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My first Ecsite Conference has arguably been the most inclusive conference to date with the flexible online engagement, the sharing of pronouns and visual descriptors and over 15 sessions sharing the breadth of work with diverse communities in the sector linking into Ecsite's wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) commitment.

Whilst this progress should be rightly celebrated, there is still work to ensure this is embedded longer-term and for me, four key themes and provocations emerged for the informal science learning sector.

“Whose story is this?”

“...And if it's not my story, why don't I have the humility to engage with the person whose story it is?” asked Elizabeth Rasekoala from [African Gong](#). Science centres and museums have benefitted historically from extracting objects and stories from marginalised groups, and as we increasingly work with these groups, it's imperative our engagement doesn't replicate neo-colonial dynamics by instrumentalising these voices. We should reflect on who is centred and ensure communities are at the tables – in planning, decision-making and our conferences. The classic adage in the Disabled community rings as a challenge– “Nothing About Us, Without Us”. There are many barriers including the dominance of English as the often default language of science which means we can easily miss (or ignore) voices and perspectives. However, another more insidious barrier is how we often don't value these voices. This doesn't always have to be financial (though in many cases, it could and should be) but more vitally, it's through our mindsets. Unless we have the humility to listen and respect the expertise of lived experiences from our communities as equal partners rather than if we are doing these groups a favour, true equity won't move forward.

Earning Trustworthiness

Trust is essential through this. In informal science learning, we have many tools in our disposal - from playful tinkering, cultural exchange, to the creative process of making zines together. These offer participatory opportunities to get to know our communities, connect beyond the usual suspects and develop partnerships longer-term.

However, whilst we often ask communities to trust in us as individuals, when it comes to our institutions, and “science” as whole, we often neglect to question whether we

have earned that trust and have developed our trustworthiness. Studies such as [EIT Food TrustTracker](#) suggest it may not be enough for science centres to convey competence and transparency of the mechanics of the scientific process, and democratise the stories of discovery, but we need to show how we ultimately care about communities. How good are we at sharing that in our mission statements, social media, values and most importantly, actions?

“The time for inspiration is over”

So is the beckoning call of Indonesian-Dutch youth activist Melati Wijsen, discussing the need to feel the “butterflies” which push us forward whilst the world is quite literally burning. Climate and social justice are intertwined. The same industrial revolutions in the past that spearheaded many of the scientific advancements we celebrate in our work were fuelled through the extraction from people and ecosystems across the world, producing much of the carbon dioxide which is damaging our atmosphere to this day and, through colonialism, the global unequal wealth distribution. As my fellow colleagues Colin and Camille observe, the Ecsite commitments to climate action and 21st-century skills are tightly bound to EDI – and it’s the legacy from the earlier centuries which must be reconciled too in all. Against this backdrop, it is the systems that have built up that will need to re-made. An individual projects cannot “solve” systemic oppression, even excellently co-produced with communities, any more than it can climate change. Acknowledging this again with humility is key – that’s not to say we cannot do this work, but we must be clear about our role to play and examine how it all connects.