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## **The social museum in the Caribbean : grassroots heritage initiatives and community engagement**

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# Curriculum Vitae

Csilla Esther Ariese was born in Amsterdam on 26 November 1987. She was selected for the first edition of Leiden University's PRE-University College (2004-2006), which she successfully completed alongside her secondary education at the Vossius Gymnasium in Amsterdam (*cum laude*, 2000-2006). She began her studies in geoarchaeology at the Free University in Amsterdam, before moving to Sweden where she obtained a BA degree *with distinction* in archaeology from Gothenburg University (2008-2010). Her thesis, *A Twisted Truth* (2010), was a comparative archaeological and historical study of the 17<sup>th</sup> century shipwreck *Batavia*. Afterwards, she obtained a MSc degree *with distinction* in international museum studies, also at Gothenburg University (2010-2012). In *A Series of Firsts* (2012), she critically investigated the representations of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and its 'discoveries' as shown in Australian and Dutch museums.

As part of her studies, she was project leader for the *Gender Matters* exhibition (2011) which was set across three museums: Göteborgs Naturhistoriska Museum, Göteborgs Stadsmuseum, and Sjöfartsmuseet Akvariet Göteborg. Within the framework of internships, she worked at the Néprajzi Múzeum in Budapest, Hungary, and the Western Australian Museum Shipwreck Galleries in Fremantle, Australia. Additionally, she was a work experience volunteer at the Amsterdam Museum. On a freelance basis, she researches and translates VOC archival documents.

In 2013, she obtained a four-year PhD position at Leiden University's Faculty of Archaeology, within the ERC-Synergy project *NEXUS1492: New World Encounters in a Globalising World*. This publication is the result of her PhD research, for which she conducted fieldwork in 25 different islands and countries throughout the Caribbean, visiting 195 museums. During this time, Csilla participated in teaching activities for several MA courses at the faculty, as teaching assistant, thesis supervisor, and instructor, most frequently for Critical Museology. In 2015 she was elected Secretary to the Board of the Museums Association of the Caribbean. In the same year, she co-founded the VALUE project – for research and outreach on the past, heritage, and video games – which was formalized two years later as the VALUE Foundation. In 2018 she was offered a postdoctoral research position at Leiden University within the NEXUS1492 project. In this position, she is now developing a publication to provide a comprehensive overview of Amerindian archaeological collections currently held in European museums.

Csilla's authored and edited publications reflect her wide range of interests. *Engaging Youth Audiences in Caribbean Museums* (2018) and *How Caribbean Museums Contribute to a More Sustainable Society* (2017) resulted from her PhD research. *The Interactive Past* (2017), *From the Stone Age to the Information Age* (2017), and *Video Games in Archaeology* (2016) are all thanks to her involvement in VALUE. Lastly, her internship in Fremantle provided the opportunity to write *Databases of the People aboard the VOC Ships Batavia (1629) & Zeewijk (1727)* (2012), of which a revised edition appeared as *Australia's Earliest European Graves* (2016). In all of Csilla's endeavors her aim is to engage people with stories of the past.





## THE SOCIAL MUSEUM IN THE CARIBBEAN

A mosaic is the only image which can do justice to museums in the Caribbean. They are as diverse and plentiful as the many communities which form the cores of their organizations and the hearts of their missions. These profoundly social museums adopt participatory practices and embark on community engagement processes in order to embed themselves firmly in contemporary Caribbean societies.

This dissertation presents a mosaic of 195 Caribbean museums and the results of a unique research project based on a mixed methods approach. It begins with a macro view of Caribbean museums and their participatory practices. This part of the study consisted of a regional museum survey in which the museum visit was approached as an event, leading to the creation of an extensive database of Caribbean museums and their participatory practices. The dissertation continues by zooming in to a micro level to explore the dynamics of community engagement processes in two case studies. The *Kalinago Barana Autê* in Dominica shows the ongoing process

of an indigenous grassroots initiative that became a governmentally owned but locally managed museum. The *Bengal to Barbados* exhibition in Barbados reveals the complex dynamics of the beginnings of a co-curation project between a heterogeneous migrant community and a national museum.

By giving voice to grassroots museums, this dissertation shifts the museological discussion away from the usual suspects to consider topics such as the ephemeral museum. By combining a regional museum survey with case studies, it provides both overarching and close-up views of this mosaic. From ecomuseums and object donations, to multi-vocality and participatory styles, and the need for negotiation and representativity, the study reveals a multitude of facets of the social museum in the Caribbean.

This book is a unique resource for museologists around the world, especially those interested in community engagement. It is particularly valuable for those working in, with, or on museums in the Caribbean.



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