into my work, but if I try to look at it objectively, I still can't see how else anything is really meaningful and makes sense for all the people involved, you know." (Community, Local Authority Museum)*

It appears enthusiasm for working with communities, and the value they ascribe to this work, motivates people to carry out community engagement. The interviewee here uses emotive language to describe their position – *"my passionate…world view" / "I still can't see how else anything is really meaningful"*, suggesting their motivation for carrying out work with young people is value-based. This chimes with research by George and Jones (1996 cited in Chalofsky 2003, 72), which suggested emotions can motivate and energise and drive performance, as well as Chalofsky's (ibid, 73) suggestion values motivate individuals to both carry out tasks and gain

satisfaction from doing so. Although no interviewees directly mentioned job satisfaction, the passionate way in which they described their work suggested they gained satisfaction from their role.

J. A. Davis' 2011 study about knowledge transfer from Museum Studies courses to the workplace also touches upon the concept of meaningful work; she reports learners' "deep sense of emotional investment in, and satisfaction from, working with collections, creating meaningful visitor and community experiences and interacting with one another in synergistic and innovative ways" (J. A. Davis 2011, 471). The research participants believed in museum work and some specifically said the "integrity and purpose" of museum work (ibid, 471). This finding is mirrored in Chen's (2004) research with US based art museum professionals, which found they considered the benefits their work provides to the community is one of the greatest rewards of their job. Benefits to the community included offering arts experiences to school children, bringing art to rural communities, connecting people with arts, and giving people the opportunity to enjoy art (Chen 2004, 158).

Work by Michaelson et al (2014, 80) might also be helpful here; the authors posit workers who are directly connected to the beneficiaries of their work are more motivated to pursue prosocial impact. Perhaps working with communities and supporting them to access learning or other opportunities is relevant for museum workers who see the positive impacts of their work on the people they are working with and are therefore more motivated to continue to carry out work that has a social

impact. Engaging in meaningful work also benefits workers by supporting them to live meaningful lives (Michaelson et al 2014, 88). In finding the work they do to help others a meaningful experience, museum staff may also be making their own lives more meaningful. If doing meaningful work in museums leads to feeling that one's own life is meaningful, this may provide an extra motivating factor – albeit perhaps a subconscious factor – for people working in museums to carry out community engagement work.

Meanwhile, one interviewee, who was primarily motivated to work in museums because they want to work with people and 'help' people in some way, said they are sometimes frustrated with the museum sector as they do not feel it 'helps' people enough. This interviewee attributed this to the fact they work for a large museum where they believe new initiatives are perhaps slower to get off the ground because of the bureaucracy involved in making this happen.

Research suggests meaningful work is bound up in humans' concept of self and ability to express this. Shamir (1991 cited in Chalofsky 2003, 75) postulates individuals are motivated by work that is in line with their concept of self and that carrying out this work supports self-esteem and self-worth (ibid, 75). These interviewees appear to consider community engagement an expression of their identity and values and this may be a motivating factor for them. Carrying out work we deem to be worthwhile, and that supports us to achieve our life purpose, motivates us to go on (ibid, 79). Being limited in their capacity to undertake work which they

value, that motivates them, and that, ultimately, is an expression of their identity perhaps provides a reason for why this interviewee felt so frustrated with the slow pace of community engagement issues.

My research with museum workers during 2013 and 2014 demonstrates their enormous personal and emotional commitment to doing 'good' work that makes a difference to people. Scholars including Allan, Duffy and Collisson (2017) and Lips-Weirsma and Morris (2009) have suggested individuals find work more meaningful when they perceive it as helping, or serving, others. Serving others can include making a difference and working for an organisation that helps tackle issues (Lips-Weirsma and Morris 2009, 501). The responses given by these interviewees show they, too, are motivated by helping others, whether it be supporting people to access learning or enabling a specific group within society to access museums. It is possible to surmise that working in roles that enable them to serve people contributes to making museum work meaningful for these interviewees.

Being engaged in meaningful work is important for several reasons. Firstly, as scholars such as Chalofsky (2003) and Yeoman (2014) have suggested, people have a need to carry out meaningful work. Indeed, Yeoman (2014) hypothesises meaningful work is a "fundamental human need" (ibid, 235). As well as fulfilling individuals' needs, workers undertaking meaningful work is of benefit to organisations; Maslow (Maslow 1971 cited in Chalofsky 2003, 70) believed those who do not consider their work to be meaningful "will not work up to their professional capacity". Undertaking

work which is meaningful is a useful way by which to "foster an employee's motivation and attachment to work" (May et al 2004 in Lips-Wiersma and Morris 2009, 492). It seems museum workers' belief that, by practising community engagement, they are engaged in meaningful work did only perhaps support this practice to continue throughout difficult financial times of 2013 and 2014, but could also have been of benefit to the museum sector as these workers are potentially more likely to be motivated and to work hard. Perhaps this provides another reason why community engagement practice was resilient in 2013 and 2014.

5.5 A Cautionary Note

The research found museum workers' passion for their work that was evident in the interviews I conducted, and their strong belief museums have a responsibility to undertake work that results in positive social outcomes, was one of the factors of resilient community engagement practice in museums in 2013 and 2014. Although it should be noted all the interviewees talked positively about the work they were doing during the cuts and some, as will be evidenced in later chapters, talked about how the cuts had made their work more strategic and considered, some interviewees expressed frustration at the financial cuts, although – it should be noted - they were determined to continue their work, making changes if necessary, to ensure community engagement would be protected from the cuts. One person, for instance, voiced some disappointment at their museum prioritising corporate event hire over community-run exhibitions when allocating space at the museum because of the more pressing need

to generate income as a result of the cuts. However, although the interviewee expressed some frustration about this, they were pragmatic and acknowledged the importance of income generation for the museum. Another said,

> *"..the reality is, you've got less staff doing a greater service…….Our funding, it is being cut. It's being cut year on year on year." (Senior Manager, National Museum)*

The research supports Davies' (2013b) claim the "skills and commitment" of museum workers were key to the museums' success in 2013. The findings also echo the research undertaken in the report, *'In austerity, what is it about organisational culture that supports meaningful community engagement?'* (n.d., 21) that suggested the willingness of workers to 'go the extra mile' and show passion for community engagement is key to achieving meaningful engagement in the context of austerity.

This is a significant finding as it highlights just how important the museum workforce is to the sector. Indeed, this strong commitment to their work was voiced by one interviewee who, when talking about their work practice, said,

> *"Yeah, and also the flexibility of the workforce and things like that….it's a bit like, well, we're here at the weekend, we're here in the evening…" (Learning, University Museum)*

suggesting that their work goes well beyond the 9-5 working day.

Further cuts may lead to increased frustration and a demoralised workforce. Indeed, literature suggests the effects of austerity on museums, in terms of staff and budget cuts, for example, has led to museum workers feeling more stressed (Kendall 2015b). It is important to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff is prioritised and that the sector's passionate and enthusiastic workforce do not leave the sector due to high stress levels. The museum workforce is one of the key factors in ensuring museums can continue to work with communities, tackling social exclusion, delivering initiatives that meet community need, offering opportunities for people to participate in museums, and supporting the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. As such a vital resource, the museum workforce must not be taken for granted; without them, it is less likely that community engagement practice would survive in museums.

Museum workers in my study have proved themselves to be adaptable and able to change their community engagement practice in order to enable such practice to continue during the financial cuts. It is important to not simply praise the efforts of museum workers, but also look at the implications of this for the sector. If workers, and their passion for the job and belief in the work they are doing, are a key factor in ensuring that community engagement continues even in difficult financial times, it is essential to consider the impact future staff losses might have on the sector's ability to carry out community engagement. As one interviewee working in a learning role in a

Local Authority museum put it, *"without people, it's hard to sustain stuff"*.

5.6 Conclusion

Community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014 in the museums in my study was influenced by the practice of museum workers who believe that museums have a social responsibility, have a desire to do meaningful work, and who were committed to carrying out work with communities. Interviewees, particularly those in learning and engagement roles, were driven by a desire to do meaningful work that helps people. The sense they are 'making a difference' is a motivating factor for working in the museum sector and undertaking community engagement. According to the literature around meaningful work, in carrying out work that they consider to be meaningful, museum workers may be more likely to "work up to their professional capacity" (Maslow 1971 in Chalofsky 2003, 70) and be more motivated and attached to work (May et al 2004 cited in Lips-Wiersma and Morris 2009, 492), which is of benefit to the museum sector. Workers who are motivated and hardworking may be a reason why community engagement practice was resilient in 2013 and 2014.

The research suggests the knowledge culture has had an impact on community engagement practice in museums. Museum Studies Masters courses have the potential to spark a passion for community work in students who, if their workplace is receptive to such work, may then go on to undertake community-focused work in museums and share their knowledge about community engagement with colleagues,

contributing to organisational knowledge culture. This suggests Museum Studies courses have a continuing role to play in potentially sparking individual passions for community engagement amongst some students, a finding which may be of interest to those who are responsible for developing Museum Studies courses. Museums can support graduates, who have been inspired to undertake community work, to carry out this practice in the workplace by being receptive to community engagement and, as far as possible, creating conditions where graduates can undertake community work. The rise of new museological literature and the increasing focus of Masters courses on audiences also appears to have influenced practice, as has the theoretical, philosophical consideration of museums and their social responsibility to which MacLeod (2001, 58) refers. In addition, the research hints the sector itself, as a community of practice, has a knowledge culture that includes an understanding of community engagement and that broadly values community engagement. Further research to explore organisational and sectoral knowledge culture in relation to beliefs around the value of community engagement is necessary in order to shed more light on this issue.

The research provides evidence personal histories of museum workers are an important factor in encouraging people to practice community engagement in museums. These personal histories include learning about community engagement on Museum Studies Masters courses and transferring this knowledge to the workplace post-Masters, reading museological literature that advocates for community-focused work, and working in non-museum, community-focused roles prior to working in the

museum sector. This finding suggests there are multiple ways in which museum workers can develop knowledge about, and a strong belief in, community engagement. Encouraging more people to join the museum sector from community roles such as youth work brings people with specialist skills which may be of benefit to future community engagement practice to the sector.

The fact the individuals I interviewed were all able, within different roles and organisations, to enact community engagement work suggests not only are they interested in pursuing this type of work but, also, that they are working in organisations that are both receptive to community engagement and have a knowledge culture that understands and values community engagement. It appears the combination of individuals' personal interest in, and knowledge of, community engagement, and organisations that welcome community engagement, are factors that help to explain why community engagement is practised in the museum sector.

The museum workers in my study also practice community engagement because they have a strong belief museums have a social responsibility. This includes undertaking work that supports hard-to-reach or vulnerable groups - and not necessarily that which includes collections-based interventions. Interviewees had a clear sense of duty that they and museums overall must support people to enact their cultural rights and that there are both moral and financial imperatives for doing so. Interviewees working at publicly funded Local Authority and National Museums particularly emphasised the duty of their museums to be accessible and deliver social impacts.

The research found that one way in which austerity affected community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014 in the museums in my study was to make some interviewees cut out work that they could no longer afford to carry out. However, this was not necessarily a negative outcome; indeed, the curatorial staff at one museum stopped running workshops for communities but they consulted with, took advice from, and collected objects and stories from, their local communities. This new practice is more sustainable than also running workshops and ensures the museum shares power with community members. Another interviewee felt they would continue to practice community engagement even if the funding for their museum was withdrawn completely.

In the 2011 MA Cuts Survey, Newman and Tourle (2012, 298) argued the cuts were demoting some museums to "merely repository status" – museums that did not undertake public engagement with communities. Although I do not dispute this may have been the case for some museums in the sector, my research demonstrates that, certainly for the museums in my study, museum workers' strong belief that museums have a social responsibility ensured that in 2013 and 2014 museums were not only reaching out to communities but specifically working with hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups with the aim of providing positive social outcomes for individuals and communities.

The research provides evidence individual museum workers are a key factor in

ensuring the resilience of community engagement practice, which reflects Walker et al's finding that human actors are key to the resilience of social-ecological systems. In order to ensure community engagement practice retains its resilience, it would be helpful for the sector to continue to employ staff who are committed to community engagement work, and who consider museums to have a social responsibility. These beliefs can potentially be fostered through, for example, Museum Studies courses and museological literature. Museum workers must be able and willing to adapt their practice to ensure community engagement work continues with little or no funding. In considering how to adapt their practice, it is important for museum workers to think about ways in which they can ensure community engagement practice is embedded in their museums, is sustainable, and finds ways to share power with communities.

Reductions in funding do not mean museums must only practice tokenistic work that merely ticks boxes. Indeed, funding cuts can lead to practice that is more embedded and less tokenistic by forcing museum workers to focus on practice that is sustainable and that does not rely on having a wealth of resources.

Chapter 6: The Interpersonal Level

6.0 Introduction

In a social-ecological model, the second level is the Interpersonal level. This encompasses individuals' formal and informal social networks, such as family, peers and colleagues. In my model, the Interpersonal layer relates to museum leaders who create a community-focused ethos in their institutions and who set a direction for what community engagement practice will look like. This supports exploration of my primary research question as well as helping me understand why people practice community engagement.

These Interpersonal factors are significant in championing and directing community engagement practice in individual museums and in inspiring others to carry out community engagement, sometimes with specific community groups.

6.1 Creating a Community-Focused Ethos

The research found evidence individual museum staff in leadership roles, such as Directors but also those in less senior leadership roles, including Heads of Departments, can have an influence on the way in which community engagement work is practised at their institution. This influence, where present, can be seen both in the ethos of a museum and the direction of community engagement practice at a

museum. In social-ecological theory, these leaders are 'Influencers' who influence individual's values and behaviour.

Although I did not specifically look to speak to interviewees in museums that were led by people with a passion for community work, several of the museums represented in my study are led by people who have this passion and have made a strategic decision to position community work as one of the priorities for their museum. The passion of these leaders is clear from the way in which museum staff describe them,

> *"I think [having a director who prioritises social inclusion] has [shaped the mission of the museum]. I think even from [previous] years [under a director who valued social inclusion], that has carried through, maybe slightly differently under different directors, but yeah, I think that's probably true."*

In the small number of cases where Directors did not position community work as an absolute priority, the museums in my study were still influenced by other leaders, such as departmental leaders, suggesting that, although it is potentially easier to embed community work when a Director is committed to this work, it is possible to achieve this to an extent when others in leadership roles are passionate about community engagement. The role of less senior leaders in embedding a culture of community work at a museum is discussed later in this chapter.

Through helping to create an organisational culture that values community engagement, whether that be from director level or otherwise, these leaders appear to also be better able to attract staff who, like them, have a strong belief in the social role of museums and wish to work for an institution that will enable them to practice community-focused work which has positive social outcomes for individuals and communities.

> *"…everyone knows the value of [social inclusion] and that's what we all really want to be doing, so the fact that we're trying to fit as many different things in still and really trying to help people out and be involved and make a difference, I think. I think without that commitment, we wouldn't be getting as many things done really as we do."*

In this way, these leaders have embedded a culture of community-focused practice in their museums, to which every staff member is dedicated. One senior manager said,

> *"[A community focus at our organisation is] not just education, it's curatorial, it's exhibitions, it's estates, it's marketing, it's the front of house, visitor services. Right through, whatever cross-section you're cutting, every department feeds into our attitudes and those values."*

The workers I spoke to who worked at the museums where Directors positioned community engagement as a priority were aware of the community-focus of the

institutions prior to applying for their job and, now they were working at the museums, were wholly committed to undertaking work that fit with the organisational values the leaders had set.

> *"[The ethos around social inclusion] is] one of the reasons I came here."*

An example of one interviewee's commitment to the ethos of their museums was evidenced by the fact they were able to quote their museum's missions during the interview, without referring to notes, and with great passion, which suggests they had bought in to the mission. This interviewee worked at a museum with a particularly strong focus on community-focused practice, this being the museum's top priority. Given the especially strong focus of this organisation on community work, it is perhaps unsurprising this interviewee was more articulate about the community-focused vision of the museum.

Interestingly, a member of staff at one of the museums suggested a change in Director in the future might lead to a reset in the ethos of the museum,

> *"We could get a Director in the next ten years who doesn't feel the same way and feels we should pull back and focus on what our specialism is."*

This provides evidence for the role that influential leaders have in setting the ethos of their museum and driving practice. When leaders, themselves, are committed to

community engagement, they are able to create a community-focused ethos at their institution. However, this does not necessarily mean their influence will continue to be felt when they leave a museum. This provides somewhat of a warning that, although leaders who are committed to community-focused work create organisations that prioritise, and embed, such work, this is not perhaps enough to embed a community-focused ethos in the very long-term. Such a leader must be followed by another leader with a similar ethos and, as this research suggests, other factors must also be present if community engagement practice is to be truly embedded in a museum.

6.2 Leadership during Austerity

Kielkowski (2013, 62) suggests that, during a crisis, leadership is "essential". My research provides some support for this assertion. For Directors of museums to continue to prioritise, and champion, community engagement during the age of austerity is testament to their belief in this work and to the power that leaders have to develop community-focused organisations whose staff will practice community engagement even during times of crisis. The research suggests that, even during austerity it is more likely staff working at museums in which leaders prioritise community engagement will find a way to continue to work with communities no matter what their funding situation. Therefore, it appears leaders who believe in the social role of museums and have built a strong community-focused organisational ethos is one of the characteristics of resilient community engagement practice, but

organisations that are committed to such practice must continue to appoint leaders with a similar ethos to better ensure this remains.

6.3 Setting the Direction for Community Engagement Practice

The research discovered the beliefs and values of leaders play a significant role in shaping what community engagement looks like in their museums or departments. A Director of a Local Authority Museum who I interviewed, for example, had personally overseen the creation of a permanent initiative in partnership with the local Job Centre that enabled local people who had been long-term unemployed to gain customer service work experience at the museum; at the end of the placement, the museum provided a reference to employers – something participants often lacked. The project was inspired by the Director's strong belief museums should support people to gain skills (and are not just about trying to achieve cultural outputs) and this person's in-depth understanding of the local area; they knew the local community well and were keen to support projects that met the needs of the community, in this case, tackling low skills levels and high unemployment. The permanence of the initiative shows this work is embedded in core museum practice, which provides evidence for the influence leaders can have in directing and prioritising which practice museums should focus on. It seems leaders who believe community engagement is a core element of museum work are more likely to be able to ensure such work is prioritised and embedded,

> *"It's about saying it doesn't matter in fact that we are a museum, but we're a publicly funded organisation that has the capacity to help young people get the skills and training they need to help them get on the ladder to employment. So that's something which I'm very pleased about, that we can do that kind of thing, because you see a direct impact on helping the community, helping those young people. So that's something we'll be doing more of in the future. It's something I personally wanted to do. I felt very strongly in a place of high unemployment to—you know, high youth employment, that if there's something we can contribute in a small way then we were, as a socially responsible organisation, we should be evidencing some kind of commitment to it." (Director, Local Authority Museum)*

The interviewee's reference to 'helping people', and the fact they are so pleased to be leading this work, once again suggests individuals working in the museum sector consider their work to be useful and meaningful, and that they want to make a difference to people through their community engagement practice. The fact this practice is specifically addressing a local community need is suggestive of a museum that is 'locally oriented' (Hatton 2012), serving the needs of its community rather than simply undertaking work that only serves to benefit the museum, and taking the role of service provider rather than destination, one of the characteristics of Hatton's locally oriented museum. The community served, here, is a local community that is geographically tied to the museum. This museum, and all the other museums in my study, work with their local geographic community suggesting community

engagement practice in museums partially works on a definition of community where community members are linked through a shared geographic location, such as the geographic communities described by scholars including Crowther and Cooper (2002, 344), Crooke (2007, 31) and Graham, Mason and Newman (2009, 3).

The museum's partnership with the local Job Centre is an example of a welfare partnership (McCall and Rummery 2017) in which a museum works with an external organisation to address a societal issue. The attempt by this museum to tackle unemployment is rooted in the socially inclusive practice that was requested of museums by New Labour, which suggests that, despite this government not having been in power for over three years at the time of this interview, work to tackle social issues was still a core part of community engagement practice.

The quote also provides useful data about Local Authority Museums; the interviewee states the fact the museum receives public funding gives it more of an impetus to do work that achieves positive social impact for members of the local community and meets a specific community need. This provides some evidence to suggest that those working in publicly funded museums feel a sense of duty to serve their communities, which supports Perkin's (2010, 210) view that such museums that have a responsibility engage with, and add value to, communities.

In addition, the research found current and former leaders of specific departments had also influenced the community engagement work being undertaken by departmental

staff. One former departmental leader, for example, who had been personally committed to supporting Looked After Children, had set a precedent for working with this specific group and this work was still being continued by staff even in the years after they had left the department. This was partially because the leader had developed a great body of work, such as specific projects, that could be continued by those currently working in the team. The interviewee noted the staff member's position as a departmental leader gave them the power to set the direction of the department and embed work with Looked After Children into the department's core practice. This provides further evidence of the importance of leaders in guiding community engagement practice. This example also shows how a departmental leader is able to help embed community work at their museum, without being at Director level. A museum can become known in the sector for being committed to community engagement practice through means such as case studies on the MA website and conferences. Once a museum builds a reputation for practising community engagement, this could potentially attract those with similar values around the importance of community engagement to apply for jobs at a museum. In addition, such applicants may be more likely to be successful at interview if they demonstrate to the interview panel that they share similar values and views about community engagement, thus leading to a museum building a team of people who all value this practice.

The leader's passion for working with Looked After Children, and for working with disadvantaged communities, had also passed to other members of their team, and, as such, was continuing to influence practice at this museum,

> *"There's a kind of value-judgement of what I personally think is valuable and what we should be doing and also I inherited some from my previous manager and I'm sure all that comes into play."*

This demonstrates the power that leaders have to inspire others to take up, and continue, their work with communities. It also perhaps suggests departmental leaders have an opportunity to set the direction of the very long-term of their department, a direction that, in this case, has continued even after the leader has left the organisation. Here, the leader's passion for working with Looked After Children has become one of the passions of the department; in this instance, it seems this particular community engagement work is truly embedded in the museum.

The influence of departmental leaders in directing what community engagement at a museum looks like is significant; those who are not at the very top of the organisation still have the power to embed and shape community practice.

6.4 A Note on Other Potential Interpersonal Influences

Although other interpersonal factors were not mentioned by interviewees, it is

possible these may have had an impact on individuals' practice. Such influences may come in the form of peer-to-peer interactions on social media, namely Twitter, and sector conferences. On Twitter, the weekly 'Museum Hour' chat, held every Monday from 8-9pm GMT, attracts a large international group of museum professionals who come together to discuss a range of topics, including accessibility in museums and community partnerships.

Community engagement and the social role of museums are also often included in discussions at major sector conferences, which may influence the work of attendees and others in the sector who follow conference proceedings on Twitter, for example, or who are colleagues of people who attend such events. The annual MA conference has included presentations on participation (Liverpool, 2013), involving communities (Birmingham, 2015), and building strategic partnerships for wellbeing (Glasgow, 2016). The 2014 conference in Cardiff was even opened by a speech from then MA President David Anderson on his belief museums have a moral responsibility to make a difference to people's lives (Kendall 2014). In addition, The Association for Independent Museum's 2017 conference included a talk on diversifying museum visitors (Chatham, 2017).

As discussed in Chapter 4, opportunities to network cross-sector, such as social media and conferences, has the potential to build a community of practice in museums that is informed about, and values, community engagement.

6.5 Conclusion

The findings in this chapter helps us to understand why people practice community engagement. Unlike Morse and Munro's (2015, 17-18) study, which found community engagement was not always valued by senior management, my research found community engagement practice can be influenced, and inspired, by values-based leaders who feel passionately about community engagement and develop museums that have community practice at their core. Indeed, some leaders may feel so passionately about this they personally oversee social inclusion initiatives, as evidenced in the example of the Local Authority museum that is tackling local unemployment. By doing this, the museums at which they are based may become known for community-focused work and attract workers who share similar beliefs in the social role of museums. Indeed, Frost (2014, 124) argues people choose to follow leaders with whom they feel a connection, and choose to work in places with which they feel they have a connection. As a word of caution, the research also suggests organisations with a particular set of values may not retain those values once a leader has left; there is perhaps a need for museums that wish to continue to be imbued with community-focused ideals to keep appointing leaders with similar values as it perhaps cannot be taken for granted organisational culture will be retained as leaders change. This finding provides some evidence that resilient community engagement practice may be impingent on all the factors uncovered in this study being in place at a museum; the loss of one factor – such as the presence of a leader who values community work – may be fatal to the resilience of community work. However, more

research is required in order to test this hypothesis.

The research discovered the presence of leaders – both Directors and other leaders within a museum - with a community-focused outlook helped to ensure community engagement practice continued in the museums in my study throughout a time of austerity in 2013 and 2014. This finding appears to suggest such leadership is one of the factors of resilient community engagement practice. Community-focused leaders who drive this practice at their organisations help to protect community engagement practice from austerity as they have built organisations that have community work embedded into core practice. Frost (ibid, 125) seems to suggest organisations with values-based cultures tend to be more resilient as they are marked by "a sustainable and dynamic organisational culture", "the emotional connection and engagement of employees", and "the ability…to be responsive and adapt to the changing environment within which it operates".

Leaders can have an influence on what community engagement practice looks like at the organisation at which they are based. As well as helping to embed such practice in their museum's core practice, leaders can also set the direction for which groups staff work with and which local issues are tackled via community engagement work. This can be seen in the example of the museum that delivered an initiative for local unemployed people and the museum that continued to work with Looked After Children even after the leader who had begun this work had left the organisation. The latter example is particularly significant as it demonstrates how, through setting a

strong direction for the work of a department or museum, building up a body of work that can be taken forward by members of the team, and inspiring team members to feel as passionately as the leader does about working with a particular group, a leader can embed specific long-term practice into their department or museum.

Chapter 7: The Community Level

7.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the partnerships that individuals working in the museum sector build with organisations in the community. In a social-ecological model this 'Community' level relates to relationships between organisations. In the model in this thesis, the Community level is community organisations that work in partnership with museums and funders outside of the museum sector, such as health bodies, that are supporting community engagement work in museums.

When analysing codes, it is important to consider patterns, such as frequency of use - for example, if an idea is referred to many times (Saldaña 2009, 6). All but one of the interviewees stressed the importance of partnership working in their interviews, suggesting that this is one of the most important factors in community engagement practice. Partnerships have a range of benefits for museums, including providing specialist expertise and helping museums reach communities, and are an important influence on community engagement practice, enabling practice to be more sustainable and embedded and setting a direction for the type of community engagement that is practised. The research also found funding cuts led to more strategic and sustainable partnerships in the museums in my study in 2013 and 2014. I suggest developing and maintaining sustainable partnerships that benefited community partners as well as museums, also meant community engagement in 2013

and 2014 was, thinking about Modest's work, more 'real' than 'symbolic' (Modest 2013, 99).

The research findings are in line with those of Morse and Munro (2015, 3), who discovered the financial cuts led to museum workers at the museum services they studied developing new partnerships with local social service agencies and voluntary organisations. Like Morse and Munro's article, my research suggests partnerships were created partially in order to diminish the effects of austerity (ibid, 4) and partially because of museum workers' dissatisfaction with the short-term nature of previous partnership projects (ibid, 13). The creation of partnerships by museum workers as a response to austerity, or funding cuts, is not new; Janes talks of developing partnerships as a partial response to large reductions in Glenbow Museum's budget in the 1990s (Janes 2014, 144). In addition, Robinson (2010, 6) argues strong networks are one characteristic of a resilient arts organisation. Outside the museum sector, authors such as Lowndes and Squires (2012) and Diamond and Vangen (2017) argue collaboration is an effective response to public sector cuts. However, my research also found partnerships are created in order to gain specialist expertise, reach communities more effectively, support health and wellbeing agendas, and to work with community groups to create community-led exhibitions.

7.1 Reasons for Partnership Working

My research suggests museum workers create partnerships for a variety of reasons, which are discussed here.

The literature suggests partnerships are more likely to be effective and robust if they support both organisations to meet strategic aims (Zien 1995, 19; McCall and Rummery 2017, 59) and provide benefits for both partners (Modest 2013, 99; Kinge 2014, 858). It is clear from my data interviewees specifically look to create partnerships that offer this good strategic fit and that offer benefits for both partners. For example, one interviewee said,

> *"The primary [ingredient] of a successful partnership is mutual benefit and clarity of what you both want from working together, and honesty about that. Ours are mostly successful when we're really honest with our partners about what we want from working with them and they're really honest with us about what they expect from us, so that there are no surprises later on or miscommunications. It makes it easier for a partnership to be less based on the personal relationship." (Learning, National Museum)*

The experience of this interviewee reflects the findings of McCall and Rummery (2017, 58-59), which suggests 'welfare partnerships' are more likely to be robust when developed because of a real need from both partners. The benefits of partners

communicating in an honest and open way and setting out expectations from the start of the relationship aligns with Zien's (1995, 18-19) research which found pitfalls of partnerships include poor communications, a lack of strategic fit, and a failure of organisations to familiarise themselves with the partner organisation. In providing benefits for both partners, this type of engagement could also be considered to be more 'real' than 'symbolic' (Modest 2013, 99).

The interviewee explained strategic partnerships that benefit both partners are also helpful in ensuring partnerships are not purely based on a personal relationship between a museum worker and someone working at a partner organisation so, for this reason, may be more robust and not as likely to dissolve if a key person leaves an organisation. I suggest this also makes the engagement more 'real' than 'symbolic' as it is more embedded in a museum and not as at risk of being lost due to a loss of personnel. Indeed, another interviewee talked about the issue of relationships coming to an end because of staff leaving a community organisation due to funding cuts,

> *"That's the danger of community work, isn't it, where you build up relationships and then they're gone?"* (*Learning, University Museum)*

This echoes Morse and Munro's (2015, 13) finding that suggested museums have been affected by community partners' suffering as a result of the cuts which led to key contacts being lost, for example. Whilst personal relationships between museum workers and staff of partner organisations are important, it appears from the research

that building partnerships based on shared strategic aims and that are embedded into the work of both organisations rather than purely based on a personal relationship, are an effective way to ensure the longevity of partnerships, particularly during times of austerity.

Interviewees made it clear that sharing resources with partners is another key reason for why partnerships are formed. The greater need to share resources appears to partially result from the funding cuts. In the course of a discussion about austerity and partnership working, one interviewee said, for example,

> *"I don't think there is very much we would consider doing on our own without somebody there to work with. We certainly haven't got the resources." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

The research demonstrates the enabling role partners play in community engagement practice in providing resources that helps make community work possible. This echoes the work of McCall and Rummery (2017, 69) in suggesting museums are dependent on partners to help them to deliver core functions of their work, and is evidence of one way in which austerity has affected community engagement practice in museums. The reliance of museums on partners to help them deliver core work and the way in which this leads to unequal power relationships is discussed later on in this chapter.

The resources shared between partner organisations and museums may include staff, money and other resources, such as practical items used for activities, as this interviewee discusses,

> *"It's helpful if partners can bring resources and money because I have a tiny, tiny budget. My budget is now a third of what it started out at. I'm very good at running projects on a shoestring but there comes a limit, you know, where try as you might, you can't get a silk purse. So, partners who will bring in money or resources is tremendously helpful, and that can be very small, little things…like money for tea and biscuits [for activities]."*
> *(Community, Local Authority Museum)*

Here, the interviewee highlights the significant effect the cuts have had on their budget, which had been reduced by two thirds. This also draws attention to the type of items - those which might be considered fairly basic and cheap such as tea and biscuits - that could not be afforded within the interviewee's new budget. As suggested in Chapter 5, small acts like drinking tea together can have benefits for participants, such as improved wellbeing, and it is important to acknowledge budget cuts can prevent museums from being able to afford to deliver these small, but potentially powerful, activities. That said, the quote demonstrates the interviewee, though stretched, is adept at delivering projects with small budgets so that their work with young people has continued despite the cut to their budget. Whilst I absolutely do not suggest this person's experience, and others like it, should be used as evidence

that museum workers can continue to receive cuts to their budgets, it shows a determination on the part of the interviewee to continue to practice community engagement in reduced financial circumstances, which is testament to their strong belief in, and passion for, community work.

McCall and Rummery (ibid, 67) claim museum workers often develop welfare partnerships as a means to gain funding. This was given as another reason by interviewees for why they work in partnership with community organisations. One interviewee said, for instance,

> *"I think partners also bring us resource, either directly because they can apply for funding that we can't find when we work jointly on something…." (Learning, National Museum)*

Here, working with partner organisations enables museums to diversify their funding streams access funding that they might not otherwise be able to unlock. Working with partners to access funding from sources that do not traditionally fund heritage activities is a positive way in which museum workers are responding to the financial cuts. Furthermore, this approach may help to secure the financial sustainability of museums in the long-term; both Stanziola (2011, 115) and Lindqvist (2012, 9-10) recommend that cultural sector organisations must attempt to diversify funding streams in order to support financial sustainability.

Although not specifically partnership working in terms of working together on a project or initiative, museum workers are also creating relationships with these 'non-traditional' funders as a means to support community engagement work when museums are affected by funding cuts,

> *"Our funding, it is being cut. It's being cut year on year on year. There's less external funding to access so what my job and my colleague's job is to start looking at other sections [funders]." (Senior Manager, National Museum)*

This interviewee specifically talked about finding and securing funding for health and wellbeing related projects from funders who support work in these areas. This pragmatic response to the cuts shows a determination to find money from elsewhere at a time when traditional funding streams had reduced. This particular diversification in funding also suggests museums are undertaking work that is aligned with government policy in order to gain funding. While I do not suggest museums should undertake health and wellbeing initiatives for the sake of getting funding – with no strategic impetus behind this decision – if museums are keen to contribute to health and wellbeing agendas, it is encouraging funding can be found to help make this possible. The interviewee stressed the importance of advocacy in creating a positive relationship with funders. Issues around advocacy will be discussed in more detail later on in the chapter.

A fourth reason why museum workers partner with community organisations is in order to gain specialist expertise to better enable them to deliver specific projects. One interviewee said,

> *"It enables us to work with groups that we don't necessarily have the specialist skills to support in all aspects that they might need to, because I think there's a danger there. Museum staff are great and we have a lot of very well trained and specialist staff, we're quite lucky, but they're not necessarily mental health experts and autism experts and dementia experts…It actually helps upskill our staff working in partnership with them as well….Because the conversations we have, we learn from them, and I think they learn from us about what museums can offer and how they can access museums." (Learning, National Museum)*

Fleming (in Dodd and Sandell 2001, 24) argues some museum professionals are reluctant to engage with social inclusion policies because are they not experts in the field. My research suggests that, whilst museum workers still acknowledge they lack specific expertise that supports social inclusion work, they address this issue by working in partnership with people who do possess these specialist skills and knowledge. Rather than a lack of expertise being a barrier to community work, the research found museum staff worked with others who had specialist skills to ensure community work took place despite this lack of expertise. The quote also demonstrates another positive benefit of working with expert partners; that partners

share their expertise with museum workers, thus upskilling people in the museum sector. This knowledge transfer perhaps means museum workers are then more able to deliver specific social inclusion projects in the future as they have relevant skills in-house.

Another interviewee also explained the process of knowledge transfer is two-way,

> *"[Expertise] is one of the drivers for partnerships, isn't it really, that we can match their experience with ours." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

Whilst those in partner organisations share knowledge and skills with museum workers, museum staff also share knowledge and skills with partner organisations. In supporting partner organisations to better understand the work that museums do, particularly in terms of social inclusion, this knowledge transfer may support museums to advocate to those outside the museum sector, demonstrating museums are able to contribute to social inclusion agendas. This is encouraging since advocacy to those working outside the museum sector can help them to understand the social role of museums (Sandell 2003, 53-56). The importance of advocacy will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014 was partially focused on working with communities which were located in the same geographic area as a museum. Interviewees stressed one reason for working with partner organisations was as this

better helped them to reach these local geographic communities – often communities with a shared characteristic or something in common - who may be more difficult to reach. This supports Long's (2013, 150) claim that partnership working supports museums to undertake work that meets community need, rather than working with one individual. This practice fits into the model of Hatton's 'locally oriented museums' which act as a service to meet the needs of their local communities (Hatton 2012, 132).

For example, one interviewee commented partnership working has resulted in their museum working with groups with whom they otherwise would not have worked,

> *"[Partnership working] brought in lots of different groups that we wouldn't have reached." (Learning, University Museum)*

Partner organisations, here, act as a gatekeeper to the community the museum is trying to reach. The crucial role of the gatekeeper in supporting the creation of partnerships echoes the work of McCall and Rummery (2017, 70), Lowndes and Squires (2012, 405) and the Interdependence Network (2014).

Another interviewee noted the importance of partners having a good understanding of the communities the museum is trying to reach, which means they can identify which community members might be best served by the initiative, and can provide practical support to help community members access museum initiatives,

"Our partners are going to be the people who are working in the community and can actually identify people who would benefit [from engaging] with the opportunities we've got and make sure that they come, so they'll be organising contacts, transport..." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)

The role of partners in breaking down barriers to access, such as lack of confidence and unfamiliarity with museum spaces, and building trust between community members and museums was stressed by this interviewee who discussed a programme that is delivered by their museum for local unemployed people,

"We work with a wide range of signposting referral agencies, so we work with people who are working with that target audience, so that might include Job Centre Plus advisers…small charities working at kind of quite grass roots levels… we also host taster days where participants can come, supported by their project workers, if they want to and find out a little bit more….It's a bit of a step by step approach…To try and help people build confidence to actually come on the programme in the first place…..It's enabled us to recruit people who wouldn't otherwise consider coming to a museum."

The people who work for the partner organisations mentioned by these interviewees, such as the Job Centre, are the "special people" who can "build relationships of trust"

that Lowndes and Squires (2012, 405) assert are key to successful collaborations. My research suggests these 'special people' are a vital asset to museums who wish to work with harder-to-reach groups, playing a key role in identifying potential participants, advocating to group members and supporting them to access museums, and, ultimately, helping to enable museums to undertake specific social inclusion work. Given this, it appears to be important to advocate to these gatekeepers and to develop and maintain relationships with them.

Partnership working can support museum workers, who lack capacity and financial resources, to make contact with communities, thus, here, partnership working is a means by which to break down a barrier to community engagement,

> *"We have a small team and a small budget and we're busy people and in fact, I would question if it was a good use of our time to be working, finding and making contact with hard-to-reach groups, sorting out all the other—you know, the transport, the childcare, the money, the cultural barriers to using the museum. They're enormous and certainly I think, for us, too many to do." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

Here, we see the at times complex nature of community work and the barriers faced by museums in working with hard-to-reach, or non-traditional, groups, as well as some of the structural and cultural barriers faced by vulnerable groups in accessing museums. Partnership working is both a means by which to reach communities and to

better enable groups to access museums, thus helping museums fulfil the moral duty – as referred to in the literature review when discussing scholars such as Brekke (2013, 189) – to actively enable people to fulfil their cultural rights. Partnership working supports museums to act as "agents for social justice and positive change" (ibid, 189).

The above examples also demonstrate that working with partners to address societal issues, which was particularly emphasised and promoted by the New Labour government (Lawley 2003, 82; Tlili et al 2007, 13), was still a reason why museum workers created partnerships in 2013 and 2014. Whilst Tlili et al (2007, 130) argued in 2007 tackling social issues was "by and large uncharted territories for the conventional museum profession", it seems that, in 2013 and 2014, social inclusion work was a regular practice in museums, suggesting that, partially because of partnership working, this practice has been more embedded into museums since it was first championed by New Labour.

Writing in 2013, Camic and Chatterjee (2013, 66) argued few museums had created partnerships with health and social care services. Given this, I was encouraged to find one reason offered by interviewees for working in partnership was in order to carry out work with healthcare providers. This suggests healthcare providers may be more willing than they once were to partner with museums, an issue that had been highlighted as a barrier to such work by Sandell (2003, 48). Interviewees undertaking such health and wellbeing initiatives were mainly working with people with dementia or people with lived experiences of mental health issues, which is perhaps

unsurprising given that these two issues are most prevalent in the literature around museums and health (Ander et al 2011, 238; Scott Dodd and Sandell 2014; Camic and Chatterjee 2013; Johnson et al 2017). The prevalence of health and wellbeing initiatives being delivered by the people I interviewed hints that museum workers may recognise the contribution museums can make to health agendas. In addition, the research provides some evidence that, at a time when an increasing amount of literature about how museums can support health and wellbeing is in existence, museums, too, were undertaking more of this type of community engagement work. Reasons for why museums in my study were increasingly working on health and wellbeing initiatives appears to have been the result of a desire to diversify funding streams by tapping into government funding by responding to government policy around health and wellbeing – this is discussed further in Chapter 9. In addition, there is, potentially, a greater interest in pursuing health and wellbeing work amongst museum workers and the wider museum sector; evidence of the latter may be the increasing focus on health and wellbeing in museum literature, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Partnerships support museums to undertake health and wellbeing work by providing expertise and acting as gatekeepers, helping enable museum staff to reach communities who could be supported by health and wellbeing initiatives. As this interviewee states, the wellbeing work they deliver would not be possible if they did not work in partnership with the local hospital trust,

> *"Our art and wellbeing work [is due to] the fact that we can work in partnership [with the local] hospital trust….we've managed to [ensure that] when people do medical training, doctors will now have a session about culture and that sort of wellbeing, so that does make a difference…"*

The quote also underlines the importance of advocating to health practitioners so they have a better understand of the role culture can play in supporting people's wellbeing. Another interviewee suggested that, in advocating to health professionals, museum workers must 'talk the language' of partners in order to effectively advocate for health and wellbeing work and bring health partners on board,

> *"It's the language that we use as well when we're talking to the health partners, when we're talking to housing partners. You have to shift it so they're understanding, not just cultural speak, you know, it's—the trickiest thing with us…..is convincing the clinicians, the doctors, the GPs."*

Here, the research found a potential need for the training provision for museum workers that enables them to better understand what language to use when advocating to potential health and wellbeing partners and better persuade these organisations to enter into partnerships with museums**.**

One interviewee said they find it helpful to have a presence at local meetings which are attended by doctors as this gives them the opportunity to advocate for their work to those who can support their dementia programme,

> *"…there were GPs there, there were people with dementia….So at least we're kind of in the loop of what's happening, which is good." (Manager, Independent Museum)*

This echoes the work of Ander et al (2011, 237), who suggest advocating for the benefits of health and wellbeing work to partners and funders that might work with museums in the future is important. The interviewee's experiences suggest being well-networked and attending local community meetings is an effective way to form partnerships and advocate for health and wellbeing work.

The interviewees I spoke to did not appear to be using the Generic Wellbeing Outcomes (Thomson and Chatterjee 2013) to measure the impact of their health and wellbeing work and to support them to advocate to potential health partners. The reasons for this are unclear, but there is perhaps a need for this simple and accessible tool to be more widely promoted to those in the sector. Interviewees, however, sometimes used their own methods to evaluate the impact of their work. One interviewee, for example, worked in partnership with local health experts to measure the impact of their programme, which was supporting them to better understand the

health-related impacts of their work on participants and, in turn, helped them to advocate to health professionals.

The final reason offered by interviewees as to why they created partnerships was in order to work with community groups to create community-led exhibitions for their museums and, in doing this, to enable these groups to interpret their own heritage in museum spaces. One issue raised by the research was that funding cuts meant museum staff had to be more focused in terms of which groups they worked with; groups that had funding to offer or that had strong projects were more likely to create community exhibitions than others. This means some individuals and community groups were given more opportunity than others to enact their cultural rights.

One reason given for working with community groups to create community-led exhibitions was because funding cuts have meant museums have less money with which to develop curatorial content. In this way, such work helps to counter the effects of austerity,

> *"Giving space to community groups for exhibitions also requires very little money." (Curatorial, National Museum)*

Although, here, reduced funding appears to be shaping the ways in which museums in my study worked with communities in 2013 and 2014, it is encouraging that, during times of austerity, the museums still found ways in which to carry out community

engagement that gave community groups power to represent themselves within the museum, an approach that has been praised by scholars such as Witcomb (2007, 136). Thinking about Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969 cited in Lithgow-Schmidt 2004), here, a reduction in funding led to museums working with communities in partnership, or even delegating power to them by giving communities decision-making powers over an exhibition space. This is also perhaps further evidence for museum workers being determined to keep working with communities in a meaningful way despite reduced funding.

The research found working with community groups to create displays also brought in funding for museums; community groups applied for money from funders such as the HLF to carry out community heritage projects that included an exhibition at their local museum. Sometimes, museums did not directly receive this money, but they did benefit from high-quality displays that were created using external funding; other times, museums were given direct funding by projects for items such as curatorial services. This interviewee explained they are able to advise community groups of approximately how much money is required in order to produce a high-quality display,

> "*The exhibitions are externally funded…[usually by community grants or the HLF]; we roughly know how much money we need to do it to a standard we're happy with…" (Manager, Independent Museum)*

Here we see an example of museums developing partnerships as a means to gain and diversify funding, which echoes the work of McCall and Rummery (2017, 67 and 69-70) and suggests a dependency on partners to support museums to deliver functions of their core work, an issue that was also raised by the authors in their 2017 article about welfare partnerships (ibid, 67). However, giving space to community groups in this way is potentially a positive act as it helps give community members a voice within the museum and supports them gain skills and that, as Wood (2013, 219) argues, is a means by which to increase connections between museums and communities.

One issue of working with groups who have secured funding is those who cannot bring funding to the table may be overlooked. As this interviewee explained, the funding cuts meant they had to work with groups who have funding,

> *"With significant funding cuts, we're only in a position generally now to work with groups, of course, who have a very strong project and fit our community aims but also who have funding." (Curatorial, National Museum)*

This is problematic because it prevents groups that do not have funding from being represented in the museum, which leads to, as Graburn (2007, 131) asserts, a dominant representation being displayed that includes some groups and excludes others. It also fails to provide equal access for everyone, enabling some to have greater opportunities to enact their cultural rights than others. However, it is somewhat naïve to think museums could ever work with every single group in a local

community, even in times of economic prosperity, due to issues of capacity and space. Museums must always make decisions about how to prioritise resources, no matter what the wider economic situation. Perhaps in times of austerity, these decisions are simply more likely to be based on economic factors above other factors.

Although it is important not to be entirely uncritical of community-led exhibitions, there are, as has been previously suggested, many positives to be drawn from such work. Another benefit of this work is that, for some interviewees, working with community groups in this way has meant that, despite the funding cuts, they are carrying out a similar level of community engagement work than they were before the cuts,

> *"..we're not really cutting the amount of community projects we're doing because we still have a huge amount of people who are approaching us and it's actually a problem at the moment of being able to fit them all in because yeah, there's a few that are clashing at the moment and we've really had to think about where to put things and when and timescales. So ironically, even though we have less funding, but the will is still there." (Curatorial, National Museum)*

It appears that, whilst the type of community work this museum was delivering changed as a result of the cuts, the work they were delivering in 2013 and 2014 gave community members a voice in the museum and an opportunity to tell their own

stories. It should be noted this interviewee said the reason so many groups approach the museum is because the museum is well-connected with, and has a high-profile within, its local community which means community groups know they are welcome to create displays in the museum and tend to be keen for their stories to be included in the museum. This provides evidence for the importance of museums being well-networked in their local community, a topic which will be discussed later in this chapter, and to advocate for their work in the community.

By enabling community groups to create content for the museum in 2013 and 2014, museum workers in my study were perhaps not only increasing representations of communities in their museum, a benefit of community exhibitions that is suggested by Witcomb (2007, 136), but also creating community. Crooke (2007, 27), for example, suggests communities are constructed via acts of mobilisation and through specific circumstances (ibid, 31); therefore, museums enabling community members to work together to produce exhibitions may help members of the group to form a specific community that is working together to a specific end.

It is important to note that, whilst every other interviewee felt partnership working is a key factor that enables and supports community engagement work, one person took a different view. The interviewee felt working with partner organisations can almost create a layer between the museum and project participants so participants consider they are working with the partner organisation rather than the museum,

"I'm not a massive fan of the third-party involvement…. I.. fear that people will lose the message that they're working with us, if that makes sense, so…if you were a member of some organisation and then you came here through them and then you went away again, I'm not sure you'd realise…obviously they'd know they came here, but I think you'd associate it with that charity's work. Whereas if we are organically sourcing people from the communities and saying, we the museum want to work with you, they know that it's us that wanted to work with them and they have that direct [contact]." (Community, Museum Trust)

The interviewee appears to be concerned that, rather than acting as an enabling gatekeeper, partners' involvement in projects almost masks the museum's involvement, meaning participants may not build sustainable relationships with the museum. Whilst other interviewees seem to view partnership working as a way to attempt to prevent tokenistic practice – as the relationship they have with partners, even if not with individuals, is sustainable – this interviewee appears to link partnership working with tokenistic practice because a museum's relationship individual participants may be lost when projects come to an end. This is an example of issues of power within partnerships between museums and community organisations; here, the community organisation is the more powerful partner as they are likely to maintain links with individuals after a project has finished. This also links to power dynamics noted by McCall and Rummery (2017, 69) who argue one reason why community organisations are the more powerful partner is because

museums are dependent on them to deliver core functions of their work. During times of reduced funding, in particular, when museum workers lack capacity and resources, they often need to work with partners in order to undertake community engagement; some museum workers are therefore not in a position to do as this interviewee does and build relations with individual community members.

If a museum worker has the capacity and resources to develop individual relationships with community members it could be positive as it means projects with individuals are not tokenistic and the projects themselves have been effective in breaking down barriers to access. However, whilst it could be argued working with partners does not necessarily lead to museums developing sustainable relationships with individual community members, that does not necessarily render partnership working a tokenistic practice. Rather, in making and maintaining strategic partnerships, museum workers are going beyond tokenism and developing long-term, embedded relationships that are the antithesis to the short-term, box-ticking relationships with community partners of which scholars such as Lynch (2011) and Onciul (2013) are so critical. Indeed, as McCall and Rummery (2017, 63) suggest, effective partnership is a means by which to prevent the tokenism that can be present in short-term funded projects.

7.2 The Importance of Being Well-Networked

The research found partnerships are easier to create when museum staff have comprehensive networks with organisations located in their local geographic community. Such networks have a range of benefits for museums.

First, the research discovered being networked helps museums establish a presence in the local community which gives them credibility with potential partners. One interviewee said, for example,

> *"If you can establish a real presence out there in the community, then you build credibility, don't you?" (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

Perhaps this is also about building trust between museums and community organisations; being well-networked enables museums to advocate to a range of potential gatekeepers who become familiar with the work of the museum and may start to gain trust in the museum – two elements of a successful partnership, according to Zien (1995, 19) – and, because of this, are motivated to take part in museum initiatives and to advocate for the museum to groups with whom they work.

The importance of being familiar with the work of potential partner organisations that work in the vicinity of the museum was raised by other interviewees. This provides support for Zien's (1995, 19) claim partnerships are more likely to last if partners

become familiar with each other prior to developing the partnerships. One interviewee commented, for example, that having this knowledge enables them to see opportunities for strategic and effective partnership working,

> *"A lot of the most effective working in this area with museums is when you're working with a good partner. So, it's all about keeping an eye on what partners are working on." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

Interviewees noted the key to building relationships with community organisations is time; time to network in the local community in order to get a good grasp of the organisations in the local community and the needs of these organisations. One person said,

> *"It does help if you recognise names and people or you go, "Oh, I know that…they're a really good group to work with, I know what would suit"…so it is basically networks and knowing people and attending conferences and gradually building that up." (Learning, National Museum)*

This demonstrates it is important for museum workers to comprehensively network with local organisations in order to better understand the work of these organisations and to develop relationships. This may take time but, ultimately, having a good understanding of partner organisations leads to more strategic, sustainable partnerships that are a good fit for both the museum and the community partner. It is

encouraging that, despite reduced funding, museum workers considered it a good use of time to build relationships with partner organisations and become well-networked in their local community. This is perhaps testament to how important museum workers feel partnerships are to supporting and enabling their community engagement practice.

Another interviewee, who manages an Independent Museum, explained they sit on a local community in their capacity as museum manager, which enables them to meet potential partners and also, crucially, better understand local community needs,

> *"We're part of the [name of community board] ....they can tell us where the low-income areas are or where there's particular problems within the town, which is quite useful…we might be able to step in and offer something there." (Manager, Independent Museum)*

This practice matches some of the best practice recommended in The GLLAM Report (Hooper-Greenhill et al 2000, 45), which asserts museums should consult regularly with communities to identify community need and build trust. Being well-networked enables museums to better understand the needs of the community and to create partnerships with local organisations that help to tackle community issues. As attending such meetings only uses the resource of staff time, rather than costing a great deal of money, this approach may be helpful for museums who wish to better

advocate for their health and wellbeing work, and other community work, and to develop partnerships with local health practitioners and other partners.

7.3 Maintaining Partnerships

The research discovered museum workers in my study felt it is particularly important to maintain long-term relationships with partners. There was a genuine effort amongst interviewees to develop partnerships that would be sustained in the long-term, rather than for the course of a specific project. One interviewee said,

> *"I send them updates…they join our e-newsletter, so they know what's available, or if we have invites, we'll invite them to the private view, things like that." (Learning, National Museum)*

Another interviewee talked about the various ways in which they maintain relationships with partners,

> "*I think different partners require different kinds of communication, so…because some of our partners it might be invitations to private views or launch events…. for some partners, it might be going out to meet with them, particularly smaller organisations, and more informal kind of coffee and a chat, can be more appropriate, so I think some of it's thinking about how your partners want to be communicated with." (Learning, National Museum)*

Interviewees also said keeping in touch with partners also enables partnerships to be more intensive when a specific museum initiative is particularly relevant to a partner; so, for example, an organisation that works with young people might be heavily involved in a museum initiative for this group but less involved in other museum initiatives. In this way, partnerships are pragmatic, strategic and sustainable. Partners may not work intensively with museums all the time but the partnerships are valued and sustainable.

Museum workers' efforts to keep in touch with partners and actively inviting them to events are a demonstration of their genuine attempts to create sustainable partnerships that last beyond the life of a project. The quotes also show museum workers are considering the needs of each partner in terms of, for example, how to communicate with each partner. Whereas Lynch (2011, 6) found some community partners in her study were concerned the museums they worked with were not committed to developing long-term relationships, my research suggests this tokenistic practice is decreasing as museum workers find ways to sustain partnerships and demonstrate that they value partners by, for example, inviting them to special events. This way of working suggests museum workers acknowledge partnerships are vital to enabling and supporting community work and that it is important for them to nourish and maintain these relationships.

Finding ways to maintain partnerships appears to have partially been borne out of a feeling of discomfort about previous partnership projects that had felt tokenistic for both the community partners and museum staff. This aligns with Morse and Munro's 2015 study which found staff of one museum had partially developed long-term partnerships with social care services as a response to previous dissatisfaction with the short-term nature of projects that may have had limited social impact (Morse and Munro 2015, 13). One interviewee said,

> *"...when we worked with any of the groups that it [was] picking them up as a group to use, [and] putting them down when the funding [ended] so we've established what we're calling currently…a Community Leaders Panel. We're going to meet again soon. We met them once and what came out of that was the idea for the taster days …It's just been something that's been established through the project." (Community, Local Authority Museum)*

This interviewee said community groups had fed back to museum staff they felt they were being 'dropped' when projects came to an end. The creation of a Community Leaders Panel, which had been developed during a short-term funded project, demonstrates a commitment from the museum to go beyond short-termism, as criticised by Lynch (2011, 5) and Butterfield (2002), and bring what could have been short-term funded work on the margins of museum practice (Lynch 2011, 5) to the core of practice. Furthermore, the development of a Community Leaders Panel that shares decision making, and is on equal terms, with museum workers (ibid, 5 and 14)

is a further demonstration of the museums' commitment to go beyond tokenistic practice.

Another museum in my study also had a community panel which supported the museum to keep abreast of community issues and stay connected with community members, and empowered community members to share decision making with museum staff,

> *"So that's where we stay very active and very current and those individuals sit on [our regular community advisory] group. So they look at — bigger than the events programme — they look at the exhibitions, they look at partnerships in the city….. It's just to ensure we stay current and we stay connected." (Senior Manager, National Museum)*

Paquet Kingsley (2015, 484) suggests the creation of community advisory committees, or panels, is a means by which to challenge the traditional views of the role of the expert curator and to take part in shared decision making practices with museum workers, which, the author argues, can support museums to become more inclusive, and is a way in which museums can go beyond tokenism (ibid, 485). In addition, the relationships built through the sharing of knowledge between museum workers and committee members are a "valuable outcome" in and of themselves (ibid, 485). Furthermore, community advisory committees enable the breaking down

of power hierarchies between curatorial staff and communities which Golding (2013, 20) argues is critical for the success of community work.

The research demonstrates the reduction in funding that came with the introduction of austerity led to more strategic partnerships in 2013 and 2014 and partnerships that were embedded into museum practice, that museum workers were dedicated to sustaining in the long-term. It seems the funding cuts, alongside a discomfort with previous practice, were a catalyst to making museum workers change their practice in relation to building and maintaining partnerships. These new, sustainable partnerships align with Modest's (2013, 99) 'real' engagement practice, being both embedded into a museum's ethos and sustainable. In addition, this way of working seems to be what Lynch (2011, 8 and 17) called for when asking museums to end their 'dependency' on short-term project funding and shift participation to the core of museum work so it is "firmly situated in the organisation's locality and developed with the help of new, long-term community partnerships" (ibid, 8). Shifting practice so community partners are not 'dropped' once they have served their usefulness to a museum has the potential to lead to genuine inclusion (Ng, Ware and Greenberg 2017, 143) that may be empowering and transformational for communities (Onciul 2013, 92). Furthermore, the partnerships that were developed by the people I interviewed had echoes of Zien's "structurally innovative partnerships" (Zien 1995, 20), which Zien advocates for; those which interact often, co-operate in multiple ways, and are permanent.

7.4 Unequal Power Relationships

McCall and Rummery (2017, 67) argue partners in welfare partnerships may not have the same amount of power, and that museums are the lesser partner as they do not generally have much control over the relationships and are dependent on partners to support them to deliver core functions of their work (ibid, 69). This is in opposition to Lynch (2011, 5 and 14) who found community partners in her study had less power than the museum partners. My research aligns with McCall and Rummery's findings, as I will discuss presently. That said, I acknowledge I did not interview community partners and may have found, had I done this, that community partners felt like they had equal, or less, power than museum partners.

My research found museum workers are, at times, frustrated by the inequitable working practices they perceived were inherent in some partnership projects. One interviewee noted,

> *"I think the most dismal partnerships I've had are where…the workers have come in with clients and regarded it as an afternoon off and, you know, you get left with all the clearing up, all the disciplining, all the rest of it." (Community, Local Authority Museum)*

Whilst the interviewee said they had learnt from these experiences, and tried to create partnerships that included more equitable divisions of labour by discussing

expectations at the start of new projects, these experiences provide examples of one of the difficulties of partnership working. The lack of commitment from partners is one of the elements that can hinder partnerships, according to Zien (1995, 18-19). It is unclear why the partners were uncommitted – and may be due to lack of capacity (ibid, 18-19) – but it is clear such behaviour from partners hinders partnership working. This seems to provide evidence for museums being the lesser partner in welfare partnerships as they do not appear to have much control over the relationship (McCall and Rummery 2017, 67).

One person said they evaluate each partnership and consider whether it has been equitable; if not, they make the decision to terminate these partnerships as they are difficult to manage and maintain and take too much resource from the museum,

> *"…. are people turning up? Are they reliable? Are they actually delivering what they said they could deliver, and if not, why not?.....Was it an equal partnership?....had you done what you said you were going to do?"*
> *(Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

This way of working aligns with Zien's (1995, 19) recommendation that partners should become familiar with each other prior to developing the partnership. At a time when austerity has led to museum workers becoming more reliant on partners to support them to undertake community engagement, it seems to be increasingly important for such partnerships to involve equitable divisions of labour as museum

workers perhaps have less capacity than they once did. Furthermore, it is important for museum workers to carefully consider whether partnerships are equitable and to feel able to terminate partnerships that are problematic. As Kinge (2014, 858) argues, partnerships may fail unless each partner benefits from the partnership.

While the interviewees I spoke to strongly believe in making museums accessible and creating positive social change through museum programmes, it seems the power of museums to cause positive social change may not be understood, or believed in, by staff in non-museum organisations. This can be a barrier to partnership working and means museums have very little control over relationships with partners to the extent where they sometimes cannot get partnerships off the ground. One interviewee said, for example,

> *"I particularly wanted to work with [a local] drug and alcohol rehabilitation and try as I might, I just couldn't – it must have been us not being clear…they couldn't see how we could help, how we could be useful, and I'd like, obviously, to change that perception amongst people." (Community, Local Authority Museum)*

Others commented,

> *"There's not a great understanding of what museums can offer out there, so we're not natural partners." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

"It could be that they come in with all sorts of preconceptions about museums not being for them or not being for their clients. That can happen." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)

The experiences of these interviewees reflects the findings of the MA's Museums 2020 report (BritainThinks 2013), which found that those who visit and do not visit museums – but do not work in them – felt that, while museums should educate everyone in society equally, helping the vulnerable, including outreach with vulnerable groups, was a low priority task as this sort of work should be carried out by agencies such as social services and charities rather than museums (ibid, 21). If staff in potential partner organisations do not feel that museums should, or can, play a social role, it can be impossible to form partnerships with them. The research found individual museums and the wider museum sector needs to get better at advocating for the work of museums, demonstrating the social impacts their work can have on individuals and communities, so that organisations are more likely to enter into partnerships with museums in the knowledge that museums can support their clients and/or help them achieve their social objectives. It is interesting museums in 2013 and 2014 still did not appear to be advocating effectively enough, given that increased and improved advocacy has been called for over a number of years by scholars such as Sandell (2003, 53) and bodies such as the MA (Stephens 2017), and was highlighted in the GLLAM Report (Hooper-Greenhill et al 2000, 55) as a way in which museums can secure funding.

Another interviewee felt national bodies, such as National Museums and the MA, as well as senior museum leaders, also have a role to play in advocating for the impacts of museums' community engagement work,

> *"I think there needs to be a national layer where we need people to be advocating what museums can do on a national scale and draw attention to the kind of things that we can help with, and I think perhaps national museums have a role there as well. I think there's a layer at museum director level as well. They have pathways into both local and regional groups of people that people like me don't have." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

Although recent years have seen national advocacy campaigns, such as the National Museum Directors' Council 2015 *I Love Museums* public campaign which aimed to generate and measure public support for museums (Steel 2015), and bodies like the MA advocating on behalf of the sector, as highlighted by Stephens (2017, 4-6), it seems the sector still has some way to go to effectively and widely advocate for the social impacts museums can have on individuals and communities and how museums can work in partnership with community organisations to undertake work that delivers these outcomes. The difference in perceptions regarding the social role of museums between those working in the sector – who appear to have a strong belief in the social role of museums – and some of those who do not work in the sector is stark. There is perhaps a danger the museum sector is so confident it is 'doing good' that it

does not consider those outside the sector might not share this viewpoint. Partnership working is vital for supporting and enabling museums' community engagement work and, therefore, it is essential the sector advocates widely, and in the language of potential partners, in order to continue to enable museum workers to build robust, sustainable partnerships with community organisations. Advocacy is also a way museums might protect themselves from economic fluctuations (Lindqvist 2012). Advocating for the social role of museums, in particular, can "reinforce [museums'] legitimacy" (ibid, 9). Advocating to government can help secure future funding (ibid, 7), influencing how the government spends its resources.

In order to advocate as effectively as possible, it is important to have evidence of the impacts to which that community work can lead. The research suggests that, at times, museums are not collecting robust evidence about such impacts. One interviewee said,

> *"…with [some] groups, [evaluation] it's a bit more based on [staff members'] perception…" (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

This is problematic because staff perceptions about the extent to which community engagement has been successful and has resulted in specific impacts is perhaps not powerful as collecting this data from participants, particularly if staff already have a strong belief their work is resulting in social outcomes. Although the literature (West and Smith 2005) suggests social impacts of projects are difficult to measure, it is

important for museums to attempt to measure and demonstrate social impact in order to demonstrate their public value (Munley 2010, 22-23), prove they can promote social inclusion (Newman and McLean 2004, 175) and advocate to government who, without evidence, may find it hard to understand the difference museums can make to people's lives (West and Smith 2005, 276).

The funding cuts provide one reason why it might be difficult for museum workers to measure the impact of community engagement work. One interviewee commented that,

> *"It's always a challenge to think about evaluation because all the focus is always on just getting the exhibition organised and we try to do qualitative evaluation whenever we can. Again, that's been another problem with funding cuts." (Curatorial, National Museum)*

The lack of capacity caused by the funding cuts reflects the work of Chadwick, Tyler and Warnock (2013), who discuss the challenge of undertaking evaluation with limited finances. The funding cuts have meant museum staff have to prioritise work tasks and, for some, this has led to decreasing the amount of evaluation they undertake. However, my research suggests evaluation is perhaps even more crucial during austerity as museums are under more pressure to demonstrate the social impacts of their work in order to better advocate to politicians, a view which aligns

with Sullivan's 2015 article in *Museums Journal*, which voiced concerns museums may not be doing enough to show their social impact (Sullivan 2015a, 12-13).

One interviewee, on the other hand, talked about the fact funding cuts have led to them collect more evaluation as they want to ensure they can advocate for their work to partners in other sectors and funders,

> *"One of the things that we're doing with the funding [for an externally funded programme] this time is focusing quite heavily on the evaluation and creating really solid evidence for why what we do is valuable and thinking very careful about which sectors it's valuable to. We believe it has a value as a king of early intervention programme to the health sector, and we know it has a value in terms of developing people's employability, so making sure that we've got more options in terms of funding and have got evidence to keep it going in the future…. You need to be able to advocate for the value of what you do." (Learning, National Museum)*

The quote demonstrates this interviewee is collecting robust data that can be used to advocate for this work in an attempt to ensure the longevity of their funded project so it can be continued once the funding comes to an end. Once again, this shows a desire amongst museum workers to go beyond tokenism and embed community engagement practice in the core of their work. The work of this interviewee provides evidence for

Sandell's assertion that small social inclusion pilot projects can spark a change in practice (2003, 53).

Rather than viewing evaluation as an 'add-on' activity that is good to do if resources allow, evaluation should, instead, be seen as a crucial part of museum work that enables museum workers to measure and demonstrate the social impacts of their work and supports advocacy to local and national government and other stakeholders. As Chadwick, Tyler and Warnock (2013, 850) suggest, during austerity, evaluation should be "embedded and ongoing" and robust. If individual museums are struggling to undertake evaluation because of a lack of institutional capacity, they could perhaps do as the Denver-area Education Network has and work with other museums in their local area to carry out evaluation (Steele-Inama 2015, 79), which would be the sort of collaborative response to austerity that is advocated for by scholars such as Lowndes and Squires (2012), Diamond and Vangen (2017), and McCall and Rummery (2017).

7.5 Conclusion

Morse and Munro (2015, 4 and 13) found museum workers were mainly creating partnerships with social service agencies and voluntary organisations as a way to lessen the effects of austerity and partially because of museum workers' dissatisfaction with the short-term nature of previous partnership projects and McCall and Rummery (2017, 56) found that 'welfare partnerships' are largely the result of national, devolved and local government policy. However, my research found there

are a multitude of reasons why museum workers create partnerships with community organisations, including a desire to unlock government funding through doing work that aligns with government policy and as a means to gain access to specialist expertise from partners that supports community engagement work.

Austerity certainly had an impact on museum-community organisation partnerships in 2013 and 2014; museum workers formed partnerships with organisations with whom they could share resources and to tap into 'non-traditional' funding streams and have increasingly created more strategic and sustainable partnerships with community organisations. Austerity in 2013 and 2014 also led to some museums increasingly working with community groups on community-led exhibitions as this practice is cheaper than other community engagement initiatives, such as outreach, and because working in this way can bring in funding to the museum.

Although it is perhaps worrying that, in some cases, museums in the study appeared to be dependent on partners to deliver core functions of their work, which was also found by McCall and Rummery (2017, 69) in their study of welfare partnerships, and that a lack of funding can impact on the type of activities museums deliver, the act of creating partnerships may also be seen as one of determination from museum workers who wished to continue community engagement practice despite the funding cuts, a finding that aligns with Morse and Munro's study (Morse and Munro 2015, 13). Furthermore, partnerships that have opened up new funding streams are helpful to museums as, according to Stanziola (2011, 115) and Lindqvist (2012, 9-10),

diversifying funders can support long-term financial sustainability. In addition, the practice of community-led exhibitions identified in the research is beneficial for communities who are given the power to represent themselves, and tell their stories, within the museum.

In 2013 and 2014, museum workers looked to create partnerships with organisations that offered a good strategic fit, to gain specialist expertise, reach communities, tackle societal issues, deliver health and wellbeing initiatives, and creating community-led exhibitions. To ensure partnerships were as easy as possible to identify and create, and to build trust between themselves and people working for community organisations, museum workers ensured they were well-networked within the local geographic community.

The research has demonstrated gatekeepers working at community organisations play a crucial role in supporting the creation of partnerships and in breaking down barriers to access, building trust between community members and museums, and enabling museums to reach vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities and support them to enact their cultural rights. Museum workers must attempt to identify gatekeepers and create sustainable relationships with them.

In 2013 and 2014, museum workers were concerned the partnerships they created should be maintained in the long-term. As suggested by Morse and Munro (2015, 13), this was because of a dissatisfaction with the previous short-term nature of

partnerships. The desire to create sustainable partnerships meant museum workers found ways in which to maintain partnerships, such as keeping partners abreast of happenings at the museum and inviting partners to special events, and by creating permanent community advisory committees. In maintaining partnerships and providing more opportunities for communities to share decision making, community engagement practice went beyond tokenism and was moved towards the core of practice. These long-term partnerships are a move towards Modest's 'real' engagement and away from 'symbolic' engagement (Modest 2013, 99), being embedded into a museum's ethos and sustainable. The partnerships also appear to benefit community partners as well as the museum, which meets the third criterion of Modest's 'real' engagement practice.

The research discovered that museums' evaluation practices are not always robust, which means it is difficult to understand whether community engagement is as effective as it could be. Despite museum workers having accessible tools, such as the Generic Wellbeing Outcomes, that can be used to measure the impacts of community engagement on individuals and communities, the museum sector still appears to lack robust evaluation of community engagement activity. Although it could be argued evaluating such practice according to its instrumental value may have negative repercussions for the cultural sector as it does not champion culture for culture's sake (Rowley and Griffiths 2017, 189), in austere times, this is perhaps a concession the sector has to make, no matter how uncomfortable for some. Improving evaluation

practices and using evaluation data to better advocate to potential partners ultimately strengthens community engagement so doing this may be a means to an end.

The research found unequal power relationships between museums and community partners, where museums were the lesser partner in terms of inequitable divisions of labour and having less control over the relationship than partner organisations. Partners partially influence the type of community engagement that is practised as museums may not be able to carry out certain projects if partners do not come on board; one example of this is the Local Authority Museum unable to work with a drug and alcohol rehabilitation unit.

These unequal relationships might become more balanced if museums and community partners become more familiar with each other prior to developing partnerships, and with improved evaluation of social impact and advocacy to potential partners. Improving advocacy to potential partner organisations, stakeholders and local and national government is crucial as, without partner support, museums will be less able to carry out community engagement work. Furthermore, effective advocacy should, according to Lindqvist (2012) help protect museums from future economic fluctuations and may help them secure future funding. In order to improve advocacy, museums must effectively measure the social impacts of their work and use the language of partners and stakeholders when advocating to them.

Partnerships are a key element of resilient community engagement practice as they help museum workers deliver such practice, open up new funding streams, and bring funding into a museum. In addition, partnerships strengthen links between museums and communities. In 2013 and 2014, partnerships themselves were also more resilient as museum workers found ways to make them more sustainable. Partnership working is identified in the literature review as a means by which to respond to austerity and crisis by scholars such as Lowndes and Squires (2012) and Diamond and Vangen (2017). In widening their networks and becoming more interdependent with other organisations in their locality, museums appear to be moving towards the model of interdependence Janes suggests is "essential for successful adaptation in a complex and increasingly severe world" (Janes 2010, 335).

Chapter 8: The Organisational Level

8.0 Introduction

In a social-ecological model the Organisational level is organisational policies, rules and structures. In my model, this level relates to the formal and informal organisational policies museums have in place that enable community engagement to take place, and having an organisational ethos that values community-focused work. As well as formalising community engagement work, policies can set a strategic direction for community work that supports museum staff to focus working with targeted groups rather than trying to spread their work too thinly; the thesis argues having a focus for community work supports resilient community engagement practice. Having a strong community-focused organisational ethos in place means museums are more likely to allocate resources to community engagement, even in times of reduced funding, and that community work is more likely to be embedded at the core of museum practice.

Museums in this study appear to be largely operating in what Davies, Paton and O'Sullivan (2013, 353) would consider to be a 'forum mode', prioritising social impact and encouraging participation. By developing museums with community-focused practice at their core, it seems organisations are then more able to attract staff who strongly believe in the social role of museums and are passionate about delivering such work.

8.1 Formalising Community Engagement Practice

The research found that, although it is not always necessary to have formal policies in place, organisational policies that formalise community engagement work help to enable community engagement practice and embed this work at the core of museum practice. As the literature suggests, museum mission statements can help direct the focus of institutional practice, and these can include ambitions relating to community engagement (Sandell 1998, 415; Ashley 2014, 261). Ashley (2014, 261) suggests many museums use mission statements as a way to set out their commitment to engagement, an assertion for which my thesis provides further evidence. In addition, my findings align with the work of Nightingale and Mahal (2012, 14) who argue that, in order to embed equality practices throughout a museum, staff across the museum have to work to a clearly formulated internal policy. Furthermore, the research also demonstrates the sector has shifted since Dodd and Sandell (2001, 4) noted the majority of museums address issues of social exclusion via specific outreach, education or access projects, rather than embedding social inclusion in the central philosophy of their museum. In 2013 and 2014, my research suggests some museums did have social inclusion, and other community-focused work, at the heart of their mission statements, demonstrating a real commitment within the sector to not only undertake community work but to embed this practice at the core of museums.

An interviewee talked in detail about their museum's mission statement, describing how it influences organisational practice across the whole museum,

> *"[Our core mission policy] sets the scene for our mission and values because it doesn't matter which department you work in, we all feed into those core missions, those values, and how [they] set the tone for the rest of the organisation". (Senior Manager, National Museum)*

Another interviewee who works at a museum whose mission statement is particularly community-focused said the following. I have not quoted the specific mission statement in order to protect the identity of the museum.

> *"…. it is apparent that everybody is very aware [of our mission statement] and is working to that mission statement, and I'm not just saying this for corporate reasons, I genuinely believe that that is true, so [the museum's] vision, I think, is completely happening, everybody's working to that, but within that I think different departments take different approaches to it." (Curatorial, Local Authority Museum)*

Here, the research shows that, despite some scholars finding people do not always follow policy (Newman and McLean, 2004; McCall and Gray, 2014), the people I interviewed adhered to the policies of the organisations for which they worked. This may be because they strongly believe in the social role of museums and so implement

policies that relate to such work 'on the ground'; this aligns with McCall and Gray's (2014, 28) study which found museum workers have a key role in implementing new museological practice and in embedding such practice at their museum and that the extent to which they implement this practice is guided by their attitudes towards new museology (ibid, 31).

Where museums in the study did not have formalised policies, interviewees spoke about their museum having informal policies or organisational ethos that values community engagement work. One interviewee noted,

> *"We don't have policies anymore, we've…moved away from…endless policies, to be honest…We have a tone of voice document which really sums up the idea that we are friendly, we're accessible." (Learning, University Museum).*

During the interview, this interviewee also said,

> *"We don't talk about social justice here…but it does underpin some of the things we do; it's all integrated within what we do."*

This provides evidence to suggest that, whilst formalised policies are helpful in setting a commitment to community-focused work, is not always necessary to have such policies as long as a museum has an informal document that sets the tone for the

organisational practice or a clear organisational ethos that places a strong value on community engagement.

The research demonstrates organisational ethoses can be a powerful influence on the behaviour of individual workers. It is important to consider how a community-focused ethos might be created at a museum like the museums highlighted above. Hochschild (2010, 622) postulates physical spaces are transformed into "socially and emotionally significant" locations via people collectively imbuing meaning onto the space through social interaction and interconnectedness. In this way, people begin to consider a space to have an emotional significance (ibid, 622), although others may resist the meanings that have been imbued onto a place by a specific group (ibid, 624). By imbuing specific meanings on a space, groups are able to "redefine what places mean, how they should be used, and who should use them" (ibid, 624). Even if others have a different view of how a place should be defined, one group's definition of a place is likely to win out (ibid, 624) and they may be supported in this by "guardians whose job is to maintain such a definition" (Duncan 1976 cited in Hochschild 2010, 624). This concept provides interesting food for thought in terms of considering how museum ethoses and cultures might be shifted to embody community-focused work; if a museum space can be imbued with a meaning by a dominant group, and this group believes museums have a social role to play, then there is an impetus for any museum to become inclusive spaces. This also links to knowledge culture; knowledge around community engagement practice can be transferred between individual workers, contributing to an organisational knowledge

culture which understands, and places value and emphasis on, community engagement.

Thinking about my research, it could be suggested museums that have community engagement at their heart have been imbued with this meaning through the values and interactions of their workers and leaders. If this is the case, it could be postulated such museums may attract staff who share these values. The work of Karanika-Murray et al (2015) on organisational identity and job satisfaction is helpful here. The authors argue both workers and organisations benefit when an individual identifies with organisational values and goals (ibid, 1020). Workers are provided with a sense of identity, whilst organisations are able to function effectively (ibid, 1020-1021). Individuals who strongly identify with their organisation are more likely to work towards organisational goals, meet organisational expectations, perform better, and be more engaged with work tasks (ibid, 1021). An alignment of personal values and organisational identification can also lead to greater work satisfaction (ibid, 1026). Attracting staff who strongly identify with a museum's ethos is, therefore, beneficial to the museum (as well as the staff member). Museums well-known for having a community-focused ethos are, it seems, well-placed to attract staff who share this ethos and whose work will be imbued with this ethos. As they strongly identify with the organisation, these staff are also more likely to be engaged with their work, which may support the continuation of community work no matter what the wider financial situation.

8.2 Setting a Strategic Direction

The research found evidence that, as well as creating community-focused organisational ethoses and practices, organisational policies help to make community engagement practice more focused and strategic. In 2013 and 2014, there was an emphasis on developing a more strategic community engagement offer in museums in my study because the funding cuts meant museums had to decrease the amount of community engagement they were practising, making it more focused and streamlined. Another reason for developing more strategic practice was because of a frustration with the short-term nature of previous projects, which led to less meaningful engagement, a view that mirrors Lynch's arguments (2011, 6). In making community engagement practice more strategic and sustainable, austerity led to community engagement being more embedded in museums, as opposed to previous practice which was more likely to involve a series of small funded projects such as those criticised by Lynch (ibid, 5).

One interviewee – who I have not described to ensure they cannot be identified by the work they are undertaking - explained the shift in practice that had happened at their museum as a result of the funding cuts,

> *"What we're finding now is that..in the sense of being more strategic…our project work groups around a few key activities….It feels quite cohesive rather than doing the opposite of that…One small youth project over here,*

something else with an older group over here...but they don't join up and you've got staff working very differently, which isn't that efficient, so we found it more efficient to narrow our focus.

This is a personal opinion, but I think the growth of museums that I certainly saw in my early career where there was always more money, made it quite easy, in a way, to be less strategic…"

This interviewee and their colleagues moved away from their previous way of working with communities, which tended to be a series of unconnected projects with different groups, towards a more strategic approach. The interviewee described how, following the funding cuts, their museum had started to prioritise a small number of specific communities – those that share specific characteristics – that were carefully chosen based on 1) particular needs within the local community the museum wanted to try to tackle and 2) which groups the team felt would most benefit from working with the specific collections and themes of the museum. Undertaking work that meets the needs of their community reflects Fleming's (2010, 2) suggestion each museum is unique and should undertake actions that will support their museum to meet community need. Here, the funding cuts were a catalyst to this change in practice, enabling community engagement practice to become more strategic, sustainable and embedded.

Funding constraints meant some museums in my study had to work with fewer groups in 2013 and 2014 than they had previously, which led to museum workers having to more carefully consider which groups to work with. One interviewee described how their management team had recently decided which groups to work with based on how much budget they had for community engagement,

> *"We had an interesting conversation in one of our management meetings last week. We're doing our programming. We're setting our objectives for the next twelve months. We're setting our budgets. We have said, look, we've got this amount. We need to consider, 'Do we want to re-prioritise [a specific group not mentioned here in order to protect the anonymity of the interviewee]? Even if that means you're not going to be doing something else?' So, it's those constant questions we're asking ourselves and that inevitably impacts on which communities you work with and that's what we're in the process of working through now." (Senior Manager, National Museum)*

Funding cuts, here, meant the management team had to more carefully consider which groups to work with so that they did not exceed their community budget and, therefore, played a role in setting the direction for the type of community engagement practised by people working in this museum. Whilst such decisions, of course, mean some groups cannot be involved in specific museum projects and initiatives, these decisions help ensure that community engagement work is focused.

The research discovered organisational policies helped to set a direction for community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014 by identifying the specific target groups museums worked with,

> *"[The groups we work with] are in the five-year strategy." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

> *"Our audience development plan…talks about all our audiences and who our priorities are, how we're targeting with different programmes." (Learning, National Museum)*

The practice of targeting specific groups aligns with Nightingale and Nahal's (2012, 24) argument that museums, which are able to contribute to social inclusion in a multitude of ways, cannot tackle every issue and so have to prioritise the issues they decide to tackle; no museum, even in times of economic prosperity, can work with every community group and tackle every issue. As one interviewee said,

> *"I think we need to really have a focus because obviously, trying to do too many things and trying to be too many things to too many people, it just doesn't really work." (Curatorial, National Museum)*

There is a need for pragmatism and an acknowledgement that, as Dodd and Sandell (2001, 5, 6 and 35) argue, doing *something* to work in socially inclusive ways is

better than doing nothing at all. The research shows a strategic approach is particularly important during times of austerity when funds are limited.

In addition, the research found interviewees were developing a more strategic approach to community engagement - by carefully considering which groups to work with - because they were concerned that previous, less strategic work had lacked impact. As one interviewee noted,

> *"…unless you've got a big team, you can't sustain working, so it does become quite transient and not very meaningful." (Learning, National Museum)*

This interviewee particularly talked about how they and their colleagues no longer 'chase funding' by applying to a multitude of funders to work on short-term projects with lots of different groups which, ultimately, were not as meaningful as they could have been for participants because of the short-term nature of the projects. In addition, short-termism was leading to the projects, and the team's relationships with community organisations, being transitory. A large funding cut to this museum meant the team did not have the time to apply for lots of grants, and nor did they have the capacity to work on many different projects at the same time. The team therefore shifted their practice so that, in 2013 and 2014, they only worked with a small number of groups on projects and initiatives that met key organisational strategic aims. Relationships with these groups were more sustainable as they were more embedded

into the core work of the museum. Here, the research shows how a reduction in funding and staff capacity led to community engagement being brought to the core of practice, leading to more meaningful impacts for participants. This provides evidence for Lynch's (2011, 5) suggestion that reduced opportunities to gain external funding – in this case, the reduced opportunities stemming from a lack of staff capacity - for participatory work could be an opportunity to bring this work being brought to the core, rather than relying on short-term funding that relegates such work to the margins of practice.

8.3 Allocating Resource to Community Engagement Work

Lynch (2011, 448) argues stretched resources mean museums cannot spend as much money on public programmes that seek to alleviate social exclusion, particularly if museum professionals do not view the promotion of social inclusion as core work. My research found that, in 2013 and 2014, museum workers were allocating core budget to community engagement practice, despite reduced budgets, demonstrating a clear organisational and personal commitment to community-focused work. One interviewee talked about their organisation making a positive decision to allocate money to community engagement work,

> *"…people say they can't do it because we haven't got money, but you think, 'we choose to allocate ourselves; it's the decision that we take'." (Learning, University Museum)*

Another interviewee described how their museum's strong community-focused organisational ethos was a driver for community engagement practice and led to community work being practised even though organisational funding had been reduced,

> *"…the ethos is there and we do it regardless of funding." (Curator, Local Authority Museum)*

Here, community engagement is at the core of practice, protected, as much as possible, from funding cuts by staff who are determined to continue working with communities and organisations which strongly value community-focused work. This is Modest's (2013, 99) 'real' engagement practice in action and suggests the sector no longer objects, or is reluctant, to engage in social issues as scholars found to be the case in the past (Sandell 1998, 411-412; Dodd and Sandell 2001, 3; Sandell 2003, 51; Beel 2011, 3).

8.4 Community Engagement at the Core of Museum Practice

The research discovered community engagement was considered to be the responsibility of staff across departments, rather than simply being the domain of those working in roles such as outreach and engagement. I spoke to people working in a range of roles, including curatorial staff, senior managers and directors, learning

staff, and outreach and engagement staff, and all of the interviewees both practised community engagement and felt that such work was their responsibility. This finding is in opposition to Modest's (2013, 102) suggestion curators are rarely involved with community engagement initiatives and demonstrates that the museum sector as a whole is shifting to become more community-focused, bringing community engagement to the core of museum practice.

The funding cuts were one reason why community engagement was increasingly embedded at the core of museum practice in 2013 and 2014. One interviewee said,

> *"We don't have the luxury of having dedicated staff posts which are externally funded, which is what we've traditionally had…We don't have those posts but what we've done is we've took the learning from all of those community projects, for want of a better term, and bedded it into our core education provision…." (Senior Manager, National Museum)*

Whilst it is important to note that, here, the funding cuts led to the loss of jobs, and to acknowledge the pain that can be caused through job losses, it is interesting the cuts led to the museum shifting their practice so that work once undertaken by specific staff is now more embedded into the core of museum practice. This reflects Lynch's (2011, 5) view that external funding for participatory work can keep such practice on the margins of museum practice and reduced funding can be used as an opportunity to bring this work to the core.

Another interviewee, whose museum had fairly recently received major funding cuts, reflected that,

> *"…what people perceive as being project work and what they perceive as being our core work and I think that's becoming more blurred as the funding's…changing. It's a different funding landscape, as opposed to what it was before, and my argument would be that that is changing what we perceive as being our core and project work and how the two kind of work together really in that way." (Community, Local Authority Museum)*

Here, we see evidence of the funding cuts being a catalyst for embedding community engagement into the core of practice, rather than work that is largely practised through short-term projects. Again, this is a demonstration of museum workers, who are passionate about community engagement, changing their practice in order to continue community work despite the cuts. By 'blurring the lines' between project and core work, and bringing community engagement to the core of practice, this museum is showing a commitment to community engagement and is also protecting community work in the long-term, ensuring it is less vulnerable to any future cuts.

8.5 Conclusion

Organisational policies, such as mission statements, have an influence on community engagement practice by ensuring museums enable and value community work. This finding aligns with the views of scholars such as Sandell (1998, 415), Ashley (2014, 261) and Nightingale and Mahal (2012, 14). Setting out a clear intention for a museum to practice community engagement in an organisational mission statement influences and enables community work across a museum and helps to inspire and enable staff to practice community-focused work and embed this in their day-to-day work. Even if a museum does not have a specific policy relating to community engagement, the museum can still embed this work through having a strong organisational ethos that values community engagement and which staff have bought into and embody in their practice.

It is important to note scholars such as Newman and McLean (2004) and McCall and Gray (2014) found museum workers do not always follow policy and that, in addition to a strong community-focused policy or mission statement, and/or organisational ethos, it is helpful for staff working 'on the ground' to strongly believe in community practice so policies are adhered to, perhaps particularly during austerity when funds are stretched. Recruiting staff who share a community-focused ethos is beneficial as, thinking of Hochschild's (2010, 622-624) work, the more staff in a museum who feel this way, the more likely it is that the museum will become a space with community engagement at its heart. It is also important to note that having a strong organisational

purpose is one of the marks of a resilient museum or arts organisation that is evident in the literature (Robinson 2010, 6; BOP 2012, 5; AIM 2016, 1), perhaps another benefit of having a clear, community-focused purpose is increased resilience.

Organisational policies can also set a direction for which community groups a museum works with. My research found that, in 2013 and 2014, museum workers in my study were particularly keen to undertake more strategic community engagement with target groups rather than trying to work with a multitude of groups and tackle many different issues. This was partially the result of funding cuts, which meant it was not possible to undertake as much community engagement as it previously had been, but also due to a frustration with the short-term nature of previous projects that had not led to particularly meaningful impacts. Having a clear strategy in place that sets a direction for community engagement practice helps museum workers to both navigate austerity and also undertake more focused, sustainable work with community groups. Museums' community engagement practice becomes more 'real' than 'symbolic' (Modest 2013, 99) through working more sustainably with groups, rather than 'dropping' groups once a project has finished.

Austerity was a factor which led to the museums in my study shifting community engagement work to the core of practice; museum workers allocated core budget to community engagement work and made community engagement the responsibility of staff across the museum, not just those working in more traditional community roles. The research suggests sustainable community engagement work does not have to be

enormously costly; it is more helpful for museums to work with communities in a way that fits organisational strategy and resources. Trying to work with too many groups or undertake too many projects can lead to community engagement that is unsustainable and that lacks meaning or impact.

Chapter 9: The Policy Level

9.0 Introduction

In a social-ecological model, the Policy level is local and national policies. In my thesis, this level relates to local and national policies that guide and enable community engagement practice, particularly ACE's policies and the policies of the HLF, a more traditional museum funder that provides funding for community-focused heritage projects. In addition, policy – in particular local government policy in relation to Local Authority Museums – can set a direction for which groups to work with via community engagement.

The literature suggests national government policies were an enabling and influencing factor for community work in museums during New Labour's time in office (Sandell 1998; Newman and McLean 2004, 171; Tlili, Gewirtz and Cribb 2007; Beel 2011). My research found that, although New Labour's policies may well have been a positive force that encouraged museums to tackle social exclusion, they do not appear to have the same influencing factor in museums today, which is perhaps unsurprising given that New Labour left Office over eight years ago. However, it may well be, as Scott, Dodd and Sandell (2014, 10) argue, that the cultural legacy of New Labour is still present in the sector; the data I collected strongly suggests people working in the sector are committed to tackling social exclusion and working in community-focused ways.

9.1 Setting a Direction for Community Engagement Practice

The research found both local and national government policy influenced community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014 by setting a direction for which groups museums worked with, and which issues they tackled.

My research found evidence Local Authority Museums – which are directly funded by local government – in my study were influenced by local government policy. One interviewee, whose museum - which, at the time of my research, received funding from ACE as well as their Local Authority - includes children and young people amongst its primary target audiences talked about why the museum had chosen to prioritise this group,

> *"Laura: Was there a reason why you focus on work with young people?*
>
> *Interviewee: …because that was a priority for ACE and also it's a priority for the county..." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

Another interviewee who worked at a Local Authority Museum talked about the importance of keeping abreast of local government policies; they specifically talked about needing to work with groups that align with the local political agenda in order to gain funding,

> *"There's always a political agenda and we have to keep an eye on the [local] political agenda…Sometimes the political agenda also brings funding to the table, which is very important." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

National government policy that is not specifically linked to museums was mentioned by two interviewees who discussed how museums can contribute to such policies. One interviewee talked about work their museum is doing to support people with dementia and their carers, and mentioned one of the reasons for choosing to work with this group was in order to address Prime Minister David Cameron's 2012 challenge on dementia, which aimed to "deliver major improvements in dementia care and research by 2015" (Department of Health 2012, 1), as a way to potentially unlock funding and because museums are well-placed to contribute to this agenda via collections-based reminiscence work,

> *"We say we want to engage with older people, older people living with dementia, because that's addressing a national challenge that the Prime Minister set out. He has said, 'I've got a challenge on dementia'."*

Another interviewee said the issues they tackle are driven by national government because this brings in funding from partners,

> *"I used to do a lot of work with Schools for Life groups and speakers of other languages. We did lots of work here, regular courses here, but those partners have all disappeared with the present government. Their funding has gone. They're not there anymore, so that's not work we do anymore. It's sitting on the shelf and I would be delighted if it came back onto the political agenda, but that's been dictated by the government." (Learning, Local Authority Museum)*

The research found work that fits with national government agendas can be a way to unlock funding, which is perhaps particularly important during austerity. As Stanziola (2011, 115) and Lindqvist (2012, 9-10) suggest, diversifying funding streams is one way in which museums can support their long-term financial sustainability. Being aware of government agendas can be an effective way in which to diversify funding and enable specific community engagement practice. However, it is important to note – as raised in the quote above - that when certain agendas fall out of favour in national government, this can also prevent particular community engagement work to take place in museums as funding is retracted. One way in which to counter this might be to better advocate for the work of museums to government to increase understanding of how museums can support individuals and communities, as discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

9.2 National Policy

Two interviewees, who had both worked in museums during New Labour's time in Office, talked about the political imperative New Labour set for museums to tackle social exclusion, and discussed the financial rewards given to the museums for working in this way.

> *"I think there was a time nearly a decade ago when it was the political kind of imperative ask museums to demonstrate how inclusive they were and there was this political agenda committed museums to having an outward profile in the community….and there were rewards for doing that." (Director, Local Authority Museum)*

> *"Probably about ten years ago, on average, there was a big push within museums and cultural services around engaging new audiences, celebrating diversity. There was lots of money swimming around." (Senior Manager, National Museum)*

The experiences of these interviewees during New Labour's time in Office potentially influenced their community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014 because they had directly seen the financial and societal benefits of museums following New Labour policies that required socially inclusive ways of working. When I interviewed them, these interviewees were both clearly very committed to undertaking socially inclusive

practice and, now in senior roles at their respective museums, were ensuring this was still a central part of their work and the work of their colleagues. In this way, it is possible museum workers who joined the sector post the New Labour government may still be indirectly influenced by New Labour's policies as they work for senior managers and directors who embed socially inclusive practices into their museums. However, it must be noted no other interviewees spoke about New Labour directly. The influence museum leaders have on community engagement practice is discussed in-depth in Chapter 6.

The policies of ACE influenced museum community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014. One interviewee, for example, who worked for an ACE Major Partner Museum, reflected it was particularly important for their museum to be audience-focused in order to align with ACE principles,

> *"….within [Arts Council] statements, it's very clear the intent that we're there for audiences." (Learning, University Museum)*

Several of the people I interviewed whose museums received ACE funding – both via Major Partner Museums funding and specific project funding - talked about their practice being influenced by ACE priorities. In particular, interviewees said their museums felt more compelled to work with children and young people because of ACE's emphasis on this group; ACE's Goal 5 in its ten-year strategy *Achieving great*

art and culture for everyone is "Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries" (ACE 2015, 7). An interviewee who worked at a Major Partner Museum, and whose post was directly funded via the Major Partner Museum funding from ACE, said,

> *"Laura: Do you know why, when the ACE bid was [written], youth was decided upon as a key focus?*
>
> *Interviewee: Well, in fact, that's top-down from ACE. ACE said they wanted every child and young person to have the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts….So we were taking our cue definitely from ACE, who had actually specified they wanted these posts…" (Community, Local Authority Museum)*

ACE's emphasis on children and young people appears to have led to the museum sector also prioritising this group. As suggested by *Achieving great art and culture for everyone* (ACE 2013, 35-36), museums (as well as arts and libraries), have the power to support critical thinking, learning and development, children's understanding of the world and their place in it, and be inspired, amongst other benefits. ACE (ibid, 35) stresses children and young people have a right to experience the arts, linking with Brekke's (2013, 189) argument that museums have a responsibility to actively enable individuals to fulfil their rights to access and participation.

A potential issue of funding children and youth-focused roles entirely from ACE funding is the danger that these roles may come to an end when the funding finishes unless museum leaders decide to allocate core funds, or other funds, to this work. By funding work with children and young people entirely from external funding, museums are perhaps keeping this work on the margins of practice, as suggested by Lynch (2011, 5).

My research found HLF policies also influenced community engagement practice in museums in 2013 and 2014; HLF funding enabled community engagement practice and encouraged museum workers to undertake community work and think strategically about audiences. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 7, HLF funding was also an enabling factor that supported museums to work with community groups in 2013 and 2014. The influence of the HLF aligns with the literature (for example, Rees Leahy 2007 and HLF strategic plans of 2002, 2008 and 2013), which suggests the HLF helped change the discourse around heritage organisations, encouraging them to become more focused on making a positive difference to individuals and communities. A succession of HLF strategic plans (HLF 2002; HLF 2008; HLF 2013), for example, prioritised increasing access to heritage, diversifying audiences, and supporting participation.

One interviewee, whose museum was in the process of a two-stage HLF project at the time of their interview with me, talked about the need to create an audience

development strategy as part of their application. The strategy identified users and non-users, and, as a result of this, museum staff were undertaking work to try to reach these non-users as well as users. Museum staff were also using the strategy to inform their day-to-day work, which suggests organisational strategies and policies written for HLF bids have the potential to influence practice beyond the confines of the HLF project,

> *"We'd had that report so we'd identified those users and non-users, so it was building on that as well. So that's an example of how it's quite strategic." (Community, Local Authority Museum)*

Another interviewee noted that,

> *"HLF grants....working with the community…there seems to be an emphasis on." (Manager, Independent Museum)*

This Independent Museum only received a modest income, and so it was arguably particularly important for staff to bring in funding that further enabled community engagement. Indeed, this interviewee spoke more about the HLF as an enabler of community engagement than other interviewees. It appears the HLF's requirement that projects funded by them need to make a positive difference to people and communities encourages museums to work with communities and, by providing funding, enables this work to take place. Whilst community engagement was

embedded at this museum – the museum had a particularly community-focused ethos and regularly worked with local community groups - there is perhaps a danger that a reliance on HLF funding – or any external funding - for community engagement practice can relegate community work to the margins of museum practice (Lynch 2011, 5). This is perhaps of particular concern at the time of writing as the HLF has recently announced a massive reduction in grant-making in 2018-19 due to a reduction in lottery income as a result of fewer people playing the lottery (Brown 2017). As Brown reports in *Museums Journal*, in 2017, the HLF distributed £305million in grants to UK-wide projects but this will be reduced by 37% in 2018 to £190million (ibid). Brown expresses concern at this news, arguing lottery funding has become increasingly important during austerity (ibid).

Although only one interviewee directly mentioned the MA's Museums Change Lives campaign,

> *"….it seems to be another big drive [for community work]; it's the MA's baby at the moment." (Community, Museum Trust)*

this may well also have influenced those working in the museum sector by emphasising the positive contribution museums can make to individuals and communities and the social role of museums, and encouraging museum professionals to do work that increased the social impact of museums (MA 2013). However, it is possible the creation of this document in 2013 also reflected museum sector practice

at the time, which, as my research and the MA Cuts Surveys suggests, was prioritising community work.

9.3 Conclusion

Local and national policies enabled and influenced community engagement practice in English museums in 2013 and 2014. For Local Authority Museums, local government policies set a direction for community engagement, influencing which groups museums worked with as this provided funding and ensured these museums were aligned with the strategic priorities of the councils, or other local authority bodies, that owned and ran them. Some non-arts and cultural policies of national government, too, encouraged museum staff to work with certain groups and tackle specific issues, such as dementia. Interviewees were acutely aware that aligning to national government policies could provide funding but that, if these policies and priorities change, funding for community engagement initiatives can disappear, leading to the end of these initiatives. Local and national funding that is not specifically related to arts and cultural policy can help museums diversify funding but it is important for museums to advocate for their work to government to try to prevent such funding being stopped.

Although only two interviewees specifically mentioned New Labour's policies that required museums to tackle social exclusion, the community-focused outlook and values present in all of the interviewees – not just those who worked in museums

during New Labour's time in Office – suggests that, as Scott, Dodd and Sandell (2014, 10) argue, the cultural legacy of New Labour is still present in the sector; it is interesting policies that are no longer in date, and were created, in some cases, nearly twenty years ago, may still have an impact on the sector.

National policy relating to the arts and culture had an effect on community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014 particularly, in the case of ACE, in setting a direction for the groups that museums worked with and, in general, in encouraging and enabling museum staff to work in community-focused ways. Interviewees who worked for ACE-funded museums felt it was important for them to focus on children and young people, aligning with ACE's Goal 5, and that, in general, being ACE-funded meant they had a responsibility to be audience-focused. The HLF's emphasis on funding projects that lead to lasting differences for individuals and communities (as well as heritage) also encouraged museum workers to be community-focused and, as discussed in Chapter 6, supported them to do work with community groups which were awarded HLF grants.

Having an awareness of local and national arts and non-arts policy can be a way to bring funding to a museum, which is particularly important during times of austerity. It is important museum workers have an understanding of the local and national policy and funding landscapes and time to reflect what community engagement practice they might undertake in order to meet policy and funding priorities. However, museums should not rely on external funding in order to carry out

community engagement; it is crucial to embed this practice, as much as possible, so community-focused roles and practice are not vulnerable to reductions in funding. In addition, embedding community practice, rather than solely using external funding, enables practice to be more ‘real’ than ‘symbolic’ (Modest 2013, 99) and to move from the margins to the core of practice (Lynch 2011, 5).

Chapter 10: Resilient Community Engagement Practice

10.0 Introduction

This chapter considers what resilient community engagement practice looks like. It brings together findings from Chapters 5 to 9 to conclude that resilient community engagement practice is enabled by having a number of factors in place that support community engagement to be practised in museums, even in times of reduced funding. These factors are museum staff and leaders who believe in the social role of museums, partnerships with community organisations, organisational ethoses and policies that value community engagement, and local and national policies that provide funding for, and encourage, community engagement. The chapter also considers what it means to be resilient and how museum workers have adapted their practice to ensure community engagement practice remained resilient during the financial cuts of 2013 and 2014. Finally, the chapter considers how resilient practice might be redefined so it is not simply linked to having money or funding.

10.1 The Characteristics of Resilient Community Engagement Practice

Austerity, and the reduction in funds austerity brought to the museum sector, is one of the factors that led to museums embedding community engagement practice into their core work in 2013 and 2014. The research found a reduction in funding was a factor that caused museum workers to shift community engagement to the core of museum

practice, largely away from short-term funded projects that scholars such as Lynch (2011, 5) argue can keep community engagement practice on the margins of museums. Short-termism, much criticised by scholars including Butterfield (2002), Lynch (2011) and Modest (2013), seemed to decrease during 2013 and 2014 as museum workers found ways in which to embed community engagement in their core practice, particularly through increased and more sustainable partnership working, undertaking initiatives that can be afforded within core budgets and being less reliant on project funding for community engagement initiatives, and working more strategically. This finding supports Lynch's (2011, 5) view that reduced opportunities to gain external funding for participatory work could be an opportunity to bring this work being brought to the core.

However, it would be a simplification to suggest austerity is the only reason why community engagement practice appeared to be embedded, and thriving, in English museums in 2013 and 2014. My study found people working in the sector, including some sector leaders and senior managers, who believe in community engagement and are passionate about working with communities, help to embed community engagement practice at their museums. This shows evidence of a shift in thinking and attitudes since the early 2000s when Sandell (2003, 51) suggested one of the factors that inhibited social inclusion practice in museums was the "deeply entrenched attitudes" of museum workers who did not believe museums had a "social responsibility to tackle issues of inequality and disadvantage" (ibid, 52) and provides evidence for Sandell's suggestion that a change in such attitudes would support the

sector to change (ibid, 53). In addition, working with partners, and maintaining links with partners, moving away from short-term project working where partners are 'dropped' when a project comes to an end, also had a role in embedding community practice. Further to this, the research found organisational policies help to embed community engagement practice by setting a clear intention to carry out community engagement. In addition, the research found creating an organisational ethos that values community engagement helps embed such practice and that museums with this ethos are more likely to attract workers who share a belief in the importance of community work. Furthermore, local and national policies, such as ACE and HLF policies, encouraged museum staff in my study to carry out community engagement and provided funding for this work. In addition, my research provides evidence that community engagement in 2013 and 2014 was not considered to be the role of one person or a team, such as learning and outreach. Although some museums still had such teams, community engagement appears to be just as likely to be undertaken by a curator as it is a learning or outreach officer. This is in contrast to Modest's (2013, 102) suggestion curators are rarely involved with community work. The range of staff who have a responsibility for working with communities is evidence that such work became more embedded in museums' core work in 2013 and 2014 and is a sign of effective inclusion work (Fleming 2012, 74; Nightingale and Mahal 2012, 14).

While austerity seems to have to been a catalyst that prompted museum workers to shift their practices in order to protect community engagement, as much as possible, from the effects of austerity, the embedding of community engagement in museums

in England seems to have also been part of a long process that includes the growth of new museological thinking, the development of Museum Studies qualifications that include a focus on community-focused work, and New Labour's emphasis on museums tackling social exclusion and funding for museums to try out projects and work that promoted social inclusion. Many of the findings of my research align with Sandell's (2003, 53-56) suggestions for factors which would support a shift in practice in the sector so that it better promoted social inclusion; namely, a change in attitudes of museum workers, committed leaders, and training for workers to help foster an understanding of the social role of museums. A decade after Sandell's article, the research shows there appears to have been a shift in the sector so that, in 2013 and 2014, community engagement was a valued and important element of museum work.

The practice revealed by my research suggests community engagement practice in museums in my study in 2013 and 2014 was, to consider Modest's theory (2013), more 'real' than 'symbolic', that is, embedded into the ethos of museums, of benefit to community partners and the museum, and sustainable. By developing long-term relationships with partners, prioritising community work, and embedding this work into core museum practice rather than relying on short-term funding for community projects, museums in 2013 and 2014 not only practised more resilient community engagement, but also engagement that moved beyond the tokenistic and the symbolic.

10.2 Resilience, Adaptability and Transformation

Looking at the findings from my research through the lens of a social-ecological model enables me to better consider the characteristics that make-up resilient community engagement practice. Resilience, as social-ecological theorists note, is "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function" (Walker et al 2004, 1). The research has provided evidence to suggest that, in 2013 and 2014, community engagement practice in English museums was resilient as museum workers shifted their practice (reorganised) in order to absorb the 'disturbance' of the cuts.

The research found individual museum workers were one of the factors that supported the resilience of community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014, which aligns with the theory human actors are key to managing and influencing the resilience of social-ecological systems (ibid, 3). Resilient community engagement practice is, in part, characterised by individuals who are passionate about community engagement and protect this practice from funding cuts; resilience relies on individuals acting in ways that ensure community engagement happens despite 'shocks to the system'. Museum workers in 2013 and 2014 helped sustained community engagement practice during the 'shock' of the cuts by widening their networks, creating and maintaining partnerships with community organisations, diversifying funding streams for community engagement, following organisational and local and national policies that

highlighted and advocated for community engagement practice, and embedding community at the core of their practice.

In being able and willing to adapt their community engagement practice to protect community engagement, as much as possible, from the cuts, museum workers in my study demonstrated they have adaptability, or the capacity, to influence resilience in a social-ecological system (ibid, 1). This is particularly important given that, according to social-ecological theory, this supports resilience, and helps the future resilience, of a system (ibid, 1). Adaptive capacity was also highlighted by Robinson (2010, 7) as being key to the resilience of arts organisations.

It is important to note resilient community engagement practice is not just created by individuals' behaviour, but by a combination of all of the factors identified in this research – individual, interpersonal, community, organisational and policy factors. Individuals' community engagement practice is enabled, and influenced, by senior leaders, partnerships with community organisations, organisational policies and ethoses, and local and national policies.

In social-ecological theory, the transformability of a system is its "capacity to create a fundamentally new system when ecological, economic, or social structures make the existing system untenable" (Walker et al 2004, 1). It is crucial for social-ecological systems to develop transformability, otherwise they may not be able to transform during shocks or disturbances to the system until it is too late (ibid, 6). The research

suggests community engagement practice in English museums in 2013 and 2014 demonstrated transformability. Faced with shrinking budgets that could have had a long-term negative effect on community engagement practice, as Newman and Tourle (2012, 298) warned it might, museum workers in my study ensured community engagement was shifted to the core of museum practice and embedded in museums so that it was protected, as much as possible, from the cuts.

10.3 Strengths and Weaknesses

It is important to consider strengths and weaknesses of the system that might support or detract from the resilience of community engagement practice in the event of future 'shocks' to the system, in particular further funding cuts. This supports understanding of how community engagement practice can continue to maintain its resilience in the future.

The research has demonstrated individual museum workers are a key strength; staff who believe in the social role of museums and shift their practice to ensure community engagement is protected, as much as possible, from funding cuts are vital to the resilience of community engagement practice. The sector must recognise and celebrate its workers and take steps to continue to recruit people who believe in the social role of museums, and are committed to such work, and encourage them to stay working in the sector. Bringing such people into the museum sector will also help ensure future sector leaders believe in the social role of museums, which is also an

important factor in resilient community engagement practice. The reliance on individual museum workers to adapt their practice so that it is resilient, however, could also be viewed as a potential weakness; losing staff, or reducing staff hours, due to funding cuts would mean the system becomes less resilient. In addition, the system would be weakened if museum workers' positive attitudes towards, and strong belief in, community engagement change; it is important those working in the sector continues to value community work. The crucial role of museum workers in contributing to the resilience of community engagement practice, and the implications of this for the museum sector, will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion.

Partnership working with community organisations is another key strength of the system. Partnerships support resilient engagement practice by helping museum workers deliver community engagement, bringing in funding – some of which comes from non-traditional funders - and resources that help enable practice. Community engagement practice would become less resilient if museum workers were not well-networked within their local community; it is important for people to have the time to network and to create sustainable partnerships. A lack of advocacy to potential partners also weakens the system as community organisations are less likely to enter into partnerships with museums if they do not feel museums can support them and their clients. My research provides evidence to suggest the museum sector – individual museums, workers and sector bodies – would be wise to prioritise advocacy to those outside the sector to help potential partners better understand how museums contribute to social outcomes, including health and wellbeing outcomes.

Advocacy about social impact may also lead to future funding (Lindqvist 2012, 9-10). Furthermore, advocacy to those outside the museum sector may also shift the public's perception so they better understand the social work of museums, which could encourage people to provide financial support, such as donations, and could help inspire the next generation of community-focused museum professionals to enter the sector, determined to make a difference to society. In order to advocate as effectively as possible, museums must evaluate community engagement initiatives and measure the impacts of this work on individuals and communities. In addition, those in the museum sector must understand language that needs to be utilised to encourage organisations outside the sector, such as health organisations, to partner with museums.

Organisational policies and having an organisational ethos that values community engagement are strengths as they demonstrate a commitment to undertake community engagement no matter what the funding landscape looks like, helping embed community engagement at the core of museum practice. The resilience of community engagement practice in a museum would be hindered should the museum not have in place policies that commit to community engagement, or a community-focused organisational ethos.

Finally, local and national policies support resilient community engagement practice by bringing funding to museums for community work and encouraging museum staff to work with communities. However, museums must not solely rely on external

funding to resource their community engagement practice; this practice would be unsustainable if this funding was cut – for example, when cuts are made to HLF funding in the near future -, and, in addition, may keep community work on the margins of museum practice.

A final word of caution: although community engagement practice in English museums was resilient in 2013 and 2014, there may be a point - if, for example, funding and resources are slashed entirely - at which museum workers will no longer be able to change their community engagement practice in order to protect it from the cuts and which affect other factors such as having time to develop external partnerships. Museum workers in my study certainly possessed a determination to keep working with communities, even if there is no funding for such work, but, being realistic, it is likely, at some point, it would become very difficult to undertake meaningful community engagement that has positive impacts on people and communities if funding was vastly reduced in the future. My research has provided evidence community engagement was embedded in museums in 2013 and 2014, but the sector should not be complacent and should work to ensure community engagement continues to be resilient, and thrive, in the future.

10.4 Towards a Definition of Resilient Community Engagement Practice

As those working in English museums in 2013 and 2014 appear, from my research, to have been trying hard to counteract the negative impact of the cuts, it is useful to look

again at why the predominant narrative that surrounded the cuts around the time of the research was one of crisis and a fight for survival, as seen in articles such as those by Kendall (2012), Davies (2012a), Kendall (2015a), Kendall (2015b) and Sullivan (2015b). One reason for this may be that such articles focused on topics such as the closure of museums and reduction of services, rather than specifically looking at community engagement practice in museums. This is understandable, as highlighting the negative effects of the cuts on museums has the potential to persuade stakeholders, including those in local and national government, to take action to help museums. However, one consequence of this largely negative reporting may be that such articles are somewhat hiding the excellent work those working in museums are doing, not least in relation to community engagement practice. Whilst it is incredibly important to report the devastating effects of the cuts to those both inside and outside the museum sector in order to try to advocate for future funding and support, the sector must also celebrate resilient practice. Shining a light on resilient practice has the potential to support those working in the sector to better understand how to make their own practice more resilient so that it is less reliant on funding and, therefore, less likely to come to an end if funding is reduced. After all, Woodward (2012) suggests museums should not expect increased government funding, at least in the current financial climate. In addition, if, as Janes (2010, 334) argues, that "marketplace success", including, for example, shop sales and donations, are not resilient, the museum sector must look to further ways to be resilient than solely thinking in terms of money and finance. I propose it is incumbent upon those in the museum sector to look for ways in which to work that is less reliant on funding. At

the time of writing, in 2018, this seems even more urgent given the imminent significant decrease in HLF funding for heritage projects.

The prevailing narrative of crisis in relation to the cuts may also partially be due to the lived experiences of those working in the sector; for example, seeing services and budgets being reduced, museums being closed, and staff losing their jobs as a result of the cuts, may understandably lead to great pessimism about the cuts. It is clear austerity has caused pain to those within the museum sector, and this study does not aim to in any way to be unsympathetic to the devastating effects the cuts have had; every museum and service lost is a huge loss to its community and others, every budget cut means those working in the affected museums have to make incredibly difficult choices, every person who loses their job has to go through the great pain of losing their income – which can also negatively affect those who are financially dependent on them - and what can be the immense struggle of finding new employment. These are the very real human costs of the cuts and should not be underestimated.

Finally, sector literature that seems to link resilience with funding (Newman and Tourle 2012, 298; G. Evans 2012; Evans 2013; MA 2014; Sullivan 2015b) perhaps gives the impression money is the only way in which to achieve resilient practice. Like Robinson (2010), BOP (2012), TBR (2015) and AIM (2016) argue, my research provides evidence that resilience – in particular, in my study, in relation to community engagement practice - is about more than simply money, or funding;

‘resilience’ should be considered a more holistic concept that encompasses a range of factors. Funding is important – museums would close if no money was available for them whatsoever via, for example, funders, admission fees or donations – but, to achieve resilient community engagement practice, this research suggests it is more important to prioritise community engagement and embed this at the core of museum practice. Resilient practice – at least, resilient community engagement practice - requires more than money. Indeed, solely relying on funding is the antithesis of resilient community engagement practice as it places pressure on museums to continue to gain funding for this work, can prevent community engagement practice from moving from the margins to the core of museum practice, and can lead to museum workers not working as strategically as they might.

10.5 Conclusion

The characteristics of resilient community engagement practice, which were evident in English museums in my study in 2013 and 2014, are museum workers who believe that museums have a social responsibility and are passionate about community engagement, sector leaders who believe in the social role of museums and create a community-focused ethos in their museum, strong and sustainable partnerships with community organisations, organisational policies and ethoses that value and commit to community engagement, and local and national policies that value community engagement and provide funding for community work. These findings suggest museum workers who are looking to increase the resilience of their community

engagement practice must ensure that, as much as possible, all of these factors are in place at their museum. Whilst funding, or money, supports resilient practice, it is important to recognise funding alone does not make community engagement resilient. Indeed, too much reliance on external funding both leaves community engagement vulnerable to funding cuts and can keep community engagement on the margins of museum practice.

Though austerity undoubtedly had a negative impact on the museum sector - for instance, leading to museum closures, job losses and reductions in services, all of which can be devastating for museum staff and communities and should not be dismissed – the cuts seem to have been a catalyst for bringing community engagement to the core of museum practice and making community engagement more resilient. A reduction in funding led to museums moving away from short-term funded community projects and more strategic, focused community engagement practice. The cuts also acted as a catalyst that made museum workers, who strongly believed in the social role of museums, shift their practice in order to protect community engagement, as much as possible, from the effects of austerity.

The practice revealed by my research suggests community engagement practice in English museums in 2013 and 2014 was, to apply Modest's concepts (2013, 99), more 'real' than 'symbolic'; that is, embedded into the ethos of museums, of benefit to community partners and the museum, and sustainable. By developing long-term relationships with partners, and prioritising community work, embedding this into

practice rather than relying on short-term funding for community projects, museums in my study were not only practising more resilient community engagement, but also engagement that moved beyond the tokenistic and the symbolic.

Chapter 11: Conclusions

11.0 Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore what community engagement practice looked like in English museums in 2013 and 2014, during the context of austerity. Secondary research questions explored the impact of the knowledge culture on community engagement practices, why people in the museums sector practice community engagement, what effect austerity had on community engagement in museums, what effect organisational and local and national policies have on community engagement in museums, and how resilient community engagement in museums might be characterised.

In order to answer my research question, I carried out 15 semi-structured interviews with staff working in curatorial, community, learning, and senior managerial roles in nine museums across the North and East of England and the Midlands. The study encompassed National Museums, a University Museum, a museum part of a Local Museum Trust, and a small Independent Museum. At the time of my research, four of the museums were ACE Major Partner Museums. Of the people I interviewed, all but one interviewee – who only received a modest grant from the local council which covered the costs of one member of staff - had experienced cuts to their museums through the loss of ACE grants and/or direct cuts from local and national government. One interviewee spoke in the knowledge their museum was about to receive another

significant cut. This real – in most cases - or potential threat to funding had led to all the interviewees working and thinking in a different way as they dealt with, or wanted to be prepared for, cuts.

Undertaking qualitative interviews with research participants enabled me to take a look behind negative articles about the effects of austerity on museums to understand how austerity and the cuts affected a specific element of museum practice – that of community engagement – 'on the ground' in museums in England. The findings of the research were much more positive than I had expected prior to undertaking my fieldwork; rather than finding a sector in crisis, I discovered community engagement practice in the museums in my study was thriving due to a number of factors: museum professionals who were dedicated to carrying out community-focused work and strongly believed in the social role of museums, and had shifted their practice so that it was protected, as much as possible, from the cuts; museum leaders, community partnerships, organisational policies and ethoses, and local and national policies. The study provides evidence community engagement practice in English museums between 2013 and 2014 was resilient and embedded into the core of museum practice.

My thesis was structured into 11 chapters. Chapter 1 placed the research in context and outlined the aims and theoretical context of this original piece of research.

Chapter 2 set out the theories and literature that put this thesis in context. This literature review identified key theories about community engagement, including

what community engagement practice in museums looks like, why museum professionals carry out community engagement, and what criticisms have been made about museums' community engagement practice. After addressing community engagement practice in museums, the literature review explored the effects of austerity on the museum sector.

Chapter 3 explained how I designed this original piece of qualitative research that explored a subject which was under-researched at the time of my study.

Chapter 4 introduced social-ecological theory and the social-ecological model, the theoretical framework I used to help explain the findings of my research. Although some scholars, for example, Robinson (2010), Jung (2011) and Taylor (2017), have utilised ecological and systems thinking to explore and explain cultural and museological phenomena, this appears to still be a fairly new way of thinking in Museum Studies. Employing a social-ecological model enabled me to take a nuanced look at the resilience of community engagement in museums. Using the model, I was able to, for example, better consider how each of the factors identified by the research influence individuals' behaviour and their influence on community engagement practice. In doing this, I have been able to put forward practical suggestions for how the museum sector might ensure the future resilience of community engagement practice in museums.

Chapters 5 to 9 presented, and offered analysis of, the data collected during this research. Each chapter was themed around one level of the social-ecological model I put forward in Chapter 4: Individual, Interpersonal, Community, Organisational, and Policy.

Chapter 5 looked at the reasons why museum workers practice community engagement. It considered the influence of individuals' personal histories, museum workers' desire to do 'meaningful' work, and the belief among museum professionals that museums are places where meaningful work is done and which have a duty to do work that has positive impacts on individuals and communities. In addition, the chapter discussed the concept of knowledge culture and suggested knowledge culture in museums is moving towards valuing, and understanding, community engagement practice. The thesis suggested individual museum workers are a key factor in the resilience of community engagement practice.

Chapter 6 explored the influence of museum leaders who create community-focused ethos in their institutions and who set a direction for what community engagement practice looks like at a museum. The research found community engagement practice can be influenced, and inspired by, leaders who strongly believe in the social role of museums, and that leaders are able to build organisations in which community engagement is embedded into core practice.

Chapter 7 looked at the partnerships museum workers created and maintained with community organisations which supported them to work with communities. The research discovered the partnerships were partially created to counteract the effects of the funding cuts, but that there were also other reasons why partnerships were formed, including accessing specialist knowledge and as a means to better reach communities. The research found museum workers in the study were making the effort to maintain these partnerships so that they were sustainable and non-tokenistic. In addition, the research discovered evidence museums need to do more to evaluate the impacts of their community engagement work and advocate for this work to potential partners.

Chapter 8 explored organisational policies and ethoses museums have in place that enable community engagement to take place and set a direction for community engagement practice. The research found having a strong community-focused organisational ethos in place means museums are more likely to allocate resources to community engagement, even in times of reduced funding, and that community work is more likely to be embedded at the core of museum practice.

Chapter 9 explored local and national policies, such as those of ACE and the HLF, that guide and enable community engagement practice. The research discovered such policies set a direction for community engagement practice, influencing which groups museums work with, and enable community engagement by encouraging museum staff to work with communities and providing funding for this work.

Chapter 10 brought the findings presented in Chapters 5 to 9 together to consider the characteristics of resilient community engagement practice in museums. The thesis makes a case for considering resilience in a holistic way, as meaning more than simply having money.

11.1 Outcomes from the Research

The research identified the key aspects of community engagement practice English museums in 2013 and 2014. Community engagement practice at this time, in the museums in my study, tended to address local community need and served communities located in the same geographic settings as a museum. This suggests the museums were, to use Hatton's (2012) concept, 'locally oriented'. Janes (2010, 335) suggests museums need to become "locally-embedded problem solver[s], in tune with the challenges and aspirations of their communities", which he terms the 'mindful museum'. My research suggests museums are moving towards such a model. Museums can be helped to continue to serve local communities in this way by museum workers who are committed to understanding community need, are well-networked in the community, and who work with partners who have specialist skills and knowledge and can act as gatekeepers who can help museum workers to reach communities.

Although the type of community engagement work practiced in 2013 and 2014 was varied in each museum in the study, the research found this practice was largely

rooted in social inclusion and bringing about positive outcomes for individuals and communities. Health and wellbeing initiatives were also prevalent. The type of community engagement practised by museums in my study is particularly influenced by organisational, local and national policies, and individuals' priorities, as was the case in the museum that prioritised working with Looked After Children because of a previous departmental leaders' large and impressive body of work in this area.

In addition, partnership working was a key element of community engagement practice in English museums in 2013 and 2014. Partnerships supported museum workers in my study to undertake community engagement work and, although it is perhaps a concern that, in some cases, museums appeared to be dependent on partners to deliver core functions of their work, the act of creating partnerships demonstrates museum workers took action to help protect community engagement from the effects of austerity. Partnerships also enabled museums to access new funding that diversified their funding streams; diversifying funding helps to ensure long-term financial sustainability. In addition, the research found museum professionals in my study were working in ways that sustained partnerships in the long-term; partnerships were less tokenistic and more embedded in core museum practice.

The research explored the effects of austerity on community engagement practice in English museums in 2013 and 2014. While the prevailing narrative of the effects of austerity on museums in the national and sector press has been one of crisis, my research provides evidence that community engagement in museums in England

during 2013 and 2014 was thriving. Austerity seems to have been a crisis that led to change. The research found austerity was a catalyst that prompted museum workers in my study, who strongly believed in the social role of museums, to shift their practice in order to protect community engagement work, as much as possible, from the cuts, creating partnerships and – crucially – sustainable partnerships that were not tokenistic, looking for alternative sources of funding themselves or through partners, and working in a more focused, strategic way. In addition, during 2013 and 2014, museums in my study allocated core budget to community work and made community engagement the responsibility of staff across the museum, not just those working in more traditional community roles. All of these findings show austerity led to community engagement being more embedded at the core of museum practice in the museums in my study. The research suggests that, in successfully adapting and altering their practice to deal with the 'shock' of austerity, museum workers showed they have adaptability. The key role that the study found was played by museum workers in ensuring community engagement practice was resilient during the cuts aligns with Davies' (2013b) view that the commitment of museum workers helped museums to thrive – with high levels of public participation and delivering social impacts - despite the financial cuts. Furthermore, community engagement practice in 2013 and 2014 had transformability, being flexible enough to be altered to protect it from the cuts.

Although, in some cases, the cuts led to a reduction in the amount of community engagement work taking place in the museums in my study, and a change in the type

of community engagement – for example, moving from delivering workshops to consulting with audiences – it does not appear austerity led to community engagement practice in English museums becoming less meaningful in 2013 and 2014; indeed, the practice illustrated in this thesis appeared to empower participants, enabled them to tell their own stories in a museum space, shared decision-making with them, and sought, and valued, their expertise.

The move towards embedding community engagement at the core of museum practice was not just borne out of austerity, but also a frustration amongst museum workers about short-term projects that were not as meaningful, or impactful, as they could have been. This aligns with the theories of Lynch (2011, 6) and Morse and Munro (2015, 13). In addition, this embedding of community engagement in museums seems to have also been part of a long process that includes the growth of new museological thinking, the development of Museum Studies qualifications that include a focus on community-focused work, and New Labour's emphasis on museums tackling social exclusion and funding for museums to try out projects and work that promoted social inclusion. Community engagement in English museums in 2013 and 2014 appears to have been more 'real' than 'symbolic', to use Modest's (2013, 99) concepts; that is, embedded into the ethos of a museum, of benefit to community partners and the museum, and sustainable.

The reluctance of museum workers to engage in social issues described by authors such as Sandell (1998, 411-412), Sandell (2003, 51) and Beel (2011, 3) appears to

have been replaced with an enthusiasm for community engagement amongst museum workers. Even during a time of reduced funding, those working in the museums I explored ensured they continued to undertake community engagement and that this engagement was meaningful. Museum workers appear to have these views, and practice community engagement, for a number of reasons. First, their personal histories, including participating in Museum Studies Masters and working in non-museum community-focused roles prior to working in museums, has given them a strong belief in the social role of museums; they perceive museums as places which are able to make a positive difference to people's lives. Museum Studies Masters that focus on community engagement have the potential to highlight the importance of such work to students who are more likely to go on to undertake community-focused work in museums, particularly if the museum they work in is receptive to such practice. New museological literature also has an impact on those working in the sector, influencing them to work in community-focused ways. In addition, the museum workers I interviewed believed museums have a duty to practice community engagement, which includes undertaking work that has positive impacts for individuals and communities and enables individuals to enact their cultural rights. Finally, the research suggests museum professionals, particularly, it seems, those in learning and engagement roles, are partially drawn to the museum sector because they want to do work that 'makes a difference'; this desire does not diminish when faced with austerity. People who undertake work that is meaningful are more likely to be motivated to do work, which means the museum sector has the potential to benefit from a workforce that is motivated and hard-working.

Unexpectedly finding that community engagement practice in English museums in 2013 and 2014 appeared to be thriving led me to consider why this was the case; what characteristics make-up resilient community engagement practice? Significantly, the research found funding alone does not create resilient community engagement practice in museums. In addition, relying on external funding to resource community engagement practice can keep this work at the margins of museum practice, as suggested by Lynch (2011, 5). As previously asserted, the research found workers are a key factor in the resilience of community engagement practice, along with museum staff and leaders who believe in the social role of museums, partnerships with community organisations, organisational ethoses and policies that value community engagement, and local and national policies that provide funding for, and encourage, community engagement. The findings of this research suggest funding alone does not make community engagement practice resilient and museum workers must, rather, ensure all the factors that make up resilient community engagement practice are in place at their museum.

It seems there has been a quiet museum revolution that has changed the face of museums, at least in the museums in which I conducted my research. This has possibly been less acknowledged than it might have been by museums because of an anxiety about discussing the excellent practice that has happened during austerity in case this leads local and national governments to believe the cuts have not had any effect on practice. Here, it is important to note the cuts did indeed negatively affect

some museum practice, such as operations, and no government should think museums can survive without any funding at all or vastly reduced funding. The research provides some evidence that, during 2013 and 2014, museums delivered community engagement on less money and practised less tokenistic, more strategic and more embedded community work. This offers an important lesson that public money does not always equate to better services and funding alone does not create resilient community engagement practice. The research suggests that, rather than often focusing on the negative aspects of the cuts, the museum sector should be more pragmatic, acknowledging that people in the sector are achieving excellent practice with very modest budgets, and advocating for this work to governments and funders, explaining that receiving an increase in funding would enable museums to do even more to deliver work that has positive impacts on individuals and communities. In addition, if the sector does receive an increase in funding in the future, museums should continue to work in ways that embeds community engagement practice and should not demote this practice to the margins of museums, funded largely by external grants. Community engagement must continue to be embedded, sustainable and non-tokenistic.

11.2 Implications for the Museum Sector

The findings of this research can support the museum sector to better understand what can be done in order to support the future resilience of community engagement practice. The research found individual workers are key to the resilience of

community engagement practice, but what can the sector do to influence individual museum workers' behaviours in order to ensure practice continues to be resilient?

First, resilient community engagement practice can be supported by museum workers being positive towards community engagement practice and believing this is an important area of museum practice so they are more likely to undertake community work. The importance of community engagement can be impressed upon both future and present museum workers through Museum Studies Masters, museological literature, training courses, and via colleagues and networks. It is important to note the research discovered evidence that learning on Museum Studies Masters is often transferred to museum practice by students when they enter the workplace; such courses have the potential to first inspire people to value community engagement and then to practice community engagement in museums.

The sector must acknowledge the key role museum workers play in contributing to the resilience of community engagement practice and continue to recruit people who are passionate about community engagement and, crucially, also retain these workers. Low pay and short-term contracts are prevalent in museums and the sector may be in danger of taking hard-working museum professionals for granted, assuming they will stay working in museums because of a love of their work; however, enjoying, and being passionate about, work does not pay the bills. A museum professional who can no longer afford to support themselves on their poor wages, or can no longer bear the uncertainty of short-term contracts, may be forced to leave the sector, even if their

work means a great deal to them. The museum sector must consider how to retain these valuable museum professionals, which, ideally, should include raising levels of pay and providing more secure, permanent positions.

Leaders in the sector have a great role to play in influencing and inspiring community engagement practice at their museum. Recruiting leaders who have a passion for community engagement, and a strong belief in the social role of museums, and encouraging museum leaders to value community engagement, should help ensure that individual museum workers continue to value and practice community engagement.

Partnership working helps enable individual museum workers to practice community engagement. The research found the sector still seems to lack, to some extent, appropriate evaluation, and, in some cases, the language, to effectively advocate for its community engagement work to potential partners. Ineffective advocacy can lead to potential partners deciding not to work with museums. Although those working in the museum sector often discuss the social impacts of museum work with others in the sector - for example, at conferences and via social media - it is essential to improve advocacy to organisations in other sectors, such as health and wellbeing organisations. Partners are essential in bringing in crucial expertise, sharing resources, helping museums connect to harder to reach groups, bringing in non-traditional funding sources, and helping embed community engagement into the core of museum practice. In order to improve advocacy to other sectors, museums must collect robust

evidence that proves the impact of community engagement work on individuals and communities and which specifically focuses on the impacts that are relevant to potential partners – for example, an organisation working with people with low literacy levels will want to understand how museum initiatives can improve literacy. Advocacy must speak the language of potential partners in order to ensure staff working at partner organisations better understand how museums can support the people with whom they work, or help them meet their organisational missions and aims. Advocacy should also extend to local and national governments in order to encourage them to offer future funding. Training for museum professionals, which helps them to better evaluate and advocate for, community engagement work, including how to speak the language of potential partners, should be offered by the sector and should be included in Museum Studies courses.

Organisational policies and ethoses that promote and encourage community engagement practice influence the behaviour of museum workers. Therefore, museums that value community work should set this out in a mission statement or policy, or at least create an organisational ethos that values community engagement and that is bought into by museum staff. The more staff who value community engagement, the more likely a museum is to develop a community-focused ethos.

Finally, local and national policies, such as those of ACE and the HLF, advocate for community work and help to enable and fund this work. Local and national policy makers must continue to advocate, and provide funding, for community engagement

in order to support the future resilience of this practice. However, funders should encourage museum workers to consider ways in which community work that is funded on a short-term basis will be embedded into practice in the long-term, even if only certain aspects of practice are able to be embedded; this issue could be included in funder guidance notes, for example, and asked as a question on funding application forms. The sector must not consider community engagement to be an 'add-on' that only happens when funding is available and is, therefore, at the margins of museum practice. National and local governments could also support future community engagement practice by providing further funding for museums to support them to contribute to agendas such as health and wellbeing.

11.3 Limitations of the Research

Although the limitations of the study enabled me to explore my research question in depth and to complete the research in the time available, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge these limitations.

I have argued my sample size enabled me to reach 'saturation', the point at which no new data appeared and theories were developed. It should be noted that Glaser and Strauss suggested at least ten interviews were required in order to reach saturation, which provides further evidence that my research reached this point. However, I acknowledge that, had I interviewed a larger sample of people, including, potentially,

those working in different roles and at other museums, my findings may have been different.

The period I chose to study – 2013 and 2014 – also limited my research. Further reflections on this decision and its potential consequences can be found in the Epilogue. Looking in-depth at a fairly short period of time enabled me to take a snapshot of community engagement practice in museums in England at the time of my research, but my findings may have been different if I had conducted my fieldwork during a different period or over a longer period of time. The Epilogue discusses the impact of the cuts on museums from 2015 to 2018.

I chose not to explore the experiences of those who participated in museums' community engagement initiatives, nor the experiences of those working in community organisations that worked in partnership with museums at the time. Neither of these explorations was possible within the time available and, furthermore, I wanted to specifically understand museum practice, and the experiences of those working in the museum sector, rather than the experiences of participants or those working in partner organisations; this was beyond the boundaries of the research. However, I acknowledge that, had I interviewed people in either of these groups, I may have come to different conclusions. For example, I may have concluded, in Chapter 7, that community organisations working in partnership with museums have equal, or less, power than museum partners; or that people who participated in

community engagement activities at the time did not feel as empowered as they might have done.

Going into the interviews with a focus on how museum professionals made decisions about which hard-to-reach groups to work with may have affected my dataset; in particular, interviewees may have been more likely to discuss social inclusion initiatives with me than other areas of community engagement practice. However, although social inclusion initiatives were mentioned by interviewees, it is important to note they actually talked about a wide-range of initiatives, which is one of the reasons why I expanded my research to look at broader community engagement practice. I was also guided by interviewees' responses during the interviews, which particularly focused on wide-ranging community engagement practice, their views on community engagement, partnership working, and organisational, local and national policies. My interpretation of the data reflects the key issues and topics that were raised by interviewees during the course of my fieldwork.

Although I allowed myself to be guided by interviewees' responses, the set of core questions that I asked of each interviewee - which focused, for example, on interviewees' personal views of work with hard-to-reach groups and reasons for doing this work, interviewees' backgrounds prior to working in their current role, the role of policies and funders in influencing practice, factors that influence decisions about which groups to work with, and views on the role of museums in society - almost certainly had an impact on the data I collected. However, it was important to have a

set of core interview questions that enabled me to conduct focused and useful interviews and ensured there was some similarity between what each interviewee was asked. Conducting semi-structured interviews enabled me to explore further points and topics with each individual interviewee, which were guided by interviewees' unique responses. This enabled me to gain a deeper insight into the individual experiences of each interviewee, which I compared and contrasted when analysing the data. In addition, each interviewee was given the opportunity to provide further comments on any topic they wished to at the end of the interview.

Finally, I decided to specifically study the effects of austerity on community engagement practice in museums. I do not suggest austerity affected every area of museum practice in the same way; indeed, studies such as the MA Cuts Surveys suggest that areas such as operations were negatively affected by the cuts, with reductions in opening hours, for example. Further research is needed to explore the effects of austerity on other areas of museum practice.

11.4 Future Research

The results of this study have several implications for future research.

First, I used a social-ecological model as a theoretical framework via which to explain my research. Future research could test this model in relation to other areas of museum practice, such as collections work or fundraising practice, to explore both the

extent to which these areas are resilient and the factors that influence individual museum workers' behaviours in these areas of practice.

Second, to my knowledge, the issue of the effects of austerity upon museums' community engagement practice have not been thoroughly studied, apart from the notable exception of Morse and Munro's 2015 study. Future research could test the theory I have put forward by looking at community engagement practice at other museums. This would help to understand whether the findings I came to following my fieldwork in 2013 and 2014 are still relevant to museums' community engagement practice post-2014. Research that came to similar conclusions about the factors that make up resilient community engagement practice in museums would provide further evidence for my theory. Further research would also result in a more comprehensive understanding of the extent to which austerity affects community engagement practice, and what factors make-up resilient community engagement practice.

Finally, future research could explore the extent to which other areas of museum practice are affected by austerity. While my research discovered community engagement was not adversely affected by austerity in 2013 and 2014, it would be interesting to find out whether this is similar for other areas of museum practice. Future research in this area could help to uncover whether other areas of museum practice are as important to museum workers as my research has found community engagement to be; is the social role of museums considered to be more important than

the collecting or conservation roles of museums, for example? In addition, research into the extent to which austerity affects other areas of museum practice may help to uncover other ways in which museums are resilient or may support understanding of how overall museum practice can become more resilient.

Chapter 12: Epilogue

In the time since I conducted my fieldwork, cuts to museums have increased. For example, the government's 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review saw the DCMS' budget reduced by 5% overall – which was less than the 25% to 40% cuts the Department had been asked to model for – and a 29% cut to the DCLG (Apollo 2015). There is also evidence in the press and via the MA's Cuts Surveys that museums have been negatively impacted by the cuts post-2014.

National press articles about the impact of museum cuts, found via an internet search for 'museum austerity', often portray the negative effects of the cuts post-2014. In a 2015 article in the *Financial Times*, for example, Stephen Deuchar, Chief Executive of the Art Fund, asserted museums faced a "grim outlook" (Pickford, 2015). In the same year, Burgess (2015) reported on museum closures in *The Times*, stating over 40 museums had closed between 2010 and 2015 because of council cuts. A 2016 article in *The Guardian* contemplated whether regional galleries can "survive the cuts" (Douglas, 2016) and likened funding cuts to galleries as "asphyxiation", a bold and graphic term that leaves the reader in no doubt as to the author's views of the cuts.

Moving to articles in 2018, reporting of the negative impact of cuts to museums can largely be found in *The Guardian*[4]. O'Keeffe (2018) pleads for the protection of

[4] It is interesting that such reporting appears to mainly be found in the left-leaning *Guardian*. A search for 'museums austerity' on *The Sun* website, for example, only resulted in one article and this did not focus on museums at all. It was a piece denouncing an article by US journalist Peter S Goodman who

museums from the cuts and not taking them for granted, and Brown (2018) reports on Sir David Cannadine's investigation into museum collecting which warned that museum collecting is at risk due to a lack of funding. *The Mirror* provides one 2018 report on the impact of austerity on public places – including museums – which discusses the cuts leading to the closure of public places by local authorities and expresses concern that this makes it more difficult for working class people to access such spaces (Wynne Jones, 2018).

From these articles, it is clear that in the years 2015 to 2018, the financial outlook for museums has been difficult; the effects of the closure of over 40 museums, for example, on staff, volunteers and communities cannot be underestimated. However, these articles do not provide a specific focus on the state of community engagement in museums during this time period, with authors instead writing more broadly about the effects of the cut or about the impact of the cuts on collections and the issue of access in relation to museum closure.

Sector articles and research about the effects of the cuts on museums also offer a negative viewpoint, which is unsurprising as the sector has faced challenges that have negatively impacted on museums and because the sector press is aimed at readers

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had argued in a piece for the New York Times (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/28/world/europe/uk-austerity-poverty.html) that austerity was changing everything in the UK. My research was not about public perceptions of cuts to museums or the perceived impact of austerity on museums and so it is difficult to offer evidenced reasons for this reporting. However, the lack of articles in a broad range of the national press provides some evidence to suggest that – as put forward in my research - the museum sector has to do much more to advocate more widely for museums and public funding for museums in order to better permeate public discourse around funding for museums.

who are working in the sector and is therefore potentially more sympathetic to the negative impacts of the cuts. In 2018, for example, *Arts Professional* (n.a., 2018) reported local authority budgets have decreased by £48million since 2013 and spend on culture has been reallocated or cut to zero at four more councils in 2018. Reporting on data from local authority revenue budgets for 2018/19, the article states in 2013/14, budgeted culture spend was £439million across 443 local authorities and since 2014/15, funding given to the arts has decreased year on year (ibid 2018).

Articles on the MA website that discuss museum cuts post-2014 often use negative, emotive language to describe the impact of the cuts on museums, suggesting a feeling of anger, despair, and even grief. For example, reporting in 2015 on the MA's recent Cuts Survey, Kendall uses negative language such as "hollowed-out services" (Kendall 2015a) in an article about the impact of the cuts on museums. Kendall's article also includes strong, emotive language to describe the state of museums, such as the suggestion that "…other museums are deteriorating" and that museums must – according to the title of the piece, "Adapt or die" (ibid)[5]. In an article entitled, '*The grim fallout of funding cuts*', A. Brown (2015, 17) voices concern about the impact of 40% cuts on museums, and argues museums may only "avoid the worst" by advocating to policy makers and the public and demonstrating "why museums matter" (ibid, 17). The use of the word 'grim' and the term 'avoid the worst' provide

[5] The article does, however, offer a positive example of a museum service working in ways that attempt to lessen the effect of the cuts; Barnsley Museums has advocated for the role the museum has to play in the town to the public and local businesses, which has led to the museum being considered vital to the local "economy, wellbeing and quality of life" (A. Brown 2015, 17).

further examples of emotive language being used by authors to highlight the negative impact of the cuts. In addition, an article in March 2016 by Sullivan (2016, 13) reports on the impact of museum closures on communities in terms of the loss of an institution that is embedded within the community, loss of money, and loss of museum professionals and volunteers (ibid, 13). Like earlier articles, Sullivan's text uses powerful language, such as describing museums as "fall[ing] victim to local authority cuts" and referring to each museum that has been closed as a "casualty". The language used appears to be intended to have a hard-hitting, emotive effect on the reader; the medical language utilised by Kendall and Sullivan almost personifies museums, casting them as dying or dead.

The 2015 MA Cuts Survey also provides data on the impact of the cuts on museums post-2014. The survey found the cuts had led to, for example, reduced opening hours, more reliance on volunteers and the introduction of admission fees (MA 2015, 3) and that – of particular relevance to my research – many museum workers voiced concern there were likely to be reductions to outreach and community work in the year ahead. However, there is clear evidence to suggest participation was still a top priority at the time, with 61% of respondents – higher than in previous years – saying they were going to focus on this area in the year ahead (ibid, 11). Learning and outreach and projects that deliver social impact were also amongst respondents' top priorities (ibid, 11).

A search on the MA website for 2018 articles about the impact of the cuts on museums in England – via a search for 'museum cuts' - resulted in ten articles between January and August 2018. The majority of these articles focus on the threat of cuts to Local Authority museums - for example, reporting on cuts to specific museum services as a result of local council cuts (Knott 2018a; Picheta 2018; Steel 2018a) and risks to museums that might arise from council cuts (Sharp 2018; Steel 2018b). The focus on Local Authority museums is unsurprising as these museums are perhaps at more risk than others, as they are more likely to be affected by cuts to the Local Authorities. However, it is important to note the focus on Local Authority museums neglects the current impact of the cuts on non-Local Authority museums, which accounts for a large section of the museum sector; from these reports alone, we cannot tell the extent to which other museums are being affected by cuts or, specific to my research, any impact that the cuts had on museum community engagement practice between 2015 and 2018.

These articles in the national and sector press leave the reader in no doubt the cuts have had a multitude of negative impacts on museums in England, with perhaps the worst of these impacts being the closure of a number of museums, which can have devastating consequences for staff, volunteers and communities. Since I completed my fieldwork, the funding situation for museums has evidently become more difficult and, had I interviewed participants between 2015 and 2018, my findings might have been different. However, it is impossible to know for sure what my research might have uncovered had I undertaken research from 2015 to 2018, particularly since

articles and research about the cuts to museums so rarely specifically focus on the extent to which community engagement work has been affected by the cuts. Whilst research conducted between 2015 and 2018 could well have uncovered a more depleted sector, and a sector facing enormous financial challenges, anecdotally at least, the prevalence of community engagement discourse at current museum conferences[6] suggests that the funding challenges faced by museums – however difficult – have not necessarily discouraged museum professionals from practising community engagement between 2015 and 2018. If community engagement was no longer of interest to museum professionals, or the sector as a whole, or if museums professionals were no longer undertaking community engagement, it could be assumed that sector conferences would not feature this topic and nor would speakers be in a position to offer current case studies about community work. Another piece of evidence that suggests community work is still a focus in museums is the MA's 2018 Museums Survey, which found that, although museums that are funded by local authorities, in particular, are facing financial difficulty (Knott 2018b), with reports of reductions in funds from 39% of local authority museums and 54% of independent museums (ibid), socially impactful work is a "strong and increasing focus" (ibid) in

[6] The 2018 MA conference in Belfast (https://museums2018.insightmobilecms.co.uk/web/menu/147), for example, has sessions on 'Creating spaces for young people', 'Building community capacity', 'Dissent and hope in changing communities', 'Creating inclusive spaces for people living with a disability', 'Museums change lives: a toolkit to measure socially-engaged practice', 'Connecting museums and communities', and 'Talking co-production'. The 2018 AIM conference at the British Motor Museum (https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/AIM-National-Conference-2018-Delegate-Handbook.pdf) had sessions on diversifying audiences, broadening engagement, and building empathy with people who museums are trying to engage. MuseumNext London (https://www.museumnext.com/conference_history/london-2/), in June 2018, had sessions about community collaboration and OFBYFOR ALL – a Nina Simon initiative to support cultural organisations to become of, by and for their communities. In September 2018, the MA is also holding a conference on the theme of how to embed community participation in museums (https://www.museumsassociation.org/news/25072018-full-programme-for-community-participation-conference-unveiled).

museums, with a rise in the number of museums working non-traditional groups or vulnerable groups and evidence from respondents of a commitment to focus on such work in the future.

Despite the incredibly challenging financial climate it appears that, even in 2018 after years of cuts, museums are still actively pursuing a level of community work and are more than the stark repositories that Newman and Tourle warned of in 2012 (Newman and Tourle 2012, 298). Further research that explores the impact of austerity and the cuts on community engagement work in museums from 2015 to 2018 (and beyond) would be welcome in order to look in more detail at this specific area of museum practice rather than the broad effect of the cuts. In addition, further sector research that specifically looks at the effect of austerity on community engagement practice in museums would help shed further light on this issue.

12.1 Final Reflections

I took the decision to focus on the years 2013 and 2014 when researching community engagement in museums during the age of austerity. This decision was largely taken for practical reasons; I began my PhD studies in 2012 and so, after spending time formulating my research in the first year of my studies, I was ready to commence my fieldwork in late 2013 and continued this into 2014. As I was writing up my thesis, I took time out for personal reasons. On coming back to my studies, my supervisor and I discussed whether I should follow-up my fieldwork and go back to my research

participants for up-to-date data or whether I should continue to write-up my findings from 2013 to 2014. I decided the data I had collected in 2013 and 2014 provided a unique insight into what was happening, with regards to community engagement, in the museums I looked at that time; data that would be impossible to replicate and that provided a snapshot into sector practices that – owing to its uniqueness - would be of value to future researchers. I hope my research has given some small insight that goes beyond the headlines of articles in the mainstream and sector press – those of museums in crisis – to uncover thriving community engagement practice during this difficult financial time. Whilst I would in no way assume to have convinced the reader to agree with my conclusions, I hope my thesis has provided a study which is of use to researchers of museums, community engagement practice and the impacts of the cuts on museums.

When I began my research, I did not think I would come to the conclusions I have set out in my thesis – that resilient community engagement practice was happening during 2013 and 2014. Indeed, my political opposition to austerity contributed to making my PhD journey a challenging one as I started to uncover a picture of thriving community practice that seemed at odds with the prevailing narrative around the effect of the cuts on museums. Writing this epilogue, nearly six years after beginning my PhD journey, I can say for certain that, whilst I still do not politically agree with the ideology of austerity, I believe, with the right factors in place, it is possible to undertake resilient community engagement work in museums in the context of austerity and funding cuts. This said, it is also my belief community engagement

work could be increased, with the potential to reach more people, if the cuts were reversed.

Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

What is this study about?
This study is looking at how museum professionals choose which hard-to-reach groups to target.

Who is organising this study?
The study is being organised by Laura Crossley, a PhD student in the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. My personal profile on the University website can be accessed here:
http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/research-degrees/phd-student-research/Laura_Crossley

The research is being funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

What is the purpose of the research?
My research looks at the external and internal factors that influence museum professionals when they decide which hard-to-reach groups to target both generally and for specific social inclusion projects.

The interviews I undertake will help me build a picture of how museum professionals decide which hard-to-reach groups to target. Interviews will be conducted in conjunction with:

- Observations of museum professionals' related work activities, for example social inclusion planning sessions (if relevant)
- Analysis of relevant literature and policies

Why have I been invited to take part in the research?
You are being invited to take part in this study as a museum professional who makes decisions regarding which hard-to-reach groups you and/or your museum target both generally and for specific social inclusion projects.

Each participant must:
- Currently work at a museum, or be affiliated to a museum (for example, work for a museum funder).
- Be involved in making decisions about which hard-to-reach groups your museum targets.

What will be my role in the project?
You will be interviewed by me in your work place or, if inconvenient, a nearby quiet public space. The interview will take around 1-2 hours, and will take place at a time that is convenient for you. Dates and times will be arranged via email or phone. The interview will be recorded on a digital dictaphone. I will transcribe the interviews, and you will be given the opportunity to obtain a copy of this transcript, free of charge.

If you are conducting work that directly relates to making a decision regarding which hard-to-reach to target, such as participating in a social inclusion planning meeting, I may request permission to observe this work activity as it will help me build a better understanding of how these decisions are made. If this work activity involves more than one participant, everyone who is observed will be asked if they wish to participate in my research. Observations will be recorded on a digital dictaphone.

I am conducting interviews with several museum professionals from a range of museums, and in a wide variety of positions, in order to compare and contrast data collected at each museum.

How will the information collected be kept confidential?
All data that is collected will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Hard copy data will be kept in a in a secure, lockable cabinet and digital data will be encrypted.

What are the benefits in taking part in this study?
There is no payment for taking part in this research.

This study will build a better understanding of how museum professionals decide which hard-to-reach groups to target both generally and for specific social inclusion projects. This will aid museum professionals and researchers shape social inclusion strategies in the future.

What are my rights?
Taking part in this research is **voluntary.**

You can withdraw from this project at any time without penalty and you do not have to give any reason for why you no longer want to take part. Any information that you have provided to the project will be destroyed.

What will happen when this study finishes?
The results will be published as a PhD thesis, feature in published articles and will be presented at conferences.

You will be given the option to remain anonymous in any publications arising from the research. You will also be asked whether or not you would like your words to be directly quoted in publications arising from the research.

What if I have a concern about the ethical conduct of the research?
If you have any questions about the ethical conduct of this research please contact Giasemi Vavoula, the Ethics Officer for the School of Museum Studies on xxxx@le.ac.uk or xxxxxxxxx.

What happens next?
If you are happy to be involved in the project, you will be asked to complete and sign two copies of a consent form to confirm this. You will keep one copy of the consent form and I will keep the other copy in a secure, lockable cabinet, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

There are two consent forms – one for interviewees and one for participants whose work activities will be observed. If you are being interviewed and observed, you will be asked to complete both forms.

What if I have a question?
If you have a question or are not sure about any aspect of this study, please contact me on xxxxxx@le.ac.uk or xxxxxx.

Thank you very much indeed for your interest in this project.

With best wishes,

Laura Crossley

Appendix B: Consent Form for Interviewees

Consent Form - Interviews

Title of research: How do museum professionals choose which hard-to-reach groups to target?

Researcher: Laura Crossley **Contact:** xxxxx@le.ac.uk / xxxxxxx

Purpose of data collection: PhD Museum Studies, University of Leicester. The project is being funded entirely by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Please tick each box to confirm you have understood and agree to the statements below.

Taking Part

1. I have read and understood the project information sheet. ☐

2. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project, and they were answered to my satisfaction. ☐

3. I agree to take part in the project, which will involve being interviewed. ☐

4. I understand that this project will be carried out in accordance with the University of Leicester's Code of Research Ethics which can be viewed at http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice ☐

5. I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part. ☐

Data Storage

6. I understand that my data are to be held confidentially, and only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to them. ☐

7. I understand that my data will be kept securely (digital data will be encrypted and written data will be secured in a locked cabinet), and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, for a period of five years after the appearance of any associated publications, after which time it will be destroyed. ☐

8. A copy of my interview transcript may be requested, free of charge, on request. ☐

Use of the information I provide

9. I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project. ☐

10. *Please indicate, by ticking ONE of the boxes below, whether you are willing to be identified in reports and publications arising from this research and in future related research.*

a) I give permission to be identified in publications that result from this research. The name of my institution will be included in publications. The researcher has made me aware of the consequences of this. ☐

b) I do **not** give permission be identified in publications that result from this research. The name of my institution will be included in publications. The researcher has made me aware of the consequences of this. ☐

11. *Please indicate, by ticking ONE of the boxes below, whether your words can be directly quoted in reports and publications arising from this research and in future related research.*

a) My words may be directly quoted. ☐

b) My words may **not** be directly quoted. (If you tick this box, your words will be paraphrased or summarised). ☐

I give my consent for the data to be used for the outlined purposes of the study.

_____ _____ _____

Name of participant [printed] Signature Date

_____ _____ _____

Name of researcher [printed] Signature Date

Appendix C: Topic Guide

1. Please explain your role at your museum.

2. Please tell me about your background – including work and study - prior to taking up your current position at the museum.

3. What work have you been involved with relating to hard-to-reach groups in the past?

4. Who in your organisation is responsible for targeting hard-to-reach groups?

5. To what extent do your museum's mission statement or strategies take a view on which hard-to-reach groups should be targeted?

6. Which, if any, public funders regularly fund your museum? To what extent do these funders recognise hard-to-reach groups as a particular section of society to be targeted?

7. To what extent has austerity had an impact on your work with hard-to-reach groups?

8. Why do you personally undertake work with hard-to-reach groups?

9. What are the most important factors that influence this practice?

10. Have these key influences changed over time?

11. What do you think is the role of museums in society?

12. Any other comments?

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