

RE-designing Access to Cultural Heritage for a wider participation in preservation, (re-)use and management of European culture



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PARTICIPATION IN ACTION

The Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Council of Europe, 2005) promotes a broader understanding of heritage in relation to communities and society, placing much emphasis on citizen participation. How can participation be done most effectively? There is no one-fit-all model to orient the organisation of participatory activities in the cultural heritage field. Participation takes different forms in different contexts; it may originate in institutional initiatives or community actions, and involve a variety of beneficiaries, from large, undefined audiences to small and specific groups of citizens and stakeholders. Not all modes of participation in cultural heritage entail the sharing of responsibility and power that defines participatory governance. But they all bear witness to the increasing interest, especially in the twenty-first century, in democratising access to culture, and opening up the fruition, management and preservation of heritage to ensure the active and effective collaboration of communities, neighbourhoods and individuals.

Within the framework of the REACH project, an extensive mapping exercise has been undertaken to collect good practices related to social participation in cultural heritage. The REACH repository comprises well over a hundred records, ranging from small-scale, localised activities to larger collaborative projects and global or distributed online initiatives. Covering a variety of approaches and heritage themes, this collection is intended as a resource to help professionals, practitioners, researchers and citizens with the planning of participatory actions. It is an easy-to-search archive of projects and ideas that can be transferred, adapted or replicated in different contexts. Each record contains valuable knowledge about participation in action, whether the focus is on museums designing participatory forms of intervention or on disadvantaged communities taking action to ensure the preservation of their heritage; on the role citizens can play in revitalising rural and urban sites or on the preservation and (re-)use of local heritage via bottom-up initiatives.

Located in 30 countries across the world, but with a specific emphasis on Europe, the good practices collected in the REACH dataset demonstrate the increasing appeal of participatory initiatives that blur the distinction between amateur and professionals, or facilitate the release of control and power, in tentative ways, to communities and citizens. The value of incentivising social participation in cultural heritage is linked to the need for higher inclusivity, felt all the more keenly in troubled times by citizens as well as institutions. The REACH repository shows that widening participation in culture and heritage, by addressing the interests of minorities, Indigenous communities, disadvantaged groups of citizens, is a socially responsible commitment that many are willing to undertake.



The database of good practices is available on **Open-Heritage.eu**, the online space created by the REACH Project.



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