Zining as artful method: Facilitating zines as participatory action research within art museums

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Abstract
‘DIY’ publications called zines have long been a way for marginalized communities to record their stories, spread information and organize. However, this article presents zines as a potential research tool for action researchers who are working within organisational contexts. The authors, both museum professionals, action researchers and zinesters, use examples from their research within art museums to examine the value of zines as a methodology. Though the research projects take place within art organisations, using the four themes of aesthetics, communities of practice, counter-narratives and plurality it considers how zines could be used more broadly as a research tool in other knowledge-based settings. The authors provide a recommendation for practitioners to explore zining to engender dialogic cultures in their organisations as well as their potential in shaping ‘major’ and ‘minor’ organisational change.

Keywords
Zines, art, participatory action research, facilitation, museum, methodology,
Introduction

Zines (pronounced ‘zeens’) are self-published, low-budget, non-profit print publications. Originally born out of fandom; particularly sci-fi, music, sport and cultural iconography, they have long served as a significant medium of communication in various subcultures and considered a mainstay of the “do-it-yourself” creative movement that express “all variety of personal and political narratives” (Piepmeier, 2008, p. 214). Historically, zines have been an underground way for marginalized communities to record their stories, share information and organise. Zines are frequently associated with anarchist politics, feminism and queer communities, and theorised as a method of ‘direct democracy’ (Jeppesen, 2012, p.265); popularised by countercultures whose voices are underrepresented or alienated by dominant narratives. For the purposes of this article, zining is artful in two ways; firstly, the process of making a zine is artful (e.g. making aesthetic decisions, working together collaboratively) and secondly, the finished zine can also be an artwork itself.

Over recent years there has been an increase of zines within museums. Zines have entered museum collections, been included in exhibitions, sold in museum shops and used as an activity to engage visitors through workshops, courses, or via self-led zining stations. Associated with efforts to decolonise, pluralise or queer collections, zines have also been incorporated by museum teams on a variety of programmes and projects, becoming much-used tools to change the tempo of collections.

Participatory action research (PAR) has also sought to present an alternative to mainstream approaches that offers a critique of, and challenge to, “dominant positivist social science research as the only legitimate and valid source of knowledge” (Maguire, 1987, p. 10). A core goal of PAR is to elicit change in one’s own system, privileging collaborative, practical approaches that induce partnerships within the community; to research ‘with’, rather than ‘on’. A deeply dialogical approach to research, transformation of circumstances may only be achieved “by means of the praxis: reflection and action” (Freire, 1970, p. 85). Inherently, PAR’s philosophical underpinnings are congruent with the postmodern acknowledgement that multiple, shared knowledges and realities exist and shift (MacDonald, 2012, p. 36). With direct consequences for knowledge production in museums, these ideologies are turning traditional one-way exchanges between institution and community on their head.

As zinesters, museum practitioners and action researchers, our approaches to enquiry are practice-led and directly informed by our professional experience. We have written this article for practitioners beyond the arts to share zining as a possible action research tool, recognising that zines have much utility beyond art and museums across other organisational contexts. Fundamentally, zines cross disciplines and boundaries. By the same logic, we argue that zines have the capacity to emulate this function as a research tool. To emphasize this, we have identified four themes; aesthetics, communities of practice, counter-narratives and
pluck a nown values as a PAR methodology, drawing on case studies of our own PAR within British art museums\textsuperscript{1} Tate Liverpool\textsuperscript{2} and Bluecoat.\textsuperscript{3} Although we advocate for the value that zines bring to PAR, we are critical about their use. PAR has been referred to as “the bridge between knowledge and action” (Khan et al., 2013, p. 157), but to what extent are zines as PAR able to permeate embedded policies and practices to affect organisational change? While in our experience zining can provide a powerful way to work with groups to conduct research that accounts for wider ways of knowing, in this article we also ask; are zines at risk of performing ‘empowerment-lite’ engagement? (Lynch, 2013, p. 2). Our thoughts, like others in this intersection of practice (Casio, 2019), are conflicted.

\textbf{Case studies}

\textit{Art as advocacy}

Jade’s PAR project \textit{Art as Advocacy} took place between 2014 and 2018 in partnership with two organisations; Bluecoat, Liverpool’s centre for contemporary art, and Halton Speak Out, a self-advocacy group for learning disabled people. Jade had no previous employment history with these organisations, but was interested in collaborating with them due to their established disability programmes and commitment to learning disability-led art as a form of self-expression in the community.

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, \textit{Art as Advocacy} explored ways to reimagine curating as an inclusive and accessible practice with learning disabled people. Using action research, Jade facilitated five learning disabled people to curate an art exhibition at Bluecoat called \textit{Auto Agents}. These curators were recruited from both partner’s established memberships. All were invited to participate in a ‘taster day’ at Bluecoat where they met Jade, learnt more about the research, as well as trying out action research activities. From these taster sessions, five individuals joined the project: Hannah Bellass and Leah Jones from Halton Speak Out, and Tony Carroll, Diana Disley and Eddie Rauer from Bluecoat. \textit{Art as Advocacy} used zining as a core methodology resulting in the \textit{Ask the Curators} zine series (French, 2017, p. 61) which is discussed in this article.

\textit{The People’s Glossary}

Undertaken at Tate Liverpool between 2016 and 2020, Emma’s PAR project \textit{The People’s Glossary} set out to co-create an inclusive language for underrepresented museum publics. After researching Tate Liverpool and its collection at Masters level, Emma explored the need for the project with its community groups to develop the research. Conducted with a group of local adults with no formal education in the arts called \textit{Community Collective}, zining was a fundamental research tool in
engendering personal creativity and critical enquiry (Curd, 2020a, p. 34). Members were recruited to the project following an invitation to pilot a workshop concerning the research and decide whether they’d like to be involved. After which, seventeen members signed up as participants for a two-year period.

**Ourselves as instruments**

As participatory action researchers, we are interested in a departure from conventional disciplinary research characterised by a separation of ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’. Within PAR, people in communities are recognised as active participants of the inquiry process, not as passive subjects (Reason, 1994). This has a number of profound implications including co-ownership, upheaving power dynamics, and crucially, how to practically conduct research collaboratively. This means that action researchers need to acquire facilitation skills to enable people to work together, articulate their views; analyse and reflect on these; deliberate on actions to address them; and document and share these lessons elsewhere (Apgar & Nurick, 2014, p. 13).

In museums, facilitation is emerging as a valuable set of skills for professionals, not just to conduct research but to enable community participation. Similarly to PAR, museums have sought to shift from one-way systems of knowledge distribution to increasingly co-productive practices where staff teams are experimenting with new ways of collaborating with communities (Simon, 2010). This includes rethinking traditional hierarchies, or what researchers Waterton and Smith (2010) describe as presumed differences between “‘experts’ and ‘everybody else’” (p. 5).

In our work, we consider ourselves as instruments of our practice (Sennett, 2008) which for us manifests through acting as facilitators, practicing what researcher Jenny Mackewn (2008) describes as “facilitation as action-research in the moment” (p. 618). These skills were initially cultivated through our museum roles but now are applied to our academic work, reflecting our evolution from practitioners to practice-led action researchers. As researcher Tina Cook (2009) discovered, conducting action research is a ‘messy’ process, yet facilitation – “the practice of applying structure to the complex and unruly process of collaboration” (French, 2020, p. 17) - provides us a valuable repertoire of practical tools, one of which is zines.

This work we do as researchers and facilitators requires reflexivity. In writing this article we consider the driving forces behind these projects, influenced by our identities and experiences of feeling outside the status quo; whether because of our sexuality, class, educational or professional background. Fundamentally, it is the questioning of academic and professional legitimacy that drives us. Whether that be for ourselves, or with our co-researchers, we envision and seek an expanded view of knowledge creation through disruption and action.
French and Curd

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Figure 1. Zine pages from the Ask the Curators series. Page to the right depicts Diana’s experience with “Jeanine Tate Visitor Assistant” (2016).

Figure 2. Zine page from IMAGINE (if you made the rules) arranged thematically around “dialogue” (2017).
We consider the term ‘organisational playground’ relative to museum operations in two ways; by looking from within and outside. The first consideration relates to our identification of museums from within; as a series of systems, structures and organisation. Museums are comparable to a ‘social institution’ defined by researcher Jonathan Turner (1997) as: “a complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organising relatively stable patterns of human activity” (p. 6). For us, museums mirror this complexity and naturally depend on various hierarchical systems of organisation to negotiate power, inform order and manage day-to-day operations (McCall & Gray, 2014).

Within museum services, like many knowledge-based organisations, professional activities are typically split between teams or departments. In museums, this typically comprises; 1. Exhibitions and displays; 2. Learning/educational teams; 3. Management; and 4. Visitor Services. Typically, museum professionals will possess academic training in the arts and are considered ‘experts’, but this is complicated by new funding-dependent priorities to dialogue with, represent and centre people labelled as “non-experts”. We see our PAR interrogating the sustainability of upholding such roles and systems.
Museums as 'organisational playgrounds'

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Secondly, we configure museums from the outside, where - to society - museums are buildings where the “ordering” of knowledge, objects and artefacts takes place. This underpins a belief of museums as ‘neutral’ spaces, however, professional practice and academic study over the last twenty years has worked to challenge this myth, recognising that museums actively construct culture. In this article, we use the term ‘institution’ to recognise the significance of museums as ‘Places of Power’ (Curd, 2020b, p.405; Hardt, 2000, p.212) due to their competencies to emulate imperial practices; to collect, exhibit and educate (Ashley, 2005, p. 32).

Feminist scholar Sara Ahmed (2007) defines such institutions as “orientation devices” that “take the shape of ‘what’ resides within them”, and thus, she argues, institutions are “shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others” (p. 157). From the outside, institutional and organisational culture, language and habit reflect those who inhabit and care for them; many of whose identities are unrepresentative of the population (Brook et al., 2018). Ahmed’s concept of orientation is relative to our objective toward inclusion of “non-traditional” voices in museums due to the potential flexibility of spaces to be “freed up when they are inhabited by those for whom they were not intended” (Ahmed, 2017).

With the aim to straddle the outside/inside margins, we positioned ourselves as “critical friends” (Lynch, 2011, p. 8) in our research. This allowed us to enquire from the margins of institutions without being embedded in staff systems.
In the following section we analyse the core principles of zining in relation to PAR using four themes; aesthetics, communities of practice, counter-narratives and plurality. To frame our analysis we reflect on the aesthetics of zines and how they support a broad scope of expression through their materiality. In communities of practice, we discuss examples of participatory learning and critical thinking through zining, contextualised through our projects. This leads us to analyse how zining creates counter-narratives - or ‘little stories’ (Lyotard, 1984) - within monolithic settings, to put forward alternative narratives from the status quo and represent ‘other’ identities. Lastly, we summarise zining as a method of plurality; to validate personal experience and foster PAR as a ‘we-I’ form of enquiry.

Aesthetics

Zines occupy specific physical forms and are often defined and categorised by their materiality and aesthetic. Zines are created uniquely by zinesters; some maintain consistent aesthetics, while others change the look and feel of their zines from issue to issue, even from page to page. From glossy and colourful ‘art zines’, hand-made illustrated zines, comic zines, photographic zines to those which contain only text, such visual diversity and materiality helps to shape the reader’s experience. In contrast, formal publications such as books or periodicals tend to adhere to set layouts, sizes and formats, but crucially, there are no set guidelines as to what zines should look like, leaving design and format open ended.

The punk ‘cut-and-paste’ aesthetic is the style which most people associate with zines today. This type of zine is also what we have found to be the dominant aesthetic adopted within museums and other cultural organisations. The recycling of pre-existing media material and found-text through collage, irregular approaches to layout, numerous different typefaces and handwritten notes, the use of the photocopier as the means of production, and the personalisation of the photocopied text are common features of the punk zine aesthetic, exploding with “chaotic design” (Duncombe, 2008, p. 1). Significantly, there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to how zines should look, they are the ultimate anti-design aesthetic. This can be liberating for groups less experienced in art making or design.

While scholars, particularly literary scholars, have focussed on assessing just the words on the page, for zinesters, the page itself also creates meaning. As Piepmeier (2008) describes, zines have a unique capacity to represent “visual energy” and fluidity that the “linear typescript of a standard book or magazine cannot accommodate” (p. 222). The Ask the Curators zine series exemplifies the punk zine aesthetic. Created by collaging existing media found in magazines along with museum ephemera, drawings and graphic papers, the hand-made zine pages were then photocopied and printed in black ink onto brown Kraft paper resulting in bold, textured graphics.
Notably, the group would typically incorporate ephemera collected during research visits to different museums and artist studios, further emphasizing zine’s unique capacity for materiality (Figure 3). On page one of issue two for example, a collaborator created a zine page on ‘jargon’ when reflecting on the inaccessibility of museum interpretation experienced during a museum visit. This word was carefully typed up on the computer, printed out and glued onto the zine page. Juxtaposed underneath are torn museum leaflets, catalogues, artist statements and handouts collaged together into a minimalist design. Even though there is no written explanation accompanying this page, the word ‘jargon’ with the appropriated museum media communicates the dissatisfaction with artspack and is the ultimate manifestation of ripping it up and starting again that is associated with the punk zine aesthetic.

Frustration with ‘artspeak’ (Rule & Levine, 2012) is common in contemporary art museums and is interwoven within both action research projects. It was also the core focus and motivation for Emma’s PAR. In initial meetings, project collaborators called for Tate Liverpool to give users a ‘glossary and stop making me feel stupid and unwelcome’. Whilst many professions have developed jargon, contemporary art relies on tax-paying publics to support its production, collections and exhibitions. Thus, the inaccessibility of ‘artspeak’ is a public issue; because “when we use language, social goods and their distribution are always at stake” (Gee, 2014, p.7).

Through The People’s Glossary, ‘artspeak’ was interrogated using various methods of ‘articulation’ (taking things apart) and ‘re-articulation’ (putting things back together again) (Wray, 2019, p. 317) to create a common language. Aesthetically, this manifested through the use of coloured record cards, mapping, writing and drawing to undergo processes of PAR within gallery spaces. PAR enabled the group to amend, prioritise and reject words used by the museum, in action. This process permitted a communal construction of language for the group to draw from; to etch out their underrepresented identities; to adapt the hegemonic discourse and narratives of exhibitions; and to articulate different ways of knowing about art.

Through both research projects, zining and its processes - punk ‘cut and paste’, writing, drawing, mapping, and the creation of public works - set out to create intentional aesthetic disruption within the museums. In this article, this disruption is synonymous with what Ahmed calls ‘vandalism’, because to “vandal is to damage what you are supposed to revere, to bring an end to what you are supposed to reproduce” (Ahmed, 2017). In these terms, whilst zining causes acts of temporary disruption – similar to articles of public protest, like fly-posting a contested monument – zinesters leave signifiers of their identity in the hope to centre themselves “in ‘minoritarian’ terms” (Peters & Lankshear, 1996, p.11).

**Communities of practice**

In sociolinguistic circles, communities of practice (COP) are traditionally described as groups of people engaging in a “process of collective learning” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015); where interlocutors may share opinions, ideas, and
values with others by virtue of their shared interests. Their grouping is not defined by age, gender or class; it is motivated towards co-developing expertise. COPs can encompass a broad range of activities; scalable in size, specialism and formality. Belonging to one describes a shared fluency in that subject created as a product of thinking together. A rich area to conduct PAR, their proximity to specialist subjects - in our case museums - creates a motivated community in which transformation is an end goal. Similarly to zining, COPs gather around specialist subjects which often are not recognised for their expertise outside their circle.

Our collaborators are both groups who are not traditionally recognised for their expertise in museums. Learning disabled artists and curators often have to “battle to be seen as professionals” as their “creative agency” is called into question (Todd, 2020). Equally, members of Tate Liverpool’s Community Collective are not deemed legitimate because of their perceived status of having low cultural capital. Both groups are conceived as without the appropriate tools to recognise, classify and appreciate art. A deeply patronising framework to postulate groups, these views are based on the belief that art must define itself as different from other forms of culture by being difficult to understand (Kester, 2005).

An example of COPs in zines is demonstrated by an interaction during Jade’s PAR project *Art as Advocacy*. Within issue two of their zine series, Diana created a zine page carefully assembled from a number of words and phrases cut from magazines onto the zine page which included ‘art talk’, ‘debating’, ‘new ways of seeing’, ‘staff’ and ‘news spotlight’ (Figure 1). Alongside this text, she also hand drew an image of a person and wrote “Jeanine Tate Visitor Assistant” in black marker. The rest of the group asked Diana to explain her page. “This is Jeanine,” explained Diana, “she helped me in the exhibition with writing and reading. We talked a lot and she was [nice]. She’s not from Liverpool, she’s a student.” Diana went on to describe a research visit to Tate Liverpool where she had spoken to Jeanine and asked for help. Diana was not able to read the written museum interpretation like object labels and wall texts independently; “She read out the writing and she told me about his [the exhibiting artist] life.”

This moment was significant. What Diana acutely observed and then reflected on through zining was the importance of visitor service staff in museum interpretation. As the facilitator, Jade opened this up for discussion by the wider group. “What do we think of Diana’s experience?” Jade asked. “Well we need people doing that for our show, don’t we?” suggested another group member, “People to help you out and show you around. Should we write it on the [exhibition] plan?”. During the next research visit to a museum the group took Diana’s tip of asking gallery assistants for help. Through zining, they not only reflected and surfaced their experiences, they also incorporated a new interpretative strategy and learned new ways of decoding museums together.

Language is also significant for COPs and zining for whom shared language is created. Either in the use of written language within zine pages or verbally through their creation, the languages created by zining have capacities to legitimise collaborators and their experiences. Professor Janice Radway (2011) suggests that for
zine-makers validation comes not only from finding a community, but also by “pursuing actual connections with those who read their zines” (p. 147). For us, this not only emphasises the importance of zining for linguistic expression, but also for acknowledgment of the relationship between speaking, listening, hearing and responding.

Creating an expanding “speech community” (Eckert, 2006, p. 683) was a key aim for the Community Collective in The People's Glossary project. During a workshop intended to demystify jargon terms in Tate Liverpool’s gallery, discussing the meaning of words was an exercise in learning and thinking together;

Janice: We found utopia, so we needed dystopia.
Danielle: What does that mean? ... What does dystopia mean?
Tony: Is that a new word?
Janice: It’s the opposite of utopia. It’s like a dystopian future where everything is miserable, the world has gone to hell in a bucket.
Tony: Does it not exist now, that word?
Emma: It does.
Helen: Has everyone remembered to vote today?!

The four voices engaged in this discussion are assessing whether to add ‘dystopia’ to their zine. First, Janice proposes a word that she recognises - utopia - to discuss. Her mention of ‘dystopia’ enables Danielle and Tony to express their unfamiliarity with the word. Subsequently, the group were able to collaboratively articulate and “transform given information into new understanding” (Mercer, 2002, p. 8). Janice’s colloquial description of dystopia as ‘hell in a bucket’ is accepted by the group. Once the understanding of the word is grasped, Helen interjects to draw it into everyday relevance.

Both PAR and COPs aim at improving social contexts. In the examples given here, we outline instances during zining processes where collaborative learning could potentially influence the distribution of social goods and cultivate new practices of knowledge production.

Counter-narratives

Counter-narratives are stories that “splinter widely accepted truths” about people, cultures, and institutions as well as their value and the knowledge they produce (Given, 2008). The term itself signals its purpose in expressing scepticism of narratives that claim the authority of knowledge, enabling them to challenge claims about what is to be taken as ‘truth’. Similarly to zines, counter-narratives work to highlight the “little stories” of groups and/or individuals that are produced at the margins of ‘official’ storytelling. Little stories constituting counter-narratives engage and deconstruct the official stories used to create and sustain ‘otherness’ and maintain marginality. Over the years, both researchers (Sampson, 1993) and museum professionals (Baker, 2015) have become increasingly aware of how their
disciplines construct, legitimize and perpetuate ‘otherness’. Acknowledgment of this demonstrates the importance of reflexivity when practicing PAR and our museum work alongside individuals who are marginalized in ways that we are not.

Zines, however, are driven by little stories. Zinesters act as “resisting subjects” seeking to privilege and explore the agency and actions of the non-elite whose lives are often under-represented in public discourse (Chidgey, 2006, p. 4). The DIY ethos underpinning punk culture, which sought to reclaim music back from corporate ownership and control, has been redirected into zines to reclaim authorship from the “officially endorsed venues of publication” (Farmer, 2012, p. 48). Arguably, everything about zines stands in material and symbolic opposition to corporate and institutional ownership of ideas, identities, and metanarratives. Subsequently, one common rhetorical purpose of zines is to encourage readers to ‘do it yourself’ to ‘make your own culture’ and ‘tell your own story’.

For issue four of the Ask the Curators zine series, the group created a zine about their experiences of applying for grant funding to enable them to commission new artworks for their exhibition. The first page of the zine reads:

In April 2016 we applied for funding for help pay for our exhibition. We found it was hard as not all of the group reads or writes. Here are some ideas for a more inclusive way.

Throughout the zine, the group question the dominance of text within museums and how this is made visible through the funding application process. On pages three and four the words, “Its about our disability not our ability” are typed onto the page alongside the carefully handwritten, “Be [smiley face] at what I can do not [sad face]”. When Jade discussed this zine page with the group, one said, “it feels like everything is against us”. Others, however, were more hopeful and created a zine page consisting of a large cut out of a retro video camera alongside the text, “video is a good way to share info!”, providing their solution to the inaccessibility of written text.

The experience of the funding application as expressed through zining, teamed with difficulties in accessing texts inside art exhibitions during research visits, resulted in choosing to not use text within their own exhibition. Instead, the group chose to co-produce a video with the exhibiting artists and boldly chose to forgo any labels, statements or written information. Here, the group’s counter-narrative of a world not navigated through the written word created possibilities for alternative ways of ‘knowing’ about art (French, 2019, p.161). In this instance, the group’s counter-narrative went beyond merely countering official knowledge to producing a different way of representation altogether.

Arguably, the process of making counter-narratives public creates “a movement from distance to proximity” where “the strange can become familiar” (Golding, 2019, p. 128) and this can only be done by the creation and dissemination of ‘little stories’. However, in ‘Places of Power’ - where the rules are rigid due their qualities
that protect knowledge and traditions - there is resistance against dissemination of counter-narratives.

**Plurality**

Though traditionally action research has been used to open up communicative space to bring consensus (Kemmis, 2006); we discuss the use of zines to explore subjective viewpoints and situate these in relation to plural and competing discourses.

Plurality is an emergent objective in museums. Debates over public participation and “museum activism” (Janes & Sandell, 2019) are increasingly creating pressure on museums to become “forums” as opposed to traditional “temples” of culture (Cameron, 1971). This has been accelerated by a growing consensus that museums are full of the biases of the people that run them (Fleming, 2015); an idea reflected across organisations such as universities and schools. Contemporary attention to plurality is reflected in the International Council of Museum’s (ICOM) new proposed definition of a museum as “democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures” (ICOM, 2019). This marks a stark contrast with the previous definition idealising preservation and education. Traditionally used in music, the term polyphonic implies listening and hearing. Also used in feminist social research, polyphonic insinuates active-listening to multiple stories and voices (Gilligan, 2006). Voices that compete and contradict, but also at times ‘sing together’. Museums are considered as having ‘many voices’; yet studies reveal that there remains significant underrepresentation of people from diverse backgrounds within cultural roles (Brook et al., 2018). Encouraging greater levels of plurality is just one response to the evolving roles of museums in a postmodern, multicultural society.

Arguably zines occupy a similar language and function to museums and adjacent organisations embracing democratic practices. Due to the physical organisation of zines - that bring together ideas and experiences on multiple pages - they are able to encompass many voices, tones and conflicting opinions, knowledge and subjectivities. In museums, zines can bring powerful and personal perspectives to dominant narratives that “expert”-led research may not provide. This convergence of plurality and zining is evident in the zine; *IMAGINE (if you made the rules)*, facilitated by Emma. Influenced by the sentiment that museums are currently ‘tearing up the rulebooks’, the research group undertook an activity where they imagined they were the management team of Tate Liverpool for the day (Figure 2).

A small but powerful provocation, the question; ‘what would you do differently at Tate Liverpool?’ was conceived congruently to the group’s feeling that they had little-to-no say in how the institution operates. To enable critical thinking before creating pages for zine, they discussed some of the common rules already in place at museums i.e. ‘no photography’ and ‘do not touch’, whilst also rationalising their necessity. The discussion concluded by recalling how implementation of museum rules may disproportionately impact audiences’ feelings of inclusion, using
examples of the group’s personal experiences. To create the zine, members wrote newly developed rules on paper with the provocation; ‘your rule and why’.

In this activity, the powerless became powerful. This change in demeanour was demonstrated by demands to; ‘THINK LOCAL!’ and ‘BE INCLUSIVE!’ Or, more radically; ‘GIVE ALL YOUNG PEOPLE AN EDITING PERMANENT MARKER’. Comprising drawings, poems, questions and statements, the zine became a pluralistic, complaint forum. Though thematically coded into groups; local, access, curation, dialogue, representation and public space; the format incorporated explicitly individual tones. Importantly, antagonistic excerpts are also included in the zine; like ‘stop having useless things like this, we want art, not [to] talk about art’ and calls for ‘galleries without words’.

Not only plural in tone, content and voice, zines additionally represent plurality aesthetically. In the Ask the Curator zine series, after agreeing on the theme of the zine together, collaborators would then individually create their own zine pages, each in their personal signature style. Diana, for example, often incorporated handwriting, drawings and mark making, whereas Leah would typically include lettering cut and paste from media. Though the distinct zine pages strongly reflect each individual, once completed, the group would then come together to create an introduction and arrange the pages into an order, considering how to ‘best tell the story’. The overall aesthetic of black ink on brown paper brings harmony and consistency across the plurality of colours, designs and voices, enabling the group to remain as individuals, yet at the same time, ‘sing together’.

It could also be argued that such strategies advocate for the inclusion of voices who are rarely heard in monolithic organisations, alongside those whose voices are already established to challenge “authoritarian order” (Mouffe, 2000, p. 16). Zines are therefore intended to create space for bodies and voices that are not typically represented or approved. They allow their creators “to speak ‘in one’s own voice’” (Fraser, 1990, p. 69). Consequently, zines have the capacity to tell stories that are different from the status quo. For PAR, the benefit of zines is that their physical manifestation can demonstrate inevitable issues that arise including voice, conflict and power. These instances may be ‘circled back to’ as a reflective tool through dialogue. Through this process, the heterogeneity of voices contributes to critically engaged conclusions and recommendations.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this article we have advocated for zining as a methodology of PAR within museums and adjacent organisations seeking organisational change. As discussed via our four themes, zines possess capacities that cut to the heart of key issues within contemporary museology, and organisations more generally; diversity, power and representation. By sharing these examples it is hoped that zining could be used by other action researchers within their own contexts.

Though we advocate for zines as a method to collaborate with co-researchers, we continue to grapple with how zines can impact organisational change towards
We continue to grapple with how zines can impact organisational change towards diversity, power and representation. By sharing these examples it is hoped that zines possess capacities that cut to the heart of within museums and adjacent organisations seeking organisational change. As discussed via our four themes, zines have the capacity to tell stories that are represented or approved. They allow their creators "to speak 'in one's own voice'" and are therefore intended to create space for bodies and voices that are not typically included in the major and the minor. For PAR, the benefit of zines is that their physical auctate, rearticulate, imagine and reimagine how things could be done differently...
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Notes
1. We use the term ‘art museum’ to broadly describe organisations who collect, display and mediate art.
2. Opened to the public in 1988, Tate Liverpool was originally established as the ‘Tate of the North’ on the post-industrial Albert Docks in Liverpool. One of four Tate sites – Tate Modern and Tate Britain in London and Tate St Ives in Cornwall – Tate Liverpool boasts three floors of galleries housing exhibitions, events, project spaces and some of Tate’s national collection of modern and contemporary art.
3. Located in a 300 year old listed building, Bluecoat is Liverpool’s centre for the contemporary arts attracting 700,000 visits annually. Bluecoat delivers a year-round programme of exhibitions, music, dance, literature, live art and heritage events, as well as providing a base for around 30 artists, collectives, small arts organisations and craftspeople.

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