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MASTER THESIS

*Making museums participative places. Inter-sectorial linkage
as an instrument to shape museums in Romania as an area of
active participation.*

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Abstract

Introduction

When speaking about the Romanian museum field, it is important to relate the present situation to the recent communist legacy, when museum as an institution was obliged to face specific ideological constraints. Unfortunately, it led museums to a dead end situation, where many of them remain today.

Despite changes happening in the international contemporary museology, in Romania, museology has operated under the paradigms of classical museums, staying far behind new trends and practices. Most of Romanian museums were and are still perceived as ‘fortress-like’ institutions, often without any real interest in delivering new and relevant content and therefore facing a continuous decrease in visitors.

Although major changes were enthusiastically expected after the fall of the communist regime, few museums took the challenge seriously. It is a fact that currently, after almost 25 years from the change of the communist regime; museums are passing through a crisis specific to countries in transition.

Museums find themselves at the heart of a public agenda dominated by lack of vision, lack of incentives and financial shrinking. In the same time, they are asked to diversify, renew, open their collections, exhibitions and educational work in order to gain their audiences and demonstrate their roles as a public institution.

Aims and hypothesis

With this research I tried to answer to the following question: how can museums in Romania get closer to the public, demonstrate their value and relevance?

The aim of my thesis was to investigate whether collaborative and participative practices may represent solutions that would help museums to innovate, improve the content of their activities in order to become more visible and relevant for their audiences.

I assumed that participation and participatory practices are not used in Romanian museums setting the following main hypothesis:

- Romanian museums are far from using participatory practices in their activities with the public, due to series of obstacles such as: lack of a participatory culture caused by resistance to communist legacy (with its top-down approach) and the transition period; lack of incentives at the policy level; lack of training in approaching innovative techniques for the museum's professionals; lack of adequate funding; misunderstanding of the concept of participation among museums; low level of focus of museums on cooperation with the community and the perception of participatory practices as being amateurish.

Assuming also that in a climate marked by different constraints, public museums should start building links with different stakeholders, in order to diversify their offer and prove their relevance for the audiences, I settled my second hypothesis as it follows:

- Collaboration between museums and different actors (educational institutions, different organizations with art or cultural profiles, business companies) in the community have the potential to create the premises for making museums more visible and attract new audiences. By securing collaborations with different actors and benefiting from their expertise, the museum is more likely to diversify, raise the quality and the attractiveness within its activities.

Research methodology

In order to verify my hypothesis I used a qualitative research strategy based on the following methods:

- In-depth (unstructured) interviews with museum's professionals, policy makers, independent educators.
- Secondary data analysis through analyzing information and legal documents already available in print or published on the internet. I used literature reviews, international and regional case studies of best practice and statistics relevant to my topic.

In the third part of my thesis I formulated a project proposal for a county museum in Romania (The Art Museum of Timisoara).

Findings and Conclusions

Having conducted the research, the paper has proved its main and secondary hypothesis:

1. Museums are passing through transition times marked by redefinition of museums' concept and displays, lack of proactive behavior, lack of top-down incentives, finances and adequate equipments, lack of trained and motivated staff, lack of focus on audience, local communities and their needs.
2. Collaboration between museums and different actors (educational intitutions, different organizations with art or cultural profiles, business companies) are most likely to bring important additional knowledge and expertize which enables museums to provide higher quality and attract new audiences. The important issue here is to be constituted into structural collaborations in the frame of a more complex program running for longer periods of time and not just ad-hoc or separated instances of collaboration.

At this moment, inter-sectorial collaboration within the museum field in Romania stands far behind the potential it has for making a significant contribution. Although separate cases of successful collaborative projects can be found, they are still isolated and occasional attempts.

After conducting this research, I can depict a general conclusion: in Romania, at present, a bottom-up approach regarding the changes in the museum field is favored. It is up to the management of each museum institution to become more open and find creative solutions to innovate in order to bring audiences closer to museum. The most difficulties come from changing mentalities. It is necessary to encourage the idea that the museum is for people both on the public policy level as well as on the museum's management.

Résumé

Introduction

Lorsque l'on parle du domaine des musées de Roumanie, il est important de rapporter la situation actuelle à l'héritage communiste récent, quand le musée en tant qu'institution était obligé de faire face à des contraintes idéologiques spécifiques. Les régimes socialistes ont utilisé les musées pour exprimer leurs idées et la muséologie n'était qu'une autre forme de propagande. La pratique du musée à l'époque communiste a trop insisté sur la propagande et sur l'importance d'un seul grand récit. Malheureusement, ce fait a conduit les musées à une situation sans issue, où beaucoup d'entre eux se trouvent encore aujourd'hui.

Malgré les changements qui se sont produits dans la muséologie contemporaine internationale, la muséologie en Roumanie déroule ses activités conformément aux paradigmes des musées classiques, en restant derrière les nouvelles tendances et pratiques, sous le prétexte qu'ils sont des institutions culturelles financées et protégées par la loi, avec des employés qui réalisent principalement des tâches connexes à leur profession et qui s'occupent du public en dernière instance.

En conséquence, la plupart des musées roumains ont été et sont encore perçus comme des institutions «forteresse», qui souvent n'ont aucun intérêt réel dans la diffusion de contenu nouveau et pertinent, et c'est pourquoi ils font face à une diminution continue du nombre de visiteurs.

Irina Nicolau¹, muséologue roumain bien connu, a déclaré en 1996 que le musée roumain était dans une crise double, provoquée par les conséquences de l'idéologie communiste et par le danger de s'approprier d'une mauvaise manière la muséologie occidentale.

Bien que des changements importants fussent attendus avec enthousiasme après la chute du régime communiste, peu de musées ont relevé le défi au sérieux. La plupart d'entre eux ont tout simplement fait disparaître de leurs expositions toute référence au passé communiste et ont continué à fonctionner sans vraiment être reliés aux nouvelles exigences de la société

¹ Nicolau, I. (1996) *Moi et le musées du monde: L'histoire d'une expérience muséale dans un pays de l'est*, dans New Europe College Yearbook 1994, Bucarest: Humanitas

contemporaine. Il est un fait que de nos jours, 25 ans après la chute du régime communiste, les musées traversent une crise spécifique aux pays en transition.

L'Etat, par l'intermédiaire du Ministère de la Culture et du Patrimoine national et des autorités locales, représente la principale source de financement pour les musées publics roumains. La pratique du financement privé de la culture n'est qu'à un stade de développement de début. Les musées régionaux et départementaux se trouvent particulièrement dans un état précaire; ils présentent un contenu qui n'est pas du tout attractif, s'éloignant de plus en plus de leur public. Quelques réformes importantes telles que la loi sur la décentralisation ont été commencées. Bien que cette loi soit actuellement mise en œuvre, elle ne permet pas suffisamment de flexibilité pour que les autorités locales prennent leurs responsabilités et soutiennent financièrement les musées d'une manière appropriée.

En outre, l'intervention politique dans le domaine des musées est un fait commun. Les directeurs sont fréquemment remplacés, la plupart du temps en fonction du parti au pouvoir. Plusieurs règlements² relatifs à la gestion des institutions publiques ont été publiés, mais ils soulèvent une série de controverses, surtout quand il s'agit d'évaluer l'activité du directeur. Malheureusement, en Roumanie, les affiliations politiques pèsent plus que les capacités de gestion.

Récemment, un facteur négatif très important qui a généralement influencé la participation culturelle en Roumanie, y compris dans les musées, est la récession économique (qui a eu des effets à partir de la seconde moitié de 2008). Elle a généré une évolution négative de la consommation culturelle dans presque tous les domaines culturels, mais les zones les plus touchées sont les visites des musées et des expositions.

Selon des statistiques récentes, l'évolution de la présence des visiteurs dans les musées et les expositions d'art a diminué de façon significative entre 2005-2010. En 2010, seulement 15% des répondants ont utilisé les services offerts par les musées et les galeries d'art. En plus de ce faible taux de visite, la fréquence des visites aux musées et aux expositions d'art est insignifiante (le pourcentage de ceux qui y sont allés cinq fois n'est que de 0,2%).

² Au début intitulée *Décision du Gouvernement (DG no. 26/2005)*, remplacée par la *Décision (DG no. 189/2008)* et récemment modifiée par la *Décision du Gouvernement (DG no. 68/2013)*.

Ils se trouvent au cœur d'un agenda public dominé par le manque de vision, de stimulation et par le rétrécissement financier. Au même temps, ils sont invités à diversifier, renouveler et ouvrir leurs collections, leurs expositions et leurs activités éducatives afin de gagner leur public et de démontrer leurs rôles en tant qu'institution publique.

Objectifs et hypothèses

Par cette recherche, j'ai essayé de répondre à la question suivante: comment les musées de Roumanie peuvent se rapprocher du public et prouver leur valeur et leur signification? J'ai essayé de répondre à cette question en faisant une recherche de la littérature spécifique sur les théories de la participation, de l'engagement du public et de la liaison intersectorielle (collaboration) dans les musées. Ils représentent le fondement théorique de ma thèse.

L'objectif de ma thèse était de déterminer si les pratiques collaboratives et participatives peuvent représenter des solutions qui aideraient les musées à innover, à améliorer le contenu de leurs activités afin de devenir plus visibles et significatifs pour leur public.

D'après les théories spécifiques dans le nouveau domaine de la muséologie, une institution culturelle participative est *aussi un endroit où les visiteurs peuvent créer, partager et se connecter les uns aux autres autour d'un contenu*³ et quatre différents types de participation des visiteurs peuvent exister dans les musées: *contribution, collaboration, création en commun, hébergement*. La participation à des activités et des programmes du musée comprend des techniques diverses que les musées utilisent afin d'inclure les visiteurs, tout en promouvant les objectifs institutionnels, et en respectant leur point de vue et leur mission. Les stratégies participatives sont considérées comme des moyens pratiques d'améliorer et non pas de remplacer, les institutions culturelles traditionnelles. Par conséquent, les techniques participatives qui correspondent aux valeurs fondamentales institutionnelles sont considérées capables de faire une institution plus significative et essentielle pour sa communauté.

³ Simon, N. (2010). *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz (Calif.) (www.participatorymuseum.org)

Pour ma recherche, j'ai assumé que la participation et les pratiques participatives telles que définies ci-dessus ne sont pas utilisées dans les musées roumains. Mon but est de vérifier l'hypothèse suivante:

- Les musées roumains sont loin d'utiliser des pratiques participatives dans leurs activités avec le public, en raison d'une série d'obstacles tels que: le manque d'une culture participative dû à la persistance de l'héritage communiste (avec son approche descendante) et à la période de transition; le manque de stimulation au niveau politique; le manque de formation dans les techniques innovatrices pour les professionnels du musée; le manque de financement adéquat; l'incompréhension de la notion de participation parmi les musées; le faible niveau de concentration des musées sur la coopération avec la communauté et leur perception des pratiques participatives comme des pratiques dilettantes.

En supposant également que, dans un climat marqué par des contraintes différentes, les musées publics devraient commencer à établir des liens avec des différents intervenants, afin de diversifier leur offre et de prouver leur signifiante pour le public, j'ai formulé ma deuxième hypothèse comme il suit:

- La collaboration entre les musées et les différents intervenants de la communauté (des institutions d'enseignement, des organisations avec un profil artistique ou culturel, des sociétés commerciales) a le potentiel de créer les prémisses pour rendre le musée plus visible et attirer un public élargi. En assurant la collaboration avec les différents intervenants et en bénéficiant de leur expertise, le musée est plus susceptible de diversifier et d'améliorer la qualité et l'attractivité de ses activités.

La méthodologie de recherche

Afin de vérifier mes hypothèses, j'ai utilisé une stratégie de recherche qualitative fondée sur les méthodes suivantes:

- Des entretiens en profondeur (non structurés)

En utilisant cette méthode, j'ai l'intention de saisir les différents points de vue des experts impliqués dans le domaine des musées (professionnels des musées, facteurs de décision, éducateurs indépendants). Les interviewer, j'ai essayé de connaître leurs perceptions

concernant la participation et la collaboration, comment elles se produisent, quelles sont les difficultés, mais aussi les effets positifs. J'ai enquêté sur les principaux obstacles à la mise en œuvre des pratiques participatives dans les activités du musée.

- Analyse des données secondaires

En utilisant cette méthode j'ai rassemblé et analysé les données et les documents juridiques déjà disponibles en version imprimée ou publiées sur l'Internet. J'ai utilisé des revues littéraires, des études de cas internationales de bonnes pratiques et des statistiques pertinentes à mon sujet. En analysant la situation en Roumanie, je me suis concentré en particulier sur les études de collaborations dans le domaine de l'éducation qui sont conduites par les départements d'éducation des musées. Ainsi, j'ai essayé de déterminer s'il s'agissait de collaborations stratégiques conçues pour des périodes plus longues ou plutôt de tentatives de collaboration séparées et isolées. J'ai considéré que l'éducation fournie par le musée crée de nombreuses occasions pour amener le musée plus proche des nouvelles catégories de public, en particulier des jeunes visiteurs, qui représentent le public futur d'un musée. J'ai pris comme exemples de collaboration dans le domaine de l'éducation les suivants musées nationaux publics situés à Bucarest et considérés parmi les plus représentatifs et actifs: Le Musée National d'Art de Roumanie, le Musée National d'Art Contemporain et le Musée National 'George Enescu'...

Dans la troisième partie de ma thèse, j'ai formulé une proposition de projet pour un musée départemental de Roumanie (Le Musée d'Art de Timisoara). Cette proposition envisage des activités potentielles de collaboration visant à augmenter le niveau d'interaction entre le musée et la communauté locale.

Constatations et conclusions

En ce qui concerne **l'hypothèse principale**: *les musées en Roumanie n'utilisent pas des pratiques participatives dans leurs activités avec le public*, j'ai déduit de la recherche et des entretiens menés que les principaux obstacles sont les suivants:

- Le manque de stimulation au niveau de la décision.
- L'absence d'une culture de la participation, spécifique à la société roumaine.

- Le manque de formation adéquate du personnel des musées dans les techniques participatives et le manque de financement adéquat.

Dans le contexte roumain, la perception concernant la participation est très différente de celle qui existe dans les pays avec une culture de la participation plus développée. L'idée que le public pourrait enrichir l'institution en l'aidant à compléter ses connaissances, grâce à leur contribution, est une attitude très rare dans le contexte local.

Il s'agit d'une attitude globale de scepticisme. Ni les professionnels des musées, ni les représentants du Ministère de la Culture ne sont positifs sur une approche potentielle descendante qui permettrait de créer un cadre favorable à la participation.

Pour résumer les conclusions pour la première hypothèse, les musées traversent une période de transition marquée par une redéfinition du concept des musées et des expositions, par le manque d'un comportement proactif, le manque d'une stimulation descendante, des financements et des équipements adéquats, et par le manque de personnel qualifié et motivé.

Outre les obstacles ci-dessus indiqués pour la mise en œuvre des pratiques participatives par les musées, je considère qu'il y a certains qui sont beaucoup plus larges et ne sont pas liés spécifiquement à ces pratiques, affectant son potentiel de développement beaucoup plus que l'absence de mesures de stimulation, de ressources financières et la crainte de dilettantisme. Ils sont plutôt liés à l'absence générale d'orientation sur le public, sur les collectivités locales et ses besoins, de la part de la majorité des musées roumains.

Toutes ces lacunes sont susceptibles de créer à l'avenir une situation dans laquelle l'approche des techniques participatives sera loin de se trouver parmi les priorités des musées roumains. Les constatations concernant le sujet des obstacles dans l'approche des pratiques participatives dans les musées montrent que la première hypothèse établie au début de ma thèse était valide.

En ce qui concerne **l'hypothèse secondaire**: *la collaboration entre les musées et les différents intervenants de la communauté (des institutions d'enseignement, des organisations avec un profil artistique ou culturel, des sociétés commerciales) a le potentiel de créer les prémisses pour rendre le musée plus visible et attirer un public élargi*, je concluais que les exemples de collaboration analysés en utilisant trois études de cas dans des musées différents, sont tous des exemples de bonnes pratiques concernant les effets de la collaboration intersectorielle dans le domaine de l'éducation muséale. Les partenaires de l'extérieur du domaine des musées sont

les plus susceptibles d'apporter des connaissances supplémentaires importantes et une expertise qui permettrait aux des musées de fournir une qualité supérieure et d'attirer un nouveau public. La question importante ici est de constituer des collaborations structurelles dans le cadre d'un programme plus complexe, déroulé sur des périodes plus longues et pas seulement des collaborations ponctuelles ou séparées. Cette conclusion confirme ma seconde hypothèse.

A ce moment, la collaboration intersectorielle dans le domaine des musées de Roumanie est loin derrière du potentiel qu'elle a pour apporter une contribution significative. Bien que des certains cas de projets de collaboration réussis peuvent être signalés, ceux-ci restent des tentatives isolées et ne peuvent pas être généralisés à l'ensemble du domaine des musées.

Après avoir conduit cette recherche, je peux en tirer une conclusion générale: en Roumanie, à l'heure actuelle, il revient à la direction de chaque institution muséale de s'ouvrir davantage et de trouver des solutions créatives afin d'innover pour rapprocher le public des musées. La plupart des difficultés proviennent du changement des mentalités. Il est nécessaire d'encourager une nouvelle philosophie qui affirme que les musées appartiennent aux gens. Le public doit être encouragé à visiter et pour cette raison il est nécessaire que les musées proposent des activités pertinentes et remplissent leur mission en tant qu'institution publique.

Part I

Introduction

The choice of the subject '*Making museums participative places. Inter-sectorial linkage as an instrument to shape museums in Romania as an area of active participation*' is a result of my interest in museum management and the personal believe in the positive outcomes of implementing collaboratory and participative practices designed to make museums more relevant and reach new audiences. I was inspired in choosing this topic mainly by reading Nina Simon's practical guide entitled *The Participatory Museum* as well as by her blog *Museum 2.0*.

Being aware of the numerous differences at many levels and the impossibility at the moment that similar practices really work in the local context, my intention is to research which are the realistic options in terms of approaching collaborative or participatory practices when considering the future development of museums in Romania. Throughout my research I will review current literature on, collaborative, and participatory museum practices, I will also locate exemplary practices and policies existing at the regional or international level. Finally, I will try to find out, by doing desk research and interviews with some local museum professionals and policy makers which are the existing obstacles for implementing similar practices within the Romanian museum context. I am interested in finding out why collaborative and participatory practices are not truly working in the local context and to what extent approaching innovative concepts and practices characteristic to new museology is a realistic opportunity for the Romanian museum context at present.

Despite changes happening in the international contemporary museology, museology in Romania has operated under the paradigms of classical museums, staying far behind new trends and practices. Most of Romanian museums were and are still perceived as 'fortress-like' institutions, often without any real interest in delivering new and relevant content and therefore facing a continuous decrease in visitors. Often, the lack of interest from the public is mainly an effect of the low interest showed by museum professionals, especially by museum managers and policy makers in coming up with innovative practices. Although a

new law on museums and public collections was issued in 2003⁴, as well as other regulatory measures that have made great steps in improving the management of institutions, numerous issues need to be solved. One of the main issues within Romanian museum field is getting the audience closer to museums.

As officially stated in *The Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*⁵, ‘the Romanian cultural policy model can be characterized as being more oriented towards consumer-generated benefits/satisfaction, especially through the strengthening of managerial responsibilities of the directors of cultural institutions, the establishment of new and more complex decentralized services and the financial operation of ‘arm's length bodies’, such as the Administration of the National Cultural Fund’.

Contrary to the official statements, when looking at the particular case of museums, one can notice they are generally confronted with isolation from the public and audience. Usually, this is attributed to the lack of managerial vision. Management in the field of public cultural or art institutions is a rather young field in Romania. During the communist period the managerial responsibilities were handled by the communist party itself and a good manager had to be a good negotiator, since their most difficult responsibility was to mediate between the artistic mission of the institution and the communist ideology. Even though after the fall of communism in 1989, the democratization of artistic and cultural life gave an immense opportunity to accept new forms of organisation, it also proved to be a serious challenge.

Museums facing challenges during the transition period is common to all post-communist countries in the region. However, I think the worst and saddest case scenarios in this field are cases when museums are forced to close like in the case of two major museums in Belgrade: The National Museum of Serbia (closed for 11 years now) and The Museum of Contemporary Art (closed for 8 years). Similarly, in Romania museums are faced with other challenges such as losing their premises because of the restitution law of private properties and the passivity of local authorities responsible for managing the situation. Recently, the National Museum of Romanian Literature lost its building and was forced to move in one inappropriate space for the exhibits.

⁴ Law on Museums and Public Collections (L 311/2003).

⁵ <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/romania>.

From 2010, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage priorities are supporting the national heritage and contemporary creation, aspects that are integrated also into the Strategic Plan developed for 2014-2020. The general objective stated for the museum's sector in the current strategic plan includes the developing and diversifying the specific offer of museums by integrating the participatory dimension and emphasizing the role of education. Furthermore, some of the medium-term priorities included in this strategic plan are: to protect and promote national heritage, to support cultural and creative industries and the independent cultural sector, to improve infrastructure, management of cultural institutions, cultural facilities, the potential of culture and cultural heritage and the decentralization of decision-making and administration. However, it is well-known that Romanian reform in the field of culture has not been constant and firm, but has rather taken a 'small steps' strategy, being affected by discontinuity and the change of different governments. I consider it to be an ongoing process also in the present.

My assumption is that in a climate marked by constraints (political changes and financial shortages), public museums should start building relationships with different stakeholders, in order to diversify their offer and prove their relevance for the audiences. Often, the value of collaboration is felt in the search for new ideas, skills and expertise, institutions having more chances to innovate themselves through being open.

General theoretical background

Theories of inter-sectorial linkage (collaboration), participation and public engagement in museums represent the theoretical background of my thesis. Although some research has been done, the issue of collaboration between museums and other sectors is still under-researched. Collaboration between sectors has increased in recent years. Different organisations cooperate in a range of ways. Austin⁶ argues that the benefits of collaboration for nonprofit organisations, such as museums and galleries, include cost savings, economies of scale and scope, synergies and revenue enhancement. Arnold-Forster and Davies⁷ indicate that collaboration enables museums to share resources, experience and knowledge.

⁶ J. E. Austin, *The collaboration challenge: How nonprofits and businesses succeed through strategic alliances* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000).

⁷ K. Arnold-Forster, S. Davies, *Collaboration between museums: A report for the museums & galleries commission* (London: Museums and Galleries Commission, 1998).

According to them, museums, although primarily committed to education, must also meet the challenge of attracting more people to visit. In this climate, collaboration has become an important element in most museums' management plans.

A more extensive theoretical framework regarding collaborations between museums and non-museum sector with references to particular collaborative practices will be discussed in the next chapters.

Regarding the concept of participation, Nina Simon⁸ says in her book that participation in museum activities and programs include diverse techniques which museums use to engage visitors while promoting institutional goals, and respecting their vision and mission statements. The author sees participatory strategies as practical ways to enhance, not replace, traditional cultural institutions.

Nina Simons defines a participatory cultural institution as *a place where visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content*, while four different kinds of visitor participation can be identified in museums: contribution, collaboration, co-creation, hosting. In some of these instances the role of the museum is greater, while in some other cases the role of the museum decreases and leaves more control with audiences.

Participation in the museum context is mainly a consequence of the digitization and democratisation process which lead museums to focus more on the dialogue with its audiences. Because providing more information is no longer considered sufficient, in order to better fulfil their role as a public institutions within the democratic framework, the museums seek for increasing participatory activities.

Even though there are numerous controversies and limitations regarding the concept of participation, this is also considered by many authors and museum practitioners as one option for a cultural institutions to reconnect with the public, demonstrate its value and relevance. Thus, in many instances, participation and engagement become seen as either prerequisites or additions to fulfilling other museum roles.

⁸ Simon, N. (2010). *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz (Calif.) (www.participatorymuseum.org)

Nina Simon believes there are some commonly-expressed forms of public dissatisfaction that participatory techniques is trying to address. I assume these dissatisfactions could be easily translated also into the Romanian museum context:

- Museums are irrelevant for the public.
- Museums never change there is no reason to return.
- The authoritative voice of a museum doesn't include the visitor's view or give the context for understanding what is presented.
- The museum is not a creative place where visitors can express and contribute to history, science, and art.
- The museum is not a comfortable social place for visitors to talk about ideas with friends and strangers.

These challenges are considered by the author reasons to pursue participation, whether on the scale of a single educational program or the entire visitor experience. Therefore participatory techniques that align with institutional core values are considered to make an institution more relevant and essential for its community.

Relevance for the local context

Speaking about the Romanian museums, it is important to relate their present situation to the recent communist legacy. During nearly half a century of totalitarian rule, museums in Romania were faced with specific ideological constraints. Socialist regimes used museums to enforce their view of history on the present. Museology was just another form of propaganda. Museum practice in the communist era overemphasized propaganda and the place of a single master narrative. Unfortunately, it led museums to a museological dead end, where many of them remain today. In the enthusiasm that followed the 1989 change of regime, it was enthusiastically expected that everything had to be reinvented.

Irina Nicolau's book *Me and the Museums of the World: the History of a Museum Experience in an Eastern European Country* (published in French) describes this moment of change and the high expectations placed on museums. Nicolau was a writer, an ethnologist, a museum curator and one of those responsible for creating the most well-known and innovative of Romanian museums, the Romanian Peasant Museum. Nicolau also developed the notion of

the ‘antidote-museum’. According to her, the antidote-museum is supposed to respond to the double crisis facing Romanian museums in the post-communist period. She stated that ‘The Romanian museum is in a double crisis, provoked by the consequences of communist ideology and by the danger of badly appropriated occidental museology’.

In her opinion, the ‘antidote-museum’ is the antonym of the apathetic or ‘blasé museum’. In the 1990s, Romanian museums were challenged to reinvent themselves, to renounce the ‘blasé museum’ and become ‘antidote-museums’. Still, few museums took the challenge seriously. Most museums simply cleansed their exhibitions of any reference to the communist past and considered that the rest of the exhibitions were acceptable.

Furthermore, nowadays, museums are facing series of new challenges common to countries in transition. The state, through the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the authorities at the local level, represent the main source of funding for public museums in Romania. The practice of private funding for culture is only at a developing stage. Museums now find themselves at the heart of a public agenda dominated by lack of vision, lack of incentives and financial shrinking. In the same time, they are asked to diversify, renew, open their collections; exhibitions and educational work in order to bring back their audiences and demonstrate their roles as a public institution.

In former socialist countries like Romania there is still a high level of disparity between innovative trends in museology such as collaborative or participative practices and the local expectations and perceptions about how a museum should function and what its purposes and duties within its community are. Taking in consideration the entire series of challenges specific for a post-communist country in transition, it is rather difficult to introduce and to implement the idea that museums are for the people and their core value is to enable visitors to lead more meaningful lives, not just being passive consumers of culture.

I consider that structural changes are much needed at many levels. Still, they are not assumed or are just isolated attempts, not being backed by continuous efforts. Especially regional and county museums are neglected, displaying very unattractive content, becoming more and more distanced from their public. Several important reforms such as the law on decentralization have been initiated. Although, this law is currently implemented, it does not

allow enough flexibility for local authorities to take responsibility and to sustain financially the museums in a proper way in order to respond to needs in contemporary Romanian society.

For example, a recently issued law, the Law no. 311/2003 regarding museums and public collections is not restrictive when it comes to collaborating with non-governmental organizations⁹. One could say that the manager of a Romanian museum enjoys a sort of autonomy in initiating collaborations in order to benefit the museum. Still, there are no incentives and mechanisms to properly encourage and sustain these initiatives and make them sustainable in the long run.

Furthermore, political intervention within museum sector is a common fact. Directors are frequently changed, mostly depending on the ruling party at power. Regulations¹⁰ in the field of public institutions' management have been issued and were proved to raise a series of controversies in relation to the evaluation procedure of manager's activity. Unfortunately, in Romania, party affiliations are often far stronger than managerial capabilities.

Regarding the audience, a very important contingent agent which generally influenced cultural participation lately in Romania, including in museum, is the economic recession (which impacted from the second half of 2008). It determined a negative evolution of cultural consumption in almost all the cultural areas, but the most affected domains are museum and exhibitions attendance. According to the statistics found in the Barometer of cultural consumption¹¹ (2010) in Romania, the evolution of museums and art exhibitions visiting between 2005-2010 has significantly decreased. In 2010, only 15% of respondents used the services offered by museums and art galleries. In addition to this low level of attendance, the frequency of museums or art exhibitions visiting is insignificant (the percentage of those who went five times is only 0.2%).

Pointing out the entire range of difficulties, one could say the only driving force in order to make changes for the better are museum professionals' passion to communicate heritage and

⁹ Art 12 states that 'The central or local public administration authorities and the specialized public institutions subordinated to them, as well as the owners and bearers of other real rights over museums and public collections may cooperate with non-governmental organizations, in view of the development, protection, conservation, restoration, research and enhancement of the museum patrimony for scientific or touristy-cultural purposes'.

¹⁰ Initially named the Government Directive (*GD no. 26/2005*), replaced by Directive (*GD no. 189/2008*) and recently modified by Government Directive (*GD no. 68/2013*).

¹¹ *The barometer of cultural consumption* (2010)

http://www.culturadata.ro/PDFuri/Barometrul_de_Consum_Cultural_2010_etapa1.pdf

culture to as many people as possible and in the most effective way. By adopting a bottom-up approach, they should become more and more responsible to change priorities and place the public over the politics.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned negative trends, the aim of my thesis was to investigate whether collaborative and participative practices may constitute solutions that would help museums to innovate, improve the content of their activities in order to become more visible and relevant for their audiences.

Research hypothesis

Based on theoretical frameworks and definitions found in the specialized literature as well as my personal observations regarding the context of Romanian museums, I set the following hypothesis:

- The first hypothesis is that Romanian museums are far from using regularly participatory practices in their activities with the public, due to series of obstacles such as: lack of a participatory culture caused by resistance to communist legacy (with its top-down approach) and the transition period; lack of incentives at the policy level; lack of training in approaching innovative techniques for the museum's professionals; lack of adequate funding; misunderstanding of the concept of participation among museums; low level of focus of museums on cooperation with the community and the perception of participatory practices as being amateurish.
- My secondary hypothesis is that collaboration between museums and different actors (educational institutions, different organizations with art or cultural profiles, business companies) in the community have the potential to create the premises for making museums more visible and attract new audiences. By securing collaborations with different actors and benefiting from their expertise, the museum is more likely to diversify, raise the quality and the attractiveness within its activities.

Research methodology and data analysis

In order to verify my hypothesis I will use a qualitative research strategy. This strategy is more flexible. It has been also preferred in light of the relative novelty of the topic and on the consequent very limited amount of data at disposal.

In order to gather data for my first hypothesis I will use a series of in-depth or unstructured interviews as well as desk analysis of strategies, protocols, statutes and other internal normative acts in order to counter balance subjective perceptions of interviewees. Interviews are of particular importance in my attempt to find which are the perceptions of museum's professionals about the topic of participatory practices in museum's activity. Furthermore, my interest is to find out which are, in their opinion, the main obstacles for implementing participatory practices and whether this approach could work or not for the context of Romanian museums. In this regard, it is important to talk to people (directors of museums, curators, educators, coordinators of educational projects related to museums, policy makers) to grasp their points of view. The interviews are flexible in order to give the possibility to cover the topic. The aim is to obtain as full and unbiased as possible, an account of the respondent's perspective on this topic.

In order to prove or to invalidate my second hypothesis, I will gather the relevant information by implementing a multiple case study design. I will focus on separate cases of intersectorial linkage (museums in collaborations with different actors) in three museums, considered among the most representative and active ones, located in the capital city, Bucharest. The case studies will include different examples of collaborations in museums. I will focus my attention particularly on those collaborations in the field of education which are lead by the educational departments of a museum and I will try to investigate whether they are strategic collaborations designed for longer periods or are more like separated and isolated collaboration attempts. I consider that the educational area is the one which can create numerous premises for collaborating. Furthermore, museum education creates numerous premises to bring the museum closer to new categories of public, especially young visitors, which represent the future audience of a museum. I will take instances of collaboration in the field of education from the following public national museums: The National Art Museum of

Romania, The National Museum of Contemporary Art and The National Museum 'George Enescu'...

In order to collect my data I will use the following methods:

- In-depth (unstructured) interviews

The method of qualitative data collection is important for my thesis and therefore I intend to grasp different points of view from experts involved in the museum field (museum's professionals, policy makers, educators). By interviewing them, I hope to find out more about their perceptions regarding participation and collaborations, how they are generated, what are the difficulties but also the positive effects. I will also investigate on the possibility of implementing participatory practices within museum's activities and which are main obstacles in making this shift possible.

- Secondary data analysis

The research will gather and analyze information, already available in print or published on the internet. I will use literature reviews, case studies and statistics relevant to my topic. The theoretical background of my thesis shall conjure up relevant case studies (regional and international) in order to combine both practical and theoretical considerations.

In the last part of my thesis my intention is to formulate a project proposal for a county museum in Romania (The Art Museum of Timisoara). This proposal aims to formulate potential collaborative activities aimed to increase the level of interaction between the museum and the local community, by making it a more open and relevant institution within the community.

PART II

The new museology and the role of museums today

Defining museology and new museology

Since my thesis contains many aspect related to the concept of ‘new museology’, in this section, my intention is to review key conceptual frameworks related to this topic.

Starting with 1970s, museums have expanded the scope of their exhibitions and curatorial practices to include living heritage, such as oral history and memory, craftsmanship, festivals, ritual and performance, and in this regard, museums are increasingly being recognised as important partners in the effort to safeguard intangible cultural heritage.

According to a definition given by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), ‘museology is the branch of knowledge concerned with the study of the purpose and organisation of museums. It has to do with the study of history and background of museums, their role in society, specific systems for research, conservation, education and organisation, relationships with the physical environment, and the classification of different kinds of museums’.

Another existing definitions offered by the Reinwardt Academie in the Netherlands, states that ‘Museology covers the complete range of, and working with, cultural and natural heritage’.

Peter Davis, professor from Newcastle University, UK states in one of his lectures¹² that ‘the second definition offers a wider framework, because it moves beyond the traditional idea of museology as defined by a building, collections and special expertise. This broader definition of museology can encompass the conservation, interpretation and management of heritage sites within the landscape, thus liberating museology from the museum building’.

Tracing back the development of museums towards the end of 19th century, particularly in Europe and America, Peter Davis observes traditional practices in museum such as, storage,

¹² <http://www.sac.or.th/databases/ichlearningresources/images/LECTURE5.pdf>, *New Museology, Communities, Ecomuseums* by Prof. Peter Davis, Newcastle University, UK, lecture date: 25 august 2010, accessed on the 15th August 2014.

research, conservation, documentation, and education. He believes that even though these practices are still used today, a series of changes started in the 1960s and 1970s, since this was mainly a time of social unrest and political activism around issues including civil rights and the environment. In this period people became increasingly concerned about the impacts of technology, industry and development on the natural world and the environment generally. Moreover, this was a time in history when many former colonies were liberated. This period marked by political and intellectual reconfigurations as well as new social movements was the time when 'new museology' emerged.

The term 'new museology' was first used in 1980, when André Devallées, a French museologist, wrote a piece for an encyclopedia using the phrase 'Nouvelle Muséologie'. 'New museology' was linked to a community development agendas, and it gradually became popular in many European countries such as Spain and Portugal. The term was formally accepted when ICOM established the "International Committee for New Museology" (M.I.N.O.M.) in 1985. M.I.N.O.M. is a very active committee, with their most recent meeting being held in 2011 in Amsterdam.

'New museology' was expressed by P. Vergo¹³ as both 'a state of widespread dissatisfaction with the traditional characterization of the museum (what he names 'old museology') and as a need to pursue new museologies based upon a radical re-examination of the role of museums within the society'.

Old museology is connected with a rather elitist approach towards the museum and a passive character that does not really encourage visitors to act and participate. It is related to traditional ideas and a linear perception of history. Museum remains a conservative and static institution, not eligible to accept new ideas, far from making any changes and attached to old theories that cannot open new windows to the museum reality. On the contrary, new museology is more people than object orientated.

New museological theories have been developed as the need for museum transformation has become an imperative in the face of new missions and increased demands. Following these changes, a range of new museum concepts were introduced, both in practice and theory.

¹³ Vergo, P. (ed) (1989). *The New Museology*. London: Reaktion Books

Community museum has particularly been a starting point of ideas associated with the term 'new museology'. It has had different shapes and names in different countries (participatory museums, ecomuseums, inclusive museums, dialogic museum, discursive museum, disruptive museum,) and signified a trend which took a different approach of heritage management than the traditional museums. All enumerated models have in common the idea of placing the heritage in the function of the people and are the effects of a renewed vision concerning the relation between museums and their constituent communities.

New museology places an emphasis on intangible aspects of cultural heritage, such as collective memory, identity and belonging. It also shifts the view of museology from the curation of objects and specimens to the 'museum as place'. It recognises that cultural landscapes reflect the uniqueness of localities and prioritises community participation. These are the defining attributes of the ecomuseum.

Four basic concepts of new museology have been defined by Stam¹⁴, a major theorist in the field:

- **value** (not seen as an inherent property of objects, but as an attribute conferred to them by their inclusion in the museum);
- **meaning** (which is altered by museums through the re-contextualization of objects in the museum setting);
- **access** (access seen this way is a much wider question than just a 'physical' one. The museums should be seen as part of the world of the educational establishment which acts not only as the mode of transmission of official culture, but as an institutionalization of that culture);
- **politics** (an integral part of museums. Who has the power to control their collections and research? What relations do they have to marginalized societal groups?);

Most of these concepts deal with the information base of museums and, as Stam notes, 'the changes lie in the cognitive realm'. Their focus on value, meaning, power, control, interaction with visitors, interpretation, authenticity and authority, centers on the processing of

¹⁴ Stam, D.C. 2008 (2005). The informed muse. The implications of 'The New Museology' for museum practice. In: Corsane, G. (ed.). *Heritage, museums and galleries. An introductory reader*. London & New York.

knowledge. It is very much about creating, interpreting, receiving and understanding information.

New Museology and the Ecomuseum

The ecomuseum concept emerged in the early 1970s, a time when environmentalism was becoming a critical issue. Several international organisations focusing on environmental protection were founded around this time, such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. Ever since, the terms new 'museology' and 'ecomuseology' have been applied to community-based heritage projects concerned with environmentally sustainable social and economic development.

According to Peter Davis, Hugues de Varine, former Secretary General of I.C.O.M., was the person who first proposed the term 'éco-musée'. The word, éco-musée (originating from ancient Greek *oikos*=meaning *home*), first used at a meeting of ICOM in Dijon, France, in 1971 was anglicised as 'ecomuseum'.

The idea of a museum as a more socially inclusive form of cultural institution, was a key outcome from the Round Table on the Development and the Role of Museums in the Contemporary World, a joint meeting between the UNESCO and the International Council of Museums (I.C.O.M.) held in Santiago de Chile, Chile, in 1972. The meeting gave rise to the idea of community museology, that is museums developed for and with the people. This was linked to a more democratic vision for museums; one in which museums are associated with a development agenda by working with local communities.

Another important figure who promoted the museum's role in local development was a French museologist, George Henri Rivière. Rivière's belief was that an ecomuseum is an instrument conceived and operated jointly by a public authority and a local population. He and Varine conducted experimental projects working with local communities in many rural areas of France. The core concept of these projects was about how local people could use their heritage to strengthen the local economy, aid local identity and improve their lives. However, de Varine and Rivière held different points of view regarding the framework. George Henri Rivière was an ethnographer particularly concerned with aspects of cultural heritage which were disappearing from French rural society. By contrast, de Varine was more focused on the democratisation of museums.

Both of them provided the most useful definition by comparing the traditional museum (=building+collections+experts+public) to the ecomuseum (=territory+heritage+memory+population).

René Rivard, a French-Canadian museologist, provided a definition of the ecomuseum as being a territory encompassing both tangible and intangible heritage, including the memories of the people who live there. Since then, the ecomuseum model has been developed, particularly in Europe, where a group of European institutions created the 'European Network of Ecomuseums'. This network defines the ecomuseum as 'a dynamic way in which communities preserve, interpret, and manage their heritage for a sustainable development. A ecomuseum is based on a community agreement.'¹⁵

In 2007, Peter Davis published an article about ecomuseums and sustainable development, where he provided a concise definition of the ecomuseum as 'a community driven heritage project that aids sustainable development'.¹⁶ His conviction is that local people should play a central role in supporting heritage projects and activities in response to their own particular situation.

Different from the traditional museum, knowledge in the ecomuseum is held by local people who designate their own heritage, place and territory. A territory encompasses aspects of the landscape (geology, scenery), built heritage (architecture), natural heritage and intangible heritage (dialects, songs, stories customs, myths etc.). The size of the ecomuseum territory is determined by local people. Davis mentions that the largest ecomuseum, the Kalyna County Ecomuseum, covers an area of approximately 10,000 square miles of Alberta, Canada¹⁷. Alternatively, an ecomuseum might be a very small site, such as one related to a former industry.

According to the same author, three features of the ideal ecomuseum were identified, named also as pillars:

¹⁵ Declaration of Intent of the Long Net Workshop, Trento (Italy), May 2004 in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecomuseum#Definition_from_the_European_Network_of_Ecomuseums , retrieved on 15 August 2014.

¹⁶ Davis, P. (2007), *New museologies and the ecomuseum* (Ashgate: Research Companion to Heritage and Identity).

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

- **Sense and Spirit of place** This pillar is about the heritage work (conservation and interpretation) which is supposed to be done in situ. That means that heritage will be conserved and interpreted in its own context and it will not be moved to a museum building.
- **Community involvement** Related to the democratic approach of an ecomuseum. Decisions regarding heritage management are made by the local community. This ideal presents challenges in contexts where there are social hierarchies, and in countries where the government takes a more top-down approach to heritage management.
- **The flexibility of the Ecomuseum model** This feature means that ecomuseum can be adjusted according to the community and the specificities of a place. It can be focused on an industrial or an archaeological site, or a whole range of intangible cultural heritages in a given territory.

Peter Davis has developed 21 key ecomuseum principles. The principles are broadly divided within three categories: 1 through 6 are about participation, 7 through 12 are about ecomuseum functions and ways of working, and 13 through 21 are about the goals that the ecomuseum might achieve¹⁸.

Using these principles one can assess how successful one museum has been in reaching its goals. However, they express the ideal ecomuseum model, and it is not necessary for every ecomuseum to achieve all of them:

- Originated and steered by local communities;
- Allow for public participation in a democratic manner;
- Joint ownership and management-double input system;
- Emphasis on process rather than on product;
- Encourages collaboration with network of partners;
- Dependent on substantial active voluntary efforts;
- Focus on local identities and sense of place;
- Encompasses a 'geographical' territory, which can be determined by different shared characteristics;

¹⁸ *Ibidem.*

- Cover both spatial and temporal aspects - diachronic rather than simply synchronic;
- Fragmented 'museum' with network of hub and antennae of buildings and sites;
- Promotes preservation, conservation and safeguarding of heritage resources in situ;
- Equal attention given to immovable and movable tangible and intangible heritage resources;
- Stimulates sustainable development and responsible use of resources;
- Allows for change and development for a better future;
- Encourages an ongoing programme of documentation of past and present life and interactions with environmental factors;
- Promotes research with different inputs-from local 'specialists' to academics;
- Promotes multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches to research;
- Promotes a holistic approach to interpretation of culture/nature relationships;
- Illustrates interconnectedness between: nature/culture; past/present;
- Provides for an intersection between heritage and responsible tourism;
- Brings benefits to local communities e.g. sense of pride, regeneration, and economic, social and cultural capital.

Although there are common ecomuseum characteristics, they also have distinct traits because they respond to shifting local environment, economic, social, cultural and political needs.

Examples of ecomuseums

In this section I will briefly refer to the example of two regional ecomuseums: one located in Romania (The Sibiu County Ecomuseum) and the other located in Sirogojno, Zlatibor, Serbia (The 'Old Village' Museum).

The Sibiu County Ecomuseum in Romania

The initiative of setting up this ecomuseum was a national premiere. It was a project initiated by the non-governmental sector in the frame of the Program 'Sibiu European Capital of Culture 2007' and was supported by the Romanian Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

The project aimed to valorize the heritage of Sibiu region by developing an ecomuseum on the territory of six rural municipalities in the county of Sibiu in order to support local authorities

and communities to save and present the cultural and natural heritage, creating competitive products, a quality travel offer and shaping an identity specific to the territory by involving local communities. The project was developed in partnership by the French NGO 'GAIA Heritage', the Sibiu County Council and the ASTRA National Museum Complex.

The ecomuseum includes Romanian villages in Marginimea Sibiului area (Saliste and Gura Raului), villages with Saxon architecture (Biertan, Mosna and Valea Viilor) and villages with valuable built heritage, but much damaged (Sasaus). Actually, the ecomuseum is entirely 'in situ', each locality is presented as an objective of the museum; the inhabitants are receiving visitors in their homes and workshops. Different traditional activities are performed such as: hand-loom weaving, woodcarving, leather processing, stone working, woolen handicrafts, barrel-making, shepherds' hats-making (called 'clop' in Romania, a round and black hat, specific to the shepherds in Sibiu area).

The presentation brochure for the Sibiu County Ecomuseum states that the Ecomuseum Association in Sibiu (in charge with organizing and managing the ecomuseum) aims to 'carry out local and regional development projects; to preserve the folk traditions and customs; and to involve local communities in the protection of heritage. The same brochure explains that the Sibiu County Ecomuseum project is based on modern principles for preserving the heritage, seen as being constituted not only of objects, but also of the entire area in which they are situated: the community, landscape, history and crafts, specific agricultural and industrial activities preserved 'in situ'.

It might be observed that the idea of an ecomuseum in Romania appeared rather late, in a context favorised by the 'Sibiu European Capital of Culture' a program financed by European Commission. It appeared also in a situation of crisis of the villages, similar to other ecomuseums in Europe opened during situations of crisis. Therefore, the ecomuseum comes as a tool for the local communities to help them come together, evaluate what is left, what they can do, how they present themselves to others since very few people there were really interested not only in preserving the houses, but also their significance.

As a cultural project was considered to be a successful one, due to the fact that it launched the idea of an ecomuseum in Romania, but the real challenge is its sustainability in time and its institutionalization.

The ‘Old Village’ Museum in Sirogojno, Serbia (Serbian: Muzej ‘Staro Selo’).

‘Old Village’ Museum in Sirogojno in Serbia is an open air museum, the most famous and oldest of that kind in Serbia, which covers nearly 5 hectares and consists of around forty wooden structures made of wood-logs that were transferred from all over the Zlatibor region. Museum exhibits represent the life in Zlatibor village in the 19th century.

The process of transfer, setting-up and reconstruction of Zlatibor log cabins in the ‘Old Village’ was initiated by architect Ranko Findrik and the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Heritage in 1980 (former Yugoslavia). The village of Sirogojno and Saint Apostles Peter and Paul's church from the 18th century were declared as cultural monuments of exceptional value in 1983 and are protected by law of the Republic of Serbia.

The institution of the Open-air Museum was constituted in 1992, performing its activities in accordance with the provisions of the I.C.O.M. As stated on the web-site, ‘the initiative came from the organization of handicrafts from Sirogojno and realized by the persistence of Mrs. Dobrila Vasiljević – Smiljanić, engaged as ethnologist, Mrs. Bosa Rosić, competent national institutions and numerous collaborators’¹⁹.

There are various components and artifacts of the ‘Old Village’ open air museum displayed which represent the authentic architecture and family lifestyle of the mountainous region in the second half of the 19th century: a house, a cottage specially built for married members of the family that was just used for sleeping, a guesthouse, dairy, granary, bakery, forge, animal compound, copper's workshop, blacksmith's workshop, pottery workshop, beehives shelves, shed for drying plums, tavern. The "Old Village" Museum protects not only the buildings in it but the whole traditional art and craft of the building industry of the Zlatibor region.

Various interesting cultural events are held in Sirogojno traditionally such as exhibitions of handmade knitted materials from Zlatibor region, workshops of traditional crafts/pottery manufacture, weaving, mosaic making or painting. Museum has a particularly elaborate programme to revive old local arts and crafts. Copies of objects of fine workmanship are produced in the workshop of the Museum: pottery, hand printed textiles, utensils of wood and

¹⁹ <http://www.sirogojno.rs/en/about-museum>

iron. There are also new products inspired by an ancient artistic traditional, but adapted to the needs and tastes of modern man.

Several buildings are intended for visitors: a shop selling the handicrafts of Sirogojno, carpenter's and potter's workshops and a shop for selling medicinal herbs and herbal teas. For summer entertainment, lectures, concerts, literature meetings and other programmes, a special small theatre was built to suit the needs and architecture of the Museum. There are houses for hotel accommodation of guests and restaurants with Serbian food specialties.

Open Air Museum "Old Village" Sirogojno, Serbia can be considered a sustainable successful project a fact which was proved by being nominated in 2014 for the European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA), organised by the European Museum Forum (EMF).

The new role of museums today

If one looks back at what was the definition of museum in the last three decades, the roles of museums nowadays are easy to be perceived: 'Museum is an institution which collects, documents, preserves, exhibits and interprets material evidence and associated information for the public benefit' (Museum Association in te UK, 1984) and a recent one: 'Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens; which they hold in trust fort the society' (Museums Association in the UK, 1999).

According to another definition formulated recently (2007) by the International Council of Museums' statutes (ICOM)²⁰, 'museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.'

The major point of differentiation regarding the new definitions is that the dominant perception which considers the collections the tools to serve the museum's misssion and objectives, has been transformed into a more human-centered one. Even more, words like 'inspiration', 'learning' and 'enjoyment' come together to serve the museum's mission.

²⁰ ICOM Statutes approved in Vienna (Austria) August 24, 2007, <http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/>

Looking back at other definitions developed by ICOM over the years, it is obvious that starting with 1961, museum's definition has evolved according to the new evolution and expansion of its roles in society. Change within the museum context is a non-stop and constant process. Demographic shifts, changes in economic systems, changes in the market and consumption, changes in the scientific sector and the use of technology, changes in the political status and changes in the formation of the European space have various effects on the aspects of a museum's role today.

At first, museum's role was focused on preservation of legacy and its presentation to the community. Gradually, there came to be a need for emphasizing the openness to the public. It is a fact that nowadays, museums cannot survive only by preserving their collections for future generations. They have to prove that they contribute also with other services to the community and therefore they can justify the funds spent. Nowadays museums are challenged to preserve traditional museum roles but to combine them also with educational values, focusing on sharing knowledge. In addition to care given to preservation of their collections, museums should now look outwards to their diverse audiences, develop a clear social function, improving their relationship with their audience. As stated in *The Manual for Museum Managers*²¹, the new role of museum is described 'as a challenge to preserve traditional museum concerns but to combine them with educational values, focusing on sharing knowledge and adding quality to everyone's life. This in function means a radical reorganisation of the culture of the museum, which in addition to looking inward to their collections should now look outwards to their diverse audiences'.

One of the fundamental roles of the museum is to educate since it has the capacity and the ability to deliver cultural education effectively. According to Allard and Boucher²², 'education is the mobilisation of knowledge stemming from the museum and aimed at the development and the fulfilment of individuals through the assimilation of this knowledge, the development of new sensitivities and the realisation of new experiences. Museum pedagogy is a theoretical and methodological framework at the service of educational activities in a museum environment, activities the main purpose of which is to impart knowledge, information, skills

²¹ Konstantios D., Konstantios N., Tsombanoglou L., *A manual for museum managers*, Department of Culture and Cultural Heritage, Directorate General IV – Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (2005)

²² Allard M. et Boucher S., 1998. *Éduquer au musée. Un modèle théorique de pédagogie muséale*, Montréal, Hurtubise;

and attitudes to the visitors'. Learning is defined by these authors as 'an act of participation, interaction and assimilation of an object by an individual which leads to an acquisition of knowledge or the development of skills or attitudes'. Other related concepts which enrich education are the concepts of museum activities or cultural action, like that of 'interpretation' or 'mediation'. These concepts are often used to describe the work carried out with the public in the museum's efforts at transmission.

The concept of 'mediation' has been in frequent use in France and in European French speaking zones. Essentially it refers to a whole range of actions carried out in a museal context in order to build bridges between that which is exhibited and the meaning that these objects and sites may carry. Mediation sometimes seeks to favour the sharing of experiences and social interactions between visitors and the emergence of common references. This is an educational communication strategy, which mobilises divers technologies around the collections exhibited to give visitors the means to better understand certain aspects.

Mediation is somehow a correspondent for the museological concept of 'communication' and museum public relations, especially for the concept of 'interpretation', which is very much present in the Anglo-Saxon museum world and on North American sites.

It is obvious that museum education is also connected with the communicative nature of the museum. Museums act not only as protectors but also as a medium of communication. Visitors started to be considered not as being a mass of people, but individuals with particular needs. The active post-modern museum approaches the visitor through new theories of learning and communication. The majority of museums provide education services within and outside the museum. They either organise a range of formal teaching programmes or work closely with schools to allow teachers to make the best use of the educational resources available. The establishment of a department of education has been of high priority and of enormous value to a museum. Education specialists, members of the staff with special training in psychology of learning, experienced in analysing complex concepts and how to present them in a simple and inspirational way to non-specialist audiences, are responsible for organising regular programmes to schools and/or other groups, for arranging open days to individuals or for providing education material.

Museum education is not only what museums do with their objects but a process of individual and community development where both public and museum staff contribute as partners.

Fredrik Svanberg in his article *Towards the museum as forum and actor?*²³ discusses the idea of the museum as 'a sort of inclusive social forum, letting people take part, influence and be seen, and creating a platform for democratic discussion, where many voices and perspectives are shared rather than as a place for authoritative indoctrination'. He believes also that museums should not be passive in current important issues. In other words, museums can no longer justify their existence only in terms of safeguarding and displaying their collections. They also need to prove what they offer to the society. Part of this offer has to do with knowledge and education. Museum education shifts to a broader scope and gains another meaning as the 'arena of educational work is no longer the educational room but the whole museum'. As a result, museum educators follow critical museum pedagogies as an educational approach.

According to Fredrik Svanberg these ideas may also be aligned with two principles common to current museum developments: those of 'inreach' and 'outreach':

'Inreach' is 'about letting audiences take part in museum's practice, creating settings for co-creation, inviting 'community curators' from stakeholders groups, opening up databases for interaction and user generated contents'.

In this sense, inreach activities within a museum are very much linked to the concept of a participatory museum and using participatory techniques, a topic which I am going to develop in the next chapters.

'Outreach' is about 'how museums can get outside their walls, working in complementary places with groups they want to reach and questions within their field of competence that may be better addressed in other settings than museum buildings'.

Nowadays, it is assumed that educational role of the museum is a major justification: 'Museums are repositories of collections, scholarship, expertise and skills. Therefore, museums have the duty to make their resources available to all potential users and the delivery of these resources has to do with museum education'²⁴. The educational role of the

²³ Svanberg F. (ed), *Towards the museum as forum and actor?* (article) in *The Museum as forum and actor*, The Museum of national antiquities, Stockholm. Studies (2010).

²⁴ Konstantios, D., Konstantios, N., Tsombanoglou, L. (2005) *A manual for museum managers*, Department of Culture an Cultural Heritage, Directorate General IV – Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport

museum is believed to be crucial, as new possibilities and structures are emerging for education in museums around the world. Furthermore, those who fund museums are asking them to demonstrate that the society benefits from their investment.

For a proactive museum, changes in the field of education are of great importance, because they enrich visitor's experience of the collections, increase attendance attracting a more diverse audiences. Technology has broadened the amount of information that can be shared, diminished the need for experts and minimised the speed with which information can be accessed and manipulated making more easy to accomplish the educational role of a museum. The use of technology by museums today is so widespread that it can be considered as a "cultural artefact" in its own right. I believe that approaching well-designed participatory practices in the museum's activities might represent one extremely effective way for a museum to accomplish its educational role.

In her book, *Museum and Education*²⁵ (2007), Eileen Hooper Greenhill says that the creative re-imagining and re-working of the identity of the museum is a characteristic feature for the 'post-museum'. She uses the term 'post-museum' to describe the contemporary museum which could be regarded as the product of changing agendas, broadening boundaries and changes in the relationship between visitors and the museum. A central feature of new museology as reflected by this author is its focus on the study and understanding of 'what museums do in society', often analyzed in terms of what kind of culture they 'produce' and how they do that. Through the activities of display and interpretation, museums construct a view, present a story and produce resources for learning. Understanding this central process of the creation of meaning and the facilitation of learning is crucial for this author. Museums are now sites in which knowledge, memory and history are examined, rather than places where cultural authority is asserted.

Museums can contribute to the cultural but also to the economic improvement of the society since they act upon the the economic development of the community. They attract tourists and encourage new businesses. As a result, museums increase the income per individual and enhance the quality of life. Museums contribute to the overall ambiance of a city, thus making it a more interesting and pleasant destination to visit. In recent times a museum is one of the

²⁵ Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2007) *Museums and Education: Purpose, Pedagogy, Performance (Museum Meanings)*, USA: Routledge

most common expressions of cultural tourism in conjunction with various cultural institutions, monuments and/or archaeological sites. But the economic approach of a museum can be seen from a critical point of view also since very often museums offer, apart from exhibitions and educational services, a range of shopping, entertainment facilities and events. This is because they are more and more pushed to change and offer attractive services and meet the needs of the public in order to attract visitors and survive. The notion of 'comercialization' is very pregnant and visitors of a museum are often seen as clients or consumers and therefore museums being transformed into a kind of 'supermarket'.

Apart from economic development, museums nowadays are also connected with the general improvement of social life. They constitute means through which the wider process of "urban regeneration" is achieved. Museums do not only help in the fight against economic decline, unemployment, crime, depopulation, political radicalism or social violence but have been particularly beneficial in opening the routes of social health as well. Museums can change a city's poor image, acting as a major cultural attraction, as a way of accelerating urban regeneration.

As a conclusion, it is obvious that in recent years museums' functions have been significantly expanded. Museums are not only buildings or just collections under protection, but also cultural institutions which securely conserve and preserve material cultural objects, whilst, at the same time, interpreting, mediating our understanding of them and therefore communicating relevant meanings.

Taking in account the new circumstances in which museums exist, the use of effective management has been proved necessary. As Lord and Lord argue 'the purpose of management is to facilitate decisions that lead to the achievement of the museum's mission, the fulfilment of its mandate, and the realisation of the goals and objectives for all of its functions'. Effective managemet can make museums more responsive both to their internal and external users.

Theorising museum collaboration

Since the second hypothesis in my research is related to museum collaborations with other organisations or inter-sectorial linkage (as formulated it in the title), seen as a tool for museum to gain audiences, and meant to make it a more participatory place, in this section I am going to provide some theoretical framework together with short examples related to collaborations, based on the investigations of the specific literature in the field.

The emergence of collaboration

Museological collaboration focuses on making collections more visible, managing museums more efficiently, cutting costs, achieving higher quality and sharing or securing museological knowledge. Furthermore, it is also about reaching new audiences and attracting more visitors. In a report²⁶ by the Asscher-Vonk II steering committee in Netherlands, cooperation is defined as: ‘contributing to a common result by means of joint effort from a museum and a fellow museum or other party (such as educational, other cultural institutions, business or the audience)’.

According to the same report, it must be repeatable and aim for a sustainable result in at least one of the following areas:

- shared and/or guaranteed museum knowledge;
- increase in audience reach via wider/or new audience;
- greater visibility of the collection;
- more profitable operations by cutting costs of increasing revenue.

According to Bergquist and Betwee²⁷, the tendency towards collaboration began in the early 1980s, with the growth of technology and the maturing of the global market. Businesses felt the need to make alliances with other organisations to meet the competitive challenge, believing that this strategy would enable them to extend their competencies to enter new global markets.

²⁶<http://www.museumvereniging.nl/Portals/0/6Publicaties/Bestanden/Tried%20and%20tested%20partnerships%20web.pdf>

²⁷ Bergquist, W., Betwee, J. Meuel, D. (1995) *Building strategic relationships: How to extend your organization's reach through partnerships, alliances and joint Ventures*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publisher.

Early collaborations between business and nonprofit organisations occurred in the late 1980s. However, these relationships drew little attention from market researchers, because cooperation between cross-sector partners was initially limited. But these collaborations have become more popular in recent years. Austin²⁸ indicates that the twenty-first century is the age of collaboration. In USA and generally the Anglo-Saxon part of the world, collaboration between business and nonprofits increased during the last decades, becoming an important strategy. The nature of the relationship varies, from charitable, to transactional, to in depth cooperation.

Because no specific collaboration policy exists within the cultural sector in Romania, I must look for examples in other countries such as UK or Netherlands. For example, The Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB, now the ACE, 1986) has called for partnerships since the late 1980s, believing that they can improve the cultural industries and enhance their economic potential²⁹. The UK Department for National Heritage (now the Department for Culture, Media and Sport) encourages museums, museum services and museum bodies to cooperate with each other. A survey, conducted by Arnold-Forster and Davies on behalf of the Museums & Galleries Commission³⁰, shows that 67% of museums do not regard the concept of collaboration as a central aspect of museum management. However, over half of them (66%) have participated in at least one collaborative project. The Council for Museums Archives and Libraries (now MLA) appeals a strategic and operational framework for museums and galleries to work together and proposed research into cross-sector collaboration strategies that will allow museums to operate with new vision. In 2003, Arts Council England identifies four priorities, *'the creative economy, healthy communities, vital neighbourhoods and engaging young people'* to work with arts organisations and set up closer partnership between arts funding system and local government³¹. A Manifesto for Museums³² states that collaboration between national and regional museums can attract new audiences.

²⁸ Austin, J. E. (2000). *The collaboration challenge: How nonprofits and businesses succeed through strategic alliances*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

²⁹ A.C.G.B., *Partnership: Making art money work harder* (London: A.C.G.B., 1986).

³⁰ Arnold-Forster, K., Davies, S., *Collaboration between museums: A report for the museums & galleries commission*.

³¹ A.C.E., *Local government and the arts: A vision for partnership* (London: A.C.E., 2003).

³² N.M.D.C., *A manifesto for museums* (London: N.M.D.C., 2004).

In Netherlands, a recent policy memorandum by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science devotes a great deal of importance to museological cooperation. The minister's policy document places the emphasis on, among other things, collection mobility, education, reaching a new audience and developing talent. Furthermore, the national government is to make available an additional budget of two million euros a year to encourage cooperation.

In the face of financial difficulties, museum managers recognise that collaboration is a way to gain support. Cultural bodies are also aware that by integrating resources from within and without, they can maximise performance.

Motivations for collaboration

During my investigation, I found that much of the literature related to collaboration between museums and other organisations, including the motivations for collaboration, are mainly related to management in the business sector.

Collaboration has become popular as markets and technology have changed. Businesses have been stimulated to take action and adopt this strategy. Bergquist, et al.³³ found that attitudes towards simple partnerships are generally positive. One motivation to collaborate is often the search for new ideas and strategies among companies who lack the resources to innovate by themselves. These authors also suggest that, in addition to creating markets and expanding resources, partnerships enable improvements in efficiency and flexibility. They allow participating organisations to provide high quality service at lower cost. Personal satisfaction can also be improved through partnerships since 'partnerships offer the chance for increased personal involvement, control, and professional fulfilment.' In other words, this strategy facilitates stable relationships among participants.

Iyer³⁴ indicates that the most important motivation for participants is the belief they can achieve a better outcome than they could in isolation. Bergquist et al. call this attitude 'pragmatism'. Other motivations are more personal, such as the wish to find more fulfilment

³³ Bergquist, W., Betwee, J., Meuel, D., (1995) *Building strategic relationships: How to extend your organization's reach through partnerships, alliances and joint ventures.*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publisher

³⁴ E. Iyer, 'Theory of alliances: Partnership and partner characteristics', *Nonprofit and business sector collaboration: Social enterprises, cause-related marketing, sponsorships, and other corporate-nonprofit dealings* (NY: Best Business Books, 2003).

at work, to enjoy the experience and to be involved in partnership formation. Kogut³⁵ argues further that the motivations for setting up joint ventures are to lower transaction costs, improve strategic position, and facilitate learning within the organisation.

Collaboration across sectors is increasing. Wymer and Samu³⁶ indicate that collaborative relationships between business and nonprofits are different to those found within sectors. Nonprofit organisations may wish to increase awareness and their market, while businesses may be attracted by the incentives of positive promotion and public relations. Austin³⁷ explores the reasons for the creation of collaborative relationships between business and nonprofits. At the macro-level, political, economic and social forces encourage collaboration. At the micro-level, positive feedback from participants is a strong motivation for alliances. This author shows also that the motivating factors are significantly different for the various partners in cross-sector collaborations, because the participants have different objectives, performance assessment criteria, cultures, competencies and motivations³⁸.

Hopper Greenhill³⁹ suggests that, in order to increase visitors, museums work together with other groups to set up exhibitions and projects or that they collaborate with different sectors.

Wireman⁴⁰ suggests that particular benefits can be identified for museums when collaborative projects are envisioned. These include increasing visitors and revenue, fulfilling educational and research aims more effectively, expanding exhibitions and collections, improving public relations, raising funding and gaining expertise. Kotler and Kotler⁴¹ also suggest that improved finance and resources, such as equipment, marketing, expertise and so on, come to museums entering into corporate partnerships.

³⁵ B. Kogut cited in J. Child, D. Faulkner, and *Strategic of co-operation: Managing alliances, networks, and joint ventures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³⁶ W. W. Wymer, S. Samu (eds.), *Nonprofit and business sector collaboration: Social enterprises, cause-related marketing, sponsorship, and other corporate-nonprofit dealings*.

³⁷ J. E. Austin, *The collaboration challenge: How nonprofits and businesses succeed through strategic alliances*.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ E. Hooper-Greenhil, *Museums and their visitors* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁴⁰ P. Wireman, *Partnerships for prosperity: Museums and economic development*. Washington (D.C.: The American Association of Museums, 1997).

⁴¹ N. Kotler, P. Kotler, *Museum strategy and marketing: Designing missions building audiences generating revenue and resources*.

A survey conducted by Arnold-Forster and Davies⁴² shows that most museums in the UK deem that the primary benefits of collaboration are to gain expertise and knowledge, reduce costs and expand communication channels. They also recognise that they cannot reach their objectives in isolation.

Museum collaboration takes various forms, most often loans and exhibitions. Working with the mass media to organise a special exhibition is considered to be also a very popular alliance strategy. Chuang⁴³ has researched 64 museums in Taiwan and found that museums are increasingly aware of the need to communicate effectively with their audience to ensure the success of their exhibitions.

For example, one exhibition - *Art and Culture of the Han Dynasty* - hosted by the National Museum of History in Taiwan (NMN) in collaboration with the Min Sheng Daily, attracted about 250,000 visitors over five months. Another example is that of the National Museum of History (NMH) Taiwan, and the China Times who joined together to organise an exhibition *Da-chien Chang and Pablo Picasso*. The press produced reports and supplementary stories on the exhibition, and were involved in lectures and special events. These examples reveals the extent to which a museum may benefit by attracting potential visitors through an alliance with the press.

According to J. Chuang, this form of co-operation between museums and the press could assist museums to increase public awareness and expand their audience. It can be seen that the role of the press in cross- sector collaboration is not only to communicate with the public; It can be directly involved in supporting special exhibitions mounted by the museum sector. It seems that museums in Taiwan increasingly see the value of forming partnerships with other sectors, especially the press. However, it is a known fact that promotion is expensive and usually museums have cost concerns, not being able to truly benefit from this opportunity in order to reach their target.

⁴² K. Arnold-Forster, S. Davies, *Collaboration between museums: A report for the museums & galleries commission*.

⁴³ J. J. Chuang, *A study of the relations between the museums and the mass media in Taiwan*.

Stages of collaboration for business and nonprofit organisations

Austin⁴⁴ provides a conceptual framework for the collaboration between business and nonprofit organisations, such as the museum sector. He identifies three stages in the relationship: *the philanthropic stage, the transactional stage, the integrative stage*. This framework can assist organisations to evaluate their current and future situations.

Kotler and Kotler⁴⁵ identify similar stages, which are more focused on the particular challenges faced by museums to raise money and attract resources. They call their stages: *begging, collections, campaigning, and development*. These stages serve as a useful framework for museums seeking to arrange collaborative strategies with different sectors.

The most common type of relationship between business and nonprofits is the philanthropic stage. In this stage, a corporate donation is requested by the nonprofit. The level of engagement and resources is 'relatively low, infrequent, simple and nonstrategic'⁴⁶. The first way for museums to appeal for money and donated resources is by begging. Generally, is not simply begging since even for simple donations, museums offer some kind of benefit in return.

The next stage, in which organisations gather annual or special support from defined groups on a regular basis, is collection⁴⁷. Corporate giving represents one of the most important resources in the museum sector. A survey shows that one of the most popular types of collaboration is with commercial organisations⁴⁸. However, according to Kotler and Kotler, museums must be able to withstand fluctuations in the corporations' fortunes - this can significantly affect the nature of the collaboration.

A number of business organisations and nonprofits are migrating into the transactional stage. Austin illustrates that in this state, 'the interaction tends to focus on more special

⁴⁴ J. E. Austin, *The collaboration challenge: How nonprofits and businesses succeed through strategic alliances*, p. 19.

⁴⁵ N. Kotler, P. Kotler, *Museum strategy and marketing: Designing missions building audiences generating revenue and resources*.

⁴⁶ J. E. Austin, *The collaboration challenge: How nonprofits and businesses succeed through strategic alliances*, p. 25.

⁴⁷ N. Kotler, P. Kotler, *Museum strategy and marketing: Designing missions building audiences generating revenue and resources*.

⁴⁸ K. Arnold-Forster, S. Davies, *Collaboration between museums: A report for the museums & galleries commission*.

activities' and 'there is a significant two-way value exchange'⁴⁹. This is not only simple fund transference; the relationship also covers activities such as marketing programmes, event sponsorships, special projects and volunteer services⁵⁰. In the 1980s, corporate giving increasingly took the form of strategic philanthropic collaborations. Corporations involved in collaborating with nonprofits in the 1990s adopted an integration strategy and sought to become involved in the nonprofits' activities.

The situation has also changed in relation to collaborations between museums and corporate organisations. Kotler and Kotler⁵¹ call this stage campaigning. It involves a planned arrangement made to gain financial support and resources from a corporation. Many ongoing programmes are being developed to attract support from different sectors. The corporate attitude shifted from philanthropic giving to giving as a strategic investment in the 1990s, and the scope of corporate giving is now wider, including in-kind services or marketing and advertising know-how⁵².

The integrative stage involves 'deep mission mesh, strategy synchronization, and values compatibility'⁵³. A small but growing number of collaborations are adopting this strategy. More joint activities, such as joint ventures, are being undertaken. Some museums are now at the development stage and perfecting a range of long-term and loyal partnerships⁵⁴.

Regarding the process of collaboration, Austin stresses the importance of five main elements in the creation and development of an inter-organisational collaboration which include:

- Understanding strategy collaboration;
- Making the connection;
- Ensuring strategic fit;
- Generating value;
- Managing the relationship⁵⁵.

⁴⁹ J. E. Austin, *The collaboration challenge: How nonprofits and businesses succeed through strategic alliances*, p. 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ N. Kotler, P. Kotler, *Museum strategy and marketing: Designing missions building audiences generating revenue and resources*.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 301.

⁵³ J. E. Austin, *The collaboration challenge: How nonprofits and businesses succeed through strategic alliances*, p. 24.

⁵⁴ N. Kotler, P. Kotler, *Museum strategy and marketing: Designing missions building audiences generating revenue and resources*.

⁵⁵ J. E. Austin, *The collaboration challenge: How nonprofits and businesses succeed through strategic alliances*.

The first point is to be aware that the relationship may pass through different stages. Making the connection means building alliances and finding a potential partner. Having found the potential partner, organisations need to pay attention to the strategic fit, which will depend upon the match between the organisations' missions and values. The value of the collaboration to each partner will influence the long-term relationship, although this value is often not analysed. The final stage is to manage the relationship, which involves communication, trust-building, responsibility and learning.

After investigating this wide range of theories about collaborations as they were formulated by the above mentioned theorists, it can be concluded that the drive behind setting collaboration between museums and other organizations from non-museum sector is mainly related to increasing financial resources, new markets, raising fundings or improving visibility and the relation with the public. To a lesser degree, collaborations are seen as an useful tool to increase expertise, skills, fulfilling educational and research aims, expanding exhibitions and collections. It shows that museums which are highly dependent on public funding, are increasingly looking for alternative funding, especially those coming from business field.

Unfortunately, for the specific case of Romanian museums, collaborations between museums and the business sector is a field which has no tradition, being infrequent at present. Although isolated examples might be found, it is usually through personal relationships and contact with corporations when the level of support from these companies is influenced.

Theorising museum participation: advantages and limitations

The concept of 'participation' in the museum play a major role, being designed as a major part of the theoretical framework in my research. My intention is to approach different theories related to participation, as investigated in the specific literature consulted, especially the one that appears in Nina Simon's book *The participatory museum*⁵⁶.

However, since 'participation' is rather a recent and often controversial concept, I will also make reference to adverse opinions stating its advantages and limitations.

⁵⁶ Simon, N. (2010). *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz (Calif.): Museum 2.0.

According to a study about cultural participation made by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the commonly accepted meaning of word ‘participation’ covers both ‘attendance’ (passive) and ‘participation’ (active). Another two-fold distinction is between creative and receptive participation. Creative participation is associated with making, creating, organizing, initiating, producing and facilitating arts activities and indicates active engagement (e.g. film distribution, theatre management, curatorial activities, and supportive involvement of family). Receptive participation involves receiving, using, purchasing or observing a culture or leisure event or product.

Originally, the concept of ‘participation’ signified the cooperation of institutions and either the community or individuals, although as it has become used more widely, it has lost quite a lot of its meaning.

Peter Dahlgren⁵⁷ states that 'Engagement generally refers to subject states [...] mobilised, focused attention.' He sees engagement as a prerequisite for participation, as the latter would be 'connecting with practical, do-able situations, where citizens can feel empowered [...] it involves in some sense activity'. For Dahlgren, although both participation and engagement are anchored in the individual, they do have important collective dimension as they imply being connected to others via civic bonds.

Pille Runnel and Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt⁵⁸ in their study about museum participation, consider it as 'mutually beneficial, respectful and to a certain extent, aiming for balanced power relations, or at least acknowledging the worth of discussion partners. Through this emphasis on respect and partnership, social interaction and participation become located at the level of democratic support'. For these authors 'participation' is different from 'interactivity' and 'engagement', stating that interactivity is generally not used to consciously facilitate democratic participation in the museum context. Rather it is ‘just’ a potential tool for engagement, which, in reality, offers support to the educational framework according to which interactive elements in museums are approached as learning tools.

⁵⁷ Dahlgren, P. (2006). *Civic participation and practices: Beyond ‘deliberative democracy’*. In Carpentier, N. et al. (eds.), *Researching media, democracy and participation: The intellectual work of the 2006 European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School*. Tartu: Tartu University Press, pp. 23-34.

⁵⁸ Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P., Runnel P., (2011), *When the museum becomes the message for participating audiences*, (article supported by Estonian Science Foundation).

Speaking about the context, one important core process related to participation, the democratization process, lead museums in the last decades to focus on the dialogue with audiences. Museums, together with other institutions, became implicated in what Giddens labelled ‘the responsibility of public institutions to contribute to the democratisation of democracy’⁵⁹. That means that nowadays, public knowledge institutions, such as museums, need to become ‘laboratories and meeting points for discussions and new initiatives’. In other words, the ‘sanctum-museum’ needs to become a ‘laboratory-museum’⁶⁰, respectful of the expertise of the museum staff and its experts, but at the same time open to a continuous dialogue with the outside worlds that come to visit it. More specifically, a 21st century democratic and reflexive society needs museums that encourage society’s publics to attribute meaning to the cultural objects that are on display.⁶¹

Therefore, providing information is no longer considered sufficient and, in order to better fulfill their role as a public institutions, museums seek for increasing participatory activities. This approach is also in line with the theories developed by the new museology. It seems that the traditional understanding of museums as keepers of truthful memories needs to be abandoned as the more post-modern society needs reflexive citizens. Instead of providing visitors with ready-made and perfect answers, museums can use participation as a way to entice and support critical thinking.

Beside the democratization process, according to Pille Runnel and Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt⁶², contemporary museums face at the same time the challenge of competing for people’s time. Entertainment and leisure seem to be universally acknowledged ways of organising this. One common way to achieve attention from audiences is the ‘celebrification’ of museum’s objects. ‘Celebrification’ is seen as the attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an object, within the public sphere. Museums promote certain objects in their collection to the celebrity status in the hope of gaining more attention (and visitors). According to these authors, museum institution, as they want to gain visibility and connection with its audiences, by using the celebrification process, manages in fact to distance itself from its audiences by making them ‘consumers-worshippers of glorious collections’. This implies

⁵⁹ Giddens, A. (1998). *The third way: the renewal of social democracy*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

⁶⁰ Mairesse, F. (2003). *Le musée, temple spectaculaire*. Lyon: PUL.

⁶¹ Hein, H. (2006). *Public art: thinking museums differently*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

⁶² Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P., Runnel P., (2011), *When the museum becomes the message for participating audiences*, (article supported by Estonian Science Foundation).

that in different museums, the attention for the audiences and their ways of dealing with the visitor differs.

In *The participatory Museum*, Simon states that cultural institutions can reconnect with the public and demonstrate their value and relevance in contemporary life by inviting people to actively engage as cultural participants, not passive consumers. She believes that participation is a strategy that addresses specific problems and participatory strategies as practical ways to enhance, not replace traditional cultural institutions. According to her, 'the idealistic mission statements of many cultural institutions - to engage visitors with heritage, connect them to new ideas, encourage critical thinking, support creativity, and inspire them to take positive action – can be attained through participatory practice'.

Furthermore, she believes that the digitization process in the recent years, particularly the social Web facilitates, are the tools capable to make participation more accessible than ever. For Simon, a participatory cultural institution is 'a place where visitors can **create, share, and connect** with each other around content'.

This means that visitors may 'contribute their own ideas, objects to the institution and to each other [...] they may discuss, take home, remix and redistribute what they see and what they make during their visit [...] and they may socialize with other people – staff and visitors – who share their particular interests'. All these actions should 'focus on the evidence, objects and ideas most important to the institution in question'.

Pille Runnel and Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt⁶³ have adapted Nina Simons approaches to different types of participation in the table below:

Table 1: Different museum participation possibilities, adapted from Simon (2010)

	Contributory	Collaborative	Co-creative	Hosted
Control over the agenda and over the outcome	Museum	Museum more than participants	Equal/participants more than museum	Participants (with rules and some limitations from the institution)

⁶³ *Ibidem*

Number of participants and their commitment	Potentially very many, but limited or no commitment	Smaller numbers, some casual joiners, but most with intention to participate, thus relatively small numbers	Relatively small groups, committed through the whole process	Relatively small groups, who need additional support for their own project.
Participants interaction	Individual interacts with the content of the museum and possibly with other participants contributions	Individual interacts with content and institution and possibly with other participants contributions	Success presumes interaction with institution and other participants and co-operation	Success relies on good interaction with other participants forming a community or network
Goals for how non-participating visitors will perceive the project	Visitors see themselves as potential participants and see the institution as interested in their active involvement.	Visitors see the institution as a place dedicated to supporting and connecting with community.	Visitors see the institution as a community driven place. It will also bring in new audiences connected to the participants.	The project will attract new audiences who might not see the institution as a comfortable or appealing place for them.

The table shows that in the context of museums, different approaches to participation are understood as a matrix in which in some of these instances the role of the museum is greater, while in some other cases the role of the museum decreases and leaves more control with audiences. These types of participation are differentiated according to where the power to define the project and make decisions resides:

- **'Contribution'** asks visitors to provide limited and specific objects, actions or ideas to an institutionally controlled process.
- **'Collaboration'** invites visitors to serve as active partners in the creation of a museum project which is originated by and ultimately controlled by museum.
- **'Co-creation'** happens when visitors and the institution work together from the start to define the project's goals and generate the programme or exhibition based on the community's interests. It is more about their agendas
- **'Hosting'** is when the museum turns over some of its facilities and resources for external groups to use as they want, hosting programmes or events that they develop and implement themselves. Simon doesn't think that museums should aim for 'hosting' as the best result because it involves handing over substantial power.

Her point is that museums should be aware of what kind of participatory work they are asking their visitors to become involved in, and what the implications are for the institution.

As described in the above table, the variety of approaches toward participation enables different levels of audience participation. According to Nina Simon, participation will never be all-inclusive and equally empowering. There are instances when participants do not actually participate. Participants can be divided into regular and active participants on the one hand, and into those who engage themselves from time to time on the other. According to the author, museum should valorise the same, people who see the museum as a resource, people who act as quality contributors, as well as those who are partners in collaborative and co-creative projects.

Different from Simon's non hierarchical perspective regarding the above mentioned forms of participation, there are authors which assume that co-creation with participants and hand-over of power to participants is the most valuable kind of participatory work in a museum. Somehow, this limitates the co-creation reducing it simply to a question of democracy versus elitism. In reality, museums are very unlikely ever to give up all of their control and even if they do so, this is no guarantee and has not so far proved to be a particularly effective strategy. Power hand-over should not be seen as the central aim of co-creation. 'Contribution', 'collaboration' and 'co-creation': they all involve, in different degrees working together with the public to make something new. It depends on the museum to choose the right participative approach in order to advance the institution's mission in the same time benefiting visitors' expectations for active engagement.

For Simon, participatory projects have value when they satisfy aspects of related to the mission of the institution. 'Institutions do not engage in participatory projects because they are fun of exciting, but because they can serve institutional goals'. Cultural institutions use participatory techniques not just to give visitors a voice but to develop experiences that are valuable and compelling for everyone: the institution, participants and non-participating audience members.

Simon says that in order to use participation effectively, cultural institutions should find the right design. Experiences must be well designed to be useful. The difference between traditional and participatory design techniques is the way that information flows between institutions and users. In traditional exhibits and programs, the institution provides content for visitors to consume. Designers focus on making the content consistent and high quality, so that every visitor, regardless of her background or interests, receives a good experience. On the contrary, in participatory projects, the institution designs multi-directional content experiences. The institution serves as a 'platform' that connects different users who act as content creators, distributors, consumers, critics and collaborators. 'The institution cannot guarantee the consistency of visitor experiences. Instead, the institution provides opportunities for diverse visitor co-produced experiences. Being successful with a participatory model means finding ways to design participatory platforms so the content that amateurs create and share is communicated and displayed attractively. Supporting participation means trusting visitors' abilities as creators, remixers and redistributors of content. Visitors should be offered the chance to contribute to the institution by sharing things of interest or connecting with other people.

However, this does not mean that every visitor will be willing to participate in a way or other. For example, according to some statistics made in 2008 in S.U.A about audiences engaged with social media online, the percentage of people who are drawn to create consists of only 24%. The majority (73%), is represented by spectators and joiners (51%). As it can be seen, participation inequality is not limited to the real world, but also on the Web. Generally speaking, people who create content represent a narrow slice of the participatory landscape. Even the most popular participatory opportunities in cultural institutions attract a small number of people who want to make a comment or contribute to an exhibition. Many more prefer to participate in other ways, by criticizing, organizing, and being spectators. It is well-

known also that there will always be visitors to enjoy static exhibitions with classical knowledge. Anyway, participatory technics target those audiences for whom creative activities and social connection are preconditions for cultural engagement.

When it comes to using participatory approaches there are authors speaking about many successful examples from museums who have designed significant ways for visitors to contribute their ideas to exhibitions spaces. There are also museum professionals who are positive about what both the professionals and participants gained from the participatory experience in terms of confidence skills, a new perspective or a new social network.

In the same time, there are many lows of the participatory practice and very often this is a topic marked by practical and philosophical difficulties where achievements in reality may be considered just ideals. Especially co-creating with the public is one of the most fascinating but also most difficult and often disputed area of museum work.

For example, Co-creation within the community is considered by Sheila Watson⁶⁴ to not necessarily mean the shifting of power to the community in any real manner but can mean giving power to a privileged group while still excluding or controlling others. Cases where discussions of disagreements between different communities of interest demonstrate that it is not easy to know which voice from community to listen to, and whether accommodating the point of view of one interest group will cause difficulties with another.

Also, museum curators may feel that they have a duty to stand apart from controversial histories and try to present a balanced view. They have to listen to as many voices as possible and to be as inclusive as they can in listening but still, they make a choice in selecting what goes up on museum's walls.

Mark O'Neill, head of Arts&Museums Glasgow, was interviewed in an article for *Museum Journal*, and was questioned whether giving up curatorial or editorial control is really the issue. He pointed out that projects which give space to communities to do with as they like, look like great inclusion projects, but are actually disempowering, because such projects will never involve using core collections, and museum is not going to be sharing its expertise of giving people more intellectual access. For him, the way forward is around the co-production of meaning within exhibitions, and asking for help from the communities to present a range of

⁶⁴ Watson, S.: *Museums and their Communities* (Routledge, 2007)

different interpretations of museum objects: '... there can be religious, emotional or nostalgic meanings, and that's the real value of involving people. It's supplementing the curatorial meaning'.⁶⁵

In her work on on interpretative communities, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill notes that with the best of inclusive intentions, fragmented, multi-vocal spaces are created in museums, and asks how the multiplicity of meanings can be avoided in order not to become a cacophony?

'There are difficult issues to be resolved here about the continued responsibility of the museum for the production of knowledge, the core of its tangible and intangible collections, the need to balance opportunities to speak for all who wish to do so, and the question of when, whether and how to take a stand in relation to moral and ethical matters. There are no easy answers.'⁶⁶

Josie Appleton argues that museums should not move further towards including their audiences in the making of their displays, and should stop trying so hard to engage and involve people who may want to be left to their own devices. In her opinion, this trend is entirely driven by central (Labour) government agendas, and bears little relation to the real needs of museum visitors and the true value of museums:

'Museums should stick to what they do best – to preserve, display study and where possible collect the treasures of civilisation and of nature...Everybody knows that the harder you try to win friends and integrate yourself with people, the more you repel them.'⁶⁷

Nina Simon discussing the notion of 'radical trust' (institutions trusting the users who work with them), notes that successful co-creative projects require organizations not only to trust the competencies and motivations of participants, but also to be really interested in their input. She suspects that the reason there are so few valuable co-created projects in museums and organizational spaces is that this trust and genuine desire for input is not there, or perhaps not consistently enough.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Mulhearn, D.: 'Joint Accounts', *Museums Journal*, issue 108/9, September 2008: 22-25

⁶⁶ Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2000), *Museums and The Interpretation of Visual Culture* reprinted in Watson, S. (2007): *Museums and their Communities* Routledge, p. 82

⁶⁷ Appleton, J. (2001), *Museums for 'The People'?*, reprinted in Watson, S. (2007): *Museums and their Communities* Routledge, p.125

⁶⁸ Simon, N.: *The Participatory Museum* (Museum2.0, 2010), p. 274

As a conclusion, it seems that implementing participatory techniques doesn't come without a series of risks and difficulties. Particularly, co-creation projects that involve working with people face to face rather than those on-line, are difficult to sustain.

Reality proved that the most successful co-creative projects are those limited in scope, tending to involve defined communities: geographic, ethnic, communities of interest, towards a finite, defined exhibition, or virtual space and about topics focussing on people's lives, experiences history, cultural identity. Often, increased number of active participants or contributors can mean that the contributions become more superficial, whereas collaboration or partnership can only occur with limited numbers of individuals.

However, implementing participation changes the institutional perspective about authority and audience roles, and also require efforts and ambition from museum professionals in order to sustain them in the long-run. These changes may be small or large, depending on the particular organization's commitment and motivation toward participation.

In line with Nina Simon's understanding of different possibilities of participation, I would say that whatever participatory structure is preferred, as long as participation is understood from different perspectives, the participatory aims of the museum can be seen as fulfilled.

Examples of best practices regarding museum participation.

In this section dedicated to successful practices of museum participation, I will choose two case studies. The first one is the example of The Museum of City History Leipzig (Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig), presented by Volker Rodekamp (President of the German Museums Association - DMB) in the frame of NEMO (The Network of European Museum Organisations) Annual Conference (21st edition) which took part in Bucharest, Romania in November 2013⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ *Museums in the Digital Age. Museums and the Development of Active Citizenship*, NEMO 21st Annual Conference Documentation Bucharest, Romania, November 2013

Digitization and public contribution at Museum of City History Leipzig (Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig)

General description

This examples describes an ongoing project begun fifteen years ago with the aim of centralising and digitising the collections of the Museum of City History Leipzig. I choose this example since it is a regional one (Europe) and also because it serves a good example of both collaboration with knowledgeable partners in order to digitise it and outreach within the local community. According to Nina Simon's classification it might be considered both as a contributory as well as a collaborative form of participation.

The contribution of the project resides in the fact that collections were centralised and catalogued in a new collection management system but the real added value I consider it to be the completely transformed ways in which visitors interact with, communicate knowledge to and receive knowledge from the museum.

The situation

The museum's management understood that the documentation of the collection, one that was more than a hundred years old, needed a fundamental reorientation. Before 1999, the source information about the objects in the museum was completely decentralised, each maintained by its respective curator (as it is the case in many traditional museums until now). A position 'Head of Central Documentation' was created, and under its watch, a thorough analysis of all existing source information was made and centralised. This retrospective documentation and centralisation was done with the support of the local Leipzig employment centre, which provided temporary staff for over fifteen year.

A total of 300,000 objects have been documented and can now be accessed online by the public. Since 2010, this data has been shared nationally and internationally with online portals such as Europeana, Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek and Kalliope.

Cooperation

In order to operate the documentation process, the museum has cooperated with following partners taking advantage of their own experience and knowledge: The Institute for Museum

Research and the Zuse Institute in Berlin. The museum worked also together with several volunteers in the Leipzig community also, the outcome being the implementation of a database of all victim groups in Leipzig during the Nazi regime.

Community outreach

In 2008, the museum began to present objects to the public on its webpage. A reply button was included that allows website visitors the ability to email any additional information they have directly to the museum. As a result of this collective knowledge which came as a feedback, the museum has expanded the information about its objects. A considerable amount of feedback was received from academic researchers, collectors and family descendants. This process continues to grow steadily expanding the information about its objects.

In addition to serving public requests, the museum's online database is used for several education services and projects. The online database connects the museum with local and regional schools, supporting explorative learning, developing students' research skills, preparing and processing student projects completed in collaboration with museum education officers and enabling the integration of real museum objects into the theoretical content of the education curriculum.

Results for the museum

Through the online presence of the collections and the new permanent exhibition, the museum has become very popular within the community, receiving about two-thirds more visitors to its digital collections than to its physical exhibition and collections⁷⁰. Additionally, along with its larger online presence, the museum has noted a considerable increase of objects donated. At the same time the museum has increased the interaction with visitors and information exchange through online requests and online visits, enhancing the museum's own knowledge and the ways in which it shares this knowledge with the public.

The future

The museum still has about 200,000 objects that need to be entered into the online database.

⁷⁰ In 2012, the museum received about 205,000 visitors to the physical premises of the museum

Another six to eight years and additional staff to perform retrospective documentation are estimated in order to accomplish this. Furthermore, the presence of the museum's collections on the internet has created visibility and therefore has increased the number of requests from the public. The future challenges are related to sustainability issues, namely the museum's need of additional staff and technical equipment in order to adequately serve these requests and further develop the initiative.

Conclusions

I choose this case study as it seemed relevant to me how a museum can digitize, addressing the needs of a modern public and enhancing the ways in which they connect with their history and cultural identity. What seems extremely important for the success of this participatory initiative is the fact that the museum worked in collaboration with knowledgeable partner. I believe this example perfectly illustrates the direct relation between how setting collaborations may open the perspective of becoming a more participatory place and successfully advance a city history museum's mission.

My second case study is focused on the Center of Science and Industry (COSI) in Columbus, Ohio, USA. This case study is extracted from the 5th chapter of Nina Simon's book, *The Participatory Museum*⁷¹. The motivation behind choosing it resides in the fact that this might be considered a more complex participatory example encompassing participatory activities at many levels.

Using Participation at the Center of Science and Industry

The Center of Science and Industry (COSI) is an interactive science center in Ohio whose participatory strategy grew out of crisis. In 2004, due to financial shortage, the center was forced to cut staff, close off galleries and struggled to stay open.

The new appointed director together with the entire team had the mission to demonstrate that COSI was a valuable community asset and investment, and to position the institution as a community 'center of science'. In order to do so they settled many partnerships and projects that established stronger ties with Columbus academic research community, businesses and

⁷¹ Simon, N.: *The Participatory Museum* (Museum2.0, 2010) (<http://www.participatorymuseum.org/chapter5>)

schools.

For example:

- Partnered with researchers from The Ohio State University to provide visitors with access to scientists and the opportunity to engage in real research. The partners co-created the *Labs in Life* public galleries to give visitors the opportunity to interact with real scientists working on research projects related to physiology. Scientists, in the context of the exhibits presented educational programs about their work.
- Hosted researchers in child development and cognition from The Ohio State University who conducted research studies with young children and their parents. Ohio State University's Center for Family Research (housed within COSI) has used COSI exhibits effectively to assist in improving social dynamic for at-risk families.
- Rented 12 000 square feet of gallery space to the local public TV and radio station which began broadcasting and holding public programs at COSI in 2008. They collaborated to host social media meetups, tech events and other series of events that brought together technologists, non-profit groups and digital media enthusiasts. A series of collaborative dialogue programs were hosted that invited community members to talk with scholars about contemporary issues related to science and religion.
- Collaborated with TechColumbus, a science and technology-based incubator for new businesses in town to develop an exhibition which featured innovative work and people from local research and design companies and provided a platform for hosting events with the professional tech community.

Beside these partnerships with researchers, media and business sector, COSI staff members at all levels were encouraged by the management to engage with visitors and the community on the Web and directly at the museum.

A Director of Community Relations was hired to support these efforts and a series of actions were initiated such as:

- attention on engaging families and teenagers from communities which were not the usual visitors of COSI;
- extensive social media efforts in order to engage the visitors (the institution became transparent, asking visitors to contribute programming and marketing ideas);
- Incorporating community-created photos and videos in the institutional web-site;

- Offering more science days and special programs for members, schools and the public;
- Introducing a low cost ‘family access membership’ for families on government support
- Becoming a site for internship, work experiences and learning and working intensively with schools.

In 5 years COSI managed to increase the general attendance and also to expand the diversity of its visitors and participants. From 2008 to 2009, memberships increased from 11 000 to over 18 000 (20% of the memberships were of the low-income ‘family access’ type).

The connections with the community members attracted important numbers of donors and volunteers. Furthermore, despite the economic crisis in 2009, the number of COSI’s members and donors steadily increased. Volunteers provided all kind of help: from social media consulting, iPhone application development, cleaning and painting.

Conclusion

This example describes the efforts made by the management team to connect with the community in different ways not just using a single participatory strategy. They used participatory techniques to reposition the museum within stakeholders, funders, and the public as an essential community hub of science and learning activity. The institution changed from one which a few years earlier was seen as irrelevant for the community to one relevant not only to school audiences, but to a much wider audience of technologists, scientists, and young people.

Part III

Obstacles for implementing participatory practices within the Romanian museum context

The last part of my thesis is dedicated to investigating participation and collaboration matters in the Romanian museum field. As stated in the introductory part, the first hypothesis of my research is that Romanian museums are not using participatory practices in their activities with the public. In order to have a better overview regarding the obstacles and to grasp the perceptions regarding potential future approaches, I conducted a series of interviews. To counter balance subjective perception, I performed also desk analysis of strategies and other normative acts.

Interviews with museum professionals (directors, curators, museum educators) were conducted in three national museums in Bucharest. I also interviewed one coordinator in charge with designing educational programs in museums working for an independent organization and one expert in the field of public policy from the Romanian Ministry of Culture and National Heritage

Lack of incentives at the policy level

Looking in the current strategic plan developed for 2014-2020 (drafted by the Ministry of Culture in consultation with members of civil society), it appears that the general objective for the museum's sector are stressing the importance of developing and diversifying the specific offer of museums by integrating the participatory dimension and emphasizing the role of education.

When asked about the potential encouragements given by the public policies in implementing participatory approaches, all the respondents have assumed that the legal framework is neither restrictive nor encouraging. They described it as being a rather generic framework, containing statements without real mechanisms behind in order to adequately enforce their functioning. There is a general attitude of skepticism coming from the museum professionals when it

comes to public policies specific to museums as well as on their effects in changing the situation. They believe that even very specific provisions would exist in the legal framework; the situation would remain mainly the same.

Raluca Bem Neamu, expert in museum educational programs, currently president of Da'DeCe Association (independent association who develops educational programs for children in museums and other cultural institutions) has mentioned the example with the law regarding the access of people with disabilities in cultural institutions (including museums). She said that although a specific law was issued, there are many museums not properly implementing these provisions.

Virgil Nitulescu, director of The Romanian Peasant Museum and former General Secretary in the Ministry of Culture in 2008, based on his personal experience in the cultural policy domain, has mentioned a series of shortcomings linked generally to the lack of vision and chaotic way of working when it comes to the policy domain. The issue of discontinuity and the changes of different government have particularly been mentioned. He believes that if Romanian museums intend to be more open to different stakeholders in the community, this is only up to each museum's management and motivation, less on the existing legal framework or the financial instruments.

Silvia Rogozea, curator at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, said that participatory approaches are not likely to happen or are very isolated attempts and those who initiate them need to be really motivated to take the initiative forwards on their own efforts.

Raluca Capota (policy expert working in the Department of National Heritage of the Ministry of Culture), when asked whether a top-down approach would better motivate museums to be more open to collaborating with different stakeholders, including the public, answered that from the central authority perspective, Romanian museums enjoy a great deal of autonomy within their activities. She said that museums are subordinated to central or local authorities who are only in charge with financing the operational costs (salary and administrative costs) and the minimal annual programs and projects. The central authority is also in charge with supervising the fulfillment of the objectives within the management plan. There are few cases when the authority asks museums to organize particular events (usually as a result of external demands, bilateral relations). She says that participatory and collaborative approaches are

actually up to each manager as he/she is supposed to fulfill certain objectives contained in their management plans (submitted for the managerial competition according to the Law on the Management of Public Cultural Institutions).

According to her, regulations about museums do not go so 'deep' in areas that do not require standardization. Current regulations are very general, making references to the main functions of museums (preservation, restoration, classification and evidence) since these are main activities that must be performed uniformly by all museums. Regulating the educational programs or other cultural activities within the museum are areas which require creativity and innovation. Any regulation would actually get to be limitative and therefore not favorable. Moreover, she thinks that legal regulations are hard to change. Besides, the Law on Museums and Public Collections is an organic law and it would take time to operate changes or to issue new provisions.

To sum up the above opinions, it becomes evident that neither the museum professionals nor the representative of the Ministry of Culture are not positive about a potential top-down approach that would create a favourable framework for participation and collaboration. Making museum a more participatory place it is rather up to each manager and his endeavours.

In my opinion, this conclusion is likely to open another topic which is related to regulations, particularly to the Law on the management of public cultural institutions⁷² (including museum's directors) and the evaluation of managers and their management plan mentioned above. The regulation (initiated in 2005) introduces the concept of a management contract for a negotiated period of time (usually 3 to 5 years) and a project management (renamed as management plan) based on which the candidate is to be evaluated in the competition. Those who intend to manage a museum are supposed to propose a management plan for the museum in question and to pass an interview. The candidate getting the biggest grade following the interview and a management plan proposed, signs the management contract. The manager is evaluated by the funding authority annually. At the end of the contract, there is a final evaluation, based on a management report and if the manager received a good grade, she/he had the priority in proposing a new management project and have another mandate as a

⁷² Initially named the Government Directive (GD no. 26/2005), replaced by Directive (GD no. 189/2008) and recently modified by Government Directive (GD no. 68/2013).

manager. Anyway, this law raised many controversies especially when it comes to the stage of evaluation.

For example, one of the changes brought lately by Government Directive considers the introduction of a 'periodic evaluation'. This comes in addition to the already existing annual and final evaluation stipulated in the previous form of the normative act. The novelty is that this periodic evaluation can be organized 'whenever the Authority considers necessary' (Art. no 23 and Art. no 36). The formulation is arbitrary and ambiguous, generating the idea of total supremacy and pressure coming from the authority (The Ministry of Culture or another local authority) in relation with the manager of the institution. It could mean also that the political pressure becomes free of any constraints and may intervene whenever considers it necessary. However, political pressure on managers of cultural and artistic public institutions became a common fact lately in Romania. Another article stipulates that a manager's contract could come to an end if 'the image of the institution or the authority is damaged'. It is again an ambiguous formulation which definitely leaves room for interpretation, political abuse or even artistic censorship.

As a conclusion, my comments related to the management of public cultural institutions are intended to stress the fact that these provisions are disadvantaging the managers of public institutions, including museum managers and creates important premises for political interferences in culture. In the same time, I assume that if museums would be run by cultural managers appointed only for their competencies, the chances for museums to benefit from innovative and open attitudes would obviously increase.

Lack of adequate training from museum's staff in approaching participatory techniques and lack of adequate funding

Another obstacle invoked by almost all the respondents was the lack of adequate training and funding in order to approach participatory attitudes. The specialized staff of museums and public collections includes functions such as curator, researcher, conservator and museum technician or architect. These specializations are rather poorly paid (the only exception being researchers) a situation which is often translated into lack of professional motivation.

The professional training of the people working in museums is considered to be unsatisfactory taking into account also the fact that university training is not linked to practicing in museums. Despite the efforts of universities, graduates who come to work in museums do not have sufficient knowledge to deal with the needs in the museum, requiring immediate training. There is a need to improving the formation for museum's staff especially in the field of museum education, cultural management, marketing, public relations in order to adequately respond to the challenges in the modern society.

During the interview, the representative from the Ministry of Culture stated that before the financial crisis, the Ministry has organized a several conferences on topics like marketing and museum education, but currently the budget was seriously reduced and similar activities are no longer possible. Previously, The Ministry of Culture used also to grant some awards for those museums with quality educational programs. Furthermore, due to budgetary constraints, many departments do not have enough people to cover the existing needs. Codruta Cruceanu, museum educator at the Romanian National Museum of Art related that in 2007, before the financial crisis, The Department of Education, Communication, Cultural Projects and Marketig had 16 staff members. Currently there are only 4 people left. The museum was forced to reduce its human resources in proportion of 40%, most of them being qualified museum staff.

Lack of a participatory culture specific to the Romanian society

The lack of a participatory culture at large was seen by most of the respondents a dominant and inherent obstacle regarding the potential of participation in the context of Romanian museums. Often this attitude goes back to the communist legacy (with its top-down approach) when individuals were not encouraged to express their opinions and passive attitudes were encouraged.

According to statistics in recent years, the attendance rate in museums has decreased steadily. About 70% of Romanian did not even visit a museum during a year. Young people visit more often than older (usually in group visits). Generally, those who visit museums are already involved in other cultural activities or are educated people. It seems that Romanian public is hardly attracted to the museum although the visit is perceived as a socially desirable behavior. But then, if museums are considered a desirable behavior from a social and cultural point of

view why the public is not attracted by them? The answer might be linked also to the crisis manifested in the museum sector in Romania after the fall of Communism. I assume this negative trend can be reduced if museums would open more, trying to involve with public, not just treating them as a passive consumers, but as potential contributors and partners.

When asked whether the museum would be open to involve the public in creating content, Codruta Cruceanu (educator at the National Museum of Art) assumed that the museum can not ask the public at large to generate content within the museum since the participatory culture is far from being a characteristic of the Romanian society. According to her, it would mean to lower the quality of the program offered by a museum. Moreover, participatory approaches should be designed by museums with determined groups in community, in the frame of a program structured for a longer period of time (for example working with teenagers and involving them along the school year in different projects and activities within the museum). In her opinion in Romania there is a need to enforce cultural education since early eages and to mentain it along the time. Only this kind of education would generate cultural habits that will persist. Besides, the potential of generating content through web media facilities and connecting with the audience through virtual space is perceived by this respondent as being not trustworthy, creating often superficial content through opinions which are not necessarily backed by consistent knowledge.

I believe this touches a very sensitive issue and somehow explains why, generally, there is a low focus on cooperation with the community and the perception of participatory practices as being amateurish. This idea is actually in contradiction with the concept of 'radical trust' (institutions trusting the users who work with them) from Nina Simon's book mentioned also in the chapter above. Like she said, successful co-creative projects require organizations not only to trust the competencies and motivations of participants, but also to be really interested in their input. Supporting participation means trusting visitors' abilities as creators, remixers and redistributors of content. Unfortunately, this trust can not be applied for the Romanian context and I assume the situation is typical also for all the former communist countries confronted with periods of transition.

For the Romanian context, the perception regarding participation is very much different. The idea that the audience could benefit the institution by supplementing its knowledge through

their contribution is a very rare attitude. Generally, a museum is perceived still as a knowledgeable temple-like institution with no real interest in encouraging other perspectives.

I assume this is a question of mentality which is difficult to change over short periods of time but maybe one of the most basic preconditions in order to encourage participatory attitudes. If there is no motivation and trust towards how the public could benefit the institution, then being participatory can generate just superficial experiences.

Case studies of inter-sectorial linkages (collaborations) developed by public museums in Bucharest.

In this section I will focus my attention on the particular case of three public national museums in Bucharest: The National Art Museum of Romania, The National Museum 'George Enescu' and The National Museum of Contemporary Art. Based on the interviews conducted, reports and other information on their web-sites, I will take examples of collaborations developed in the frame of their educational departments, trying to observe to what extent collaboration is used, with whom and whether these collaborations are just ad-hoc or rather structural, designed for longer periods of time. I will focus on three case studies of collaborations extracted from the above mentioned museums these three museums are among the most visible museums in the cultural landscape of Bucharest, considered also to be attractive to visitors.

Case Study: 'Teenagers' Council' at the National Art Museum of Romania

The National Art Museum (NMAR), the most important art institution of such kind in Romania is centrally located in Bucharest, in the premises of a historical building, the former royal palace. The museum hosts three important art galleries: the European Art Gallery, the Romanian Medieval Art Gallery and the Romanian Modern Art Gallery. The museum has other smaller branch art museums in its custody (The Art Collections Museum, K.H. Zambaccian Museum and Theodor Pallady Museum).

The Department of Education, Communication and Cultural Projects runs a wide range of programs destined to high schools, grade schools, kindergartens, adults and families. When looking on their website, taking into consideration the diversity of the programs developed, it

might be considered one of the most active and innovative departments of education among museums.

A capital contribution to the initial setting of this department and its further development was brought by the involvement of the Association 'Friends of the National Museum of Art of Romania', a non-governmental organisation established in 1998, with the purpose of morally and financially assisting the museum. With their support, especially in the years preceding the financial crisis, a wide range of educational programmes for children, adults and families have been initiated and part of the museum's staff benefited from educational training abroad. Currently, this association is no longer active.

Among the educational programs for public offered in 2013, as enumerated in the museum's annual report:

- Educational programs for schools and kindergartens: active visits and workshops (attended by almost 1 970 children, teachers and educators);
- Programs for families: 41 active visits and workshops (almost 815 children and parents);
- Painting workshops for children in the frame of the 'Saturday Program' (attended by 540 children);
- Programs for adults: 58 guided tours (attended by almost 3 030 persons);
- Programs for teenagers, some of them made in partnership with a series of secondary schools in Bucharest (attended by almost 547 teenagers).

Most of the collaborations in the educational department are made together with schools in Bucharest (through a strategic partnership with Bucharest School Inspectorate), different independent organizations dedicated to people with disabilities and also organizations in the field of art and culture. During the interview conducted with the representative of this museum, in charge also with coordinating educational programs, I found out that usually, the museum is approached by those interested in having a collaborative project. Therefore, the initiative comes from exterior. Moreover, collaborations come usually as a consequence of the financing received through grants offered by The National Cultural Fund Administration, the main national public body financing cultural projects since these organisations need a partner. Another financing opportunity that opens the possibility to initiate collaborative projects is represented by Corporate Foundations such as Orange or Vodafone Foundation. These foundations organize open calls for projects focused on facilitating the access to cultural

activities for people with different disabilities. For example, a similar project is ‘ARTtouch’ financed by Orange Foundation which includes multimedia and augmented reality applications, tactile replicas, textile samples, a ‘sound library’ and an ‘olfactory library’ which provides people with special needs with the experience of a multisensorial exploration of the European Art Gallery. As financing opportunities are not predictable and most of the organizations are highly dependable on their fluctuations, collaborations are unpredictable and spontaneous as well and can not be included in the strategic plan of the museum.

I will focus my attention on a collaborative project initiated by this museum which has a more predictable character being designed in the frame of a complex program with the intention to last on the long run. It is an example of collaboration between the museum and secondary schools in Bucharest, an educational program designed for teen volunteers entitled ‘Teenagers’ Council’ at the National Art Museum (CADO - Romanian short version).

This program launched in 2013 is unique in the context of Romanian museums and was especially designed for young public interested in getting involved actively in the museum’s programmes. The program aims to link museum with its young audiences, through the presence of teens as volunteers, helping to eliminate prejudices that adolescents have about museums and to build a network of support for the museum through which the museum can organize and provide activities and events for young audiences that contribute to cultural, artistic and personal development of adolescents in the community.

Over 22 volunteers were selected during an application call. Teenagers benefited from a specially designed training program enhancing their communication and personal skills in order to enhance their interaction with other teenagers’ colleagues around museum’s artistic content. They fulfill a dual role in the institution: First, they are directly involved as consultants for museum’s staff, they contribute along the process in designing and implementing activities within the program for teenagers, becoming stakeholders in this process. This intends to help the museums in getting closer to young audiences which usually perceive them as dusty and outdated institutions, not concerned with the their needs. Secondly, the team of volunteers from different schools and colleges form a network of ‘brand ambassadors’ in the community, through which the museum can organize and carry out activities for teens, offering a variety of interactive and attractive programs. A facebook page dedicated to the program has been created becoming very popular among participants in

the activities. Short testimonials about the challenges experienced by teenagers along their involvement in different activities are presented in attractive formats on the social media networks (facebook) raising the museum's visibility among teenagers.

This initiative was chosen as a finalist project in the field of arts and culture in the frame of the 13th edition of the 'National Volunteer Gala'.

Fig.1. 'Experiece Art' – musical exploration of one painting (Theodor Aman 'Party with Musicians') in the permanent collection. Activity in the frame of 'Teenagers' Council' at the National Art Museum.



Fig. 2. Training session in the frame of 'Teenagers' Council' at the National Art Museum.



During the interview conducted with the representative of this museum, the program was mentioned as being an example of a participatory educational program with a great impact among teenagers. The success resides in the fact that it was from the beginning designed in the the frame of a more complex program with a specific target and series of activities along the year which encouraged volunteers to involve and contribute in a more structural format, not only through ad-hoc and isolated forms of collaboration. The museum is highly interested in continuing the program, a nucleus of about 5 active volunteers; members of the council, recruited in 2013 are going to be involved in 2014 as well, helping also with promoting the program among new interested teenagers interested to be involved. Together with new selected member, they will continue to design and implement new series of activities for 2014-2015 meant to actively involve their colleagues thus ensuring the sustainability of the program.

Beside ‘Teenagers’ Council’ (CADO) the museum has also a number of student volunteers in almost all its departments. They come from different universities with a profile in art or museology and usually are interested in doing their internship program within the museum.

Case Study: 'Muse. Music. Museum' program at The 'George Enescu' National Museum

The National Museum “George Enescu” is the only museum in Romania with a profile in music. It is dedicated to George Enescu (1881-1955), considered the most important Romanian musician (composer, violinist, teacher, pianist and conductor). The museum was opened in the Cantacuzino Palace, one of the most beautiful buildings in Bucharest, a historical monument. Since 2007, the Cantacuzino Palace is a European Heritage Label monument. The permanent exhibition reunites the donations made by George Enescu and his family, to the Romanian state and to the museum.

According to its special profile, ‘George Enescu’ National Museum supports, through the institution’s permanent cultural programmes, the Romanian and international musical compositions, as well as the interpretative art.

According to statements related to the museum's mission, the institution is also developing educational programmes targeting the young public, aiming to bring the visitor closer to the music, with the help of a special environment and in a stimulating manner.

One recent report shows that the educational department of 'George Enescu' National Museum develops different projects in partnership with cultural institutions, especially schools and other structures with a musical profile, but also with actors in the civil society.

For the purpose of my thesis I will focus my attention on the example of a collaboration developed between the museum and one young association with a profile in cultural education, *Da'DeCe* Association. This association organizes creative educational programs in the frame of different cultural institutions, (including museums), aimed to animate them and transform through interactivity their static exhibitions. Programs are dedicated to families with children between 2-6 years old.

A program entitled 'Muse. Music. Museum' was especially created for 'George Enescu' Museum. The initiative for the program came from *Da'DeCe* Association in 2012 when they applied with this project for a grant offered by the National Cultural Fund Administration (AFCN), the main public body providing funding for cultural projects in Romania. This grant was available only for one year but the project proved to be sustainable in time and is still running at present based on request from the public. Currently, those interested to participate in this program at the museum are supposed to apply and pay a participation fee to the association. Recently the program was improved and renamed into 'Vibrating Museum'.

The proposed activities are interactive, centered on music and movement. Children are supposed to become familiar with the heritage objects in the museum and creatively learn about George Enescu's life and work. The program is an interdisciplinary one, being supported by a museum educator together with musicians playing different instruments. It contains fun games in order to make children more familiar with different timbres of sounds, different instruments and to show them how an orchestra works. It also teaches children how to make their own instruments.

Fig.3. Activities within the program 'Muse. Music. Museum'.



The starting point of the educational program is the museum building and exhibition with the purpose to stimulate children to translate these objects into music and movement.

During the interview conducted with Raluca Bem Neamu, the coordinator of this program representing *Da'DeCe* Association, I found out that the idea of the project came as a need to propose small children music and movement programs in an enjoyable manner in order to make them more familiar to basic concepts in classical music and the personality of George Enescu. This is a rather unique interdisciplinary concept for the Romanian museum field, since museums here usually don't have creative educational programs to address this particular category: small children. The whole educational approach seeks to make young children address culture in a natural, accessible and attractive way likely to develop cultural habits for the future.

The association is developing different creative programs in the frame of other museums also, but their collaboration with 'George Enescu' Museum was mentioned as being among the most stable and successful one. One important success factor mentioned was the fact that museum's staff and management had an open and positive approach regarding this collaboration. The success was also attributed to the fact that the program was well designed in advance, the association having enough time (almost 6 months) to fully develop a concept and to create a team of educators and musicians who worked together. Because at the beginning the program benefited from the grant offered by the Cultural Fund Administration the team developing the program benefited from a certain financial relaxation which opened the possibility to better focus on the quality of the content delivered.

It should be mentioned also that the people from the association who are in charge with developing creative educational programs have expertise in museum education, most of them have worked previously in a department of education within a museum. Being professionals in museum education it is easier for them to be accepted and trusted by museum's professionals who often are reticent in including non professionals in their activities.

Although the museum had a minimal contribution in conceiving and implementing the program, being more like a host for the association's project, the collaboration proved to be valuable for the museum and is supposed to continue.

The representative from *Da'DeCe* Association mentioned that it is not an easy thing to have collaborations within the educational activities of a museum, especially long term

collaborations. According to her, it is difficult to find an open approach from museum's management. Because this kind of collaborations is not encouraged through external incentives, it is only up to the motivation of each museum's management to accept them. Often this is seen as an extra effort for the museum. During the interview it was also mentioned that educational programs developed by *Da'DeCe* Association are often perceived as a competition for the staff working in the education department of a museum. Still, it is well known that educational staff in museums is often deprived of adequate training and means and therefore, they lack the right motivation in order to develop on their own similar initiatives. Taking in consideration the circumstances, one of the association's purposes is also to create a model of pedagogical good practice in museums.

Case Study: Collaborations within the educational department of The National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC)

The National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) was created by the Romanian government in 2001. The museum was founded by the fusion of the National Office for Documentation and Art Exhibition, and the Contemporary Art Department of the National Museum of Art.

In 2004, MNAC moved to Wing E4 of the Parliament Palace (built during Nicolae Ceausescu's communist regime) considered one of the world's largest and expensive civilian buildings with an administrative function. Currently the museum is considered among the most important contemporary art museums in Eastern Europe. MNAC's exhibition program focuses on temporary monographic or thematic exhibitions. Emerging Romanian and international artists are presented alongside more established practitioners. Architecture, design and photography are common threads within the exhibition program. MNAC periodically hosts contemporary dance, music, theatre and film screenings projects. In the same time, the museum was frequently involved in cross-cultural projects with marginalized communities as organized by its partners.

Even though is not centrally located, the museum managed to promote itself as a popular venue for important cultural events, most of them organized in the café space and the terrace located on the top floor.

According to the report made by the the Department of Education Communication and Marketing in the past 5 years, it can be observed that the museum is giving much attention to organizing educational activities around its temporary or permanent exhibitions. Educational activities are set either by museum's staff alone or by involving different collaborators. A more structural collaboration in the field of education is that with 'Creative Studio' Organization, who organizes programs for children and parents built around an exhibition theme which also include visits to the exhibition space (with the participation of parents) and workshops for children. Programs are designed with the aim to make children become familiar with contemporary art and experience various techniques during workshops: painting, collage, installations etc.

In 2012 The Association Friends of MNAC was created and started to be regularly involved also in educational activities. Ad-hoc collaborations involving a range of independent associations, with interest in art, culture or education, schools and universities, other professionals in the field of creative or media industries (advertising and communication agencies, IT companies etc.) are dominant.

For example, in 2012 and 2013, the museum organized in collaboration with organizations in the field of media, PR, Advertising a complex program called 'Workshops L@ MNAC' ('Workshops at MNAC') which consisted of 26 workshop divided in 4 modules: Advertising & PR, Video Games, Special Effects, Press & Editing. The museum developed these professional workshops for those interested to know more about the media and creative industries, providing them with the opportunity to learn and practice with some of the most renowned practitioners of those fields. The program was organised on request, participants were supposed to pay a participation fee.

'Little advertising' was another program financed and organized in 2012 by the advertising company 'Brand Support Project' in collaboration with 'Creative Studio' Organization, and the School Inspectorate of Bucharest and MNAC.

The education program was the first of its kind in Romania and consisted of workshops in advertising dedicated to school children. Children outside the school environment were taught to create just with scissors, magazines and pencil a promotional poster on different themes.

Formulating a collaborative project proposal for The Art Museum of Timisoara.

In this section my intention is, considering the local context, to propose potential collaborations between The Art Museum of Timisoara and different stakeholders in the community with the aim to provide engaging educational and cultural programs as part of the museum's activities. I focused my attention on this particular case since I have a better insight of the context in which this museum operates. Another reason was the fact that my research on museums described above was focused only on national museums located in the Bucharest, the capital city. In this part I will try to extend the area of my research by taking the example of a county museum in Romania.

The starting point of this proposal is the hypothesis stated in the introduction, namely that inter-sectorial linkages between museum and a series of stakeholders in the community would be an opportunity for museums to open more and break down some barriers to accessing museum's collections, increasing its attractiveness among visitors, especially among non-visitors.

Museum's Context

The Art Museum is located in Timisoara, the third largest Romanian city, with a multiethnic population (Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Serbs), considered the informal capital city of the historical region Banat. The present museum was initially only an art department within the bigger regional Banat Museum, which hosted also departments of history, archaeology, ethnography and natural sciences.

The first painting recorded in the Banat Museum's accounts was in 1879. A donation coming from Ormos Zsigmond, art collector and historian, was later added. In time, the painting patrimony was completed by new donations and acquisitions. In 1987 the art branch within Banat Museum moves in the very historical center, Unirii Square, in one wing of the Old Prefecture Palace, called 'Baroque Palace'. This palace, built in 1752, remains one of the most emblematic historical buildings in the city. Decorative motifs reveal a strong Viennese lineage, which recognizes particular model 'Palace Kinsky' in Vienna.

Anyway, the space allocated at that time for the art collection was not large enough to host the entire amount of exhibits. After 1990 the palace went through a long process of renovation and it was only at the end of 2006 when it was finally opened for the public. The Banat Museum art department was turned the same year into a county museum by itself, with a collection which, at the present, numbers more than 8 500 exhibits.

The museum has a unique permanent display of paintings and personal belongings by the Romanian realist painter Corneliu Baba (90 pieces). Other sections include three collections of Romanian contemporary art, European paintings and decorative art. The collections of contemporary art include important art works by ‘Sigma’ Group, a unique neo-avant-garde artistic movement in Romania, created in Timisoara in the ’70s. There are also collections of Romanian paintings, including religious ones, which currently are not exposed due to lack of adequate space. The ground floor is dedicated to temporary exhibitions. According to a recent report in 2013, a series of 9 temporary exhibitions have been organized. One of the most successful was ‘Goya: Chronicler of All Wars’, organized in collaboration with ‘Cervantes’ Institute in Bucharest attracting about 4 926 guests.

The museum is subordinated to the Timis City Council and operates under the Law of Museums and Public Collections (nr. 311/2003). The City Council is the main funding authority (securing 90% of the financing) in charge also with the management evaluation and the approval of the yearly program of the museum.

‘**Museum means more**’⁷³ (a proposal for the Art Museum of Timisoara)

Description:

‘Museum Means More’ is a program consisting of a series of educational and cultural activities, meant to make the museum a more relevant institution within the community. The activities envisioned are directly or indirectly linked to museum’s collections and exhibitions. The program will be addressed to a diversity of visitors, stimulating self-reflection, intercultural dialogue, and interaction and trying to inspire the visitors from a contemporary perspective. The museum will become an arena for interaction between artworks, visitors, museum and society.

⁷³ The title was inspired during my research by a similar initiative developed by the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow, Poland. (<http://www.en.galiciajewishmuseum.org>).

Desired frame:

Between 2015-2016 (pilot project) aiming to become a permanent program.

Reasons that museum should consider this proposal:

Art museums in particular have a reputation as being imposing and elitist, not encouraging the public to visit or revisit them. Their focus is on great artworks and great artists, rather than on different interpretation, dialogue, experimentation and the art-making process. It is vital to show that the museum is not a temple, but a place where visitors can experience also a series of enjoyable activities intended to help visitors to develop their skills facilitating in the same time the identification with their heritage and culture.

The Art Museum of Timisoara became an institution of its own of its own recently (2006) and it is still in the process of building its identity within the community. This identity could be innovative, different from other museums in the city. The intention is to bring art and the audience together in a museum that not only houses and cares for a collection, but it is one of those places where is good to spend time and enjoy cultural and artistic events.

It will make the institution more relevant for the community at large, attracting new categories of public, particularly young public which usually perceive museums as dusty and outdated institutions, not concerned with the needs. By getting closer to its community and initiating different collaborative projects the museum can open new perspectives including new financing opportunities.

Audience targeted:

For educational activities the target audience is made out of small children and families, but also teenagers and adults. Different learning activities should be adapted to specific groups taking in consideration the age or the level of knowledge regarding arts.

In regards to the series of other connected activities such as artist's talks, conversations, performances, concerts, screenings etc., the target audience should not be necessarily determined by age. Rather than predetermining a targeted audience age for the events, it is best to allow and encourage intergenerational visitors, as it is extremely beneficial for different age groups in the community to interact in a participatory setting. The events would allow individuals to connect, share opinions and experiences with one another.

Goal:

As suggested by the title ('Museum Means More'), the overall goal of the entire program is to transform the perception regarding the museum among a wide range of audiences, and rise interest for the proposed activities.

The overall goal was set taking into consideration the fact that not only this particular museum, but Romanian museums at large, are continuously faced with a decreasing number of their visitors. Since this trend is expected to continue for the years to come, it is up to each museum's management to make efforts to vitalize their activities and to come up with meaningful, interpretative narratives for its collections and displays that would benefit the public. It is a fact that the future of cultural institutions will lay more and more in interaction. There is a need for the museum to become more relevant, to invite visitors to get closer to the life of the museum and its heritage. The museum, as a public institution, has the mission to effectively serve its community.

Purpose:

To enhance the knowledge and enjoyment, to encourage return visits and word-of-mouth promotion and provide a platform for social interaction within the community members.

Activities:

The activities which I intend to propose are related to launching a series of interdisciplinary learning programs by involving different artists, art experts or organizations with an expertise in art or education within the community, in order to encourage a culture of doing and sharing in museum, rather than one based on passivity.

For kids and families:

- Families with children ages 3–6 (sharing stories around museum's objects, sketching, exploring art and music together, other museum activities organized in collaboration with artists or musicians intended to bring works of art to life).
- Families with children of all ages (creating artistic works right next to those in the Museum's galleries, focusing on different materials and techniques every time, with family-friendly activities led in collaboration with artists).
- Families with children of all ages and adults (learning about the techniques that were

used to create different works of art through handling tools and materials with guidance provided by museum's professionals or art experts).

- Families with children ages 5-10 (involving kids along with guiding experts in photography that will teach them how to realize a postal card having as source of inspiration one art work in the museum. The output will be printed, the kids having the possibility to deliver a copy to relatives or friends. This will work as a promotional tool for the museum's exhibition. Similar to this concept, children can also create posters on different themes along with experts in advertising).
- Families with children of all ages, but also teenagers and adults (Storytelling: story-led interpretations that can help people to 'read' objects as cultural artifacts, by giving them meaning, purpose and context. Stories represent a good tool to create an emotional relationship with museum's content. This technic can be used for example in relation to the impressive existing collection of decorative art objects in the museum).

For teenagers:

- Ages 16-19 (organizing an open door day at the museum for high school students in order to select a nucleus of volunteer teenagers interested in getting involved actively in the museum's programmes. Along with museum's staff they are supposed to design and implement appealing activities along one year that would address young audiences).
- Ages 11-18 (for those interested in applying to an art high school or university, the museum could provide monthly classes of sketches starting from works of art in the museum, with the guidance of an artist-instructor. Teenagers would have the opportunity to experiment with different drawing approaches and build an useful portfolio).
- Ages 15-18 (Career Laboratories with museum professionals or art experts in order to explore careers in the arts and build adequate skills in special workshops).
- All ages (Screening of documentaries and art movies followed by debates around different issues confronting the contemporary society).

For adults:

- All levels of experience ('Sunday at the museum': participants can gain insight into

the museum, its exhibitions, and its projects through engaging afternoon programs organized around specific themes. Each program features a combination of lectures, films, artists' talks, readings, panels, demonstrations, or performances presented by artists, curators or scholars).

- All levels of experience (Art making programs based on interaction with artists. Participants draw inspiration from the collection as they make their own work and learn about old and new artistic processes).
- All levels of experience (Artist demonstrations: visitors can experience art directly, as they watch artists create in real time and engage in an informal conversation about artistic processes).
- All levels of experience (casual experiences around art where open conversation among visitors are encouraged in an unconventional dedicated space in the museum).
- All levels of experience (events inspired by the 'Slow Art Day' concept: participants visit museum to look at preassigned pieces of art spending at least five to ten minutes on each one. They then meet up with a volunteer coordinator and other participants for having lunch or coffee to discuss the experience. It is assumed that when people look slowly at a piece of art, they make discoveries. The most important discovery they can make is that they can see and experience art without an expert);
- All levels of experience (Art appreciation classes: participants may gain new appreciation for the history of art generally, with focus on the museum's collection through provocative lectures that makes the audience to become acquainted with art in an unconventional way).

In order to lead the activities proposed above, the museum needs to collaborate, to bridge different groups and to facilitate the production of relevant and enjoyable learning opportunities. Art could constitute a mean for the museum and different stakeholders to collaborate, activating the museum as a space for making not just passive contemplation. A museum functioning as a cultural hub creates a variety of multidisciplinary, community-led happenings which alter the museum space and establishes an active atmosphere, making diverse interactions, deeper learning and richer social experiences.

Sources of support:

Collaborations between the museum, local organizations and companies activating in cultural,

educational, creative industries field as well as independent artists and experts can effectively enrich through their knowledge and skills the activities and services provided by the museum. The museum should find also partners in order to outsource the opening of a space at the ground floor of the museum, which will be designed as an 'Art Shop' with a 'Coffee Corner' space included. This space would create a friendlier and inviting atmosphere in the museum's building and could be also an adequate venue for many educational or social activities organized within the museum. Taking into consideration the financial shortcomings faced by the museum, it would be more appropriate that the museum work in partnership with another organizations to make more effective use of museum's space.

One particular example of a potential strategic partner in the local community for the Art Museum of Timisoara is Triade Interart Foundation. This is a non governmental organization operating since 2000, with a rich expertise in the artistic field, which aims at animating the cultural space at the crossroads of visual arts and other forms of artistic expression. Among its activities: art exhibits, cultural activities, educational activities (seminars, art history classes), and musical activities. This organization has also an important expertise in publishing art books and materials related to art. The museum could use this expertise in order to publish quality materials related to its collections or other educational materials intended for the public. Moreover, one print studio within the museum could be created with their help in order to ensure a better and attractive dissemination of art in the form of reproductions, screen printings, posters, postcards, diaries, calendars or other particular quality prints on demand. Anyway, this activity should not be restricted only to museum's collections. In this way art becomes more attractive, especially to young public.

In expanding its activities, the museum should involve more volunteer work. Especially teen volunteers should be actively involved in conceiving activities at the museum, with the purpose to make the museum a desirable place for teenagers who could also benefit from training on different skills. Volunteers are a valuable resource and the museum should pay attention to motivate them and look more for their participation and inputs.

Funding opportunities accessed by museum alone or through partnering with other institutions should be envisioned by the managerial team in the future. The museum should make additional efforts and apply for national funding (the National Cultural Fund Administration). Also, together with other international partners, the museum can apply to the recently launched European funding provided by the 'Creative Europe' Programme.

Facilities:

The Art Museum of Timisoara has an available space (around 100 square meters, located close to the main entrance). Currently, this space is not used as it is not adequate to host any temporary or permanent exhibition. Taking into account its accessibility, it can be designed as an inviting space for the public (with Art Shop and a Coffee Corner included). The space would provide a more relaxed and casual atmosphere for the public and can also be used to host part of the envisioned educational, artistic and cultural activities mentioned above.

Another space within the museum with a great potential is the Baroque Hall. This is one of the most emblematic and generous spaces for the museum, located on the first floor. Although it has been recently renovated, it lacks vitality. Currently its use is limited to organizing press conferences, and other events among museum's experts. The management decided also to hire it to some corporate events external to the museum's activities in order to obtain some additional revenues. By opening it to the public and organizing a wider series of events (artist's talks, screenings, performances etc) this space would not be perceived just as an elitist space and would gain a new significance on the local cultural map of the city, attracting new audiences. Museum would be therefore recognized as playing a more important role in both shaping and conveying a sense of identity and a sense of place in the local community.

Conclusions

Although it might sound idealistic, this proposal coming from a museum nonprofessional but rather from a museum keen visitor, was meant to stress the idea that museum should expand its traditional roles and become an arena of interaction between artworks and different stakeholders in the community in order to make it more appealing for the people visiting it. I assume collaborations and partnerships are good opportunities to realize this aim. Museums in general need to reach out and build partnerships since they have core skills and expertise that should be used to complement the skills and expertise of other organizations.

Still, it is up to the management of each institution to be more open and find creative solutions that would bring audiences closer to museums. Even though mentalities are not changing over night, it is necessary to encourage a new philosophy so that museums are for

people. The public must be encouraged to visit and for this reason it is necessary for museums to propose relevant activities and fulfill their mission as a public institution.

Part IV

Conclusions and recommendations.

Throughout my research my intention was to investigate whether collaborative and participatory activities could constitute solutions that would help museums in Romania to improve their activities and become relevant cultural institutions for their audiences. For this purpose, I researched international literature about concepts and practices specific to contemporary museology, particularly theories and technics specific for participatory museums but also different theories and international practices related to collaborations within the museum field.

My intention was to find out to what extent similar practices are implemented in the local context. In order to get closer to the realities within the Romanian museum field I have done desk research followed by unstructured interviews conducted with museum professionals (educators, directors, curators) in three museums from Bucharest, a representative from the Ministry of Culture and a representative of an independent association in charge with organizing educational programs in museums.

At the beginning of this research I set two hypotheses. The first one was that Romanian museums are not using participatory practices in their activities with the public.

I focused my analysis about participation in museums taking into consideration definitions in the specific literature researched which claims that *a participatory cultural institution is a place where visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content*. Based on the same literature, four different potential forms of visitor participation in museums were identified: *contribution, collaboration, co-creation and hosting*.

According to this definition, it became evident that, generally, Romanian museums are not implementing similar participatory practices within their activities. Desk research and the interviews conducted with a series of museum professionals in Bucharest were meant to find out how the concept of participation is perceived, which are the main obstacles in implementing participation within the local museum context, and also the potential perspectives for the future.

Lack of participatory practices within museums as deduced from the research and interviews conducted are mainly attributed to obstacles such as:

- Lack of incentives at the policy level.
- Lack of a participatory culture specific to the Romanian society
- Lack of adequate training from museum's staff in approaching participatory techniques and lack of adequate funding

The policies related to museum field contain very general regulations which are not specifically encouraging audience involvement in museum's activities. In other words, laws are neither encouraging nor discouraging it. Even though in the strategic plan developed for 2014-2020 (drafted by the Ministry of Culture in consultation with members of civil society), it appears that the general objective for the museum's sector are stressing the importance of developing and diversifying the specific offer of museums by integrating the participatory dimension and emphasizing the role of education, this is not likely to really make a contribution to the present situation as long as clearly defined mechanisms to implement this general provisions are not going to work behind.

There is a dominant attitude of skepticism coming from the museum professionals when it comes to public policies specific to museums as well as on their effects in changing the situation. It is assumed that even very specific provisions would exist in the legal framework; the situation would stay mainly the same. On the other hand, those in charge with the policy making are assigning the responsibility mainly on the shoulders of the managerial teams in museums and their own motivation for innovating with new museum practices.

It becomes evident that neither the museum professionals nor the representative of the Ministry of Culture are not positive about a potential top-down approach that would create a favourable framework for participation. Making museum a more participatory place it is rather up to museum's professionals and their striving.

Related to the second obstacle, the lack of a participatory culture within the Romanian society, I believe that this comes as a consequence of long doctrinary policy, centralized system and deeply controlled society without giving possibilities for personal, civil initiatives which is not specific only to the Romanian society, but to post-socialist countries.

It is a fact that Romania, as a post-socialist country in transition, is marked by lack of proactive behaviors caused by resistance to communist legacy (with its top-down approach) and the transition period. Development of civil society and increase of civil activism in public life is much slower than in countries without socialist legacy. Perhaps this obstacle is also among the main causes for the low focus of museums on cooperation with the community and the perception of participatory practices as being amateurish.

Additionally, the lack of adequate training from museum's staff in approaching participatory techniques and the lack of adequate funding is one of the most evident and pressing issues not only in the museum field, but for the entire cultural sector in the Romania. Unfortunately, too often, this is used as an excuse by museums and is translated into a passive and demotivated attitude.

Apart from the above stated obstacles for implementation participatory practices by museums, I consider there are some which are much broader and are not connected specifically with these practices, affecting its potential development much more than the lack of policy incentives, financial resources or fear of amateurism. They are rather related to general lack of focus on audience, local communities and its needs among majority of Romanian museums.

To sum up conclusions for the first hypothesis, museums are passing through transition times marked by redefinition of museums' concept and displays, lack of proactive behavior, lack of top-down incentives, finances and adequate equipments, lack of trained and motivated staff. All the shortcomings are likely to create in the future a situation in which approaching participatory techniques is far from being among priorities for Romanian museums. Findings regarding the topic of obstacles in approaching participatory practices within museums show that the first hypothesis set at the beginning of my thesis was valid.

My secondary hypothesis stated in the introduction is that collaboration between museums and different actors (educational intitutions, different organizations with art or cultural profiles, business companies) in the community are able to create the premises for making museums more visible and relevant within the community and to bring new audiences. By securing collaborations with different actors and benefiting from their expertize, the museum

is more likely to diversify, raise the quality and the attractiveness for its activities, especially in a climate of public financial cuts .

In order to research this hypothesis I limited my analysis to collaborations developed by museums in the frame of their departments of education. For this purpose I choose also three case studies of collaboration from three different museums in Bucharest: The National Museum of Art, 'George Enescu' National Museum and The National Museum of Contemporary Art.

During the interviews conducted and researching the museum's web-sites or reports, I found out that collaborations lead in the frame of the educational departments by the three museums mentioned above, have some common characteristics. First of all, it is obvious that they have a great deal of knowledge and experience at their disposal, but sharing this knowledge occurs too infrequently and is poorly organised. Usually, collaborations are reduced to occasional manifestations, without real impact for the audience and without continuity. Collaborations between different actors and museums in the frame of their educational activities made with the purpose to benefit from other institutions' or organizations' expertise and to attract new categories of visitors are not perceived by museums as a priority and are not clearly stated in their strategic plans.

Very often collaborations comes as a consequence of proposals made by external actors, museums are rarely initiating them. In other words, it seems like the attitude towards collaboration is rather reactive than proactive. This passive attitude toward collaboration is often attributed to the lack of adequate resources (human and financial resources) necessary for conducting this kind of initiatives.

As seen also in the case studies of collaboration detailed in the previous chapter, staff in the educational departments of museums are usually developing programs alone, cases when collaborations with different actors happen are mainly generated by the existence of financing opportunities attracted from exterior such as funding obtained from the National Cultural Fund Administration or those obtained through corporate funding (Orange or Vodafone Foundation) in the frame of some educational programs dedicated to people with disabilities.

Anyway, as funding opportunities are limited to certain periods of time, making collaboration sustainable is a rather difficult thing to accomplish. Cases of collaboration are also generated through museums hosting different educational programs designed for children and run by independent associations with a profile in art education. Participating in these programs requires a payment of additional costs for those interested. In these cases the museum has minimal involvement in creating the content of the educational activities or promoting it, the partners are fully in charge with designing the concept of a program, implementing or promoting it to the public. However, museums hosting educational programs run by independent associations or other profile organizations with expertise is not a common situation. It is rather an exception, usually museums are reticent in involving external actors within their educational departments and often alternative external programs are perceived as a competition by museum's staff. The successful case of collaboration developed along two years which is still running at 'George Enescu' National Museum (the program 'Muse.Music.Museum' developed by *Da'DeCe* Association described in the previous chapter) it is rather an exception than a common practice within museum field and comes as a result of the different approach from the managerial team of this particular museum .

Collaborations are sometimes developed also with Friends of Museum associations. Museums are benefiting from their contribution since they often provide expertise in different fields and also secure the adequate financing. Anyway, majority of the museums rarely have operative and active Friends of Museum as collaborators. Among the three museums researched, only Friends of Museums at the National Museum of Contemporary Art was mentioned as being currently an active partner.

When it comes to collaborations developed between museums and school institutions, the situation was described by museums educators interviewed as being rather critical. This form of collaborations is not encouraged at the central levels. For example, The Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Culture are marked by a lack of communication and vision in developing common adequate frameworks of collaboration in order to motivate schools and museums to use each other's capacities and make strategic partnerships that could bring significant outcomes on both sides. Collaborations between schools and museums are often generated ad-hoc, marked by discontinuity and missing relevance.

It is mandatory for museums to link their educational content to school curriculum and other formal learning programmes in order to become sorts of laboratories for schools and meet the needs of formal learning. Simple occasional visits made by schools to museums are not likely to bring any significant contribution to pupil's education. They need to have some recurrence and to be integrated in the frame of complex programs in order to compensate the formal school classes.

The study case described in the previous chapter, 'Teenagers' Council' at the National Art Museum of Romania, represents an example of good practice of collaboration between museums and secondary schools, but still, is an exception in the field. Involving volunteer teenagers in the frame of a complex program and asking for their input in conceiving appealing educational activities along the year in order to address their needs and interests is not something that museums usually do in Romania. It is actually a premiere. The success of this project is more related to the specific motivation developed by museum's staff in the educational department, one of the most active and experimented departments of education among museums in Bucharest and Romania.

Evidence is that in Romania museums rarely establish collaboration in the field of education with private companies. The example with the National Museum of Contemporary Art is, again, an exception. This example described how along 2012 and 2013 a series of workshops grouped in four distinct topics: Advertising & PR, Video Games, Special Effects, Press & Editing were organized in collaboration with companies specialised in PR, Media or Advertising. Anyway, the collaboration did not prove to be a sustainable one since it is no longer working.

To conclude my findings regarding the second hypothesis I would say that study cases analyzed in the previous chapter are examples of good practices regarding the effects of inter-sectorial collaboration in the field of museum education. Partners from outside the museum sector are most likely to bring important additional knowledge which enables museums to provide higher quality and attract new audiences. The important issue here is to be constituted into structural collaborations in the frame of a more complex program running for longer periods of time and not just ad-hoc or occasional instances of collaboration. This conclusion validates my second hypothesis.

Anyway, at this moment, inter-sectorial collaboration within the museum field in Romania stands far behind the potential it has for making a significant contribution. Although separate cases of successful collaborative projects can be traced, they are still isolated attempts and can not be generalized to the entire museum field.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Culture:

- Research into inter-sectorial collaboration strategies that will allow public cultural institutions, including museums, to operate with new visions.
- Create a system of incentives and support to museums which focus their attention on engaging the public within their activities (funds, expert support, awards);
- Create a system of incentives and support to museums which develop inter-sectorial long term collaborations with different actors (educational institutions, different organizations with art or cultural profiles, business companies);
- Facilitate training programs for museum's professionals in the field of cultural animation, communication, audience development, public relations;
- Evaluation of museum managers should be made in accordance with the degree to which a museum managed to get involved in collaborative inter-sectorial projects or to create premises for involving with the public in different museum's activities;
- Simplify the legislative framework and facilitate the opportunities for museums to attract extra-budgetary resources and increase their entrepreneurial actions;
- Create a common agreement with the Ministry of Education that would link educational activities in museums with the existing curricula in schools in order to provide regular and relevant educational content for pupils throughout the school year;
- Promote examples of good practice.

Recommendations for museums:

- Treat planning of inter-sectorial collaborations programs and definition of their aims and objectives as an essential part of overall strategic planning of museum;
- Museums should not use the lack of money coming from the Ministry of Culture as an excuse not to start changes, but rather take a proactive approach in attracting diverse

sources of funding. Additional efforts should be spent on securing finances by applying for grants to local, national and international donors, associations and foundations. For example, through The Creative Europe Programme, museums can access, in partnership with other similar international institutions, funding necessary for training their staff.

- Becoming a site open to volunteers, internship, work experiences and learning, and working intensively with schools;
- Work closely with schools to allow teachers to make the best use of the educational resources available and to integrate museum objects into the theoretical content of the school curriculum;
- Organize museum education programs where both public and museum staff contribute as partners, encouraging critical thinking and creativity;
- Extensive social media efforts in order to engage with visitors. Museum web-sites should become more user friendly and transparent encouraging also visitors to contribute with ideas through web media facilities;
- Incorporate community-created content in the institutional web-site;
- Inreach programs: inviting community curators from stakeholders groups, opening up opportunities for interaction and user generated content, letting people take part and creating a platform for democratic discussion, where many voices and perspectives are shared;
- Outreach programs: getting outside their walls and working in complementary places with groups they want to reach.

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