

# My Museum

## Summary

A scenario where the participants act as the visitors of a museum. Through this scenario, the participants experience the different expectations and social background of different types of visitors and how this affects their interpersonal experience in the exhibition.

## Background

A useful way to rethink the social aspects of a museum visit is through the lens of interpersonalisation. This concept captures processes of meaning-making that take place *between people* through their experience of a museum, rather than between the museum and an individual.

Aims and goals:

- Get insight into the visitor's perspective
- See the museum and exhibit from an outside perspective through the eyes of the visitor
- Reflect upon interpersonal relations and how they affect the museum experience
- Learn about research focused on museum visitors

## Groups and roles in the scenario

- The museum guide and in the last scene interviewer (facilitator)
- Exhibit host and in the last scene interviewer (extra facilitator role)
- The visitor groups
  - The dating couple
  - The gang of friends
  - The pupils from a local school
  - The retired couple
  - The parent with a child
  - The nerds from the museum club
  - The foreign tourists

*Players:* 10-20.

*Time:* 1 hour

*Supplies:*

- Location: a museum exhibit
- Preferably a separate room for debriefing
- Printed roles
- Printed instructions for the facilitator
- Printed handout: evaluation form
- Pens to fill in the evaluation form
- Optional: Clothes, hats and accessories for participants

*Keywords*

New museology;  
Interpersonal experiences;  
Culture clashes;  
Appropriation;  
Visitor perspectives

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## Preparations (before players come)

- Print and cut the roles
- Carefully read through the instructions for the scenario.
- Choose an exhibit to hold the scenario in
- Make sure to have a space (ideally a small room with chairs) in which to hold the debrief.

## Introduction: [10 minutes]

### **Present the scenario**

This will be a scenario where you all will play visitors at an exhibit. We will play in the actual exhibit, so care and consideration for the surroundings are important. You will first get all the instructions. Then we will play the scenario, in which you all will play different roles, and afterwards we will have a debrief. The aim of the scenario is to look at the exhibit experience from a visitor perspective. The scenario also focuses on the social aspect of going to a museum.

### **Role play - How you do it**

If your participants have previous experience of role-playing, this can be omitted.

1. They will play different roles
2. Their roles will have different agencies and wishes, express them as if they were your own.
3. You do not represent your own opinions, you express the opinions of your role.
4. The game master will indicate clearly when the role play starts and ends.

### **Background**

Present the background of the game:

1. Where are we: We are in this museum at today's date.
2. Why are we there: You will play visitors that for different reasons have decided to visit this exhibit today.
3. What are we doing there: The visitors will go on a guided tour and also get some time to discover the exhibit on their own.
4. Read the short flavor text:  
*The plan for today is to visit the museum and this specific exhibit together. You have traveled to get here and have just passed through the gates of the museum, hung up your coats and bought your tickets. Ready for today's activity!*

### **Distribute roles and groups**

1. Hand out the roles to the participants. Explain that they also belong to different groups.
2. Let the players read the roles and ask questions if they have any.
3. Tell them that the first scene will be a warm-up and last for a couple of minutes, then we will play the visit to the exhibition.
4. Let each participant come up with a name for their role. If you have time they can also write a short background story to their characters.
5. Tell them to play the roles until you as a facilitator asks them to stop playing the roles.

## Role Play Phase

### Scene 1: Prologue (10 minutes)

This is a warm-up scene where the participants will elaborate their roles and get a feeling for how to role play their characters.

Tell the participants: In this scene, you will play in your separate social groups. You will play a short, improvised scene where you all decide to go to the museum. The scene ends when you have reached that decision.

The visitor groups get together in separate places.

1. Decide together in the social groups where the scene will take place (at home, on the phone, at school or such).
2. Each player presents their role briefly.
3. The group decides on a few basics for their relations, such as how long they have known each other.
4. When all groups are ready the facilitator starts the scene by reading the flavor text:

*You will have a day in the city and will do an activity. This is a scene about how you together as a group decide what to do.*

All groups play out their small scenes at the same time. The facilitator walks among the groups. When all groups seem to have finished their scene, break the scene for everyone.

Ask the groups how it felt to play the scene and how their decision was made.

### Scene 2.1: Welcome and guided tour

Take the participants to the entrance of the exhibit. Tell the participants that you will count down from five to zero. When you reach zero, everyone will play their characters. Tell them that there is an off-game rule that they will follow the instructions from the guide, though they may verbalize objections. Ask if there are any last questions before starting. Then ask the participants to close their eyes while you count down slowly from five to zero. When you reach zero, start the scene.

Guide/facilitator says:

*Hello and welcome to the exhibit! I will be your guide today. We are so glad that you have come to our museum and hope you will enjoy your time here! Don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions!*

The facilitator leads the group through the museum, continuing to talk about what you see. The “guided tour” is not very informative but takes the group to a few different highlights. The visitors also get the chance to ask questions.

### Scene 2.2: Roam free in the museum

After the “guided tour” is finished, the guide says that they can walk around freely. The facilitator can decide what is a reasonable amount of time for this. Ask the visitors to kindly come back after the stated time to do a short evaluation.

### Scene 2.3: Fill in evaluation form

The guide/facilitator gathers the group and hands out the evaluation form and pens. One form per visitor. Use the printed evaluation forms.

After they have filled in the form, thank them for the visit and break the scene.

## **Scene 2.4: (Optional) Interviews in focus groups**

This scene is optional and is preferably not done inside the exhibition but rather in a separate room. If the group is big and you have several facilitators, you can make several smaller focus groups.

Gather the participants in a suitable location (preferably a room with chairs). Tell them that they will go into character again, this time in a focus group interview. Use the printed interview protocol as a basis for the interview.

Ask the participants to close their eyes while you count down slowly from five to zero. When you reach zero, start the scene.

Interviewer/facilitator: *Welcome and thank you for your time for this focus group interview.*

The interviewer/facilitator then follows the interview protocol. Feel free to skip questions if the scene feels too long. When the interview is finished, end the scene.

## **Debrief**

Introduce the interpersonal perspective on museum visits, and how it shapes the museum experience. Then go on to a discussion covering some of the topics below – let the participants decide a bit where the discussion is going.

### **The interpersonal perspective**

- Let the participants go through each other's evaluation forms.
- How was what they wrote in the form connected to the interpersonal and social experiences connected to the visit?
- Discuss.

### **How can the museum facilitate the interpersonal experience**

- Discuss in general terms.
- in the context of when making new installations.
- in the context of being in the current exhibition.

### **Designing with an interpersonal perspective**

Good and bad examples (classic audio guide, guided tour in Nefertari's tomb<sup>1</sup>, etc.)

### **Different types of visitors**

- What different types were portrayed?
- Do those types come to your museum? Why/why not?
- What target groups are most interesting to your museum?
- Consider currently targeted groups and attracting new target groups

### **Designing for different target groups**

- What do the different groups want?
- What can deter a certain group from participating?

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. 'A Guided Tour of Queen Nefertari's Tomb With a Docent in High Fidelity VR' retrieved 19 September 2019 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yX\\_rDXOL2oA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yX_rDXOL2oA)

- Inclusive design
  - Language
  - Children
  - Disabilities (sound, visual, movement, etc.)
  - Gender
  - Cultural appropriation and understanding or misunderstanding
  - Economy
  - Technology

### Curious?

A useful way to rethink the social aspects of a museum visit is through the lens of interpersonalisation. This concept captures processes of meaning-making that take place *between people* through their experience of a museum, rather than between the museum and an individual. Interpersonal meaning-making can happen during a visit, but it also covers the kind of meaning-making that takes place before and after a visit, as people discuss their plans and experiences with friends, family, and colleagues. Even if you visit the museum alone your visit is likely to be influenced by other people, whether they are present in the flesh or not.

A joint museum visit is a way to spend time together, and can be seen as something we do both *for* each other and *with* each other; hence they can serve to strengthen social ties. Groups come to the museum not only to experience the exhibition but also to do something together, and often the social aspect of the visit may be at least as important to them as the exhibition itself. Furthermore, our social ties to other people can also add to our own perspective by allowing us to understand their perspective on the museum – allowing us to ‘see the museum through their eyes’.

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## Appendix 1: Roles

<b>The couple</b> <b>Name:</b>	<b>The couple</b> <b>Name:</b>
You are on a date with another person. You want to impress intellectually and show that you can have deep conversations. Just going to the cinema feels too cheesy.	You are planning a date with another person. You want to impress intellectually and show that you can have deep conversations. Just going to the cinema feels too cheesy.

<b>The old couple</b> <b>Name:</b>	<b>The old couple</b> <b>Name:</b>
You are retired and like to spend your days visiting museums, theatres and historical sites.	You are retired and like to spend your days visiting museums, theatres and historical sites.

<b>The tourists</b> <b>Name:</b>	<b>The tourists</b> <b>Name:</b>
You come from another country and are here on a short weekend. You have read about the museum in your guidebook.	You come from another country and are here on a short weekend. You have read about the museum in your guidebook.

<b>The friends</b> <b>Name:</b>	<b>The friends</b> <b>Name:</b>
You want to hang out with your friends and do some nice activity together.	You want to hang out with your friends and do some nice activity together.

<p><b>Parent and child</b></p> <p><b>Name:</b></p>	<p><b>Parent and child</b></p> <p><b>Name:</b></p>
<p>You will spend the day with your 10-year-old child.</p>	<p>You are 10 years old and are accompanying your parent. You have been told that you will have a parent-and-child day today and do something fun together in the city.</p>

<p><b>From the school</b></p> <p><b>Name:</b></p>	<p><b>From the school</b></p> <p><b>Name:</b></p>
<p>You are a pupil at a school and are on a school-trip to the museum</p>	<p>You are a pupil at a school and are on a school-trip to the museum</p>



Use these empty character sheets if you want to create visitor characteristics that fit with the local museum context.

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Name:</b>

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Name:</b>

# Visitor evaluation form

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Date:

Gender:  Male  Female  Other/don't want to state

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you often go to museums? <input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often
How did you like the guided tour? <input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat good <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat bad <input type="checkbox"/> Very bad
How was your overall experience in the museum? <input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat good <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat bad <input type="checkbox"/> Very bad
Did the visit fill your expectations? <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeded expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Fulfilled expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Below expectations
What was the best part of the visit to the museum?
Would you recommend a friend to visit the museum? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe
What did you learn from the visit at the museum, if anything?
What could be improved?

Other comments (use reverse side if needed):

# Interview Guide

## GENERAL

- Why did you decide to visit the exhibit?
- How long did you plan to spend at the museum today?
- What was particularly good?
- What can be improved?

## EXHIBIT

- What kind of exhibition was this?
- Do you think it's an important part of the museum?
- The objects in this part of the museum: Did you pay attention to them? Do you find them similar to the rest of the museum? Different? Any that caught your attention in particular?
- The stories in this part of the museum: Did you pay attention to them? How do you find them similar to those of the rest of the museum? Different?
- Did visiting this part of the museum make you reflect on anything? Did it change your perception of the museum?
- Do you think the objects and stories in the exhibition affected how much you liked or disliked the experience?
- How did the exhibition make you feel?

## SOCIAL

- Were you visiting museum alone? With group? If group, who was in your group? How do you know each other?
- Did you interact with other group members during the visit? How?
- Did you interact with other museum visitors that were not in your group? If so, how?
- Do you think the impact on your group experience was positive or negative? What did the experience improve? What did it make more difficult?

## BACKGROUND

- If you were to describe this museum, what kind of museum would you say it is?
- What is your relationship to this museum? Have you been to this museum before?
- Why did you visit today?