

# CULTURAL PARTICIPATION AND YOUTH WELLBEING: AN EXAMPLE OF THE MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF EDUARDS VEIDENBAUMS “KALĀČI”

*Bc.art.* **Lote Katrīna Cērpa**

*Latvian Academy of Culture, Institute of Cultural and Arts Studies*

*Mg.sc.soc.* **Laura Brutāne**

*Latvian Academy of Culture, Institute of Cultural and Arts Studies*

## **Abstract**

In recent years, the field of social science research has increasingly sought to explain the role of cultural participation in promoting social and individual wellbeing. It has been studied in different cultural and artistic subsectors, including museums [Daykin et al. 2020]. The focus of this paper is on young people's participation in cultural activities, specifically museum activities, and the impact of this participation on young people's wellbeing. Fieldwork was carried out in the Memorial Museum of Eduards Veidenbaums “Kalāči” during the research project “Striving Towards Participatory Engagement in Museums: Inquiry into Museum Education Practice in Latvia (MEET), meeting young people (n=12) and finding out what their experience was of participating in the creation of the museum's permanent exhibition and by organising events like “Veidenfest” (“*Veidenfests*”) and “More Light” (“*Vairāk gaismas*”). Paper reveals how participation in these activities has contributed to young people's wellbeing.

**Keywords:** *cultural participation, museum, youth, wellbeing, participatory research.*

---

*Culture Crossroads*

Volume 26, 2024, doi <https://doi.org/10.55877/cc.vol26.496>

© Latvian Academy of Culture, Lote Katrīna Cērpa, Laura Brutāne

All Rights Reserved.

ISSN: 2500-9974



## Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been an increasing interest in how participation in arts and cultural activities can improve individuals' wellbeing. Although the concept of wellbeing is very fluid and it is difficult to find one clear and concrete definition for it, there is an assumption among researchers that wellbeing is enhanced when people are able to fulfil their potential, to achieve a sense of purpose in society [Jensen 2013: 205]. An innovative approach that can improve wellbeing is participation in arts and cultural activities. There are a number of intrinsic benefits, such as increased empathy and stronger social bonds [Hand 2017: 273], vitality, rejuvenation, resilience, purpose and increased quality of life, that can result from participation in arts activities [Fancourt & Finn 2019: 21].

When considering participation in cultural and artistic activities and their potential contribution to the wellbeing of those involved, it is important to also take into account the context in which the activities occur. Following the International Council of Museums (ICOM) adoption of a new definition of museums in 2022, which includes community engagement in museum activities, participation in cultural and artistic activities within museums has become increasingly significant [ICOM 2022].

The aim of the article is to identify how the participation in cultural and artistic activities offered by a museum can contribute to the wellbeing of young people. As the concept of wellbeing is fluid and encompasses subjectivity, it is difficult to measure. This paper proposes a holistic analytical model to identify how participation in museum activities can enhance the wellbeing of those involved. As part of the research project "Striving Towards Participatory Engagement in Museums: Inquiry into Museum Education Practice in Latvia (MEET)", fieldwork was conducted at the Memorial Museum of Eduards Veidenbaums "Kalāči" (hereafter referred to as "Kalāči"). The purpose of the fieldwork was to gather information from young people (n=12) about their experience participating in the creation of the museum's permanent exhibition through participatory arts practice and independently organising the festival "Veidenfest". The participatory research approach employed in this study involved the use of a timeline mapping method to gather data on the contribution of involvement in these activities to the wellbeing of young people. The use of a participatory research approach enables the development of a contextualised understanding of wellbeing for a specific group, in this case, young people who participated in the activities of the museum. This approach can facilitate a holistic understanding of wellbeing, moving beyond the limitations of unidimensional understandings of wellbeing [Sollis 2023: 173].

### **Clarification of concepts – wellbeing and participation in cultural and artistic activities**

As previously stated, defining wellbeing can be challenging as it involves subjective judgements. Various studies that explore the correlation between cultural and artistic participation and wellbeing offer different interpretations of the concept. Wellbeing is referred to as “broader concept than health, suggesting a positive state shaped by subjective feelings as well as social experiences” [Daykin et al. 2021: 134]. In 2008, the Government Office for Science in England conducted the Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project. The final report of this project is intended for those engaged in policy-related activities, as well as a diverse array of professionals and researchers whose work is aligned with the domains of mental capital and wellbeing, and it suggests that wellbeing “is a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society” [The Government Office for Science, London. Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project 2008]. Positive wellbeing is associated with feelings of excitement, nostalgia, and pleasure, a sense of freedom, kinship, security, support, and being valued, a positive sense of identity, agency, and autonomy [Mansfield et al. 2020: 3].

It is also important to clarify what is meant by participation in cultural and artistic activities in the context of this article. In light of the case study described later in this article, participation in cultural and artistic activities is viewed through the lens of participatory arts and arts engagement. Participatory arts-based activities encompass a form of art (including visual arts, storytelling, poetry) that involves active engagement and collaboration with those taking part during the creative process [Williams et al. 2023: 1735]. Australian researcher Christina Davis, whose research focuses on the interdisciplinary areas of arts-health, health promotion, and mental wellbeing, and her colleagues differentiate between two forms of arts engagement: passive (e. g. visiting, attending, listening, viewing and discussing art) and active (e. g. making, creating, writing and teaching art) [Davies et al. 2012: 208].

### **The link between participation in cultural and arts activities and wellbeing**

In order to characterise the link between participation in cultural and artistic activities and wellbeing, researchers have used two main approaches: the analysis of specific cases where this link has been observed, and systematic reviews and analyses of literature that examine these various cases. The authors will first look at how

systematic literature reviews describe the link between wellbeing and participation in cultural and artistic activities, as they offer more general categories.

In several literature reviews, the most commonly reported wellbeing benefits of participation in cultural and arts activities are increased self-confidence and self-esteem [Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 341; Bungay, Vella-Burrows 2013: 51; Pesata et al. 2022: 7]. Increased confidence for young people who are engaging in arts and cultural activities can come from feeling valued, being treated like an adult, overcoming challenges and having a purpose. It can also be associated with the opportunities to perform and engage in communication with other like-minded people [Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 345]. If engagement in arts is achieved through the form of performing arts, then the immediate positive validation received from other participants who view the performance can generate a sense of pride and accomplishment, which can be linked to increased self-confidence [Williams et al. 2023: 1758].

Participation in arts and cultural activities can also result in such social benefits, that are connected with wellbeing, as social connectedness, social support, developed interpersonal skills [O'Donnell et al. 2021: 7; Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 345]. Participating in cultural and arts activities can lead to positive social contact and friendships that elicit a sense of belonging, acceptance, social confidence, which can be facilitated by a non-judgmental, friendly, and relaxed environment [O'Donnell et al. 2017: 8]. Important elements of providing an accepting, non-judgmental atmosphere are the personal attitudes and qualities of artists and facilitators [Hui et al. 2019: 296].

There can be several other benefits to wellbeing from participating in cultural and arts activities. Active engagement in arts activities can play a role in identity development as the activities give participants an opportunity to explore and learn about themselves. Identity can be linked with a sense of belonging, that is facilitated by meeting like-minded people and exposure to different people and experiences [Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 341]. Such activities can also enable individuals to make small manageable decisions, to be self-resourceful, perform familiar tasks [O'Donnell et al. 2017: 10].

Case studies describing the link between wellbeing and participation in cultural and artistic activities tend to reveal some additional elements that contribute to wellbeing. In one of the case studies ("Hear and Now" project, United Kingdom, 2019), participants reported many positive emotions, including happiness, inspiration, pride and excitement [Jenkins, Farrer and Aulja 2020: 123]. Another case study within the "eARTh" project (United Kingdom), a program offering weekly group arts activities for individuals utilising mental health services, identified how participation in cultural and artistic activities enables participants to explore their identity. By working together as artists, people can perceive themselves more

positively and develop a sense of belonging through artistic activities. Participation in cultural and artistic activities can help people to develop a new belief system about themselves, based on value and worth. Some participants may begin to call themselves artists, which can lead to a transformation of their identity [Hui et al. 2019: 297].

### **Analytical models for identifying wellbeing enhancement in the context of cultural and artistic activities**

While there's no universally accepted metric for measuring wellbeing, it is not measurable against quantifiable criteria and is largely subjective [Fenton 2013: 5], most assessments consider both hedonic aspects like happiness and anxiety, and eudemonic aspects concerning one's sense of purpose and meaning in life [Daykin et al. 2021: 134]. There have been various case studies [Jenkins et al. 2020; Fenton 2013; Kovich et al. 2023]) that examine the link between cultural participation and wellbeing, using mainly two analytical models: the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model developed by the New Economics Foundation (United Kingdom) and the PERMA model developed by Martin E. P. Seligman (United States of America).

The "Five Ways to Wellbeing" developed by The New Economics Foundation encompasses day-to-day actions that are important for an individual's wellbeing – connect; be active; take notice; keep learning; give [Aked et al. 2008: 3]. Researcher Marsaili Cameron and his colleagues noted that these five actions correspond to behaviours that can emerge in participatory arts projects. "People can form close relationships by engaging in a common creative task (connect). Physical activity is intrinsic to art forms like dance but applies equally to the making of material things (be active). Creating art encourages people to reflect on their world and their experiences in it (take notice)" [Cameron et al. 2013: 55]. "Participants in arts projects can develop new skills and learn about new things, acquire knowledge (keep learning). And art is a powerful tool of communication, self-expression, participation in arts and cultural activities can build self-esteem and empathy (give)" [Cameron et al. 2013: 56].

One study employed the PERMA model to identify and analyse the benefits to wellbeing from the "Hear and Now" project, which took place in 2019 in the United Kingdom. Musicians and dancers from the Philharmonia Orchestra and University of Bedfordshire facilitated the project and performed alongside older adults living with a diagnosis of dementia and young people. These groups collaborated over four weeks to devise a music and dance piece, which was performed at the University Theatre [Jenkins, Farrer and Aulja 2020: 122].

The PERMA model, developed by Martin E. P. Seligman in 2011, comprises five elements that collectively constitute the concept of wellbeing. These five elements of wellbeing are positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and

accomplishment [Seligman 2011: 16]. Positive emotion encompasses subjective wellbeing variables: pleasure, ecstasy, comfort, warmth, etc. [Seligman 2011: 17]. Engagement, like positive emotion, is assessed only subjectively and retrospectively. This element is characterised by subjective experiences, such as a sense of timelessness, complete focus on the task, and a loss of self-consciousness [Seligman 2011: 16]. Meaning is the third element of wellbeing; it can be explained as belonging to and serving something that one believes is bigger than the self. Meaning is not solely a subjective state as more objective judgement of history, logic, and coherence can contradict a subjective judgement [Seligman 2011: 17]. Fourth element of wellbeing is accomplishment in its momentary form. It is included in this model to better describe what individuals, when free of coercion, choose to do for its own sake. This element can be described by sense of winning, accomplishing something for its own sake [Seligman, 2011: 19]. The fifth element is positive relationships. It simply means that positive and pleasant communication and engagement with other people makes one's life richer and happier [Seligman 2011: 20].

In conclusion, while wellbeing remains a largely subjective and multifaceted concept that resists quantifiable measurement, two analytical models – the “Five Ways to Wellbeing” and the PERMA model – offer valuable frameworks for understanding how cultural activities can enhance wellbeing. The “Five Ways to Wellbeing” model outlines daily actions crucial for individual wellbeing, such as connecting, being active, taking notice, keeping learning, and giving, all of which can be fostered through participatory arts projects. Similarly, the PERMA model identifies five elements of wellbeing: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment. These models provide structured approaches to analysing and promoting wellbeing, underscoring the significant potential of cultural participation in enhancing individual and collective wellbeing.

### Research design

The study is part of the project “Striving Towards Participatory Engagement in Museums: Inquiry into Museum Education Practice in Latvia (MEET)”, which aims to explore the determinants, patterns and consequences of participatory engagement dynamics in the museum sector through the prism of museum education. The project aims to take a closer look at four cases where participatory community engagement in museum activities can be observed. One of the cases is the participatory involvement of the youth community in the Memorial Museum of Eduards Veidenbaums “Kalāči”. The project “More Light” (in Latvian: “*Vairāk gaismas*”) was launched in 2022 with the aim of involving young people in the creation of a new exhibition, as well as addressing issues of young people's mental health. Museum representatives organised two consecutive years of *Sansusī* Social Wellbeing Residencies, where Latvian and

Norwegian artists worked with young people to explore the museum's collection and create artworks reflecting on mental health and wellbeing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and today. When the "More Light" project ended, those who were involved in the project did not want to stop working with the museum, so the young people initiated a new project, "Veidenfest", which took place in August 2023 in the open-air territory of the "Kalāči".

The study employs a participatory research approach and utilises the timeline mapping [Hurtubise 2023] method for the collection of data. Participatory research can be generally described as systematic inquiry conducted in collaboration with those impacted by the issue under study, aimed at education and driving action or change. One of the main strengths of participatory research is its ability to combine researchers' theoretical and methodological expertise with the real-world knowledge and experiences of non-academic participants, creating a mutually beneficial partnership [Cargo et al. 2008: 327]. Timeline mapping is a visual art-based method derived from the broader framework of graphic elicitation. It involves participants organising their life events in a self-selected chronological order, each with attached significance. This method can help reduce traditional interview hierarchies, fostering rapport between interviewer and interviewee, and allowing the participant to guide the interview agenda. Additionally, timelines facilitate participants' reflection on specific life periods and enhance the comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences. Timeline mapping method can also be used to focus on specific periods of participants' lives [Hurtubise et al. 2023]. In this study, the timeline mapping method was employed to explore the experiences of participants during a specific temporal period in which they were engaged with the activities of the museum "Kalāči".

The fieldwork took place from July 4 to August 30, 2023. Initially, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with museum representatives: the director, the museum educator, and the project manager of the project "More Light". On August 18, the researchers met with the young people involved in the museum's activities to explain the purpose and process of the research. On August 30, 2023, the young participants were given approximately one hour to visualise their museum engagement journey, tracing its inception from their initial involvement in museum activities. The young people could do this with all possible materials – paint on sheets, draw, create a path from magazines, newspaper clippings, etc. Afterwards, the young people were asked to talk about the path – either in public, with everyone involved, or in more intimate settings such as small group discussions or peer to peer interviews – whichever was more convenient. The conversations were audio-recorded, then transcribed, and along with them, the important milestones, emotions, insights, etc. of the young people's museum participation experience were highlighted.

In total, 12 young people aged 15 to 19 shared their experiences. Initially, a general thematic analysis was used to process the data in order to understand the benefits for wellbeing identified by young people. Subsequently, the authors identified the relationships of the thematic blocks of the data with the two models discussed in the theoretical section above – “Five Ways to Wellbeing” model and PERMA model.

## Results

The general thematic analysis of the data showed that it was possible to identify a number of categories from both models (coloured pink in Figure 1), but not categories such as “meaning” (PERMA model) and “give” (Five Ways to Wellbeing) (coloured grey in Figure 1). Several young people stated that participating in museum activities helped them to understand themselves and to explore themselves (self-exploration – added category), which is in line with the case study of the eARTh project described above, where it was found that participation in cultural and artistic activities allows participants to explore their identity. Although neither the “Five Ways to Wellbeing” nor the PERMA model explicitly refer to self-exploration, in theoretical materials various authors [Davies 2012: 1; Zarobe 2017: 341; Bungay 2013: 51; Pesata 2022: 7] explain that cultural and artistic participation contributes to the progress of a person’s self-worth and self-confidence – both of the elements contribute to participant’s self-exploration.

The authors developed a comprehensive analytical model to identify the enhancement of wellbeing through cultural and artistic activities. The model integrates the categories of the PERMA and “Five Ways to Wellbeing” models identified in the empirical data and adds the category of Self-exploration (coloured yellow in Figure 1). By integrating these two models, their categories were merged and given new keywords. “Connect” and “Positive relationship” are integrated into the “Community” category. Both connections and positive relationships enable the creation of strong social bonds, a sense of belonging, and community. The category “Involvement” integrates “Be active”, which is characterised by the creation of material things, and “Engagement”, which is characterised by full focus on the task. Similarly, the category “Knowledge” combines “Keep learning” with “Accomplishment”, based on the idea that the acquisition of new skills leads to the achievement of new results, contributing to an individual and collective sense of achievement and winning. “Take notice” has been included in the “Emotions” category alongside “Positive emotion”. This is because both categories describe emotions that arise from participating in activities and reflecting through art. However, based on the empirical data collected, no situations were identified that correspond to the “Give” category of the “Five Ways to Wellbeing” model and the “Meaning” category of the PERMA model (coloured grey in Figure 1).



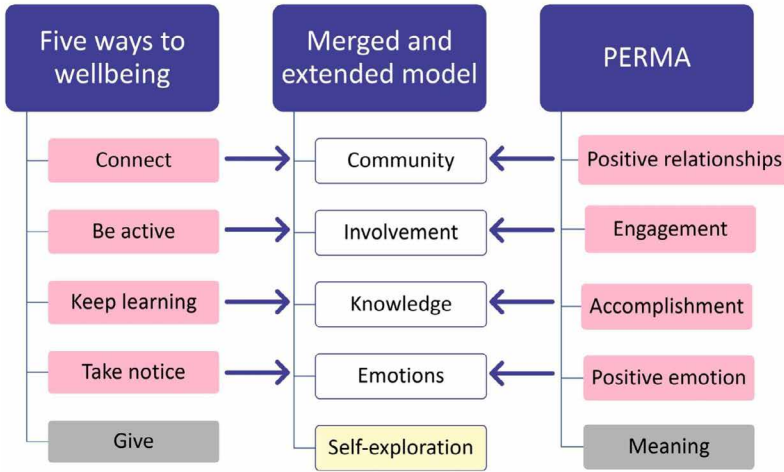


Figure 1. Analytical model for identifying enhanced wellbeing through cultural participation (created by the authors based on the “Five Ways to Wellbeing” model and PERMA model categories).

In order to gain a deeper insight into the analysis of the results and the relationship between cultural and artistic participation and young people’s wellbeing, a second (merged and extended model) figure has been created. The figure demonstrates the keywords and attributes that define each category of the newly developed analytical

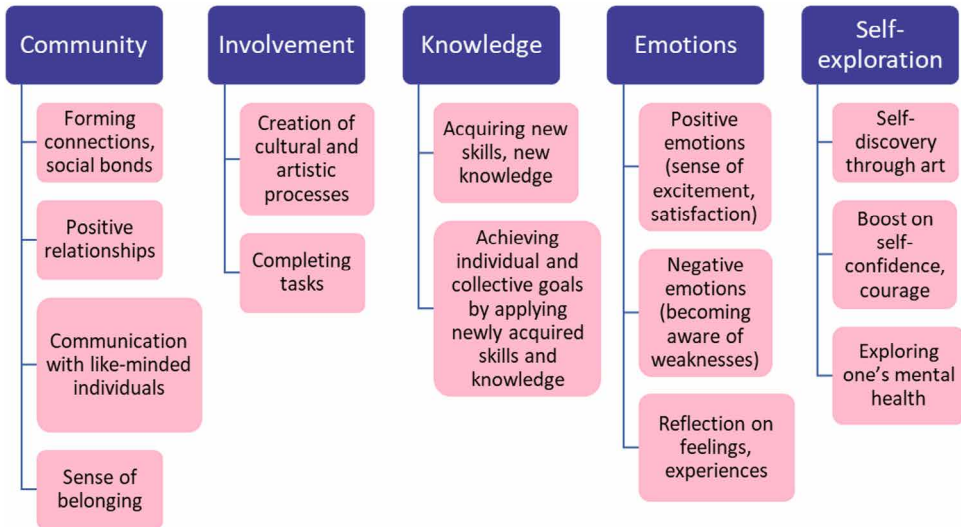


Figure 2. Merged and extended analytical model for identifying enhanced wellbeing through cultural participation, together with the keywords and attributes which describe them (created by the authors based on the “Five Ways to Wellbeing” model and PERMA model categories).

model. The keywords and attributes for each category are primarily selected based on the models previously mentioned (the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model and PERMA model). However, the category of emotions, derived from the findings of the fieldwork, has been complemented with the attribute "negative emotions", which, in turn, enables the stakeholders involved in the artistic and cultural processes to enhance their understanding of their weaknesses. The analysis of the results then proceeds to describe in greater detail how cultural and artistic participation contributes to the wellbeing of young people.

Following this, the authors will describe the results in depth, based on the merged and extended analytical model categories: community, involvement, knowledge, emotions and self-exploration.

### **Community**

As stated in this article, the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model identifies connection as a constituent element of wellbeing within the domain of cultural and arts engagements. Similarly, the PERMA model accentuates human interaction, conceptualized as "positive relationships". Empirical observations from fieldwork underscore that engaging in communication with like-minded individuals and cultivating bonds of friendship constitutes a pivotal benefit of cultural involvement. One informant explains that through this participation s/he has gained "*the confidence that maybe some of my thoughts are purely normal. Communication with young people is important, which also improved my mental health a lot, and the realisation that I am not alone. It's a very cool feeling that you can resonate with someone.*" Another informant added that this interaction between participants fosters collaborative skills and drives these positive relationships with each other: "*And then there's that collaboration and being able to understand each other, rather than just saying 'oh, you don't understand me?— then we don't need to work together, then just go away, I'll manage here!'*" In other words, the data show that the participation of young individuals in the "Kalāči" museum has strengthened strong social bonds and a sense of belonging. This experience shows a community that provides support and solidarity, and for young people it serves as a network where they will be understood, supported and helped in times of need.

### **Involvement**

Alongside the building of the community and friendship bonds described above, the empirical evidence of the study shows that young people are actively involved in the creation of cultural and artistic processes. This involvement contributes in a positive way to the development of new cooperation skills and to the learning of cultural and artistic processes. Consequently, young people feel being a part of the

cultural field and involved in cultural processes. One of the informants describes his/her experience: *“I wanted to try something new, I wanted to try some bigger, formal volunteering. Because before this I was not active anywhere. And I don’t know why I suddenly became active like that. I would say that the first “More Light” residency triggered something in me, I just wanted to try something new, I want to understand the world better, to get an insight into how it works in reality.”* Moreover, the young people explain that this participation in the activities of the “Kalāči” requires in itself continuous work and involvement. This has been a challenge for many at the beginning – participants admit that they were not confident in their own abilities and did not want to take responsibility for specific tasks to be carried out. However, this experience has taught them to overcome their fears and barriers related to communication and work management activities.

### Knowledge

Knowledge is one of the key benefits highlighted in the context of cultural and artistic participation. “The Five Ways to Wellbeing” model explicitly explains that individuals acquire new skills and knowledge through participation. The PERMA model, on the other hand, places more emphasis on the individual’s achievements. The empirical data show that the young people have achieved their individual and collective goals by applying their newly acquired skills and knowledge to the activities of “Kalāči”. The interviews reveal that the young people have gained experience in managing events – experiencing the steps of organising an event from start to finish, including budget planning, communicating with the artists involved, decorating stages, setting up tents, running events and discussions. By organising “Veidenfest”, the young people also gained knowledge and experience on various copyright issues, which they see as a benefit. The young people emphasise that organising such a festival at the museum has helped them to develop their cooperation and communication skills, and that these skills are best developed through action, through interaction with each other. It is mentioned that during the organisation of the “Veidenfest” they learnt and realised that conflict resolution and trying to find common ground, to understand each other, are valuable skills that need to be further developed. One of the informants explains it as follows: *“To see, to learn about copyright, things that we definitely wouldn’t just learn every day. Because we had different outside experts – from communication field, psychologists, etc. – and they really sort of taught us a lot of things. As I also wrote on my Facebook about “Veidenfest” – we have actually graduated from the school of communication and responsibility.”* Accordingly, there is a causal relationship here, where learning contributes to the personal and collective success of young people.

## Emotions

Young people attach particular importance to the emotional benefits when talking about their experiences. With the implementation of "More Light" and "Veidenfest", young people reveal that, although they have had some tense moments during the preparatory process, at the end they have felt a sense of excitement, satisfaction for the work they have done, for the teamwork and for having been able to be part of it. For example, one informant was particularly expressive and emotional about how thrilled s/he felt on the final evening of the "Veidenfest", saying that *"I just looked straight into the hall and I'm overwhelmed by feelings. And that was the moment when I think I said that if the stage collapsed, if lightning started to strike, I wouldn't care, because it has all worked so well."* Overall, the young people describe this experience of cultural participation at the "Kalāči" with positive emotions: *"Then the next day was the opening of "More Light", which was on October 3. It was such a warm event, a unity that we have done a lot of work. Although minimalistic compared to the whole organising team, we were part of it."* In contrast, although the PERMA model focuses only on positive emotions, young people in the interviews also mention negative emotions that have made them aware of their weaknesses, grow and develop in terms of controlling their reactions in certain escalating situations. In other words, it is also evident during the interviews that along these wide range of emotions stimulated by the museum's participatory activities young people have learned to reflect on their feelings, on the benefits of both positive and negative emotions, and how they perceive events around them. In the interviews, young people reflect on the activities they have experienced in the museum by directly describing the emotions they have felt. Accordingly, it can be seen that these emotions resonate with a person's reflection on its experiences as it was mentioned in "The Five Ways to Wellbeing" model.

## Self-exploration

The empirical data from the fieldwork suggest that one of the most frequently cited benefits for young people alongside this participation in museum activities has been self-discovery. Young people referred to an inner stirring, a getting to know themselves: *"At that moment I felt like I was getting to know myself again, or I was adding to myself in some way."* One young participant explains that through the art residencies, the "Veidenfest" she has explored her mental health more: *"We experienced a lot, we wrote poetry, we discovered ourselves through art, we talked to psychologists, it was very, very interesting."* Young people mentioned that their self-confidence and sense of courage had been boosted – many had previously struggled with the fear of talking to strangers, approaching sponsors, but now felt more confident about it. They also say that psychologically, these strengthened, new-found characteristics help them to move on with their lives.

## Conclusions

The theory of the relationship between cultural participation and wellbeing and the empirical data summarised in this paper have a number of similarities and some additions. For example, Mansfield et al. [2020: 3] write that positive wellbeing is associated with feelings of excitement, nostalgia and pleasure. The authors' study found that young people's participation in cultural activities allowed them to feel not only positive emotions (feelings of excitement, satisfaction) but also negative emotions, which allowed young people to learn to reflect on their feelings. Through reflection on their feelings, young people can get to know themselves better, which is an important aspect of identity exploration. This observation leads to Zarobe's and Bungay's [2017: 341] suggestion that active engagement in arts activities can play a role in identity development, as the activities allow participants to explore and learn more about themselves. The empirical data from the research conducted confirm that involvement in arts and cultural activities enables young people to gain a deeper understanding of themselves, to explore their mental health and to reflect on their emotions and feelings.

Several literature reviews suggest that participation in arts and cultural activities contributes to the wellbeing of those involved, increasing their self-esteem and confidence [Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 341; Bungay, Vella-Burrows 2013: 51; Pesata et al. 2022: 7]. The young people who participated in the "Kalāči" activities overcame their fears on several occasions, and by successfully carrying out different tasks for the first time with their newly acquired knowledge, they gained confidence in their abilities, which also increased their sense of wellbeing. The empirical data also show that the engagement of young individuals in "Kalāči" initiatives has had a positive impact on their wellbeing through communication with like-minded people, the development of friendships and cooperation skills. Other researchers have also acknowledged that participation in cultural activities can lead to such social benefits associated with wellbeing, as social connectedness, developed interpersonal skills [O'Donnell et al. 2021: 7; Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 345].

Synthesizing empirical findings, authors have proposed an analytical model integrating elements from both described analytical models in this article (PERMA and "Five Ways to Wellbeing"), identifying the key elements in the context of cultural participation and wellbeing: community, involvement, knowledge, emotions and self-exploration. Accordingly, in referring to the category "community", young individuals' experiences show that cultural participation activities have helped them build connections, social bonds, developed their communication with like-minded individuals and sense of belonging. The empirical data suggest that these participatory activities have given young people the opportunity to create cultural and artistic processes and complete different tasks. In particular, young people were

allowed to actively engage in these activities, which in this case refers to the category of "involvement" in the analytical model. The category "knowledge" indicates how young people develop new skills, new knowledge and are achieving individual and collective goals by applying newly acquired skills and knowledge. The category of "emotions" is of great importance: the interviews reveal that cultural participation has given young people positive emotions, a sense of excitement, satisfaction, but at the same time it has given them the opportunity to work on their negative emotions, being aware of weaknesses and reflecting on feelings, experiences. The category of "self-exploration" is also important. The results of the study show that young people who take part in cultural activities find them useful. These activities can help them learn more about themselves, feel more confident and courageous, and also explore their mental health.

An examination of the categories put forward by the authors shows that they are interlinked. For example, the sense of belonging created by the community has created positive emotions in young people and the involvement in the cultural event has created new knowledge. Whilst the conversations with young people seem to indicate that emotions and self-exploration are among the most important benefits of participating in cultural activities, a more in-depth, focused analysis of the data is needed in order to discover what the dynamics of these categories are. The authors foresee that in the future there is the potential to create a more concrete hierarchy of these categories.

It can be concluded that participation in cultural and artistic activities can contribute to the wellbeing of those involved, taking into account the aforementioned and the main benefits of participation in cultural activities for young people described in this article. The main benefits of participation in cultural activities that contribute to wellbeing are closely related to the holistic analytical model developed by the authors.

### **Acknowledgments**

This research is funded by the Latvian Council of Science, Project "Striving Towards Participatory Engagement in Museums: Inquiry into Museum Education Practice in Latvia (MEET)" (No. lzp-2022/1-0379).

### **Sources**

Aked, J., Marks, N., Cordon, C., and Thompson, S. (2008). *A report presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people's well-being*. Available: <https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/five-ways-to-wellbeing-1.pdf> (viewed 06.02.2024.)

- Bungay, H., and Vella-Burrows, T. (2013). The effects of participating in creative activities on the health and well-being of children and young people: a rapid review of the literature. *Perspectives in Public Health*, 133(1), pp. 44–52. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913912466946](https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913912466946)
- Cameron, M., Crane, N., Ings, R., and Taylor, K. (2013). Promoting well-being through creativity: how arts and public health can learn from each other. *Perspectives in Public Health*, 133(1), pp. 52–59. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913912466951](https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913912466951)
- Cargo, M., Mercer, S. L. (2008). The Value and Challenges of Participatory Research: Strengthening Its Practice. *Annual Review of Public Health*, Vol. 29, Issue 1, pp. 325–350. Available: [10.1146/annurev.publhealth.29.091307.083824](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.29.091307.083824)
- Davies, C. R., Rosenberg, M., Knuiman, M., Ferguson, R., Pikora, T., and Slatter, N. (2012). Defining arts engagement for population-based health research: Art forms, activities and level of engagement. *Arts & Health*, 4(3), pp. 203–216. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2012.656201](https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2012.656201)
- Daykin, N., Mansfield, L., Meads, C., Gray, K., Golding, A., Tomlinson, A., and Victor, C. (2020). The role of social capital in participatory arts for wellbeing: findings from a qualitative systematic review. *Arts & Health*, pp. 1–24. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2020.1802605](https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2020.1802605)
- Fancourt, D., and Finn, S. (2019). *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe. Available: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK553773/> (viewed 04.02.2024.)
- Fenton, H. (2013). Museums, participatory arts activities and wellbeing. *Teaching in lifelong learning*, 5(1), pp. 5–12. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.5920/till.2013.515](https://doi.org/10.5920/till.2013.515)
- The Government Office for Science, London. Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008). *Mental Capital and Wellbeing: Making the most of ourselves in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Available: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ce5afed915d36e95f0526/mental-capital-wellbeing-summary.pdf> (viewed 04.02.2024.)
- Hand, C. (2017). Do the arts make you happy? A quantile regression approach. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 42(2), pp. 271–286. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s10824-017-9302-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10824-017-9302-4)
- Hui, A., Stickley, T., Stubbley, M., and Baker, F. (2019). Project eARTH: participatory arts and mental health recovery, a qualitative study. *Perspectives in Public Health*, 139(6), pp. 296–302. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913918817575](https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913918817575)
- Hurtubise, K., Joslin, R. (2023). Participant-Generated Timelines: A Participatory

- Tool to Explore Young People With Chronic Pain and Parents' Narratives of Their Healthcare Experiences. *Qualitative Health Research*. Vol. 33, Issue 11. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323231189388>
- International Council of Museums (2022). *Museum Definition*. ICOM. Available: <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/> (viewed 07.02.2024.)
- Jenkins, L. K., Farrer, R., and Aujla, I. J. (2020). Understanding the impact of an intergenerational arts and health project: a study into the psychological well-being of participants, carers and artists. *Public Health*, 194, pp. 121–126. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2021.02.029](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2021.02.029)
- Jensen, A. (2013). Beyond the borders: The use of art participation for the promotion of health and well-being in Britain and Denmark. *Arts & Health*, 5(3), pp. 204–215. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2013.817448](https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2013.817448)
- Kovich, M. K., Simpson, V. L., Foli, K. J., Hass, Z., & Phillips, R. G. (2023). Application of the PERMA model of well-being in undergraduate students. *International journal of community well-being*, 6(1), 1–20. Available: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42413-022-00184-4>
- Mansfield, L., Daykin, N., Tomlinson, A., Meads, C., Gray, K., Golding, A., and Victor, C. (2019). *A Qualitative Evidence Review of Space and Place, Intangible Assets and Volunteering and Participatory Arts and Sport or Physical Activity for Enhancing Wellbeing or Alleviating Loneliness across the Adult Life course (16+ years) A Synthesis of Qualitative Studies: Intangible Assets*. Available: [https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/proofedQUALSYN\\_IA\\_3.20.pdf](https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/proofedQUALSYN_IA_3.20.pdf) (viewed 05.02.2024.)
- O'Donnell, S., Lohan, M., Oliffe, J. L., Grant, D., and Galway, K. (2021). The acceptability, effectiveness and gender responsiveness of participatory arts interventions in promoting mental health and Wellbeing: a systematic review. *Arts & Health*, pp. 1–18. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2021.1894463](https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2021.1894463)
- Pesata, V., Colverson, A., Sonke, J., Morgan-Daniel, J., Schaefer, N., Sams, K., Carrion, F. M.-E., and Hanson, S. (2022). Engaging the Arts for Wellbeing in the United States of America: A Scoping Review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.791773](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.791773)
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. New York: Free Press.
- Sollis, K. (2023). Participatory Wellbeing Frameworks and the Secret to Impact. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*. Vol. 24, Issue 2, pp. 163–193. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2023.2200238>
- Williams, E., Glew, S., Newman, H., Kapka, A., Shaughnessy, N., Herbert, R.,



Walduck, J., Foster, A., Cooke, P., Pethybridge, R., Shaughnessy, C., and Hugh-Jones, S. (2023). Practitioner Review: Effectiveness and mechanisms of change in participatory arts-based programmes for promoting youth mental health and well-being – a systematic review. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13900](https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13900)

Zarobe, L., and Bungay, H. (2017). The role of arts activities in developing resilience and mental wellbeing in children and young people a rapid review of the literature. *Perspectives in Public Health*, 137(6), pp. 337–347. Available: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913917712283](https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913917712283)