



Pop-up museum prototype

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Type of best practice

Audience and Local Community Engagement

Keywords

Prototyping, co-creation, local communities, engagement, identity, dialogue

Theme

Other

Quick and easy activities that attract new and different types of audiences can be easily organized when one adopts an experimental approach. It entails building a prototype and engaging in co-creation activities involving visitors. An example of this type of experimentation is the creation of a pop-up museum. All it requires is a few simple props, a theme, marketing, experience museologists and a 'just do it' type of attitude. We tried it and it was a great learning journey and a way of strengthening local identity in the coastal town where we set up shop on a market day in August.

Organisation in charge of best practice

Arcada University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki, Finland

Location

Dalsbruk, Finland

Dates

3-6.8.2023

Description

A Pop-up museum is a "museum-like" space where people share stories with others, and learn something about someone else through conversations. It is temporary, nomadic and typically located in a public space. The mission of a pop-up museum is to create conversation between people of all ages and walks of life. It is a low resource type of activity and is thus easy to test in a museum. We had a crew consisting of two experience museologists and an assistant that helped set up the tent and tables, as well as act as the event photographer.

In August Arcada University of Applied Sciences tested this concept, launched as a ReInHerit sponsored activity, during a cultural festival organised in the coastal town of Dalsbruk, teaming up with the local museum the Dalsbruk Ironworks Museum. We wanted to organize an event tied to the festival that would engage people that live in Dalsbruk. It was also reflected in the chosen theme for the pop-up which was 'my Dalsbruk'. The event





was marketed through the social media channels of the Norpas festival, by putting up posters in Dalsbruk, through a news story that was in the local paper and through a news story featured on a regional radio channel.

Our goal was to create a space where people could share stories about their hometown and at the same time create a temporary museological collection. The chosen spot for the pop-up museum was one that people naturally visited – the local market square on the weekly market day. Locals that visited the pop-up museum contributed objects to the temporary collection. They had been informed about bringing an object through the news stories that featured the pop-up museum event. We also brought with us some objects that we used to

initiate conversation and storytelling. We instructed the visitors that they were welcome to create a short text that could either be tied to factual experiences or create a fictional story. Concrete steps involved in organizing a pop-up museum:

1. Team up with a local organisation
2. Choose a theme
3. Invite people to bring an object that is meaningful to them, based on the theme that you have chosen
4. Promote the event through social media, word-of-mouth and traditional marketing channels.
5. Invite them to write a label describing why their object is meaningful, or a story they want to tell about their object
6. At the pop-up, people mingle with others, view objects, have conversations – the format focuses on intimate experiences.
7. The design is humble and radical – the primary focus is on ideas and the visitors' contribution so the set up is simple and flexible, low to no cost and highly temporary.
8. The experience is event-based which means it works best with a short time frame, like 2-3 hours.





What we learned from creating the event was that it is not always easy to engage local populations. People may not necessarily value their local culture in the same way that outsiders do and the idea of a museum does not necessarily tickle their curiosity. It requires time and pre-pop-up events, such as organizing workshops, that allows you to introduce the theme of the pop-up museum event at an early stage. Getting local people engaged through a series of workshops also means that they can market your event to other locals. These types of grounding events allow conversations to deepen around the chosen theme and increases a sense of commitment among local folk.

We also learned that it is important to organise your event at a time when people are actively moving in the area and have time to stop and engage spontaneously in the event. We organized our event the weekend after the yearly holiday month, which meant the market place was not as busy as it is earlier on in the summer. So, our chosen time of the year was not ideal.

The reason why you should organize a pop-up museum event is that it is easy, flexible, fun and requires few resources. It allows you to experiment and develop a prototype that you can improve upon with every pop-up event that you organize. It is a good way to engage local residents and it is a good way to bring the concept of a museum out to the people. It stresses the idea that a museum is an idea that extends beyond the physical building itself. It can happen anywhere. A museum can be a way of acting, and a way to engage people in a conversation about society, about things that are at stake for all of us.

Links

<https://bruksmuseum.fi/en/home/>

<https://www.norpas.fi/en/kuvataide/minun-taalintehtaani-pop-up-museo/>

<https://www.norpas.fi/en/meista/>

Resources needed

Tables and chairs, social media account for marketing the event, contacts to local media, 1-2 facilitators (or we called ourselves experience museologists), small snacks and something to drink, posters with writing instructions, a device like a bluetooth speaker to play background music.

Challenges encountered

Evidence of success

Local people visited the event and discussed together. They wished for further collaboration with more themes and workshops organized before the actual pop-up museum event.

Potential for transfer

This is easy to do anywhere because the concept is easy to replicate and does not require a lot of money. This is also a low threshold type of event. It is a great way to market the permanent events, collections and activities of the museum.

Further Information

Photo credits: Ines Montalvao, Susanne Ådahl

