

# UNDERSTANDING EVERYDAY PARTICIPATION

## ARTICULATING CULTURAL VALUES

### HISTORIES OF PARTICIPATION, VALUE AND GOVERNANCE SYMPOSIUM

School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 23rd April 2015







This symposium provides a platform for the presentation and discussion of a number of discrete history projects undertaken as part of the AHRC funded 'Understanding Everyday Participation-Articulating Cultural Value' project (2012-2017). These projects are the basis of the forthcoming book edited by Drs. Eleonora Belfiore and Lisanne Gibson, *Histories of Cultural Participation, Values and Governance*, to be published in early 2016 by Palgrave Macmillan.

The symposium invites conversation in relation to three inter-related thematic histories:

***Political discourses of participation and value*** - will trace the long-run intellectual history of cultural participation, examining its links with ideas of civic engagement and community wellbeing and prosperity

***Culture and governance*** - will examine the historical role of location and measurement as a co-ordinate of cultural policy and investment

***Community, participation and cultural policy*** - will develop an historical perspective on changing understandings and uses of the term 'community' in relation to cultural practices and policy.

Powerpoints and audio recordings of each presentation will be available on the UEP www by the end of May 2015 as well as a video recording of the final plenary session 'Provocations'.

The UEP Team would like to acknowledge additional funding for this Symposium received from the College of Arts, Humanities and Law, and the Enterprise and Business Development Office of the University of Leicester.

For further information about the UEP Histories work, this Symposium or the forthcoming edited book please contact the UEP Histories work package leads:

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**Dr Eleonora Belfiore, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick, E.Belfiore@warwick.ac.uk**

UEP is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of their Connected Communities: Communities, Culture and Creative Economies programme. The project involves an interdisciplinary team of researchers based at the Universities of Manchester, Leicester, Exeter and Warwick. Dr Andrew Miles is the UEP project lead, and can be contacted at [andrew.miles@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.miles@manchester.ac.uk)

[www.everydayparticipation.org](http://www.everydayparticipation.org)

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## Symposium Schedule

9.30am Arrival and Registration

10am Introductions

10.15am 'Historical Encumbrances & Contemporary Requirements'  
Dr. Mark O'Neill, Director of Policy & Research, Glasgow Life

Chair: Dr. Andrew Miles, School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester

11am **Panel 1: *Political discourses of participation and value***

'Policy discourse, cultural value and the 'buzzwords of participation''  
Dr. Eleonora Belfiore, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick

'Locating the Contemporary History of Everyday Participation'  
Dr. Andrew Miles, School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester

'The Usefulness of the Stage: Eighteenth-century cultural participation and civic engagement'  
Dr. Jane Milling, School of Drama, University of Exeter

Chair: Dr. Lianne Gibson, School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester

12.15pm Lunch

1pm **Panel 2: *Culture and governance***

'Calling participation to account: a recent history of cultural indicators'  
Catherine Bunting, independent cultural consultant, Dr. Abigail Gilmore, Centre for Arts  
Management and Cultural Policy, University of Manchester and Dr. Andrew Miles, School  
of Social Sciences, University of Manchester

'Governing Place Through Culture'  
Dr. Lianne Gibson, School of Museum Studies,  
University of Leicester

'The Well-being – Culture relationship: a long and happy  
marriage of convenience?'  
Susan Oman, School of Social Sciences, University of  
Manchester

Chair: Dr. Clive Gray



2.15pm **Panel 3: *Community, participation and cultural policy***

'Public park histories, cultural policy and everyday participation in Manchester and Salford'

Dr. Abigail Gilmore, Centre for Arts Management and Cultural Policy, University of Manchester and  
Dr. Patrick Doyle, Glucksman Ireland House, New York University

'Mr. Bodger and the Bone Skates: communities and cultural practice through time'

Dr. Felicity James, School of English, University of Leicester

'The politics of 'community' in community theatre practice: the case of Manaton and East  
Dartmoor Community Theatre'

Dr. Kerrie Schaefer, School of Drama, University of Exeter

Chair: Dr. Eleonora Belfiore, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick

3.30pm Break

4pm **'Provocations'**  
Plenary Debate

Chairs: Dr. Eleonora Belfiore, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick and  
Dr. Lianne Gibson, School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester

5pm Close



## Speaker Biographies

Dr. Eleonora Belfiore

Dr. Eleonora Belfiore is Associate Professor in Cultural Policy at the Centre for Cultural Policy Studies at the University of Warwick, UK. She has published extensively on the notion of the 'social impacts' of the arts and the effect that the rhetoric of impact has had on British cultural policy and engaged in a sustained intellectual critique of the role of evidence and research in decision-making in the cultural sector. With Palgrave she has published, with Oliver Bennett, *The Social Impact of the Arts: An intellectual history* (2008) and co-edited with Anna Upchurch a volume entitled *Humanities in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Utility and Markets* (2013), which looks at debates around the value and impact of the humanities. Over the past three years, Dr Belfiore has been developing a programme of research activities around the concept of 'cultural value', its definition, and its place in current policy discourses and justification for public subsidy of the arts and culture. In 2012, she founded The #culturalvalue Initiative ([www.culturalvalueinitiative.org](http://www.culturalvalueinitiative.org)), a curated blog and resource on cultural value and policy. She was Director of Studies of the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value, a large-scale public engagement project that aims to stimulate a public debate on the value of the arts and culture and develop fresh policy thinking which commenced in November 2013 and concluded with the launch of the report *Enriching Britain: Culture, creativity and growth*, published in February 2015.

Catherine Bunting

Catherine Bunting has over 12 years' experience of research, evaluation and impact assessment in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Her main area of expertise is arts and cultural research, with an emphasis on understanding cultural participation and its value. Catherine is a member of the team working on the AHRC-funded project 'Understanding Everyday Participation – Articulating Cultural Values', exploring the ways in which people participate in culture in everyday life, the values they attach to this participation and the role it plays in shaping and connecting communities.

Recently Catherine project managed the Manchester Quality Metrics Pilot, working with eight cultural institutions in Manchester to develop a new standardised metric set and system for evaluating the quality of arts and cultural events. She is also leading an impact study of CultureHive, a major programme run by the Arts Marketing Association to raise the standard of marketing and audience development across the arts and cultural sector.

Previously Catherine was Director of Research at Arts Council England where she was responsible for developing the Arts Council's national research programme and building an evidence base to inform strategy. Catherine led the Arts Debate, the Arts Council's major public inquiry into the value of the arts, and developed a pioneering audience segmentation which is used by arts organisations and local authorities to develop campaigns and marketing strategies to attract new audiences. She was a founding member of the Culture and Sport Evidence programme, a multi-agency research programme led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to evidence the drivers, impacts and value of engagement in culture and sport.

Catherine has expertise in a wide range of research and evaluation methods with a particular focus on quantitative analysis; she has a Master's in Applied Statistics.



Dr. Patrick Doyle

Patrick worked as a Research Associate on the 'Understanding Everyday Participation – Articulating Cultural Values' project, undertaking archival research on the parks of Manchester and Salford. His PhD History was awarded by the University of Manchester in 2013, entitled 'Better Farming, Better Business, Better Living': The Co-operative Movement and the Development of the State in Ireland, 1894-1932. He is currently a Visiting Scholar, at Glucksman Ireland House, New York University.

Dr. Lisanne Gibson

Dr. Lisanne Gibson is a co-investigator on the UEP project and leads the Gateshead and Peterborough ecosystems and the mapping work across all ecosystems, as well as co-leading the UEP Histories work.

Lisanne is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. She has published research on a wide range of cultural policy issues including gallery and museum histories, monuments and public art, cultural heritage, creative industries, cultural development, culture-led urban development and cultural values. Lisanne has published three books: *Valuing Historic Environments* (Ashgate, 2009), edited with John Pendlebury; *Monumental Queensland: Signposts on a Cultural Landscape*, co-authored with Joanna Besley (University of Queensland Press, 2004); and, *The Uses of Art* (University of Queensland Press, 2001). Lisanne has also published in a number of peer reviewed journals. Since 2005 Lisanne has been a member of the editorial committee of the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* and she is a member of the AHRC's Peer Review College and the AHRC 'Care for the Future' Steering Group.

In addition to leading work in the Gateshead and Peterborough ecosystems, Lisanne is also leading the mapping of assets and participation data across the ecosystems. Alongside Dr. Eleonora Belfiore Lisanne is co-leading the histories part of the UEP project. With Dr. Andrew Miles, Lisanne is also co-editing the two Understanding Everyday Participation issues of *Cultural Trends* (2016). Lisanne manages one of UEP's Research Associates, Dr. Delyth Edwards, and supervises two of the PhD projects attached to UEP, those of Sarah Hughes and Ruth Webber (the latter working with Victoria Hollows at Glasgow Life) all of whom are based at Leicester.

Dr. Abigail Gilmore

Abi is a Co-Investigator for Understanding Everyday Participation, leading the Manchester-Salford eco-system case study, and a Senior Lecturer in Arts Management and Cultural Policy, Institute for Cultural Practices, School of Arts Languages and Cultures. She is currently working with the Manchester Jewish Museum, artist Torange Khonsari from Public Works, two postgraduate researchers in residence and local stakeholders of Cheetham Park, North Manchester, on a participatory follow-on project using creative engagement methodologies to build social infrastructures through everyday participation in the park. Her research concerns local cultural policy, participation and evaluation, and involves practice-based, collaborative initiatives with cultural partners to inform teaching, knowledge exchange and public engagement.

Dr. Felicity James

Felicity James works on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature, with a particular interest in sociability, friendship, creative exchange and life-writing. Felicity's first book *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (Palgrave Macmillan: 2008) discusses the interplay between a circle of Romantic writers; her current research explores the creative practices of religious Dissenters more broadly. Felicity co-edited a book on



families and intellectual communities, *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbault Circle, 1740 to 1860* (Cambridge: 2011), and is working on a monograph on the life-writing of Dissenting women. This interest in forms of creative community, past and present, is what has led to Felicity's involvement with 'Understanding Everyday Participation'.

Dr. Andrew Miles

Andrew Miles is a Reader in Sociology at the University of Manchester and works on issues of cultural participation and inequality. Andrew is Principal Investigator on the AHRC-funded 'Understanding Everyday Participation – Articulating Cultural Values' project and also a Co-Investigator on an EPSRC-funded study of travel and transport practices. Andrew started out in his academic career as a social historian in the 1980s and 90s, working on issues of class and social mobility, and has recently returned to this field of research, but in a contemporary context, as a member of the team working on the BBC's Great British Class Survey.

Dr. Jane Milling

Jane Milling is Associate Professor of Drama at University of Exeter. She is author with Deirdre Heddon of *Devising Performance: A Critical History* (Palgrave 2005; 2015), *Modern British Playwriting: 1980s* (Methuen 2012) and articles on actors, women dramatists and the theatre industry in 17th and 18th century British theatre history. She is currently at work on this project around everyday cultural participation, and another re-examining participation and practices in contemporary British amateur dramatics, with Helen Nicholson (RHUL) and Nadine Holdsworth (Warwick).



Susan Oman

Susan's inter-disciplinary research interrogates the cultural politics of wellbeing, on which she has delivered a number of papers at international conferences in the UK and Europe. Her chapter for *Wellbeing: Culture, Method, Policy* will be published by Palgrave later this year. Susan's doctoral research will contribute to both UEP's histories and data work on how participation may be indicative of well-being in various ways, and what the implications of that may be for policy and practice. Susan teaches cultural policy and politics and currently leads a unit called 'Performing Research' at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Prior to her PhD, Susan held a Fellowship to the Centre for Excellence in Training for Theatre and gained an MA in Cultural Policy from City University London and a BA in Art History from the Courtauld institute, London.

Mark O'Neill FMA PhD, Director of Policy & Research, Glasgow Life

Mark worked in museums in Glasgow since he moved there in 1985, including ten years as Head of Glasgow Museums prior to 2009 when he was appointed Director of Policy & Research for Glasgow Life, the charity which delivers arts, museums, libraries and sports services for the City of Glasgow. After founding a community museum in one of the Glasgow's poorest districts in 1985 he joined the City museums in 1990. He was responsible for leading a number of award-winning projects including; the Open Museum (outreach service); the UK's only museum of world religions; the £30 million refurbishment of Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and master-planning the £74 million Zaha Hadid designed Riverside Museum, (European Museum of the Year 2013). He has lectured and published on museum theory and practice and on culture, health and urban regeneration.

Dr. Kerrie Schaefer

Dr Kerrie Schaefer is Senior Lecturer in Drama in the College of Humanities at Exeter University. She is currently finishing a monograph on theories and practices of community-based theatre and performance due to be published with Palgrave Macmillan later this year. Her research has been supported by an AHRC Fellowship, a BA/Leverhulme small grant, and a Research and Development grant from the National Arts Council, Singapore. She is recipient of an AHRC Impact and Engagement award working with acta Community Theatre to curate a seminar series and national festival of community theatre in Bristol in 2015 and 2016.

## Abstracts (in order of appearance)

Dr. Mark O'Neill, Historical Encumbrances & Contemporary Requirements

This paper will set out to articulate how one organization which combines culture and sport navigates the delivery of values-based services in an economic and highly politicized environment, in the process setting out our long term cultural policy research agenda. It will look at how we negotiate different regimes of value and the basis of the organisation's mandate, explore the institutional and professional traditions within which staff function (usually unconsciously) and traditions of public participation. And it will outline our efforts to create a system of accountability that reflects our values, as well as complying with external requirements, addressing issues of inequality and representing the identity of the city to itself and the world.

### Panel 1: *Political discourses of participation and value*

Dr. Eleonora Belfiore, 'Policy discourse, cultural value and the 'buzzwords of participation''

With my presentation I intend to share for discussion emerging reflections from a broader exploration of the rhetoric of cultural participation within post-war cultural policy discourse. The aim is to expose and explore the rhetorical deployment of what I am calling 'buzzwords of participation' (such as, for example, 'access', 'audience development', 'social inclusion', 'engagement/disengagement' and, more recently, 'well-being'), and their origin in the persisting tensions between the two key declared aims of British arts policy: access and excellence. The key argument I will be making is that 'buzzwords of participation' have been instrumental in establishing the enduring association between participation in certain forms of cultural activities (often organised and funded by the state), desirable engagement and, thus, healthy and prosperous communities that still has a central place in contemporary policy discourses. This association and its attendant argumentative repertoire, conveniently obscures struggles over cultural value, power relations within the cultural sector and institutional and governmental interests that need to be brought into light and scrutinised.

Dr. Andrew Miles, 'Locating the Contemporary History of Everyday Participation'

The sociology of everyday life has become a distinctive and productive field in recent years. Inspired by theorists such as Lefebvre, Goffman and de Certeau, and reflecting shifts in thinking associated with the 'cultural turn', its concerns are with what lies behind the ostensibly mundane, unremarkable rituals and routines of day-to-day life, and what role these play in creating order and constraint, on the one hand, and opportunities for challenge and escape on the other. While the history of everyday life is an altogether less consolidated field, the work of the postwar Annales School in France, the *Alltagsgeschichte* movement of German social historians of the 1970s and 80s, and the 'people's history' of the *History Workshop* group signaled a similar re-orientation towards the 'ordinary' practices of social and cultural life.

This paper aims to connect historical understandings of the everyday to debates around cultural participation and value. One prominent framing of the (western) history of the everyday in relation to 'modernity' highlights the growing opposition between work and leisure, stressing the negative implications of commercialised leisure and consumer capitalism and the rise of a stratified system of cultural participation and value, which came to underpin wider divisions of social class. In this paper I trace the decline of this system since the Second World War in Britain, reflecting on the increasing concern with and visibility of individual lifestyles, and the reconfiguration of cultural elites.



Dr. Jane Milling, 'The Usefulness of the Stage: Eighteenth-century cultural participation and civic engagement'

Many of our contemporary discourses around the values of cultural participation and the implications for civic engagement were re-formulated in the eighteenth century. With the rise of Habermas' bourgeois public sphere and the fall of Sennett's public man, eighteenth-century Britain has been painted as a golden era when diverse strangers freely and actively participated in cultural and civic life. Exploring one form of cultural participation – the theatre – this paper will use a Defence, a Licence and a Riot, to examine the differing discourses of the value of cultural participation employed by audiences, theatre makers and government.

Beginning with John Dennis's defence of *The Usefulness of the Stage*, to the *Happiness of Mankind*, to *Government, and to Religion* (1698), we will turn to the war of words around the Theatre Licensing Act (1737), and conclude with the verbal and physical debate that swirled around the Chinese Festival Riots of 1755. Cultural participation forged fleeting communities, for good or ill, at scales from the parochial to the national, and the resonances of these debates continue to reverberate in our conceptions of the value of cultural participation today.

## **Panel 2: Culture and governance**

Catherine Bunting, Dr. Abigail Gilmore and Dr. Andrew Miles, 'Calling participation to account: a recent history of cultural indicators'

The methods that are deployed to monitor, measure and generally 'make sense' of (cultural) participation are not neutral objects but devices that are part of a complex process of representation, one which is both culturally and politically loaded and inherently historical. What gets measured, and how, reflects the outcomes of negotiation and contestation within the fields of cultural practice and policy in the present. But these are played out within longer-term narratives about why evidence of participation is needed, what it should look like, and what it does. These narratives also reflect the historical tensions and interplay between centre and periphery – the national and the local – in policymaking.

In this chapter, we draw on to two specific case studies in order to trace the development of current systems of cultural indication in the UK and evaluate their impact in 'making up' the domain of cultural participation. The first of these is an account of the origins and emergence of the Taking Part Survey; the national survey of cultural participation, and flagship dataset in the prosecution of 'evidence-based' policy. This will reflect upon the survey's construction and development in the context of the debate about 'official' models of culture, tensions around the day-to-day processes of its operation within government, and the way the past measurement of the funded cultural sector at national level bears upon its future within the contemporary political configuration. The second case study examines the impact of national developments at the local-regional level by examining how the 'cultural model' proposed by 'new public management' from the late 1990s onwards was received, implemented and adapted in the conurbation of 10 local authorities which comprise the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA).

Dr. Lisanne Gibson, 'Governing Place Through Culture'

This paper will discuss the role of location and place in recent cultural policy. It posits that the defining feature of cultural policy over the last 30 years can be understood by the ways in which various articulations of the relations between location, culture and economy have been brought to bear on communities.

Location and place has always been an important coordinate for cultural policy. Maynard Keynes's original idea for the post war Arts Council was that it should support spaces for the amateur arts around the country in the context

of the lack of built space for leisure activities post war; very soon the idea was replaced by the focus on the capital encapsulated within the 'few but roses' policy. Meanwhile, local councils invested in formal cultural institutions and leisure facilities as a means of distinguishing themselves. While some cities undertook significant investment in cultural resources, one thinks of Liverpool or Manchester which both continued to significantly invest in the formal cultural institutions and facilities left by their late 19th century city forefathers, other cities and towns, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne for instance, did not or at least not on the same scale. This lack of investment and the consequences for the cities and towns concerned became one of the focuses for the capital development projects in the 1990s and noughties. In these projects locations and places became enmeshed in, sometimes, competing policy priorities from local, national and, in many cases, European programmes which sought to economically regenerate through cultural development. This, now thirty year old, trend of the articulation of place based economic regeneration to cultural development is manifest in cultural policy priorities and shapes cultural investment today, consider the Hodge review, ACE's 'Priority places', HLF's 'Special Development Areas', MLA's Renaissance in the Regions etc. All have used location and place as a tool to inform cultural investment with, variably, 'economic impact', 'social inclusion', and 'wellbeing', as their standard bearers. The example of Gateshead in the NE of England provides an instructive case to explore how the relationship between location, culture and economy has been defined and enacted in different policy moments and in relation to different policy contexts.

Susan Oman, 'The Well-being – Culture relationship: a long and happy marriage of convenience?'

The UK government is one of many looking to decipher and track national well-being as an alternative measure of progress. The importance of cultural life to 'progress', and 'cultural participation' to individual, community and national well-being has been reasoned since Aristotle and Plato (Belfiore and Bennett 2006; Vuyk 2010). In 2010 the UK's ministry of culture invested £1.8million in an evidence programme which aimed to substantiate this and other associations in order to prove the value of culture. Yet despite the theoretical history and recent financial investment in the 'culture - well-being' relationship, 'culture' was absent from the UK's well-being measures for the first two years.

This paper explores the assumed relationship between 'culture' and 'well-being' by tracking the two concepts historically through cultural policy. It aims to not only highlight how the relationship is misunderstood and misrepresented, but how this is indicative of wider issues regarding conceptions and articulations of participation in cultural policy and well-being in wider policy at present. It will suggest that the more reflexive and inclusive framing of 'cultural participation' outlined in the UEP project can not only argue a more robust relation to well-being than currently available, but offer valuable insights to developments of well-being as a policy tool.

### **Panel 3: *Community, participation and cultural policy***

Dr. Abigail Gilmore and Dr. Patrick Doyle, 'Public park histories, cultural policy and everyday participation in Manchester and Salford'

This paper explores the establishment of parks in Manchester and Salford, and the contribution they made to cultural policies for everyday participation from their early histories in 1830s to the mid-twentieth century. Peel Park, Queen's Park and Cheetham Park, in North Manchester and in East Salford, were established in these newly industrialised cities in response to middle-class anxieties about the impact of the urban condition on the morality and health of the working population (Sigsworth & Worboys, 1994; Wyborn, 1995). Their inception coincided with



the movement of wealthier classes to the suburbs, enclosing former agricultural land, and with a new urban interest in access to open spaces and the right to roam (Howkins, 2011).

Based on archival research, the paper explores the programming and business models established to promote access and upkeep of the parks. It considers the discourses surrounding the parks, the influences on their design and architecture, and the administration practices and structures which built up around them. These histories position parks as cultural policy spaces for regulation and moral education (of particular social classes) but also pluralistic spaces for policy experimentation and popular resistance to dominant cultural forms. The paper argues that in the context of austerity and the current interest in asset transfer from the public sector to other forms of ownership, these histories are important to contemporary debates on parks and their contribution to everyday participation and cultural policy.

Dr. Felicity James, 'Mr. Bodger and the Bone Skates: communities and cultural practice through time'

My paper contrasts two important provincial cultural institutions: the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, founded in 1781, and the Peterborough Museum Society, founded in 1871. Using the history and self-presentation of these two societies as its starting point, this paper seeks to historicise and contextualise our understanding of communities and their cultural practices.

From its late eighteenth-century inception, the Manchester "Lit and Phil" has been large and thriving. Members have included eminent scientists such as Dalton, Joule and Rutherford, industrialists such as Samuel Greg and Robert Owen, the physician and thesaurus author Roget, and the editor of the Manchester Guardian C. P. Scott. From 1785 to the present the Society has produced what it terms Memoirs: records of its proceedings which reprint lectures and regulations and demonstrate how, from its outset, it has self-consciously positioned itself as an important cultural resource both locally and internationally. The Peterborough society arguably set out with a less grandiose conception of its own cultural importance, beginning as the Peterborough Natural History Society and Field Club, and shaped by the enthusiasms of key individuals, such as Mr. Bodger the local chemist and keen archaeologist. Yet its legacy – the Peterborough Museum in which it still meets – continues directly to shape cultural practice in the city.

The stories of these two institutions afford insight into a rich, if at times conflicted, history of changing perspectives on cultural participation and value – and the ways in which communities create narratives about themselves and their cultural practices.

Dr. Kerrie Schaefer, 'The politics of 'community' in community theatre practice: the case of Manaton and East Dartmoor Community Theatre'

As a participatory arts practice community theatre occupies a niche position in the cultural (studies) field, not least due to a failure to critically define community. No longer viewed as a grassroots movement of cultural and political activism but as publically subsidised cultural provision, community/participatory arts is trenchantly criticised for facilitating neo-liberal government policies of 'social inclusion' or 'Big Society' under the banner of arts participation.

This presentation explores critical conceptions of 'community' in the discourses and practices of a community theatre company, Manaton and East Dartmoor (MED) Community Theatre. Formed in 1980 by a group of friends led by playwright, poet and primate ecologist, Mark Beeson, MED Theatre's early plays were critical of policies and structures governing the operation of the Dartmoor National Park. Performances presented strong arguments that conservation of the 'natural environment' for park users, typically drawn from outside park boundaries, outweighed the interests of humans and non-humans living within the park. Contesting a particular 'spatiality of power' (Rose



2006) and its production of an interior zone of disenfranchisement has been central to the development of the community theatre. This presentation examines the articulation of marginalisation not as an essential quality of a place-based community but as a contestable construct produced through the play of power differences. MED's work continues to enact the challenges of living in an environment protected and preserved as 'countryside' within a national infrastructure of recreational facilities. I will argue that it does so without recourse to idealised or essentialist notions of community, which must lead to a re-valuation of community performance and questions of participation and governance.



## Delegate List

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