

# Inwards Outwards

Ideas and exercises to connect the  
museum with its surroundings

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# Inwards - Outwards

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# Introduction

**Lately, museums are becoming aware of the need to play an active social role, focused not only in the past –through the conservation of objects and culture– but also on the present and the future.** Their purpose is no longer limited to connecting their connections with interested publics, but is expanding to creating relevant conversations and proposing topics on the collective interest agenda. This is why many museums have begun to take a stand regarding current problems that touch the everyday lives of large sectors of the population, such as inclusion, migration and social conflict. Addressing complex and contemporary issues helps institutions encourage tolerance among those broad and diverse sectors at their own homes. And, in essence, this is an inherent value of the public space.

**This outlook throws us into a sea of questions with no easy answers: is the museum a space for agreement or disagreement? Can the museum become involved in inclusion processes that not only regard what goes on between its four walls? How and with whom are projects carried out? What obstacles and tensions emerge during these collective processes? Can design –in its broadest sense– help overcome these issues?**

Design is a social transformation tool. Many institutions often perform design separately from the content, the use and the experience sought in a certain space—maybe due to the effects of deep-rooted historic structures and hard to change ways of work. At times, professionals involved in a museum work on the design of an exhibit, a program, a gallery or a device in a dissociated fashion, after developing the content. Separating these instances not only causes discrepancies within creative teams, but may also result in neglecting new opportunities for action.

With these questions in mind, and with the challenge of taking the museum to the street, we organized the second edition of Chaos at the Museum, a design congress that gathered 160 museum professionals, designers, architects, educators and artists from all over the world in Buenos Aires to think collaboratively how to connect museums with their standards. The congress took place between November 16 and 20, 2016 at the Museum of the City of Buenos Aires, and was organized by Fundación TyPA, University of California, Davis, The George Washington University and Central Saint Martins, UAL.

**The ideas and the experience shared at Chaos at the Museum have inspired the chapters in this publication, organized along a series of questions on the surroundings of the museum and the role of the museum,** coupled with a description of specific tools to strengthen the relation between them, and some keys to be taken into consideration along this transition. Chapter 1 and 2 revisit some of the concepts presented at individual conferences and discussion tables. Chapter 3 is based on simple and specific exercises to start thinking how to take museums out to the streets, proposed by professionals from different fields. Chapter 4 recovers the learnings gathered through the implementation of a series of group rehearsals presented during the activities.

We hope these thoughts will trigger curiosity and new ideas among those readers that consider themselves agents of transformation in the institutions where they work.

**Welcome.**

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# Surrounding the Museum

## What makes up the museum's surrounding?

Sense of Place. Urban Mesh. Expanded  
Territory. Social Urbanism. Narrative  
Environments. Context and Content.

### 1.1 Physical Surroundings

### 1.2 Symbolic Surroundings

### 1.3 Social and Community Surroundings

# Introduction

**Museums not only constitute, but are located in public space.** This is a regulated space: there, some things can be done, and some others cannot, and everyone living in a society knows the limits imposed by that *“being public.”* It is common knowledge generally transmitted by use, implicit, and thus not easily challenged. What is –then– public space? Urban Dictionary characterizes it as *“a place –in the broadest sense– where everyone can enjoy their coexistence and represent their collectivity and common interest without losing their diversity.”* In other words, it is a space for reunion and equality in diversity, where we have the certainty of exercising one right: the right to circulate, to stay, and to meet with others: known or strange to us.

The decisions made at a museum (just as those made by a local government, hospital or any other institution) can foster either meetings or failed meetings in the public space. In the words of Américo Castilla, ***“the public space may promote trenches where each tribe strengthens their prejudice or else stimulate proximity and the construction of bridges that allow to overcome diversity. They usually swing between these ends based on random political timing and social climate.”*** And any museum wishing to become a part of that social construct, according to Castilla, has *“the opportunity of looking around, to passers-by, with the same attention devoted to the museum collection (...) and the space may be deemed a platform for discussion and exchange, a new agora of citizen critique.”*

**Now, if museums are to relate themselves with the territory around them, what does the environment include, specifically?** The buildings in the block? Other local institutions? The park across the street? The school around the corner? Does it include also the homeless guy living at the park? The street cleaner? The bike-men parking on the sidewalk and the newsstand at the door?

Does the environment include the way our streets are traveled nowadays?

The variables affecting the life of an institution to be taken into consideration are many. We propose an analysis of the territory where the museum belongs from three different dimensions: **a physical dimension**–including geographic, urban and architectural aspects, taking the museum as a building of certain characteristics inserted in an urban mesh; **a symbolic dimension**, featuring the history of the place where the museum lies and the meaning of the institution today, to the extent the museum is a symbol engraved in a broader network of meanings; and **a social or community dimension**, which includes the conversations between the museum and different sectors in society to which they talk or with whom they are called to coexist. These three dimensions are closely intertwined: working on one necessarily implies changing the others. Knowing the forces affecting these dimensions will allow the museum to understand its environment and work with it.

# 1.1 / Physical Surroundings

**The experience of visiting a museum begins long before the visitor goes through the museum doors.** It begins precisely the moment a visitor decides to go to the museum, with the experience of traveling to get there: if the visitor chooses public transportation, the access to the area will most likely affect their decision; if they go by car, the chances of parking. Architect Philip G. Freelon, responsible for the design of several buildings hosting museums in the United States, put it as follows:

*Museums are often seen as destinations. Patrons make deliberate plans to visit and they have fairly well defined expectations about what they will experience upon arrival. That experience begins as one enters the general vicinity of the institution – there may be a glimpse of the building or landscape/hardscape elements that reach beyond the threshold of the Museum to engage visitors. This important approach sequence varies depending on the Museum’s immediate context. The urban fabric, adjacent structures, natural landscape features along with vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns are all important drivers for planning and design amid the chaotic realm of our cities. The intangible aspects of a place also weigh heavily on museum design, the sense of community (or lack thereof) being prime among socio-economic considerations.*

We propose a “zoom out” exercise to define the area of influence of a museum and better understand the “outside”. We can begin by observing the building, the façade, the windows and doors, and the outer signs; then, the immediate surroundings: the neighborhood; and beyond that, the city, and even the country or the region, going from the most evident to the most general.

**The boundaries between inside and outside are porous. A museum façade, as**

**well as its entrances or windows, offer possible ways of communicating to the street what is going on inside,** they let content transpire. Let us take, for example, the **Museum of the African Diaspora**, Yerba Buena, San Francisco, the design of which focused on the need to project the museum mission outwards. Freelon explains: **“We wanted to do something special in the entrance, to create an intervention that announced that something fantastic was happening on the inside.** We looked at ways of incorporating the architecture with the exhibitory and, working in collaboration with the graphic designer, we chose a child’s portrait”. The façade was built in glass, so that this gigantic portrait could be seen from the streets. The portrait is inside, and it is made up of thousands of smaller images that tell the story of the diaspora in individual scenes. Moreover, a definition of the term “diaspora” was plotted on the glass of the façade for passers-by to read as they walk along the sidewalk. **This is how the museum starts telling the story of the exhibit even before visitors walk into the museum, and these elements trigger curiosity and interest among passers-by, even if they are not informed of what is inside.**

We can see other buildings in the surroundings and project possible relations between them and the museum. **The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture**, the design of which was also directed by Freelon, is located on the **National Mall** in Washington DC, an area characterized by the presence of many other public buildings of magnificent architecture, which somehow reflect the country’s life and history, including other United States history museums, the Capitol, the White House and the Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr. and Jefferson Memorials. In this regard, Freelon says: *“Our site is visible from all of those and just as important we have views from the building back to those monuments. The site is also at a junction where the National Mall, a very orthogonal and rectilinear development, meets the more bucolic organic form of the Washington monument grounds. Our site is the transition point between those two and so we have taken those organic forms and continued them to our site but the building itself is square as the other museums around the Mall and in that way we are respecting of the geometry and plan”.* Through its design, the building engages in dialog both with the avenue of the large museums and with the area of the memorials, which is part of the mission and vision of the museum: create a dialog between the history of African Americans and that of the United States. Quoting Freelon: *“We wanted the building to be an expression of the idea so that the building is speaking to*

*the mission and vision of the institution so celebration becomes an important part of that. There are difficult stories there but we did not want the building and the museum to be about only victims and perpetrators but also about the celebration and the resiliency.”*

Although it is not always possible to design a museum from scratch, these guidelines may prove useful in evaluating the environment more thoroughly to determine the aspects to be selected to interact with, or how to renew the connection. Mapping is a technique that may prove useful for such purpose. **Museums must bear in mind that they are surrounded not only by other civic institutions, but also by stores, offices, and medical offices, and these spaces may also be considered the environment and be included in an interconnection strategy.** How can this strategy be materialized? It may be through windows or transparencies, as in the cases described above, but it may also be through smaller actions, ranging from leaving programs of the exhibits at the waiting rooms of the closest doctor offices, at the newsstand or at the school from organizing a workshop for the kids treated at the hospital two blocks away from the museum.

**If we look closer, we see the neighborhood where the museum is located, and even the city, and –beyond- the country.** How does a museum connect at each these levels, and how can it affect them? Andrés Roldán, director of **Parque Explora** –a science museum in Medellín, Colombia–, talks about the origin of this museum as part of a bigger plan for the social transformation of the city. At the time when the problems associated to drug-trafficking came under control, the city authorities deployed a “social urbanism” plan. Social urbanism suggests that a city’s urban plan must be based on indicators of social needs and citizen quality of life, rather than on market criteria.

A decision was made to set up the Parque at a plot adjacent to the University of Antioquia, the Botanic Gardens, an amusement park and Morro de Moravia, a town of very poor houses that settled on what had formerly been the Medellín landfill, mostly inhabited by people running away from the drug-trafficking war waged in rural areas. The mission of the park was thus not only educational, but also included the goal of transforming society through the generation of public spaces, where new dialogs could be fostered between different sectors and actors in the city: university students, Moravia inhabitants and other social

sectors that would hardly meet in any other context. Projects such as this one not only observed and connected with the physical elements already existing at the site, but also set to change these spaces –and succeeded.

However, fostering dialog among social sectors is not only something that should be limited to this area of the city of Medellín. Once that was accomplished, the museum sought to secure access to these conversations for those that do not live there. The response came from the infrastructure available: they created the mobile Exploratorium, a laboratory-truck that takes the contents of the museum to other cities, and offers the possibility of expanding dialog to other regions in the country.

**In the cases discussed so far, the tendency to connect the inside and outside of the museum fosters more comprehensive visits.** According to Freelon, *“The traditional barriers that separate everyday urban life from the museum visitor experience are dissolving as context and content merge. This dynamic creates intriguing possibilities for designers who embrace this challenge”.*



**National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution.** Washington, USA.

*"Our site is visible from all of those and just as important we have views from the building back to those monuments."*



**Museum of the African Diaspora.** San Francisco, USA.



*"We wanted to do something special in the entrance, to create an intervention that announced that something fantastic was happening on the inside."*

**Parque Explora.**  
Medellín, Colombia.

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## 1.2 / Symbolic Surroundings

The place where the museum is located, or even the building hosting it, may have different meanings, if any historic events took place there, or if the area has a value differential from other areas. This significance of this issue becomes more apparent when we think of memorials, for example. Undoubtedly, the social value attached to a place can have a direct incidence on the perception any visitor has of any institution, for good or for bad.

**Tricia Austin suggests that museums are –and they create– narrative environments: spaces that tell stories, convey messages and values, and construct narrations.** However, a distinction must be drawn between the implied and explicit narratives we may find at the museum. **Explicit narratives** includes all forms of speech actually uttered, from the explanations of educators and program scripts to the signs on the façade and internal signage. Implied narratives, on the other hand, are those that arise from inference or decoding, based on previous knowledge. For example, many museums have buildings of magnificent architecture, which sometimes impliedly conveys that they house important works or objects.

**The history of the place is part of an institution's implied narrative.** An emblematic case is that of the **Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture**. Deborah L. Mack, Associate Director for Community Services, recalls that it had been over 100 years since African American communities began claiming their place at the **National Mall**, the United States' political heart, until they finally got it. The reasons for claiming this place and no other are many. Many years ago, this site was home to a plantation where African American slaves used to work. Moreover, many significant demonstrations along the United States history took place there, some of them important milestones in the fight for the recognition of civil rights. Moreover,

this space has very high visibility both nationally and internationally. The opening of this museum at that site created a possibility to symbolically reverse the story of slavery of the African American community, placing a symbol of this community at the core of the country's political power. The **National Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture** has thus become the first building designed, performed and dedicated to the African American community at the **National Mall**.

But it is not only the history of a place that has symbolic implications. **Through the design, a building presents and represents the ideas and values of the institution, which adds to the contents explicitly proposed by it.** In connection with the **Center for Civil and Human Rights** in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, Philip G. Freelon argues: *"We started with research, with engaging the community to see how we can really infuse meaning into the architecture so that the building and the concept is not simply housing exhibits but the architecture and the design is contributing to the message of that institution. We began to notice the idea of interlocking arms, an enduring icon that speaks to bringing people together, people from different ethnic background, different histories and ages, very diverse, and that coming together and linking in this way you are stronger that you are as an individual so we wanted to find a way to perhaps bring that idea into the architecture"*.

To get the design, both of the building at large and that of smaller and apparently less significant elements, to become a vehicle expressing these values and identities, architects and designers must work in collaboration with the minds behind the project and those in charge of creating the exhibits, from scratch. In effect, Freelon explains: *"When clients come to us, they often about the architecture first, and the exhibit designers are hired after. **We always want***

**to bring that aspect of the design much earlier so the building and the exhibit are integrated in a powerful way”.**

The awareness that there are multiple narratives coexisting allows an institution to articulate its narrative based on this site’s history and symbolic value, and play with them to serve the messages and values the institution wants to convey. In the relation between museums and the environment, it is important to know, approach, strengthen and understand these stories, and not turn one’s back on them. **Acknowledging this identity does not only refer to the present, because these narratives are also in the imaginary of those persons that choose to visit the museum, and those that choose not to.**

Center for Civil and Human Rights.  
Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

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## 1.3/ Social and Community Surroundings

Both in the case of the **National Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture** and in the case of **Parque Explora**, the institution was born out of **the dialog with the communities to which their exhibits would be targeted, long before thinking of laying the cornerstone.** These are museums that find their *raison d'être* in their social and community surroundings.

Before the **Parque Explora** building was inaugurated, the work team engaged in certain initiatives to get to know the inhabitants of Morro de Moravia, the community next to the museum. They soon found that a large portion of the population were farmers, and knew how to work the land. While the Government implemented a housing relocation program (remember the neighborhood developed over an open landfill, which would now be cleared), the team at **Parque Explora** decided to find a new use for that landfill, that would fulfill the community's unsatisfied needs. This is how they turned the site into a worksite: they set up a cooperative to grow ornamental plants that became a source of income for many inhabitants. Andrés Roldán explains it as follows: ***"we can create contents that will transform the public space together with our communities, as a different form of land appropriation."***

Something similar happened with the creation of **Ferrowhite, the museum-workshop at Ingeniero White Port**, located few kilometers away from the city of Bahía Blanca (Buenos Aires, Argentina). At this museum-workshop, objects are not merely on display, but are also manufactured. And as these objects belonging to Argentina's railroad network get manufactured and put on display, a public space is built. Because, as explained by Nicolás Testoni, the museum director: *"the museum is the building chosen to open it, but it is also everything that happens constantly outside that building"*. **Ferrowhite** is a museum dedicated to the history of the workers of Argentina's railways, the

purpose of which was to *"expand our understanding of the present and, with that, our perspectives for the future. But this knowledge is not only formed by the tools and objects that are part of the museum collection, but also, and more importantly, with the knowledge of the workers of the General San Martín maintenance garage, the building that hosts the museum today, and the village inhabitants, that saw that railroad network arise, grow and fade away."*

**The contents of Ferrowhite are not created by museum workers based on the knowledge contributed by railway workers, but instead with those railway workers involved in this creative and descriptive process.** The idea is not to create a *"user experience"* based on what museum workers imagine their visitors will be like, but to create a joint experience among museum employees, railway workers and neighbors, which is much harder, and also much more effective.

This joint work requires the community to appropriate the museum itself. Testoni refers that museum employees ***"began by conducting interviews following the protocols or oral story-telling, and ended up committed to our interviewees in producing exhibits, organizing school visits, videos, artifacts and carnival celebrations that not only reflect the past of the community, but which somehow attempt to effect its present."*** This effect on the present may also translate in the joint resolution of unmet needs, exchange or recipes or seedlings, appreciation of history and the creation of ties of solidarity among neighbors. *"Naïve and pompous as it may sound, it helps us build a slightly less unfair society."*

Both institutions started their path with a dialog (with the inhabitants of Moravia and with railroad workers), attempting to understand their own history, but also wondering what a museum would be to them, how they would feel represented by the institution. This was not only a starting point, but a continuous work method. **This is how museums engage in dialog.** One could argue that this applies only to community museums, but this is not so. What distinguishes **Explora** from **Ferrowhite** is that the former does not work with the history of the community for which it is intended, but works instead with universal contents (science.) Yet, it has managed to find the way to engage in conversation and apply part of its contents to concrete field work, to address community needs.

**These experiences not only result in the possibility of opening museums up to their communities, but also of creating new public spaces for participation and citizen belonging,** which they trigger with their communities, but are transformed through the exchange, to finally open their doors to other sectors of society. In the words of Roldán, *“we need to turn the public space into a space that is literally public, democratic. A space where we are not only allowed to protest, but where we can affect the transformations required based on community interests, motivations and dreams. Because this is where we live and where we belong. The contents and the conversations between a museum and its community may be the driver behind the transformation of the public space. If institutions are willing to hear and generate the creative opportunity to empower citizens to transform their territory, these transformations are going to resignify profoundly the way we inhabit the space, because then we will know that it is literally public space, created by the public.”*

**Ferrowhite museo-taller.**  
Ingeniero White, Buenos Aires,  
Argentina.

**Ferrowhite** is a museum dedicated to the history of the workers of Argentina’s railways, the purpose of which was to *“expand our understanding of the present and, with that, our perspectives for the future. But this knowledge is not only formed by the tools and objects that are part of the museum collection, but also, and more importantly, with the knowledge of the workers of the General San Martín maintenance garage, the building that hosts the museum today, and the village inhabitants, that saw that railroad network arise, grow and fade away.”*



Getting to know one's surroundings is a perception exercise that requires patience, perseverance and attention. The task of watching and listening to other agents, understanding the institutions that are near and how they work, what feelings they arise among inhabitants and passers-by, takes a long time. But as we begin to understand the complexity of these surroundings, as we find the endless variables and possibilities of work, a need arises to select some elements on which to work to create or reformulate that connection between the museum and the environment. It is impossible to connect everything.

## Mentioned in this chapter:

**Philip G. Freelon**  
Perkins + Will, USA:  
[www.perkinswill.com](http://www.perkinswill.com)

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Museum of the African Diaspora.  
San Francisco, USA.:  
[www.moadsf.org](http://www.moadsf.org)

-  
Center for Civil and Human Rights.  
Atlanta, Georgia, USA:  
[www.civilandhumanrights.org](http://www.civilandhumanrights.org)

**Deborah L. Mack**  
National Museum of African  
American History and Culture,  
Smithsonian Institution.  
Washington, USA:  
[www.nmaahc.si.edu](http://www.nmaahc.si.edu)

**Andrés Roldán**  
Parque Explora. Medellín, Colombia:  
[www.parqueexplora.org](http://www.parqueexplora.org)

**Nicolás Testoni**  
Ferrowhite museo-taller.  
Ingeniero White, Buenos Aires,  
Argentina:  
[www.ferrowhite.bahiablanca.gov.ar](http://www.ferrowhite.bahiablanca.gov.ar)

**Tricia Austin**  
MA Narrative Environments, Central  
Saint Martins, UAL. London, UK:  
[www.arts.ac.uk/csm/courses/postgraduate/ma-narrative-environments](http://www.arts.ac.uk/csm/courses/postgraduate/ma-narrative-environments)

The ideas of this chapter are inspired by the following sessions of Chaos at the Museum:

**Public space: The critical agora for the XXI century** / Deborah Mack, Helen Marriage, Nicolás Testoni, Américo Castilla (moderator)

**How can public space be used for science?**  
Andrés Roldán

**Sense of Place**  
Philip G. Freelon

**Dialogue in design. Places for interaction** / Andrés Roldán, Estudio a77, The Decorators, Enrique Longinotti (moderator)

**Videos of these sessions can be found at:**

[www.youtube.com/user/FundacionTyPA](http://www.youtube.com/user/FundacionTyPA)

# Meeting Spaces

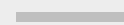
**How to activate public space inside and outside the museum?**

Social Inclusion. Consensus and Dissent.  
Relevance. Civic Participation. Hospitality.  
Political Activism. Complexity.

**2.1 / Museums In Touch with the Streets**

**2.2 / Streets in Touch with the Museum**

**2.3 / The Museum and the Streets in Touch**





# Introduction

**The public space is that where there are permanent meetings among unknown persons.** These meetings take place peacefully, in the understanding that they are safe: if we all abide by **the rules of use of that space**, nothing bad will ever happen to anyone. Current phenomena such as crime or terrorism threaten to disrupt that understanding that allows individuals to go out to the world day after day to live their lives. Protecting the public space as a peaceful space for meeting is incumbent upon many institutions, and not limited to law enforcement.

Museums, as part of a larger mesh of civic institutions that work towards the public good, are tasked with promoting spaces for common use, where people may feel reassured, not only in the sense that no bad will come to them, but also in the sense that they are in a place that includes them and challenges them.

Nonetheless, visitors often sense barriers –some explicit, some implicit– that prevent them from entering or feeling at ease at a museum. Reaching out an ever-larger universe of visitors requires intellectual, cultural and sensitive efforts on the part of every institution, to find what makes a person feel invited to enter these spaces, and why they would want to do so. A museum may produce an exhibit and simply open its doors to wait for someone to come in and see it. But it can also create situations that will enhance the uses visitors make of the facility.

A pinch of chaos is always necessary to inspire new ways of using or inhabiting a space: disruption allows us to challenge what is already there, and imagine something new may happen. **Although transformation of a family scenery may prove ephemeral, the change on the public perception of the experience leaves a permanent legacy:** the possibility of thinking new ways of occupying and using public spaces collectively. This was the inspiration for the work of Helen Marriage, artistic director at Artichoke, an art collective that produces large-scale artistic

events with the purpose of creating such an impact that may affect the way we perceive the environment. One of the most significant shows was **The Sultan's Elephant**, a large-scale puppet show that paralyzed downtown London shortly after the July 2005 terrorist attacks. It took seven years for them to secure the authorization to suspend the city's normal activities for several hours. Why was it so natural for the authorities in London to suspend the normal use of these areas for events such as political acts, royal anniversaries, war or soccer victories –i.e., events deemed of "*national significance*"– and yet it could not be done for an event associated instead to enjoyment, magic and awe? The encounter proved that, even in a context still tense upon recent developments, in which people shied away from crowded and public spaces, around one million people appreciated the work in a festive gathering that helped relax the social climate. It was the first time the city was ever used for a purpose like this: as a space for artistic use that would allow to express things that cannot possibly be expressed in any other way.

**In this chapter, we will analyze innovative strategies which, such as this elephant, manage to activate the public space inside and outside institutions.**

We will seek for strategies aimed at taking museums out to the street, using their visions to occupy the public ground. We will strive to open museum doors to think how museums get to draw new visitors (or fail at it), asking ourselves what it means to be an inclusive space. We will rise to the challenge of today's museums to be up to date with real world problems, finding ways to be permeable to new conversations and to the demands arising day in, day out, beyond their walls.

The Sultan's Elephant, 2005 /  
Artichoke. London, UK.

The encounter proved that, even in a context still tense upon recent developments, in which people shied away from crowded and public spaces, around one million people appreciated the work in a festive gathering that helped relax the social climate.



## 2.1 / Museums In Touch with the Streets

**For many museums, the outer public space is guaranteed: they are surrounded by a park or they have a large sidewalk; but, as pointed by Andrés Roldán, "having good grass does not suffice to guarantee relationships."** The mere existence of a place where people can exercise their right to meet does not turn by-standards into an organized collective: the existence of **Plaza de Mayo** or the **National Mall** are not enough for there to be demonstrations reflecting the will of the people.

**The public space offers latent possibilities of meetings among strangers. When an institution of public good makes the appropriate intervention, the potential of the public space is enhanced because it becomes a space for debate, a space for belonging and for generating new social ties.** The question facing museums today is then how to create content for that public space and make it work not only as a space for discrepancy but also for encounter. What narration can a museum generate that will give justification to the public space to draw attention?

Content may be, literally, the objects or the collections which are inherently loaded with their own narrations which quickly multiply when exposed to new contents, such as the streets. Moreover, the experience at the inside of a museum can be replicated outside. If, behind closed doors, museums generally set to create situations that will propose a different look of the world, getting the museum out to the street would also imply that exercise of making it strange, challenging the sense and the uses of everything that surrounds us. When they asked themselves this question at Parque Explora, they found that the best possible way to carry out interventions in the outer esplanade of the museum was to create a series of games that would allow people to experiment from a ludic approach. Andrés Roldán believes that this results in **"visitors**

**using the space constantly seeking for new conversations, knowing that different things happen there, that it is there that people talk about certain matters."**

Nonetheless, the outer and public space is not always a given. Many large cities are today at risk of progressively losing their public spaces. The pressures of the real estate market, the privatization of green or free areas, coupled with other state policies, have restricted their scope of possibilities. An ephemeral intervention of the public space has become one way to occupy spaces that, unless claimed, may soon lose their condition of public. This becomes particularly important in those cities going through space privatization processes, as suggested by Carolina Caicedo, who creates ephemeral interventions in public spaces with the remaining members of the Decorators. She says **"London is developing extremely fast: public spaces feel public but, in many cases, they are actually private property of a company and they have their own rules"**.

## 2.2 / Streets In Touch with the Museums

Just as getting the museum out to the streets allow for some of the things museums do within their walls to take place beyond those walls, that exteriorization act is necessarily accompanied by the inverse process: **what happens outside can also begin to affect what happens in the inside.**

The clearest evidence may be that these persons that have been challenged “outside” take an interest in further pursuing that experience inside the museum. Within the museum, there are other rules, and barriers may arise at any point along the process: either because the employee’s language is overly technical, or because visitors are greeted by a security guard (assuming that they may represent some sort of danger), or because museum facilities fail to address certain needs (by not providing the necessary adaptations for people with different needs, or for those that speak a language other than the official language, etc.). **Once a visitor has felt excluded, it is very hard to gain him back,** especially if it is a person that has been victim of previous social exclusion experiences. Feeling excluded as a profoundly humiliating and unfair experience, which produces a permanent damage on the social mesh.

**Inclusive policies are among the most prevailing concerns of many modern museums.** Rather than a formality, these policies must reflect in concrete actions, and be addressed not only to those who are already frequent visitors, but must also be aimed at fulfilling the needs of potential visitors, and may be thought both for the inside and for the outside of the museum. **Many museums have fostered the use of their outer spaces (parks, stairs and access esplanades) as gathering places or for activities not necessarily linked to the museums or its contents.** Other institutions, especially those in extreme weather, **have opened up spaces within their buildings for multiple use (lobby, café, public restrooms, sitting, etc.) for those that do not necessarily intend to**

**visit the museum.** Through these measures, museums are communicating to by-passers, even those which are not museum visitors, the idea that the institution is thinking of them too. This may be the trigger for a new conversation between the institution and that person feeling welcome, invited. The museum must find opportunity in those utilitarian users of their facilities (those that just go in to use the restrooms.) And all it takes is finding the way to make them step in; go through the physical and symbolic door separating the outside from the inside.

**If we cannot just put up a sign reading “Pstt... Come in. Yes, we’re talking to you”, how else do we tell people that they are welcome?** We all like to feel at home wherever we are, and that makes us feel confident. If one enters an unknown building and can quickly and easily understand how to move around, where things are and if the space has been designed so that people can move around without asking for directions or for permission, then you feel invited. Nigel Briggs –exhibit designer at the **National Museum of American History of the Smithsonian**, reflects upon a stay at a public hospital designed in such a way that it is easy to understand, where finding your way is just as easy as identifying orientation desks or rest or shopping areas. There, people feel welcome and at home, and this may have a positive impact even in the painful experience of being at the hospital caring for an ill family member. **When a public building has an intelligible distribution, this has a democratic effect, hospitable in the profoundest meaning of the word, and design may hence turn a challenging, stressful or painful experience into a kinder one.**

Sometimes, museums must adapt to pre-existing buildings that do not fit the requirements of a “house for many.” This was the starting point for Daniela Gómez and her team at the Undersecretariat of Cultural Innovation of the Ministry of Innovation and Culture of the Province of Santa Fe, when they had to turn an old hotel located in an emblematic building in the city of Rosario into **Plataforma Lavardén**, a recreational space. How could we turn that space, designed for private use, consisting of hallways and closed rooms, into a place that would foster public use, without turning our back on the history of the building? They chose to replace room doors by closets, which invite curiosity and wake up our imagination. This space was the initial proposal for a complicity with visitors which, rather than based on traditional wisdom, is based on a common feature: curiosity. Each room-closet recreates characteristic scenes of

Argentina's collective imaginary: a world of books, a local club typical of the 1950s, a family living-room, a theater dressing-room, a carousel-music box, a large mattress with singing and story-telling pillows, an oversize puzzle... all these scenes invite us to go through the threshold, to inhabit and interact with others, by playing. To use this space, visitors do not need any previous or specific knowledge, but only popular and common wisdom. **The fact that it is a public space thought on the basis of wisdom that is also public largely explains its success.**

**Plataforma Lavardén.**  
Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina.

This space was the initial proposal for a complicity with visitors which, rather than based on traditional wisdom, is based on a common feature: curiosity.



## 2.3 / The Museum and the Streets in Touch

When they were first created, museums had a mandate rather different from today's. Who would have imagined, back at the time of the Renaissance, that these institutions, originally created to preserve valuable works, would have today a social responsibility? Museums are faced with more and more diverse external demands. And these demands change and evolve, as the world changes. How can museums be up to date with the issues proposed by the world? How do they not turn their backs on society's concerns, and those of their visitors?

There is a general trend among museums to organize their programs based on world issues. **Should the museum be thought as a space to resume discussions taking place in other spheres of our daily lives? Is it possible or desirable to present every point of view on a certain topic? Do we really mean to include everyone? Can the museum be conceived as a politically incorrect space?**

Forced migrations, wars, natural disasters, inequality, financial crisis and the reemergence of racism evidence a gap in the current education and cultural system, and museums are no exception to this crisis. Vera and Ruedi Baur argue that *"we have to think what we can do to change the situation and invent new strategies, new compartments, and new attitudes of design. Forget nations. We need another notion to connect to the international, (...) to connect in a different way because we all have the same problems. (...) We have to look at our common problems"*. David Anderson, director at **Wales National Museum**, agrees and goes on to add that the current model implemented by many museums is an outdated model that has for the last hundred years kept its focus on the means (collections and facilities) rather than on the ends (society), and have conducted most of their activities within the safe walls separating them from outer dangers, servicing mostly a select audience that

leaves out large sectors of society. This model, born to preserve heritage, lacks a social perspective and can no longer fulfill the needs of current audiences. According to him, *"It is hard not to believe that the reason we are still persisting with it (this model) is essentially ideological rather than one based on any rational analysis of how things work. Essentially we are still continuing with a utopian model where objects are timeless, human behavior within our museum walls is tightly controlled very separate from the world outside and whose rules are unquestioned"*. Just like today's traditional museums find it hard to echo the new problems, this position may prove very comfortable, since being separated from the real world, violent and injustice-ridden, protects them from many problems. However, if we want museums to be back to being relevant institutions in contemporary society, we must leave this comfort zone and dare look at what is going on in the world.

In Anderson's view, it has become necessary to rethink the definition of "museum": ***"Maybe in fact museums isn't particularly the building, or the collection, or the exhibition or the archives or the staff but it's a way of thinking and a way of acting and the place for debate of all the issues connected the society we actually live in wherever that takes place. So maybe William Morris was right: our task is the education of desire, the stimulation of a wish to improve the quality of our lives its culture and action, the uses of culture for learning and creativity and pleasure that defines the quality of a society and perhaps the quality of a museum. As we go deeper into the dark woods that is the 21st century we should stop looking only for abstract truth but maybe look more for relevant meaning and social justice and then what would the museum that embodied that look like"***.

If we understand museums as social actors, i.e., as builders of meaning in a society, then they must play a role in the contemporary social scene: they must target current issues. One possible way to do this is to put their collections and wisdom at the service of these discussions, from any pertinent approach: a science museum should not address poverty from the same perspective as a contemporary art museum, although these issues may be addressed by both museums. No current issue can be addressed without taking a stand. It has become harder and harder to think of a museum that will address these issues without taking an institutional position on those issues. Anderson explains: ***"10 years or so ago I started looking through a lens of human rights and cultural***

*rights and now also looking at it through a sense of civic participation which leads potentially onto activism and other roles as well. I feel we do have to accept that we shift from the neutrality. I am not sure it is ethical anymore to say that museums are neutral spaces and that is a very significant bridge to cross and one that is fraught with ethical issues and political issue but I don't personally feel now that it is enough to stay on the safe side of the river".*

However, how can a museum express disagreement openly, deal with current issues and still stay alive. According to Nicolás Testoni, **"when it comes to expressing disagreement, it is essential to do it with a certain wisdom or humor, and not do it in a vacuum. At any rate, disagreement channels a demand that institutions such as museums attempt to articulate, voice, make visible..."** Thinking of sensitive issues in a less solemn and more humorous way has led the Ferrowhite team to create metaphors in a highly accessible and very universal language, that call broad audiences to have discussions and do so working as a community: restoring tools, organizing popular festivities, installing ephemeral water works or cooking at the museum.

Uncomfortable questions continue to arise. **Is it possible to rise to the challenge of being inclusive and take a stand at the same time? Since taking a stand always means giving something up, is it acceptable for museums to choose not to include some sector?** A first response may come from the idea of tension. Américo Castilla argues that *"in the field of art, if a painting creates no tension, there is no problem to be solved. What's interesting about a painting is the problem to be solved. Tension is a necessary component. Without tension, the form we wish for the ideas we propose is also absent. Museums have a large potential for vision, to create awareness and promote sense, so that I do not fear tension. Moreover, some curators intentionally provoke tension in their exhibits, because it is through tension that the public finds the questions that challenge their own difficulties."*

Another response may be related to the acceptance of complexity. Elaine Heumann Gurian suggests that the best museums can do is to adopt a perspective as complex as possible, to be able to provide a suitable response to any possible challenge against its statements. **"I am currently working on the notion of complexity, that we should no longer synthesize, that many**

**things can be true at once, that we can house the objects of faith and be rational at the same time, that there is many things we have to start to make the world be more comfortable with and that is complexity. I think about sound bites as one of the ways in which the world is being torn apart and that the way that we are training people to understand media sound bites needs to be reversed by museums that allow us to have multiplicity of answers".**

Going out to the streets to make the public space richer, to invite new visitors and new topics or discussions into the museum to remain alive in today's society is one single and unique movement. There is a wide array of possibilities that allow museums to open to new audiences and have an active role in today's current discussions. It will all depend on the will of organizations to find the way to be permanently updated as relevant institutions in their field, with a call for hospitality.

## Mentioned in this chapter:

**Andrés Roldán**  
Parque Explora. Medellín, Colombia:  
[www.parqueexplora.org](http://www.parqueexplora.org)

**Helen Marriage**  
Artichoke. London, UK:  
[www.artichoke.uk.com](http://www.artichoke.uk.com)

**Xavier Llarch Font and Carolina Caicedo**  
The Decorators. London, UK:  
[www.the-decorators.net](http://www.the-decorators.net)

**Elaine Heumann Gurian**  
The Museum Group. USA:  
[www.egurian.com](http://www.egurian.com)

**Daniela Gómez**  
Ministry of Culture and Innovation of the Santa Fe province. Santa Fe, Argentina:  
[www.santafe.gov.ar/cultura/index.htm](http://www.santafe.gov.ar/cultura/index.htm)

**Plataforma Lavardén. Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina:**  
[www.plataformalavarden.gob.ar](http://www.plataformalavarden.gob.ar)

**Vera and Ruedi Baur**  
Studio Intégral Baur. Paris / Zurich:  
[www.irb-paris.eu](http://www.irb-paris.eu)

**David Anderson**  
National Museum of Wales. Wales, UK:  
[www.museum.wales](http://www.museum.wales)

**Nicolás Testoni**  
Ferrowhite museo-taller. Ingeniero White, Buenos Aires, Argentina:  
[www.ferrowhite.bahiablanca.gov.ar](http://www.ferrowhite.bahiablanca.gov.ar)

**Nigel Briggs**  
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Washington DC, USA:  
[www.americanhistory.si.edu](http://www.americanhistory.si.edu)

**The ideas of this chapter are inspired by the following sessions of Chaos at the Museum:**

**Public space: The critical agora for the XXI century** / Deborah Mack, Helen Marriage, Nicolás Testoni, Américo Castilla (moderator)

**Dialogue in design. Places for interaction** / Andrés Roldán, Estudio a77, The Decorators, Enrique Longinotti (moderator)

**Chaos On Stage** / Presentations by Vera and Ruedi Baur, Daniela Gómez, Nicolás Testoni and Nigel Briggs

**Reaching Outside of their Walls: Designing Museums for Inclusion** / Américo Castilla, David Anderson, Elaine Heumann Gurian, James Volkert (moderator)

**Videos of these sessions can be found at:**

[www.youtube.com/user/FundacionTyPA](http://www.youtube.com/user/FundacionTyPA)



# Tools to Get Out to the Street

## Where to start?

Collective Mapping. Museums without Walls. Layering. Trojan Horse. Ubiquitous Museology. Ludic Tours. Idea Mapping.

- 3.1 / Getting to know the surroundings of my museum**
- 3.2 / Imagining relations with the surroundings**
- 3.3 / Observing how the public interact with the surroundings**
- 3.4 / Linking museum objects to my surroundings**
- 3.5 / Getting museum practices out to the street**
- 3.6 / Touring my surroundings in a ludic mood**
- 3.7 / Rethinking the topics addressed by my museum**

# Introduction

The modification of certain habits appreciated as fundamental in any human organizations requires focusing on action (transformation is driven by practices), and on time (maintaining those practices over prolonged periods) and creativity, both from an artistic viewpoint (in the sense of having a new, original idea) and from a design viewpoint (how to solve a problem). A museum's relationship with its environment, as well as the way it operates internally, are often determined by procedures that conflict with new needs. How have they survived? Whether it has been due to mere inertia or to the lack of spaces for reflection, the truth is it is not easy to unwind the way people act in regulated spaces. The path towards dismantling these long-rooted structures and dynamics entails –with no exception– some degree of anarchy, some moments of chaos at the museum.

So far we have gone over a series of ideas and discussions about the relationship between institutions and the public space, aimed at understanding the environment and changing our role in that specific ecosystem. **This chapter invites to action:** we will now propose a variety of tools to carry out material changes in that relation, so that our readers can experiment with those tools in their own workspaces, with the support of their colleagues and/or teams.

*These exercises are based on the "Tool Workshops" organized at Chaos at the Museum and the work methods proposed by the professionals referenced in each specific case.*

I WANT	I'M GOING TO CONDUCT AN EXERCISE OF...	INSPIRED IN THE WORK OF...
3.1 / Know the surroundings of my museum better	Collective Mapping	Iconoclasistas
3.2/ Imagine relations with the environment	Transparent Cube	Ferrowhite museo-taller
3.3/ Know how the public interacts with the environment	Layering	Tricia Austin and Timothy McNeil + Jim Broughton
3.4 / Link museum objects to the environment	Trojan Horse	The Decorators
3.5 / Take the museum practices to the street	Ubiquitous Museology	Clare Brown and Michael Burns
3.6/ Tour my surroundings playfully	Live Museum	La Casona de Humahuaca
3.7/ Rethinking the categories and concepts addressed by the museum	Ideas Mapping	Maria Eugenia Salcedo + Iconoclasistas

# 3.1 / Know the surroundings of my museum better. Exercise: Collective Mapping

Collective mapping is an action conducted in collaboration with social and community entities that consists in the production of maps that condense different types of knowledge over a certain territory. The tool implies inviting different people to create a map with the usual tours or uses of the area to be mapped, and identify the practices, spaces and experiences that constitute the “community patrimony” of the territory. Cartographers are then expected to identify the places that are part of their imaginary (what they like and what they do not like) that give sense to an urban setting, those that somehow preserve historic memory or are a symbol for the community in which they are inserted.

## What can this tool be used for?

- To get to know the territory where we are from a multiple perspective that will help us eliminate prejudice
- To get to know potential allies we are not aware of
- To get to know possible visitors or audiences
- To think of new tours or activities (for example, to supplement a guided tour)
- To work with local institutions to think of a joint activity

### CARTOGRAFÍA COLECTIVA CRÍTICA DE VALPARAÍSO

# “¿TE INVITÉ YO A VIVIR AQUÍ?”

Con esta frase respondió el alcalde de Valparaíso ante el reclamo de uno de los damnificados por el incendio de abril, que dejó sin vivienda a miles de familias en los cerros. La cínica respuesta resume la actitud de diversas gestiones de gobierno que fueron transformando la ciudad al ritmo de los beneficios privados, financieros y especulativos, vinculados principalmente con los intereses de los holdings portuarios y el negocio del turismo. Este “Valparaíso para otros” se evidencia en la imposición de modelos de vida basados en un consumo de alto poder adquisitivo para unos, y la precarización laboral para amplias mayorías. La vida en barrios antaño populares se ha visto perjudicada por procesos de gentrificación desplegados a partir de la especulación inmobiliaria, la expulsión de vecinos y la privatización de espacios de uso público, privilegiando así el perfil de una ciudad construida para el visitante eventual.

**1 A puertas cerradas**

El sector del puerto está protegido en un 80% desde la declaración de Paricuti, lo cual implica que del enorme flujo de mercancías y capitales que por él circulan la ciudad sólo recibe beneficios mínimos. La puesta en marcha ha desplazado por un lado a pequeños y medios comercios. Los espacios de uso popular fueron cerrados a multitudes y se agenció y se afianzó el consumo turístico.

**2 Valpo Hill**

En los cerros Concepción y Alvaro se abren la principal zona turística de consumo cultural. Generada a través de un proceso especulativo que elevó los precios para fines turísticos, especialmente en la antigüedad patrimonial y comercial mediante la edificación de viviendas de alta gama y hoteles. El resultado es una “zona” turistificada y homogeneizada de la ciudad, controlada con cámaras de vigilancia y fuerza de seguridad.

**3 Mall de muchos**

El mundo Super y sus alrededores está amenazado por un proyecto de especulación inmobiliaria de alto impacto social y ambiental, que incluye la instalación de un mall comercial en el barrio costero, en una zona de riesgo de inundación. Se constatación la intención de desmantelamiento de la estructura del paisaje urbano y la expulsión del comercio informal del cual subsisten los miles de familias.

**4 Cota de invisibilización**

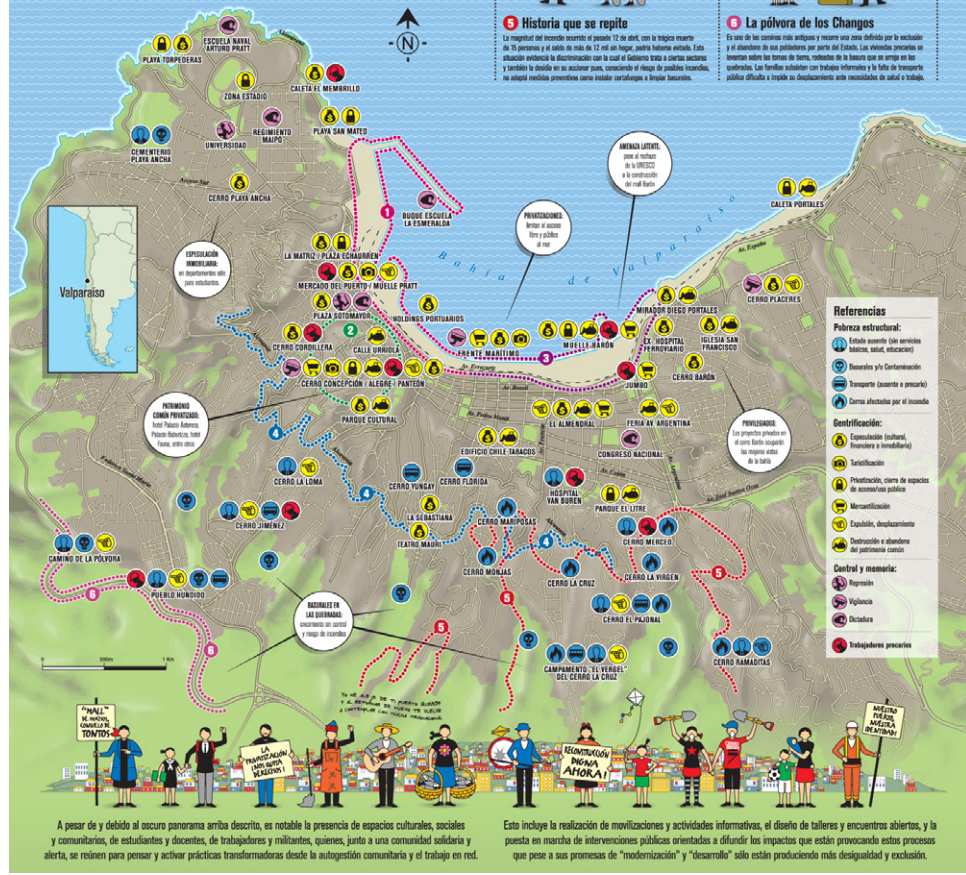
El Cerro Catedral y de la montaña Almirante dividió la ciudad en dos realidades distintas. Más allá de una bella y linda que la casa super los otros cerros, el paisaje dominante es la presencia de basura y la falta de infraestructura y servicios básicos como alcantarillado, agua corriente, luz eléctrica y gas. Es notable el desmoronamiento del sistema por realizar reformas que impiden el cobro de los servicios.

**5 Historia que se repite**

La tragedia del incendio ocurrió el pasado 12 de abril, con la trágica muerte de 19 personas y el saldo de más de 12 mil sin hogar, podría haberse evitado. Esta situación evidencia la discriminación que la casa al desnudo vive a ciertos sectores y también la división en su ubicación para, considerando el riesgo de posibles incendios, no asignar medidas preventivas como instalar cortafuegos e limpiar los cerros.

**6 La pólvora de los Cerros**

En uno de los cerros más antiguos y ahora una zona definida por la actividad y el abandono de sus pobladores por parte del Estado. Las viviendas precarias se ven afectadas por los temblores de tierra, reducción de la base que se erige en los cerros. Las familias subsisten con trabajos informales y la falta de transporte público dificulta e impide el desplazamiento ante necesidades de salud o trabajo.



## How to do it

**1 What do we want to survey and why?** Set a goal and pick an exercise. Julia Risler, who created Iconoclasistas with Pablo Ares, points out: *“Collective mapping is a practice, a trusted space for the confluence of different types of knowledge that seeks to obtain a snapshot of a certain territory to include signaling through a critical horizon, a reflexive horizon that constitutes also a transformative horizon. The starting point is popular and non-specialized knowledge, and technical knowledge, if there is any. However, the idea is to be able to work on it with one’s neighbors, discussing how they inhabit the space, the problems they face, the forces they have and how they think they could organize themselves better in order to have a concrete activity”.*

**2 Defining a territory where to work.** The first thing to do is to define the boundaries, the streets, the blocks where we are going to work, and create a white map of that territory (containing only the urban layout).

**3 Conduct group urban tours.** Mark on the map all the places, tours and persons identified as interesting. They may be positive or negative. They may be places where people go, but also places where people do not walk by. This may be done as a draft or by groups or layers, in different tours. It is also useful to have some sort of photographic record and conduct interviews to get to know people and places better.

**4 Round table discussion.** Upon completion of the experimental tools, it is necessary to have a discussion to share the findings of the survey. To agree, discuss, talk about the visible and invisible, to move and rewrite. *“Then there is a round-table discussion of these maps and the icons they contain, to identify any similarities and differences among the elements observed and others, and how they are observed, trying to drill down on the possible reasons that account for those similarities and differences. In this way, through the generation of a collective space for reflection and thinking over a territory, workshops make visible, build and allow to think of the problems of the place, facilitating the organization of an intervention or surveying the everyday experiences in the city and the impact on the ways of inhabiting, touring and perceiving the urban setting.”*

**5 Creating an integrated map.** Including all the information surveyed and agreed upon in a single map. To do that, we must agree on a system (what to include, how to chart it.) Every element must be represented by an icon, which may be created by the cartographer or else we can use those provided by Iconoclasistas at their website. According to Risler, *“in addition to inviting creative and ludic capacity, the use of icons allow for the possibility of creating a narrative, different icons, and enable weaving a more complex story”.*

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### Three exercises that may be carried out based on time availability:

**1 Strengths/ Weaknesses:** Every member of the group is given 3 red dots and 3 blue dots to place on the places they liked the best and the least in the area. Once everybody has completed this individual exercise, they discuss together a map of subjective appreciations.

**2 How to get to the Museum:** Another possible exercise is to experiment with different routes to get to the museum, indicate the one followed by each of the members, gain awareness of these routes (why they have chosen them, because it is nice, faster, safer, etc.) and create one single map specifying all the different routes. Citing Philip Freelon once again, these two exercises might help us understand how people get to the doors of the museum, a circuit that is already a part of the visitor’s experience.

**3 Map of Wisdoms, Actors and Institutions:** Iconoclasistas propose creating a map including actors and wisdom. In this regard, it is interesting to consider the uses and usual tours of the area at different times of the day (during the day, at night) and different days (weekdays and weekends). Are these habits the same at different times? For this, we recommend consulting Iconoclasistas’ Manual, available at: [www.issuu.com/iconoclasistas/docs/manual\\_de\\_mapeo\\_2013](http://www.issuu.com/iconoclasistas/docs/manual_de_mapeo_2013)

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**More information:** Julia Risler and Pablo Ares are the creators of Iconoclasistas, a work team devoted to developing collective mapping methods and tools. [www.iconoclasistas.net](http://www.iconoclasistas.net)

## 3.2 / Imagine relations with the environment. Exercise: Transparent Cube

In the conviction that conceptual discussions do not work if they do not draw on the literal weight of things, Ferrowhite museum-workshop proposes transforming the question of how to enhance the relationship between the museum and the public space into an open-ended exercise, based on an actual artifact. Instead of providing an analytical response to the question, this exercise seeks to turn it into something tangible, and imbue it with a materiality that will provide the support to rehearse multiple responses. **Ferrowhite** asked themselves about the relationship between the museum and the cube, transparency and the public space, and this is how X<sup>3</sup> was born, a 2 m x 2 m inflatable and translucent cube which contrasts with the classical “white cube” of modern museology, devoid of any illusions of autonomy or self-containment. **This transparent cube invites to explore different ways of being together or separate, and think about how to connect the inside with the outside and subvert the relations we propose when the walls of the white cube become transparent.**

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### What can this tool be used for?

This is an imagination and reflection exercise that leads us to propose new possible relations between the inside and the outside of the cube, and, by extension, those of the museum.

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### How to do it

How to do it

Transparent cubes may be made of polyethylene, as in this case, but they can also be made of other materials and one may even propose an imaginary cube, made only of pieces of yarn delimiting its volume. What's important is for the artifact to show the permeability of the interior, which will work as a metaphor for the room we strive for: a museum without walls, making visible outwards what it holds inside, and inwards, what is outside.

The imagination game implies then answering these questions: if your museum (or exhibit gallery) were this transparent cube that may be taken out to the street, which is transparent and versatile, what could be done with this device? What kind of place would it be placed in? And what could be done with the device at such place?

The idea of this exercise is to manufacture or think of a concrete artifact that would allow putting into practice the implications of a theoretical discussion. Once it has been made, we can answer these questions and similar ones, which will help carry out appropriate tests before performing transformative actions.

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**More information:** **Ferrowhite** is a museum-workshop located at Ingeniero White, a port in Bahía Blanca, which characterizes itself as a place for meeting and conveying the voices and the deeds of former railroad workers from the area, a place to build history and common action. [www.ferrowhite.bahiablanca.gov.ar](http://www.ferrowhite.bahiablanca.gov.ar)



## 3.3 / Know how the public interacts with the environment.

### Exercise: Layering

Individuals engage with the exhibition at different levels of intensity: some will simply look, other stop to reflect, others interact with the exhibit and with other visitors. The tool proposed by Tricia Austin and Timothy McNeil consists in the development of a prototype to evaluate the different levels of engagement of visitors at specific locations. **The goal is to measure the level of interaction the audience has with a physical intervention** in two different locations: at a park and on the sidewalk. The device is installed at different sites surrounding the museum to record the level of reaction of passers-by. Then we analyze the difference between a busy street, where people walk faster and are less predisposed to exchange, and a leisure setting, where individuals allow themselves more contemplation and are less shy and more curious about the emergence of a strange element.

#### What can the tool be used for?

We generally think we know how visitors behave and how they want to relate to things but the truth is often quite different in fact. This tool helps us observe what people really do: how and when they want to approach something. It can also be used as a tool for the formative evaluation of an exhibit.

Jim Broughton (**Museum of Natural History, United Kingdom**) created a series of statistics which show how much reality and how much myth there is to certain visions museums usually have of their visitors.

#### Museum Visitors: Myth vs. Fact

MYTH	FACT
Museum visitors are experts in the field discussed at the museum	90% of visitors have little to nil knowledge of the field
Visitors are willing to learn	50% of visitors to most museums go for social reasons
Visitors like to follow a story	80% of visitors are seekers of loose pieces of information
Visitors have a lot of time	Most visitors leave a gallery after 20 minutes, and leave an exhibit after 90 to 100 minutes

## How to do it

1 Create a prototype booth out of piled boxes, to create a 50 x 70 x 2m totem fitting at least one person, reasonably comfortable to move their arms inside. At armpit height, make two holes through which the person may fit their arms, with gloves on.

2 Take the prototype to the street and place it at different locations in the public space surrounding the museum. We recommend choosing at least two that will offer different characteristics: busy places (such as a street) and leisure spots (such as a park.) The prototype installation may also be placed at the entrance of other institutions (government agencies, hospitals, malls, etc.)

3 Observe the way passers-by interact with the prototype, and record the findings by taking notes, and also on video or pictures, shot from a distance and without disrupting the interaction.

4 Do a table sharing session. What happened? What have we learned about how people interact with things? How can this be applied to our exhibitions? We can discuss how people interact; how our findings relate to our own ideas of what visitors do, or how to take this to museum galleries.

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### More information:

**Tricia Austin** is the Director of the Narrative Environment Masters' Program at Central Saint Martins, UAL London, England:  
[www.arts.ac.uk/csm/courses/postgraduate/ma-narrative-environments](http://www.arts.ac.uk/csm/courses/postgraduate/ma-narrative-environments)

**Timothy McNeil** is a Professor at the Design Department and Director at UC Davis Design Museum in California, Davis, United States:  
[www.arts.ucdavis.edu/design](http://www.arts.ucdavis.edu/design)

**Jim Broughton** is the Director of International Relations at the London Museum of Natural History, England: [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk)





## 3.4 / Link museum objects to the environment.

### Exercise: Trojan Horse

**Within the museum, objects often lose the connection to the original context. The purpose of this exercise is to take museum objects and take them back to their places of origin, using them as Trojan horses:** elements that will offer a simple and speedy excuse to enter shops, institutions and other spaces in the surroundings with which we can engage. It is a path inversion exercise: rather than coming in, objects will go out and find new opportunities to interact with groups and institutions they would not otherwise interact with.

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#### What can this tool be used for?

In the words of The Decorators: *“To us, a museum’s connection with its environment is vital. The public space is the place where strangers meet, and thus constitutes the ideal place to work and create new opportunities for social interaction and participation. However, the public space is vast and complex, and the objects we choose to take the museum out to the street provide a lens to look at the area more closely, and work as a simple and quick entry vector.”* This exercise has been proposed as an excuse to connect the museum with its surroundings in a practical, realistic and poetic manner.

#### More specifically, they suggest using it as follows:

1 To know the context. This exercise allows us to find, in the vast public space, a fast path to certain public spaces in the area, often unexpected. This broadens the boundaries of the museum and creates new fields of action.

2 Think of new relations between objects and their context. The museum collects objects, but often forgets their context. This exercise may be used to tell the story of context and thus keep expanding the contents of the museum. It also offers new ways to look at the objects in a collection and use those new connections to create productive networks and identify collaborators. It offers an opportunity for co-creation. *“The development of unexpected places will allow to bring interesting and innovative content back to the museum, and create novel collaborative relations that will result in the creation of new narratives and programs.”*

3 This exercise allows us to think of new actions, programs and projects in the spaces surrounding the museum.

## How to do it

1 Choose a series of objects from the collection that have some sort of connection with the areas around the museum. They need to be easy-to-handle objects that may be taken out to the street.

2 Get out in groups with colleagues from the museum team, with the object assigned to them.

Each group needs to:

- trace the origin of each object;
- take a picture of the object in that context;
- understand the place of origin; and bring a new object representing another possibility and belonging to the same context or its surroundings. Take a picture of that object in context.

3 Conduct a common discussion including:

- presentation of the objects, contexts and learnings, group by group;
- reflection and mapping of opportunities around the museum. Positioning of objects in context;
- identification of other places, resources or sites of interest we cannot overlook even if we have no object representing them; and
- discussion and creation of relations between resources, preparation of new narrations and possible programs.

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**More information:** **The Decorators** is a multidisciplinary design group that works at neighborhood level to design, produce, and put into operation placemaking and community-construction interventions in the public space. It works mainly on areas in the process of urban transformation, designing structures that connect people and places through a development based on the local culture. [www.the-decorators.net](http://www.the-decorators.net)



## 3.5 / Take the museum practices to the street. Exercise: Ubiquitous Museology

Ubiquitous museology is a practice that perceives the world of things, places, and every-day phenomena as spaces for enriching and informal learning, and hence seeks to develop, design and integrate museum experiences to every-day life. **For this discipline, everything may be placed at a museum because everything offers a learning opportunity. The secret lies in knowing how to activate these places so that the learning experience takes place satisfactorily.** The proposal is ideal to take the museums out to the streets. The secret consists in knowing how to use spaces, reading them through different filters that will allow to see different things.

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### What can this tool be used for?

Michael Burns and Clare Brown suggest some answers:

1 Abandoning the patrimonial logic or the logic based on large theories or concepts since ubiquitous museology does not draw any distinction between those places recognized as historic sites and common places such as a supermarket or a shoe store. Rather than focusing on patrimony or ideas, this incursion of a museum into a certain space explores the different experiences offered by that place. Unlike museum collections, this collection is already

there, in operation, functioning. All we need to do is activate these sites through some sort of intervention

2 Reverting the logic of visits and exhibits moving away into the white cube shaped by the exhibit into a given space where the exhibit proposes an experience, a regard, a tour. Visitors normally need to make a decision to visit the museum. Here we are working with spaces that are already being visited. The museum comes to its visitors instead.

3 Learning new tools. The street has other tools which do not belong to the museum, but the museum can appropriate them and learn from them, such as graffiti or street art, posters, street signs or guerrilla marketing, or even the applications or ubiquitous applications, games or experience games such as Pokémon Go.

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### How to do it

1 Divide the work team into small groups, and establish several sites or areas close to the museum that are interesting for work.

2 Perform a visit and observation of the place. For observations, adopt a fresh look, especially if the place is already familiar. Try to go without any instructions, just note down what happens, what you see. It is important to bear in mind the pre-existing systems, infrastructure and behavior of a certain place to use them better in the creation of these onsite experiences: signs, screens, curbs, sidewalks, walls, lamp posts, communication media already installed in a certain area, free postcard or magazine displays, everything can be used as a means to communicate certain activities. These techniques are not always very easy to apply.

3 Identify as many ways as possible to interpret the place, objects or topics. It is important to incorporate multiple disciplinary perspectives to help us understand this space from different approaches, and, especially approaches not already available to the common user. Something as common as a shoe

store may be interpreted from fields as different as politics, history, sociology and even zoology –given that many raw materials used in the shoe industry come from the animal kingdom. Places and things are starting points to multiple paths. This is important because it means that the narratives or topics we would like to use to engage participants are already at hand.

4 Based on the issues identified, how can this space be activated? Consider whether it is a practical and interactive space, an interpreted space, both of them or something else. It is important to think of multiple ways to activate a place: since passers-by may not actually experiment with all the elements of an ubiquitous exhibit, whose elements may be scattered over a large area, it is a good idea to think of an exhibit such as this one as a thematic coverage of an area of the city so that the story proposed surfaces at different points and it is worth the experience even if you do not visit every point. Some interventions may often require authorization or even be prohibited (for instance, doing graffiti on a wall) an obstacle we must overcome with wit and using the resources available to us (for instance, instead of graffiti we can use a paper canvas temporarily hanging from the wall.)

5 Table sharing discussion of the ideas proposed by each team.

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**More information:** Michael Burns and Clare Brown are in charge of **Omnimuseum Project**, a nonprofit dedicated to the development of ubiquitous museology. [www.omnimuseum.org](http://www.omnimuseum.org)



## 3.6 / Tour my surroundings playfully. Exercise: Live Museum

The museum environment remains a mystery to many of us. **This proposal urges us to know, explore and tour this territory in a ludic fashion, imagining that we are in a great living museum and we bring every corner to life every time we understand and resignify its story.** The objective consists in imagining how the identity of the place is forged: its social happenings, going through different layers in history: commercial, residential and touristic, all present in the historic center of the city.

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### What can this tool be used for?

This exercise may be used to get to know the nearby places where the museum proposes to make interventions. It has a ludic character that allows the members of the work team to get to know one another, and expand the borders or formalities between them. The purpose of this activity is to resignify the street as a meeting point, for celebration among neighbors, articulating the work with that of other neighborhood organizations to enhance the scope, in the conviction that people appropriate certain knowledge better when they do it physically.

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## How to do it

### *Roadmap for a tour in the neighborhood of your museum*

Before you start: For this activity, certain decisions must be made beforehand.

- 1 Split the work team into groups and assign one role to every one of them (starting point) at a certain distance (short) from the museum.
- 2 Take at least three pictures detailing things that are on the way to every one of those selected starting points. Print them and put them in an envelope, with the name of the destination or the group.
- 3 Prepare a formal or informal worksheet with information on the history of the place, the neighborhood. Try to do it in a ludic, narrative fashion, focusing on details, on personal histories, on micro histories, curiosities, colorful data.

*We are just about to begin an adventure!*

Now it's time for team work.

### **Assemble at an initial meeting point (it may be at the doors of the museum).**

Every group must take a tour to get to the starting point the way they like. They only have one hour to walk the rally, where each group tours some geographic places of highly historical, touristic, religious or everyday significance in the surroundings of the museum.

### **First moment: Starting point. Getting to know one another.**

In groups, we answer questions to get to know one another. Write every answer in the same sheet of paper, which is going to be lie the flag for our group!

- CHALLENGE 1. Add up the number of hours you had to travel to get here.  
CHALLENGE 2. Write your names and a portrait, front or profile.  
CHALLENGE 3. How many neighborhoods are represented in this collective?  
CHALLENGE 4. Share and note down your occupation, studies and skills.

**Second moment: Prepare the expedition.** Pick a place with a panoramic view to start with.

1 Briefly present the neighborhood and its history.

2 Let us share the resource of *"human photographic camera"*. The human photographic camera is a resource where one person uses another one to take a picture. For that, they pick the place they want to shoot and directs the other person towards that target, focuses (using the other person's head as if it were a camera) and when he obtains the desired frame, clicks by pulling their partner's ears.

3 Each team is assigned a destination and is given three detailed pictures of places or objects located on the way to their assigned destination, which participants are to discover.

### **Third moment: The Expedition.** Destination:

Locate on the path the location of the places or objects shown in the pictures they received.

CHALLENGE 5. Here we are! Let us find out with the information of a neighbor, by-passer or someone along the road some historic referential information on the destination.

CHALLENGE 6. Use the *"human cameras"* to find the details of the place.

CHALLENGE 7. Get your (actual) picture taken with the whole team.

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**More information: Guillermo Castañeda** and **Mariela Jungberg** are in charge of the Casona de Humahuaca, a cultural center which is a social referent in the neighborhood of Almagro, in the city of Buenos Aires. The center has been organizing activities for over 10 years, inside and outside its building, to create inclusive ties. Among other activities, they organize CuJuCa –Cumbre de Juegos Callejeros – Street Games Summit– and JuPsi para Tracom –Juego y Psicodrama para Trabajo Comunitario – Playing and Psychodrama for Community Work. [www.casonahumahuaca.com.ar](http://www.casonahumahuaca.com.ar)



## 3.7 / Rethinking the categories and concepts addressed by the museum. Exercise: Idea Mapping

María Eugenia Salcedo proposes the development of a collective glossary to understand the cooperation, inclusion and interrelation not stemming from abstract definitions but, rather, from our own concerns, questions and discoveries. **The museum environment goes beyond the physical territory, and includes also the ideas delimiting those territories, ideas often unsaid but implied, and even ideas our visitors bring from the outside which not always reflect in the museum narrative.** This exercise allows us to work with the conceptual environment of the museum: rethinking, questioning and resignifying the meaning of words such as "museum", "community", "visitors", and also seek for the meaning of words such as "territory", "community", "civility" or "visitors".

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### How can this tool be used?

- 1 To define one's own conceptual context. It is essential for a work team to clearly understand the assembly of concepts used by their members, because that is also part of the environment. Not all words mean the same to everyone.
- 2 To think of how to approach visitors, how to work with the notions that guide our practices and relations.
- 3 To know and explore pre-existing inclusion and collaboration initiatives, and draw on those to build a collective glossary.
- 4 To use it as starting point for any collaborative work. **This exercise may prove useful to approach any communities with whom museums wish to work**, and can even be used within a museum's work team as a method for planning any task intended as a collaborative one.



## How to do it

First, we must choose the words to be used to build a collective glossary that will help us understand our relation with the environment. The exercise consists in choosing, as a group, the words to be included in the glossary, and create definitions for each of those words working on their multiple dimensions, seeking definitions in questions, in doubts, what remains unknown. To wrap up, we will decide what to do with this collective production.

For this exercise, Salcedo proposes the practice of “*deep listening*”, a respectful form of listening that relegates one’s own ideas and feelings to prioritize the ideas of feelings of the speaker.

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### Some possible terms for the glossary:

*Abundance, Apprentice, Auto-sufficiency*  
*Consideration, Constellation*  
*Disorder, Difference, Doubt*  
*Economy, Expectation, Experience*  
*Hope*  
*Intangible, Intimacy, Interdisciplinary, Interrelation, Interdependence*  
*Mediation, Meaning*  
*Participation, Plurality, Polyphony, Public*  
*Reflection, Relation, Relevance, Revolution*  
*Synergy, System, Sustainable, Scarcity, Structure*  
*Tangible, Transformation, Territory, Time*  
*Valor*  
*Weight*

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## Some considerations while conducting the exercise:

Creating definitions as a group, with strangers, entails a certain level of risk. Succeeding at it requires trust: trust in oneself and in the help of others. Naïve as it may sound, this kind of exercise exposes persons. Deep listening and a respectful work climate make this task easier, and are excellent practice to approach the communities to which the museum is reaching out. The glossary need not contain dictionary definitions. It may contain associations, expressions, or loose ideas. It may be helpful to use different colors. It is also possible to combine different types of knowledge, academic, popular, ideas, opinions, controversies and discrepancies.

This exercise may be combined with the mapping exercise, and take concepts to see how they appear around us: how they are defined by others or how they come up in our messages. This may materialize in a GLOSSARY, but also in an IDEA MAP, in a graphical form. Coming back to mapping, Iconoclasistas propose this system not only for territories, but also for mapping ideas or conceptual systems. For a good example of this, visit: [www.iconoclasistas.net/triptico-del-bicentenario/](http://www.iconoclasistas.net/triptico-del-bicentenario/)

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**More information:** **María Eugenia Salcedo** is curator at Inhotim Contemporary Art Center, an art museum and botanic garden in Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, Brazil. [www.inhotim.org.br](http://www.inhotim.org.br)

**Atrapar, contener, pescar.**  
[Dibujo de una red, como red de gol de fútbol]  
La red asegura o salva.

**SERVICIO**  
Brindarse a otros con base a sus necesidades.  
Solidaridad/ generosidad.  
Compromiso/ Contrato pacto con otro.  
Vínculo.

**RESPECTO**  
Valor/ aceptar las diferencias.  
Ver/escuchar al otro.  
Ceder.

**ENUNCIADOS**  
Múltiples necesidades de decir.  
Declaración de sentido.  
Aclaración/ Declaración.

**DESCONGELAR**  
Poner en movimiento.  
Empezar a fluir/ derretirse.  
Descubrir/ despertar/ soltarse/ atreverse/ educar.

**EDUCACIÓN**  
Transformación.  
Intercambio.  
Del conocer al hacer.

**POLÍTICA**  
Suma de voluntades para el bien común.  
Negociaciones, mandatos.  
Normas y reglas.  
Marcar un rumbo.

**FLEXIBILIDAD**  
Movimiento.  
Posibilidad.  
Adaptación.  
Resistencia.  
Lleno/vacío.

**Elección - fuerte - disputa - (i)responsabilidad(!)**  
Posibilidad

**DISFRUTAR**  
Tiempo libre - alegría - placer - pasión - bailar - jugar.  
Fluir [ escrito de forma fluida], relajarse, pausa  
[Dibujo del botón de pausar usado en electrónicos]

**"COMO EN CASA"**  
Pantufias - acogedor - confianza.  
Comodidad, relajó.

**TEJIDO SOCIAL**  
Trama - instituciones - red. ¿Quién teje?  
& Urdimbre  
Colaboración, interacción, intercambio

**ESPACIO**  
Universo - lugar - tiempo - dimensión.  
Espacio público como valor colectivo.  
Expansión, viaje.  
[Dibujo de una medialuna y estrellas]

**PÚBLICO**  
¿Ellos? ¿Cuántos? ¿Quiénes? Estudio - seres - burocracia.  
Nuestro patrimonio y razón.

**VALOR**  
Símbolo - convicción

**COLECTIVO**  
Abrazo - personas - afecto - sentido  
[Dibujo de un colectivo "152" en una calle, viajando en el sentido  
derecha a izquierda. Escrito en la calle del lado derecho está la palabra  
FUTURO. En el lado izquierdo, la palabra "PRESENTE"]

**ZARPAR**  
Decisión.  
Poder.  
Oportunidad.  
Alejarse.  
Soltar amarras.

**Despojar.**

**SENSACIONES**  
**Sensaciones [Palabra corregida y seguida de la idea que errar es humano]**  
Atraviesa el cuerpo.

Transversal.  
Poder.  
Percepciones.  
Emociones.  
Todo aquello que estimula los "sentidos">

[Dibujo de un velero solitario en un mar calmo.]  
Poder cambiar de rumbo.  
Deriva.  
Trayecto.  
Aire de mar.

[Dibujo en otro color de un ancora que sale del velero solitario en un mar calmo.]  
Poder.  
Anclaje.

**LEGITIMACIÓN**  
[Dibujo de un señal sobre la palabra legitimación]  
Reivindicar.  
Generación.

**GENEROSIDAD**  
[Dibujo de un árbol debajo de la palabra generosidad]  
Pasar de la característica de la acción.

Hacer más.  
Ser solidario.  
[Dibujo de un búho en un árbol] Otras miradas.  
Dar sin esperar nada a cambio.// Se puede dar buscando reciprocidad  
- conexión - encuentro - construcción colectiva.  
Amor - regalo\* - bien común.  
Frutos - reparo - raíces.  
Origeno.  
Es el acto genuino de ayudar al otro, colaborar mutuamente.

\* REGALO

No como "cosa", si como acción, regalo  
[dibujo de un regador]

**INTELIGENCIA COLECTIVA**  
Articulación de inteligencias individuales múltiples que se activan ante determinadas circunstancias y se manifiestan en prácticas concretas.  
Superar diferencias.  
Acción - acciones  
¿Cuál el objetivo de la inteligencia colectiva?

**SUSPENSIÓN**  
Capacidad de detenerse a reflexionar, ponerse entre paréntesis y discernir con más sabiduría.  
Cerrar los ojos.

**DISFRUTE**  
Razón y propósito.  
Conexión con los sentidos.  
Bienestar/placer.  
¿Por qué no?  
Motor del movimiento.

**PULSANTE**  
Que tiene circulación

♥  
Fuerza vital.  
Movimiento.  
Desplazamiento  
Ritmo.  
Transformación.  
Sentimiento.  
Calidez.  
Tacto + contacto.  
Energía que fluye.

**TRANSFORMACIÓN**  
Movimiento.  
Desplazamiento  
Ritmo.

# Wrap-Up

Whether you chose one, two or all of the exercises above, **we suggest that upon completing each exercise you reflect about what happened** while they were being carried out, based on a series of questions on the work process and next steps.

- 1 What was the process used to perform this exercise?
- 2 What was the greatest challenge you encountered as a team?
- 3 What surprised you the most?
- 4 What would you do differently next time?
- 5 What have you learned as a team?
- 6 What micro-decisions can you make based on what you experimented? Evaluate whether any of your observations can be metabolized into a program.

These exercises are far from being a final solution, and are instead first steps and incentives to understand our surroundings and move to action. They can be taken as introspective instances (through which our readers and their teams can reflect upon their institutions) or kick-offs to plan action that could be subsequently metabolized into a program, an activity or a resource. For example, the mapping exercise may result in better understanding of the environment but it is also a key tool for museum visitors: a printed map with a suggested tour of the neighborhood.

# A Collective Exercise

## What to expect?

Conscious Displacement. Careful Observation. Genuine Conversation. Sense Metaphors. Quick Ideation. Prototype. Imperfect Process. Work Teams.

# Introduction

**What happens when you actually experiment with all of this with a real team, for a real community, at a specific museum? Chaos at the Museum created a context to put into practice the concepts and tools discussed here. More specifically, Chaos at the Museum was a collective exercise that sought to resort to design tools and methods to work, resignify and expand the physical and symbolic threshold separating the museum from its surroundings.**

Under the motto of “*taking the Museum of the City of Buenos Aires to the streets*”, interdisciplinary teams worked for one and a half day in creative workshops developing proposals and interventions related to that institution. The purpose of the exercise was to discover the questions, the stories and the concepts underlying the urban mesh and drawing pedestrians’ attention. The “*sense of place*” was at all times the beat that made it possible to go from oral to visual, from static to kinetic, from hermetic information to interactive experience. This experience resulted in 15 original proposals, activations at 15 specific sites surrounding the museum. In other words, it resulted in 15 possible ways to connect the museum with its surroundings.

**How do I begin to design a proposal for my organization? Without morals or universal formulas, this chapter is a collection of notes and reflections that may cast some light on the difficulties facing any work team when it comes to turning ideas into action in the framework of a design process.** However, those willing to go down this path must follow the summary advice given by Chaos at the Museum facilitators, those “*third eyes*” that toured the work teams, watching the evolution of these ideas and giving clues on how to move forward. Our special thanks to Elaine Heumann Gurian, James Volkert, Tricia Austin, Timothy McNeil, Clare Brown and Enrique Longinotti and his team for these reflections on actions.

# Learnings

## Going out to the streets is necessary

If we really want to generate meaningful experiences; user-focused, site-specific experiences, we need to go out to the street. Even if it seems a waste of time, with the heaps of information available online, with so many ideas and so much to do- it all begins and ends at the site. For the field trip to be fruitful, we need to set aside our assumptions about what is going to happen, abandon our preconceived ideas and put our observation skills into practice.

## Visitors deserve to be consulted

One of the main assumptions museum professionals need to give up is that they know their visitors very well. Visitors deserve to be consulted: we do not know what people think, we have prejudice about it, and that is why we need to talk to them carefully, respectfully and with their permission. To have meaningful experiences, we need to create empathy, and that requires knowing your visitors: we need to watch them from a distance and engage in conversation.

## And it must be done respectfully

Going out to the street to talk to strangers in an ever-more complex world and designing methods to interact requires seriousness and respect, both for those engaging in conversation and for those we interact with. It is not simple, and we need to generate experiences to produce satisfactory unexpected interactions with outsiders. It is important to take care of those that lend themselves to that dialog, preparing them for that moment. Since there is no academic knowledge that can teach us how to do this, it requires a very complex understanding effort, adaptation and a careful choice of the words we use to convey our ideas, the ways we choose to communicate them. Respect for different points of view is key to promote genuine inclusion, integration and mutual welcome.

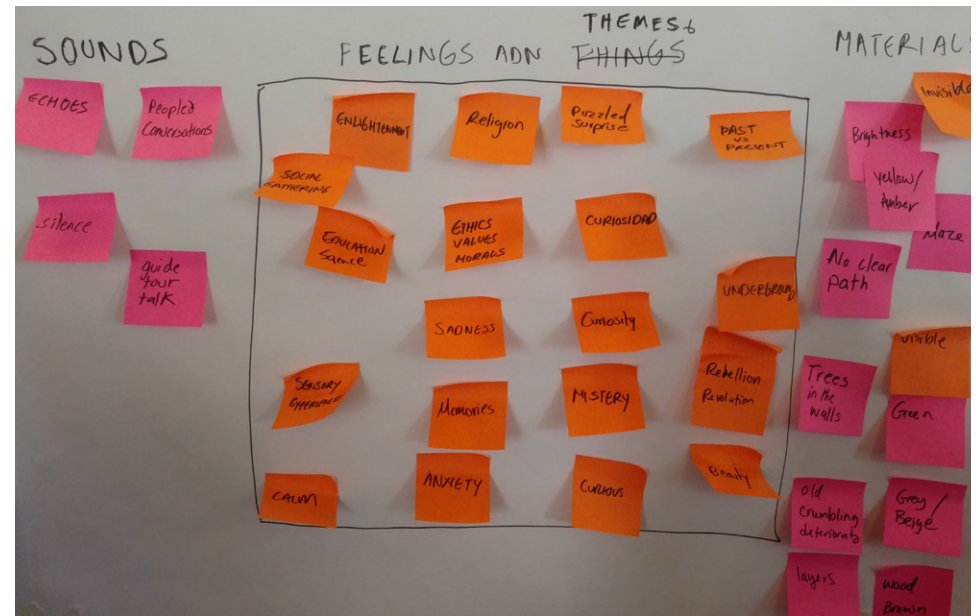


### More than one perfect idea, a wide array of ideas

We often think it is best not to say anything until we have the perfect idea. Actually, in teamwork, it is generally more effective to have one array of ideas. Quick ideation, brainstorming, those ideas uttered without any thorough consideration, is a very good resource. We not only need ideas on what to do, but also (and especially) on what we want to accomplish: what feeling, what kind of experience we want to obtain with this project. It requires some extra effort to go over the threshold of the first ideas, which are generally the commonest. The array of ideas is what allows us to rule out the first and keep on moving.

### It is hard to get to a concept

How do we move from that wide array of ideas to a single material and effective idea useful to develop a project? In the words of Clare Brown, “an essential aspect of the design process is the movement between expansive (divergent) and focused (convergent) thinking. Broadening scope of ideas, testing which are viable, narrowing back down to those ideas which hold promise, and then repeating the whole process with the remaining ideas: these are the natural fluctuations of the design process. It takes practice and experience to be able to hold on to the core framework of an idea while simultaneously pursuing divergent aspects of it. Even the most experienced designers can struggle with navigating the multitude of options that result expansive thinking”. That is why this part of the process is limited in time and, upon completion of a work stage, there is an agreed concept to work upon.







### Metaphors are a good way to navigate the process

Going from an expansive thought to a concentrated thought may be a frustrating experience, both for people and for teams. A good strategy to push this forward is to find a metaphor to shape any element of the proposal design. The metaphor can be explicit in the design. For example, one of the teams, that wanted some school students to express themselves, used the shape and idea of a megaphone to synthesize their reflections around a need for communication, the will to give voice and the need to be heard. The shape and idea of the megaphone was inherent in the design of this team's proposal, and their strategy to have people approach by connecting the literal (the object) with the metaphor (the idea of giving voice). The metaphor is not always explicitly present in the design, but choosing a guiding idea helps us go through the process, give meaning and make decisions as to the final product.



## Let's look for unoriginal creative ideas

Timothy McNeil argues that “creativity (thinking in intuitive, non-verbal, and visual terms) is at the heart of good design. It is a quality that is highly valued, but not always well understood. A common misunderstanding equates creativity with originality. In fact, there are very few absolutely original ideas. Most of what seems to be original is simply a bringing together of previously existing concepts in a new way. Thus, creativity is the ability to see connections and relationships where others have not based on previous knowledge or experiences”.

## Let's look for crazy ideas without (yet) considering if they are viable

How can we let our creative instincts flow if we know not the full potential of a certain idea? Or if we do not have any previous experience to draw on? Or if we are frustrated because we ignore the limitations imposed by the concrete realization of an idea? This is the delicate balance between creating a vision and understanding how to make it viable (the design production process.) Groups must find the way to give up 'reality' for seemingly extravagant, unorthodox or less practical alternatives (the ones at the heart of creativity itself), aware that any such ideas may be resumed later, if necessary.







### But ultimately, how does it all relate to my museum?

When and how does the museum appear in the proposal? Ideas do not always relate in the same way to the specific context (museum) and it is key not to force that relation. For example, in our workshops, two teams worked on the City's Historic Town Hall, the Cabildo. While one thought of a strategy to provide more information on a specific history (that of African-Argentines, histories made invisible in many spaces), the other chose to take what was going on in the park today, where there are sunglasses salesmen) and bring that to the museum store to tell the stories of a current community (the Senegalese.)

### The product does not need to be perfect, it just needs to work

In a design process, one of the ultimate concerns is what the end product looks like. At this stage, it is usually frustrating not to have the time, the tools, the money or the resources to achieve the idea in the most aesthetic form. In this regard, it is worth remembering that a prototype is a model or an early version of a product created to test a concept or a process, or to be used in experiments that will let us learn from that. A prototype is a version of the product that resembles as closely as possible what we want to accomplish (an area map, a tour, a glossary) as a sketch. The prototype must be able to effect the same interaction sought by the actual product, and must be easily manufactured in a short period of time and with the fewest possible resources. It must serve to test an idea in a state which allows many subsequent changes to be introduced because it resulted from a relatively low investment.



## The process is imperfect

The process of putting together an exhibit is always a complex and imperfect process. They generate stress, conflicts among participants, and reveal different ways of facing works and different notions of the roles everyone must play. This becomes even more intense if the design we are thinking of is not traditional. When we try to find actions to open the museum doors outwards, when this implies modifying the habits of an institution, it may also generate a high level of internal conflictivity. However, this process entails learnings on a team's work dynamics and also on how to work with others that do not belong to the institutions. That is why it is useful to do a thorough assessment of the process, and not just of the product.

## However difficult, it is necessary to work as a team

Work teams generally lead to the emergence of natural leaders, that do not always reflect the bureaucratic or institutional hierarchies. For instance, those that have a good sense of humor or certain special incline for social interaction may make different contributions to the work dynamics than specialized knowledge, especially when it comes to taking to the streets. If taking the museums to the street implies learning to value the wisdom of those communities with which we interact, as discussed above, it is even more essential to value the knowledge of those in our own team.



When we put this exercise into practice, we identified the flaws in its design. We felt that if we had planned it differently, everything would have turned out better. We felt we should have been more specific in our instructions, but intervene less in each team's work process and let things flow on their own. But in the end, none of the aspects we would like to change in a future edition prevented the workshops from moving forward. Not only were they completed, but they obtained very interesting results. The reason why they worked is because everyone contributed something in that work process. The success of this exercise was due to each team member's will and the commitment of taking the museum out to the streets. That should be the starting point, the initial condition: a team willing to take the museum out to the streets. Taking the museum out to the streets is not something we must do, but something we want to do. We need to be convinced. The exercise is only worth it or –even better– should only be undertaken by those willing and committed to do it.



**Annex /**

# **Chaos at the Museum: the Design Congress**

**A.1 / About**

**A.2 / In numbers**

**A.3 / Participants said**

**A.4 / Speakers**

**A.5 / Team**



## A.1 / About

**Chaos at the museum is a design congress that mixes inspirational dialogue, practical and creative workshops, and a dynamic group of attendees to reflect on the relationship between the museum and its surroundings.** Created by Re-envisioning Exhibition Design (re-xd.org), this second edition was co-organized with Fundación TyPA -Teoría y Práctica de las Artes (Argentina) and the University of California Davis (USA); Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London (UK) and The George Washington University (USA). The congress took place on November 16-20, 2016 in the city of Buenos Aires at: The Museum of the City of Buenos Aires, the Church and Convent of San Francisco, the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Buenos Aires, the University of Buenos Aires (FADU, UBA) and National Museum of the Cabildo. Over five days we shared experiences that empower museums to move outside of their walls, and advocate for their role as civic institutions.

[www.chaosba.typa.org](http://www.chaosba.typa.org)



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## A.2 / In numbers

**5** days of intensive work

**3** keynotes

**3** dialogue tables

**9** case study presentations

**16** tools workshops

**16** creative workshops

**1** exhibition in the historic center of the city open to the general public

**33** international speakers

**130** participants from different countries around the world

**+ 470** participants took part in open activities and the extension program

**76** fellowships

**15** countries: Argentina, Great Britain, United States, Mexico, Switzerland, Ecuador, Honduras, Colombia, Saint Lucia, Senegal, Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay and Venezuela

**25** volunteer students from various universities and local institutions

## A.3 / Participants said ...

*"I think the variety of formats was refreshing and stimulating. It kept me engaged and interested in different ways throughout the conference. Each format was built from the previous one: we first heard the speakers challenge our way of thinking, then we engaged with the workshop leaders who taught us new tools and then used those tools and put our knowledge into action. It was a great way to learn and grow as a designer. "*

*"A meeting that allowed the interaction of professionals of museums, the generation of alliances with other institutions and the approach of creative proposals for the activities of the museum and its surroundings".*

*"I was glad to meet people with similar interests, similar problems and above all a lot of creativity, who are able to solve the problems that the world today demands from museums".*

*"I enjoyed the possibility of getting to know the experiences of other museums and how they reflect on the connections between their institutions and public space so that their spaces are always a participatory and appropriate space for the city."*

---

Videos of the Chaos at the Museum sessions are available in English and Spanish at:

[www.youtube.com/user/FundacionTyPA](http://www.youtube.com/user/FundacionTyPA)

**Chaos at the Museum** is a series of design congresses created by **Re-envisioning Exhibition Design:** [www.re-xd.org](http://www.re-xd.org)

## A.3 / Speakers

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# A.4 / Team

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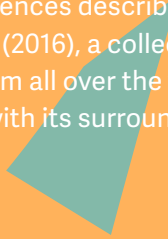
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Diseño y Urbanismo



ARTE  
en la Ciudad

This book invites readers to think how museums can get out to the streets, what it means to let the street into the museum and the new possibilities this exercise offers for museum to strengthen themselves as public spaces and civic institutions.

The reflections and experiences described here refer to **Chaos at the Museum** design congress (2016), a collective exercise that invited 160 museum professionals from all over the world to connect the Museum of the City of Buenos Aires with its surroundings.



# Chaos at the Museum

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