



# Museum Policies in Europe 1990 – 2010: Negotiating Professional and Political Utopia

Lill Eilertsen & Arne Bugge Amundsen (eds)  
EuNaMus Report No 3



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Cover photo: André Gali. Five hundred people formed a symbolic circle around the National Gallery in Oslo 2009 to protest against plans to relocate the museum.



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# Table of contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	5
<b>From Politics to Policy: Two Decades of National Museum Development in France (1989-2012)</b>	
Felicity Bodenstern & Dominique Poulot .....	13
<b>Norwegian Cultural Policy and Its Effect on National Museums</b>	
Lill Eilertsen .....	43
<b>Museum Policy in Transition from Post-Soviet Conditions to Reconfigurations in the European Union</b>	
Kristin Kuutma & Paavo Kroon .....	69
<b>Museum Policies in Hungary 1990 – 2010</b>	
Péter Apor .....	91
<b>From Ivory Towers to Visitor Centres? Hungarian Museum Policy in the Context of the European Union</b>	
Gábor Ébli.....	101
<b>Cultural Policy in Greece, the Case of the National Museums (1990-2010): an Overview</b>	
Alexandra Bounia .....	127
<b>European Union Approaches to Museums 1993-2010</b>	
Maria Höglund.....	157
<b>Author presentations</b> .....	189
<b>Eunamus – the project</b> .....	192



## Introduction

As central producers of national narratives, national museum institutions have the power not only to define a nation's relationship to the past, but also to reflect on its present situation. In a Europe realizing the impact of globalization and mass human migration, the notion of "national identity" is put to debate, and museums are accordingly being used by policy makers as instruments for negotiating identity, diversity, and change. To what extent and in which ways this happens differ of course from region to region, as national museum policies (and debates on such policies) have developed differently around Europe.

This EuNaMus report studies how nations develop policy in order to deploy national museums in national redefinition. It focuses on museum utopias that have been negotiated by politicians and museum professionals in Europe 1990-2010. This report will establish some major perspectives on the development of museum political discourses during the last 20 years by comparing museum political material from five different countries: France, representing former colonial empires; Norway, demonstrating the Nordic countries' variety of minorities and migrants; Estonia and Hungary, exemplifying the challenges of former European Soviet states; and Greece, allowing us to investigate the uses of classical antiquity. We also present the EU as an actor in the museum field. The cultural political development of each of the five countries in question will be presented separately, but with parallels drawn, contrasts pointed out, and genuine cases illuminated. The report material will help us discuss two main issues:

- *How policy makers in different regions of Europe identify national museums as instruments for negotiating identity, diversity and change.*
- *How national museums in different regions of Europe formulate their position as political and cultural institutions.*

## Important Findings

We began this investigation by expanding upon our two framing issues:

1. *How do policy makers in different regions of Europe identify national museums as instruments for negotiating identity, diversity and change?*  
How is the role of national museums to be conceived in a Europe realizing the impact of and challenges represented by globalization and mass human migration? In which ways is the present and future role of national museums discussed in media and public debates?
2. *How do national museums in different regions of Europe formulate their position as political and cultural institutions?*  
How is cultural cohesiveness built and political change negotiated through the implementation of museum policies? Are the voices of old and new minorities heard and taken into account?

We end the investigation with our central finding: the situation, and hence the answers to the referred questions, differ quite distinctly between the analysed countries, yet commonalities exist.

***1. Policy makers in different regions of Europe identify national museums as instruments for negotiating identity, diversity and change in similar ways.*** That is, the reports show that there are surprisingly few differences between “old” and “new” national states in Europe with regard to museum policies. To a certain extent it is valid to say that almost all European national states were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, since the prevailing ideology of nations and nationhood was fully developed during that century. However, a national state like France in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had a very long integrated history as a separate state, while states like Hungary, Norway and Greece after a shorter or longer period were re-constructed as independent states in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and the Baltic republics did not become independent until early 20<sup>th</sup> Century – in all cases as results of long political and/or military conflicts. Hungary and the Baltic states were re-occupied by a colonial empire in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and were not politically independent until after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989/1990. In this respect, then, France is an “old” national state and Hungary, Norway, Greece and Estonia are “new” national states.

**In the museum field, however, both ‘old’ and ‘new’ national states developed strong national museums focussing on the national history.** Eventually the national history served as basis for the narration of the history of colonial expansions: National museums in France, which is an “old” nation state and a former colonial power, focussed on the European and international position of the nation state. Being rather indisputable in earlier decades the reports from these five countries unanimously point at the fact that **since the 1990’s museum policy has been an arena for political and academic debates on the relevance of the national narratives and of the national perspectives in the museum field.**

**With Norway as an exception, all the analysed countries have passed *new acts on museums since 1990*:** Estonia 1996, Hungary 1997, Greece and France 2002. These acts have contributed to defining organisational structures on a national level, in addition to determining which standards are expected by museums and which criteria should be used for state funding of museums. Norway has no general museum act, but museum policy has been actively developed through a series of white papers defining organisational structures, general scope and specific aims of Norwegian museums.

**The wide *implications of national museum policies* being developed at the top political levels of society are very often tied into larger national political agendas and debates.** In Greece, national pride and autonomy has been at stake in the discussions on the Parthenon marbles, while the questions related to democratic access to the national cultural heritage seem to have been discussed according to a right-left political distinction. In Hungary, the museum policy questions have been related to the revision of the political past (Holocaust, Communism) and to a right-left political distinction at the Government level. In both Hungary and Estonia, the discussions on museum policy have also been closely linked to the question of liberal-capitalist economy and the consequences for cultural institutions in general. French museum policy has been highly influenced by different presidents creating cultural monuments. In addition the

liberal and radical reactions to neo-nationalism and alleged racism from right-wing positions have had a severe influence on the museum policy debates. Norway's state museum policy has been the object of major political interest and of minor public debate, with one key exception: the National museum of art, architecture and design has seen opponents fiercely defend the national canon of art being displayed in the "National Gallery." In general, however, museum policy in Norway seems to have become instrumental to the state ideologies of multiculturalism and minority rights.

***2. National museums in different regions of Europe formulate their position as political and cultural institutions following principles of cultural diversity and inclusion of minority voices—but the emphasis given to this varies.*** Most European countries have by now ratified, accessed or approved of the UNESCO convention of October 20, 2005 on the protection and promotion of *cultural diversity*. Preceded by a critique that seems to have been increasing in many parts of Europe since the 1990's, it therefore seems correct to state that critical voices against the limitations put to human understanding and agency by the 19th and 20th centuries' national ideologies have contributed heavily to regulate current museum policymaking all over Europe. However, this critique, expressed by many leading politicians and museum professionals and museum organisations for 20 years, does not necessarily mean that this issue dominates the actual museum policies all over Europe. There are obvious reasons for a renewed interest in national narratives and national museums as expressions of national identities in several of the "new" European states such as Estonia and Hungary. The changes in museum policy in Greece on the top level have also still had mostly national dimensions, focussing on the importance of the full display of the Parthenon marbles in the new Acropolis Museum of Athens. Museum policy referring to the growing number of immigrants has been marginal this far.

Still, **the overall rhetorical dimension in the debates and decisions over museum policy in Europe since 1990 has been the explicit need for change.** The pre-Communist states have expressed their need for revision of a museum policy defined by Communist dictatorships, making it possible to express a national and to a large extent ethnic identity with reference to national narratives and national displays in museums. Post-colonial France has expressed a need to open its national museums to new groups of visitors and make museums into arenas for cultural dialogue and understanding. The reference for this rhetoric of change has dominantly been the immigrant population from old French colonies. In Norway, sharing many elements of historical narratives with Greece as another "new" European nation state, the national museum policy quite predominantly has been changed in a multicultural direction with few or very critical references to the old national narratives prevailing in museums.

***Cultural diversity and minority rights have been included in museum policies all over Europe during the last 20 years, but the actual situation is manifested differently in each of the analysed countries.*** In France, immigrants are included in museum policy as part of the "new visiting public" and of cultural dialogues that are expected to take place in national museums. The social and cultural efficiency of this new museum policy has, however, been questioned, and it has not overthrown other seemingly still-influential positions in the museum policy debates, such as the need for national museums to reflect on French history and values

(albeit in European perspectives) or on the relationship between French culture and other civilisations. In Greece, national minorities like the Roma or the Turks have been included in the museum policy – but as it seems not very successfully. Interestingly, the Greek Roma have expressed their right to be included in the national narratives of Greece instead of having their own museums. In Norway, historically deep-rooted regionalism and a social democratic ideology of the strong public rights of underprivileged groups might to a certain extent explain a somewhat different approach to minorities in the museum field. Both the Sami – officially recognized by the Norwegian state as an indigenous people – and different national minorities have claimed their rights to their own cultural heritage and accordingly to their own museums and museum objects. These claims have largely been accepted by the national authorities. In Hungary and Estonia, the museum visualisation of minorities like the Jews, Old Believers, or Swedish speakers seems to have been organised locally, regionally or by private initiatives.

## Museum Utopias

This report has thematized museum utopias that have been negotiated by politicians and museum professionals in Europe from 1990-2010. Our findings on the two issues above—*how do policy makers identify museums as instruments for negotiating identity, diversity and change*, and *how do national museums formulate their position as political and cultural institutions*—have left us with three questions to pursue further as we question the utopian vision of museums as change agents:

1. What are the political functions of national museums?
2. What are the limits or limitations of politics and policymaking in the museum field?
3. Can national and transnational narratives coexist in national museums within modern Europe?

1. *The political functions of national museums* are obviously of a rhetorical character, stating how politicians and leading specialists and professionals intend to reshape the national museums and accordingly to distribute new symbolic and material value to these institutions: Museum policies have been formulated, museum acts have been passed, re-organisation and re-building have taken place.

The period 1990-2010 in fact seems historically important with regard to active political action towards renegotiating the political meaning and function of national museums. The reason is quite obvious: **The dramatic political changes in Eastern Europe concurring with major demographic changes in Western Europe have created a new agenda for using culture and cultural institutions politically to smooth or counteract the effects of the changes.**

2. *The limits or limitations of politics and policymaking in the museum field* vary due to geographic, occupational, and even personal differences among the policymakers, leading to differences not only in outlook but also in technique. The actors in the museum policy development processes are many and not necessarily unanimous in their approach. *Politicians* in the European countries and in the EU itself definitely play an important role, but museum policies are also influenced by politicians and decision makers on local, regional, and even

transnational levels. In some cases – as repeatedly exemplified by the countries analysed here – other goals and perspectives might dominate the museum policies on these levels, as opposed to the capital and the capital region, to national policy, to Brussels. Further, *museum professionals* are important policymakers, but again with the same variances as with the politicians. Individual museum directors might be in the forefront developing new, inclusive, dialogue-oriented national museums and exhibitions. In other cases, as with Estonia and Hungary, museum professionals and their organisations appear to be sceptical or even hostile towards attempts to develop new national museum policies, not least because such national policies might challenge the professional identity and independence of the specialised personnel in the institutions.

Museum policy development and change are accomplished through what in the report from France is described as “a normative kind of moral discourse in the form of elaborate operations of communication” (quote Jean-Yves Boursier). **The reports contributing to this study demonstrate five important *policymaking techniques* used to engage in that moral discourse:**

- ***Re-formulation.*** By challenging museological taboos, museums are encouraged to re-formulate their aims and scope in the direction of new norms such as post-colonial positions, cultural diversity, or minority rights. Using re-formulation, changes in museum policy in most cases are given their rationale by reference to historical injustice, past national one-sidedness, or ethnic and cultural negligence. Changes, accordingly, are presented as (morally) necessary, as in accordance with public opinion or as concurring with recent political development.
- ***Re-narration.*** Closely connected to re-formulation, *re-narration* aims at using national museums as instruments for change or correction of collective memory. On the museum policy and rhetorical level, this has led to a relative negligence of traditional national narratives in a number of European countries, with Norway as a rather extreme example. In France this negligence has been considerably more contested in public debates. In post-Communist countries, the re-narration of the national museums has included a depreciation of the old regimes and a revaluation of the national and ethnic continuities. In Greece, the re-narration seems to be responses to European integration followed by an economic crisis.
- ***Re-mediation.*** This technique uses new media and new ways of inviting museum users into existing or new museum institutions. Many national museums have, for instance, digitised parts of their collections, thus making their use and interpretation independent of time and place. Another aspect of this is, of course, that the museum collections in this way are “liberated” from old and traditional perspectives and made the possible object of new interpretations and cultural dialogues.
- ***Re-organisation.*** This seems to be among the favourite museum policy techniques. France is possibly a rather extreme example of this, constantly changing the names, locations and scopes of many of its central museum institutions. But even a small nation like Norway has been through massive government-initiated organisational changes during the last two decades. These changes have in many cases strengthened political

control with the museum field, but they have also aroused substantial critiques and negative reactions among museum professionals.

- **Re-professionalization.** It seems clear that many of the changes in recent European museum policy have been closely linked not to traditional academically educated museum personnel but to new groups who have deeply influenced the museum field both theoretically and practically. These actors include consultants, artists, economists and architects. Normally, these groups of professionals are not keepers of the traditional knowledge and skills needed to collect, interpret and display museum objects. Rather, they represent the “outside” of museum work – the financial results, the administrative efficiency, the experimental display or the material surroundings of the collections. Critically evaluated, this re-professionalization can be said to have developed a new elitism in the museum field, an elitism requiring perspectives representing the new symbolic and rhetorical values installed in national museum institutions.

3. *National and transnational narratives* coexist uneasily in national museums due in large part to the varying utopian ideologies articulated by Europe’s various policymakers. This study has more or less *a priori* regarded the changes articulated in the last 20 years of museum policy development in Europe as utopian, but which utopia depends on which policymaker is consulted.

- **EUtopia.** As the report on the EU as an actor in the museum field shows, the cultural dimensions of the European integration project have been strengthened during the last years’ political development. The EUtopian perspective is linked to a European citizenship based on common European values and identity, and the museums’ role in this is to contribute to transnational cohesion and integration. There are many political actors and strategies sustaining this perspective, but it remains open whether there are any convincing successes. The reports from Hungary, Estonia and Greece suggest that the EU has contributed to changes in national museum policy and practice through economic funding of specific museum projects, but that this effect also bears witness to the weakness of such processes: They change sectoral and temporal practice, but leave the rest of the field unchanged.
- **Multicultural Utopia.** The museum policy changes advocating strengthened emphasis on cultural diversity and multicultural ideology also have obvious utopian dimensions, at least with regard to leading national museums. However, the museum collections and the museums’ institutional history are likely so strongly linked to the national narratives that turning them into dialogue institutions or arenas for intercultural encounters is a very complicated mission. Presenting a temporary exhibition or writing new visitors’ guides does not change the impressive weight of institutional history and collection history reflecting on national perspectives. The successes of temporary exhibitions or provocative public debates are still left to convince on a general level. The most successful examples might be found in the transformations of the museums representing the French colonial past, the international Louvre collections, and the Sámi case. The success of the two former can be explained by the international and even Universalist

approaches of their institutional past. The success of the latter is probably and a bit ironically due to the fact that the political rights of the only indigenous people in Norway have resulted in the Sámi launching their own national museum construction.

- **National Historical Utopia.** At first glance this seems to have lost legitimacy during the last 20 years of European museum policy development. When looking more closely into the matter, however, it becomes obvious that there is not “one” European national museum; the institutional and professional histories of the European national museums are different. Examples from the reports suggest that the national museum agency still is productive and negotiable in several countries. These cases thematize the possibility of expressing *both national and European perspectives* when national museum collections are put on display. With ideological implications taken into consideration, cultural diversity or multicultural ideology are not necessarily the only obvious responses of the European national museums to the old aggressive nationalism.

## Conclusion

Perhaps the *via media* is still the most practicable, even in the museum field. Political and professional will to change national museum policies should not neglect the fact that museums as institutions represent and present long proven critical knowledge on culture and history. As positive and morally superior as they might seem to leading policy makers, cultural dialogue and arenas for cultural encounters are not neutral or extracted from critical and reflective knowledge production – both ways. Opening access to this critical knowledge for old and new groups of visitors is perhaps the best way to include national museums in the continuous construction of both national and European citizenship.



# From Politics to Policy: Two Decades of National Museum Development in France (1989-2012)

Felicity Bodenstern & Dominique Poulot

## General Characteristics

The 1970s and 1980s were periods of intense development for France's national museums, as the country witnessed an extraordinary multiplication of the number of museums, following on from a period of rather negative consideration of the role of the public museum in the 1960s. According to Vital (2011: 10), the new boom in museum building was essentially due to considerable public financial input and funding, especially for new buildings and extensive renovation operations, spurred by the interest in museums expressed by political figures in the highest spheres. Indeed, every president since Georges Pompidou has developed his own museum project – the national museum appears in France as a privileged form of political and cultural legacy toward which the country's leaders tend to strive. The same tendency may be observed within the hierarchy of regional and departmental politics, where museum projects have benefitted from the direct support of important political players. The relationship between political glorification and the museum is particularly strong in a country in which the most famous museum is still identified as the former palace of the prince (Poulot, 2008: 197).

If the 1980s may be characterised by the development of major new projects and building activity, then the policy of the 1990s was very much directed toward (re)organising older and new institutions, establishing a more explicit policy for museum visitors, and normalising the training of a new generation of museum professionals. Following on from an administrative reform introduced in the management of the Louvre and Versailles in the 1990s, the decade 2000-2010 prolonged and developed an effort to decentralise administration. The process of establishing new forms of management, financing structures and procedures, in order to give the institutions greater autonomy and to develop their own resources independently, is currently one of the major issues that France's national museums are dealing with, as expressed by the independent report issued by the regulative body for public expenditures, the *Cour des comptes* (2011: 47). As we will see in the following, the beginning of the twenty-first century was again a time for the development of major new projects, often directly called for by political leaders: *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*, *Musée du quai Branly*, *Musée des civilisations d'Europe Méditerranée* and most recently also the *Maison d'histoire de France*; all addressing in different ways issues of national and European identity. In terms of expenditure the budget of national museums grew three times faster than the general budget of the state, and very few public services can boast of comparable attentions in terms of financial effort<sup>1</sup>, illustrating to what extent these institutions are at the heart of France's national cultural policy (Cour des comptes, 2011: 9).

Let us begin by asking what defines the status of the national museum in France today. The response is deceptively simple, indeed *musée national* is an official label that corresponds to a

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<sup>1</sup> In 2000 the total budget allocated to the running of national museums and the management of policy has been estimated at 334,47 million euros; in 2010 this number was evaluated at 528 million, in other words an increase of 58% in 10 years (Cour des comptes, 2011: 48).

specific list of museums (Bodenstein, 2011: 299) related to the administrative body of the *Réunion des musées nationaux* (RMN), since the end of the nineteenth century and placed under the tutelage of the ministry of culture since its creation in 1959. The *musées nationaux* were listed in 1945 as an homogeneous group of museums, holding national collections, dedicated most essentially to the *beaux-arts* and numbering 37 in total, in 2010 (see list Cour des comptes, 2011: 193-195). This list includes some of France's biggest and richest museums in terms of the value of their collections (Versailles, Orsay, Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou) but also some very modest institutions that appear as out of place in this group (*Musée Jean-Jacques Henner*, *Musée Magnin* etc.). This group was formerly united by a mutualist form of management and financial redistribution that has in the last two decades undergone a complete change along with the reform of the administrative status of the RMN. It remains identifiable as an elite group of institutions, welcoming over 28 million visitors a year (figure for 2009), that is to say half of all the visitors that enter the some 1214 institutions that today hold the more general title of *Musée de France*. All museums, no matter what the governing or financing body managing them may be, can become part of this network coordinated by the *Direction des musées de France* (DMF), as long as they fulfill a specific set of criteria defined by law in 2002. Its role is to help promulgate a nationwide policy in terms of museography, public access and pedagogy, and its influence transcends *stricto sensu* that of national museums. However, not all museums that address a national agenda and that are financed by a central ministry are on the list of the RMN and they need to be recognised as national according to the definition used in the Eunamus project and developed for the case of France in an earlier report (see Bodenstein, 2011) ; they are also financed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (i.e. *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*) or the Ministry of Defence (i.e. *Musée de l'armée*) or cofinanced and run by two ministries (such is the case of the *Musée du quai Branly*, which depends on both the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education at once). These institutions all clearly raise issues of national interest and their mission is defined as national in its scope and ambition, thus, they will also be taken into consideration in the following report.

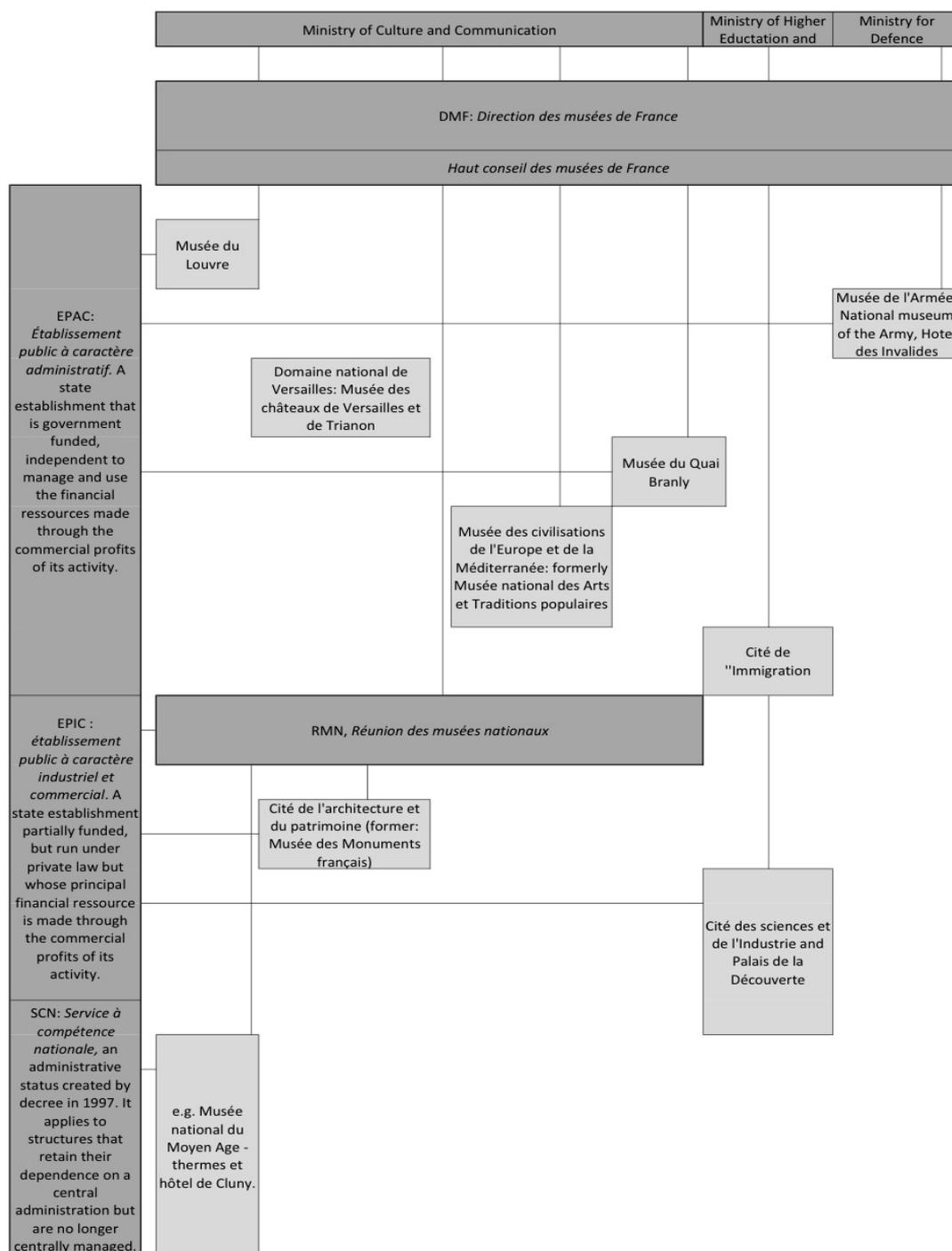


Table by Bodenstein 2012. This table does not include all of France's national museums, but only those discussed in this report. See a more complete list in Bodenstein, 2011; see the complete list of the RMN in Cour des Comptes, 2011: 193.

### Financial reforms and the commercialisation of museum activities

The most important reforms touching on the status of national museums over the last two decades were devoted to the development of a new system of museum management and financing. Between 1895 and 2004, France's national museums constituted a solidary community of institutions directly depending on the Ministry of Culture through the RMN, reflecting the

concept of the unity of the nation's collections (Cour des comptes, 2011: 14). National museums have progressively been detached from the centralising management of the RMN which was thought to be too restrictive and incapable of providing the dynamic approach needed to react to the development of a fast changing cultural economy. The first major transformations took place in the 1990s when the Louvre (1992) and Versailles (1995) were given the status of autonomous state establishments, allowing them to manage their own budgets and profits directly and to increasingly turn to private funding in order to complete their budgets for acquisitions, and to expand their activities. Three different types of structures have been developed in the last two decades and applied to the management of the *musées nationaux* and other French state museums. In 1990, the RMN itself was transformed into an *Établissement public à caractère industriel et commercial* (EPIC). This new administrative status means that whilst it remains an establishment that is state owned and financed, it is run under a regime of private law which allows it to use its own profits to finance its activities. As already stated, other individual museums also handle their own budget and are defined as EPA's, *Établissements public administratifs* (e.g. the Louvre, Versailles and the *musée d'Orsay*) meaning that they are themselves autonomous in terms of their budget and can use the profits that they generate and reinject them directly back into their own projects. However, they retain their status as public establishments: their staff remain state employees and they are administered according to the public law regime (Bodenstein, 2011: 299). Over 20 of its associated museums remain directly under the management of the Ministry for Culture as *Services à compétence nationale*.

Whilst these new laws have in some cases provided major financially viable institutions (e.g. the Louvre and Versailles) with increased freedom to make decisions and to control their own spendings, they have also proved challenging for many smaller, less frequently visited institutions, as the profits from the larger museums are no longer distributed back to them, as was formerly the case with the *Réunion des musées nationaux*. Generally speaking, new financing policies, although providing continued support from the central government, have placed requirements on museums to seek out additional and novel methods of financing through commercial strategies (the development of museum shops as a rule dates back to the 1980s) and patronage (Benhamou, Moureau, 2006: 27) and more generally by developing the range of services that they offer, styling themselves as cultural operators. It is this new *politique de l'offre* that perhaps best sums up the spirit of development at work over the last decade (Cour des comptes, 2011: 111).

For the author of the museum curator's 'Livre Blanc,' this reform constitutes one of the principal elements of what he terms as the crisis that museums are currently experiencing, compounded by the increased pressure to be commercially viable – something which the report states is only really possible for large, well-visited Parisian institutions (Vital, 2011, 26). However, though certainly criticable, these new forms of management have led to the development of more extensive notions of financial evaluation within the museum and also of private patronage (see below). Up until the end of the 1990s, budgets were often simply renewed from one year to the next with being carefully examined. A certain number of budget restrictions have changed this situation, introducing more transparent and efficient management principles (Benhamou/Moureau, 2006 : 28). Considering the issue from the perspective of budget efficiency and policy results, the report issued by the *Cour des compte* does however also point out a number of weaknesses and deficiencies related to these new systems of management; firstly they have not proven any less costly, and secondly they have weakened the possibility of applying nationwide

policies. Though these changes of status never meant to produce a situation in which national museums might claim independence in terms of certain policy aspects, such as tarification and accessibility, the contractual process (*contrats de performance*) related to their implementation, to provide new binding guidelines between institutions and their ministry, has in certain cases made it easier for the managing boards of larger institutions to avoid compliance with the directives of the ministerial framework, it has thus become increasingly difficult for the Ministry of Culture to implement a national policy (Cour des comptes, 2011: 27-31) and its role has deviated towards that of negotiating between the demands of now competing institutions (Cour des comptes, 2011: 35).

This state of affairs should be considered alongside the establishment of a new museum law promulgated on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January, 2002, defining the judicial nature of the label *Musée de France*, which as mentioned above extends to institutions outside of the list of *Musées nationaux*. The new legislation outlined the legal criteria that need to be met in order for an institution to be able to claim the title of *Musée de France*, whether it be state-owned or owned by any other non-profit-making private or public legal entity (all state-owned museums, however, automatically receive the title). In return, the museums which fulfil these criteria, with reference to their function and social utility, may benefit from state funding and the services of expertise provided by the *Direction des musées de France*, DMF. This newly defined large family of museums (1214 institution in 2011) is governed by the *Haut conseil des musées de France*, a council consisting of 7 representatives from central government, 15 from local government, and a number of professionals from the museum world.

The DMF was formerly a service of the Ministry of Education; up until 1945, it actually only managed thirty national museums, and to some extent exercised a kind of power of inspection and control over the museums of the provinces, as they are called, that is to say the major municipal museums of France's larger towns. The DMF was first radically transformed in 1991, and is now associated with the Ministries of Culture and Education, and has aimed at becoming an organisation which, as the title suggests, attempts to coordinate the activities and the policy of all of France's museums, managing such nationwide events as the *Night of Museums* (*Nuit des musées*). It contributes, relatively speaking, to breaking down hierarchical boundaries between national, regional and local museums, be they private or public.

Since 2000, one may also observe an effort to decentralize cultural institutions and their management. In 2002, a legislation introduced a new type of public establishment of cultural cooperation (*établissement public de coopération culturelle*) allowing the government to share financing with regional or departmental governing institutions – creating establishments that are no longer strictly 'national' or municipal. Such hybrids, from an administrative point of view, serve to break down the classical distinctions between 'national' museums and other institutions, e.g. Louvre-Lens (2013), Pompidou-Metz (2010), MuCEM (see below). These projects appear as a kind of solution to a problem that is endemic to France's centralisation of institutions in the Paris region (20 of the 37 official *musées nationaux*) as the report of the Cour des comptes points out, indicating also that despite a decade of intense financial investment, national policy still remains far too Parisian in its general perspectives, quoting the decision to build the *quai Branly* in a more central location than the former *Musée des arts africains et océaniens* and the decision to establish the new department of Islamic arts inside of the Louvre palace and not as a regional antennae (2011: 129). The report adds that whilst the development of the MUCEM project in Marseille might have

been considered as an effort to balance out the development of Paris' museum offer, the difficulties and hesitations that have impeded the progress of this project show just how difficult this decentralisation process is (2011: 130).

From a legal perspective, private input has increased within public institutions through a series of laws concerning patronage and sponsorship, something which, up until the beginning of 2000, has, relatively speaking, represented a modest phenomena in the French context (Benhamou, 1998). The first legislation on *dations* was passed in 1968, during André Malraux's time as Minister of Culture. A *dation* (not to be confused with donation) allows private parties to pay their heritage tax in the form of inherited artworks, rather than through financial payments. However, in 2003, a new legislation increased tax incentives considerably, this time for companies which can now benefit from tax cuts by becoming patrons of France's national museums.

### **Centralising the profession – a new school for 'national' curators**

The recently published historical study by Frédéric Poulard (2010) shows how the corps of France's curators contributed to the establishment of a more affirmed and clear cultural policy in the field of museums over the course of the twentieth century, pushing new projects, implementing museographical reforms that became integrated into more general national guidelines. He also documents the challenges that curators today have to meet with in the context of economic and market logics and their inter-play with cultural policy.

The selection process for curator's working in France's national museums underwent considerable reform over the last decades, moving towards a nationwide policy later confirmed by the strong central reform of 2002. The *École nationale du Patrimoine* (ENP), founded in 1986, bestows upon its diplomées the official title of *conservateur des musées nationaux*, and its objectives, structure and system of recruitment are based on the same principle as the famous *École nationale de l'administration* (ENA). The establishment of this school has led to a wealth of discussion on the education and profile of museum staff in France, and on the history of this profession. Admission is based on an extensive and rigorous examination in art history and history. Once admitted, students pursue a two year programme of general courses on the administration and mediation of collections, in addition to completing several internships. This system is very much a French exception, which trains curators first and foremost to be polyvalent general managers rather than recognized specialists in the field pertaining to the collections under their responsibility and it trains the highest ranking new recruits to the 7460 people working for France's national museums today (Cour des comptes, 2011: 75). Museums directed by ministries other than the Ministry of Culture may also recruit according to different criteria, depending on the speciality of the museum. It should also be noted that in comparison to other countries, there is a general absence of museums within the universities, although these are also state-owned and directed by the Ministry of Education, which is second only to the Ministry of Culture in terms of the number of national museums under its management.

In 2002, one of the aims of the creation of the *Institut national d'histoire de l'art* in Paris, located in the very buildings which house the specialised laboratories of some of France's largest universities, the country's national art history library and the ENP, was to bring the worlds of the museum and art historical research closer together, illustrating once more the great extent to which the French system equates the museum in essence to the concerns of art history and archaeology.

## Evaluating the museum and reconsidering the public

Since the inception of the Centre Pompidou (1977), a new discourse of inclusiveness and openness has been explicitly introduced into the rhetoric and practices of French museum policy. This followed on from a period of intense criticism of the museum as an institution. During the 1960s, the museum's role as a provider of democratic access to knowledge and artistic beauty was violently questioned. It was attacked for its inertia, its inability to adapt, and the absence of a truly pedagogical approach. The now famous sociological study carried out by Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel (1966), translated as *The Love of Art: European museums and their Public*, showed that the museum was not as open to all classes of society as it claimed. According to the authors, the museum was designed to meet the expectations of an ideal visitor who was more educated than the average citizen, let alone the socially disadvantaged citizen.

Confronted with a serious decrease in visitor numbers, and in response to these critical attacks, an effort was made to deconstruct and transform the image of the museum as an 'ivory tower,' and to turn it into an interactive, interdisciplinary forum for social practices (Benhamou, Moureau, 2006). This is the idea implicit in the conception, and indeed the naming, of the 'Centre' Pompidou, which also includes the single completely open central public library in Paris, the BPI – *Bibliothèque publique d'information*, where the visitor needs neither a card nor proof of identity of any kind in order to access either. But it is also at work in the naming of younger institutions such as the *Cité des sciences et de l'industrie* (1986), the *Cité de la musique* (1995), the *Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine* (2007) – formerly the *Musée des monuments français* – and the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* (2007). The 'Cité' is a term that naturally refers to the idea of the town or community as a legal entity or institution – a regrouping of citizens living together and sharing common laws and values<sup>2</sup>. This 'naming policy' is indicative of a general movement, which has transformed thinking about the museum's role and function in society since the 1980s in France and beyond. 'Museums for someone rather than about something' was the general tendency observed by the museologist Stephen Weil at the end of the 1990s, with reference to North American museums but it may also define the general manifest at work in French policy of this period. In fact idea had already been developed in France, beginning in the 1970s, with the conception of the 'Ecomuseum,' a neologism coined by the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Robert Poujade, in 1971. As an institution, its ultimate objective was not so much committed to the preservation and protection of a collection, but was ultimately concerned with community development (Poulard, 2007). Although interest in the principle was expressed by representatives of central government – indeed the politics promoting this *nouvelle muséologie* were also firmly supported by the Lang ministry in the 1980s – it was more specifically conceived of for the representation of local concerns, taking into account natural, human and cultural environments (Poulot, 2004). It was also utilized in dealing with pressing social issues like the decline of major industrial regions, such as *Le Creusot*. "This museum does not have visitors, it has inhabitants" was the strong ideology, expressed by Hugues de Varine, the creator of this different kind of museum (Quoted by Tornatore and Paul, 2003: 305).

The *Musée national des arts et traditions populaires*, which opened in 1972 as a space for a more democratic access to culture, was established by Georges Henri Rivièrè, who was a major figure

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<sup>2</sup> One might add that it is also the expression that describes many of the challenged and poverty-stricken sub-urban areas in France.

in the development of the *Ecomusée*, applying some of its principals to a museographical project of national scope. By considering formerly unrepresented aspects of French culture within the museum, such as rural culture, oral history, etc., the aim of a museum dedicated to ‘the French people’ and to the regions, or *petites patries*, and their traditions, was at the same time a departure from the notion of a museum of *high culture*, stigmatised in Bourdieu’s critique as being styled for the intellectual elite. The MNATP has since closed (see further the question of the MUCEM). Generally speaking, these in a sense alternative museum practices, and the ideas that they helped to develop, increasingly became part of a normative discourse on the importance of the needs and demands of the visiting public, which were increasingly being taken into account in the organisation and administration of the institutions themselves. However, with the exception of the MNATP, they were largely expressed by a more pragmatic attitude regarding the needs of the visiting public, and rather more in continuity with the traditional and extant national collections and collection types. However, the 2000s have witnessed the development of a new set of museum projects that seek to target a new type of public – that of a multi-cultural France. This will be considered further with regard to the policies related to the *musée du quai Branly*, to the CNHI and to the *MuCEM*.

From a more pragmatic perspective, ever since the passing of the *Museum Law* of 2002, museums are obliged to organise a department dedicated to public service (one should add, however, that this was already the case with all major national museums). These departments have become essential in handling the growing number of visitors, and developing the burgeoning public interest in their particular institution. Between 1960 and 1978, visitor numbers in French museums doubled, reaching 6.2 million – only to multiply tenfold over the next three decades, to reach an estimated 59.83 million in 2009. The major national museums situated in the capital receive the lion’s share of this growth in visitor numbers, with over 50% of the total number of museum visitors in all of France being concentrated in Paris (8.3 million in the Louvre alone), (Vital, 2011 : 10). The cultural habits and practices of French citizens have been statistically documented since 1973; these efforts have given rise to a series of regularly published reports, *Les pratiques culturelles des Français*. Their statistics show, however, that only one third of French citizens visit museums on a regular basis (Vital, 2011: 96). In terms of socio-professional categories of visitors, the figures also show that there has been little or no growth in the number of visitors defined as hailing from lower income categories – and that the highest percentages were reached in 1989. It was generally recognised, however, that establishing a clear policy in terms of the museum’s public was impossible in light of the lack of detailed information on the practice of visitors in French museums. Thus, in order to consider more specifically the case of the museum, the DMF (*Direction des musées de France*) in 1991 commissioned a private consulting firm (ARCMC – Analyse, recherche et conseil en marketing et communication) to establish an *Observatoire Permanent des Publics* with the aim of contributing to a closer evaluation of public needs and demands by considering the public of about 100 museums (including national, municipal and regional establishments within its scope). The observatory was to provide current information concerning the social background of visitors, their expectations, and their evaluation of the visit. The subject also garnered interest from academic circles, and in 1992 the journal *Musées et Publics* was founded. In an article outlining the aims of this new form of evaluation, Evelyne Lehalle (1993: 3), working for the Department of museum public services of the DMF, highlighted the fact that information gathered in this manner should aid in materialising the

discourses on the relation to the public in the form and structure of the displays. In terms of objectives, the aim of diversifying France's museum going public has not really been achieved, although it has clearly been a major ideological driving point of the Ministry of Culture. More precisely, attempts were made to bring a younger public into the museum, to democratise access to a wider range of socio-professional groups and increase the number of museum visitors outside of the Paris region.

In relation to these objectives, the major question, which has been a subject of considerable public debate in the course of the last two decades, has been that of entrance fees and the proposition of granting free access (as is the case with national museums in Britain and Ireland, going back to ca. 1990). Although national museums had been free ever since their creation, during the French Revolution, this was however revoked in 1922, following three decades of debate. However, admission on the first Sunday of each month remained free up until 1990. When this legislation was revoked, it first provoked little reaction. However, when the free Sunday policy was reinstated in the Louvre in 1996, the impact on visitor numbers was immense. In 2000, it was extended to all national museums (Fourteau, 2001: 147).

The question of extending and generalising this policy has since been the subject of a great deal of literature and a number of experiments that attempt to gauge the feasibility and desirability of introducing free access. In 2008, a six-month test produced mixed results, leading the Ministry of Culture to retain entrance fees. In Paris, the municipal museums also operate without entrance fees, allowing them to be more competitive alongside the major national museums in the city. The chief argument against free admission for everyone has been that, in effect, it does not serve to widen the profile of the museum visitor to include new segments of the population, but appears first and foremost to benefit those who are already eager museum visitors. Thus it was argued by the ministry that it does not appear to be an efficient tool in the democratisation of access to culture – in any case not conclusive enough to justify the loss in terms of the financial benefit to the museum and its development that entrance fees guarantee. Although it did not come to be generalised, it was decided that free admission to national museums and monuments be extended to anyone under the age of 26 – from any member state of the European Union (2009).

In terms of the ministry's policy, the rise in figures of museum visitors over all is clear but the results appear as disappointing in terms of the specific aims to diversify the museum going public, young visitors and the less privileged public are still as underrepresented in the statistics as they were fifteen years ago (Cour des comptes, 2011: 112).

### **The politics and polemics of national museum building**

In terms of projects and policies, national museum in France provide a prestigious public forum that allows the state to express new desires and ambitions for itself, and for its relationship to other nations, communities and cultures. For politicians, museums serve, on a national level, but also on a regional and municipal one, as ambassadors of their ideas and motivations (Vital, 2011: 28). Subsequently, extensive debates have continued to surround the museum world and the major political projects that characterise the expansion of France's national museum network. From the *Musée du quai Branly* to the current project for a new *Maison d'histoire de France*, these projects are the subject of lively and continued debate in France's professional and specialist publications, but also in the general press. Such questions as the installation of a 'branch' of the

Louvre in the Arab state of Abu Dhabi received widespread public attention, although it was debated mainly by a small group of specialists. More politically oriented, and related to the question of national identity, the debate concerning the *Maison d'histoire de France* has left few actors of the cultural sector indifferent. These debates, which will be partially examined here, show that public museum policy is an issue of general public interest in France, one that finds expression in national press, television and radio. As the subject of heated discussion they may of course serve the image of those politicians who become directly involved in museum projects. They also serve to transform the establishment of new museums into veritable media events, as was the case with the opening of the *quai Branly* – inaugurated by Jacques Chirac – an event that was attended by major public figures and intellectuals such as Claude-Lévi Strauss and Kofi Annan, then general secretary of the United Nations. The universal values represented by the Louvre since its creation have thus been expanded ideologically to include ideas of diversity and cultural dialogue, which have in turn been projected onto other national museums. In terms of the Western arts, the *musée d'Orsay* and *Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou* in a sense chronologically pursue and complete the programme of the Louvre. Meanwhile, the celebration of diversity has become the *leitmotiv* of the creation of the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* (2008) in the *Palais des colonies*, the former home of the extra-European collections now housed in the *Pavillon des sessions* at the Louvre, and at the *Musée du quai Branly*. These notions of dialogue and cultural openness have led to continuous debate, with museum professionals and members of civil society questioning the political agendas that they reflect, and the sincerity or efficiency of their intention to deal with social challenges. We will be considering these confrontations in relation to some new museum projects and major developments in policy.

## Contemporary Policy

### The principle of the Universal Museum in France

The principal contemporary ideological tendency that has emerged in the policies behind the most recent national museum creations has been the desire to represent diversity, and to establish places of cultural dialogue (*Cité de l'immigration, Musée du quai Branly*). Prior to leading to the establishment of new museums, this tendency was applied to the oldest and most famous of France's national museums: the Louvre.

Occupying a former royal palace situated at the very centre of the French capital, the Louvre does indeed exemplify what Duncan and Wallach termed the 'Universal Survey Museum,' a type of museum which they claim to be 'not only the first in importance, but also the first museum type to emerge historically, and (which was) from the beginning identified with the idea of the public art museum.' (Duncan and Wallach, 1980: 55). Prior to its opening, Diderot's famous *Encyclopedia* had dedicated an article to what the author hoped the 'Louvre' might become. The institution was the direct intellectual product of the encyclopedic principle of the Enlightenment, as implemented by the Revolution. Although the Louvre had indeed been conceived of in light of an encyclopedic or universal principle, there were some limitations: the productions of French artists and national monuments at first played little or no role in the establishment of the collections, nor did 'exotic' collections, and the main accent was of course generally placed on Classical Antiquity and the Renaissance. It did, however, come to house France's first public ethnographic collection in the nineteenth century, before the establishment of the *Musée*

*ethnographique du Trocadéro* in 1878, as well as the arts of Asia, which were passed on to the *musée Guimet* following the Second World War.

The *Grand Louvre* project and the highly controversial Pei pyramid (completed in 1989, marking the bicentenary of the Revolution) served to change the physiognomy of the building, opening it up to the city and the public in a radical new way. Its ‘universal’ mission was reinforced through the creation of the most recent independent department - that of Islamic art (2003). This may in part be attributed to the initiative of the former president, Jacques Chirac (1995-2007), who declared his intention of reinforcing the universal vocation of the Louvre by presenting the “exceptional contribution of the islamic civilisation to the course of world history”<sup>3</sup>. The slogan brandished was already the ‘*dialogue des cultures*,’ which has since become the main catchphrase of the *musée du quai Branly*.

Jacques Chirac would also use the Louvre to make a clear-cut political statement concerning the universal status of the so-called primitive arts (later replaced by the more neutral term ‘arts premiers’) in promoting the opening of the *Pavillon des Sessions* (2000), an exhibition space situated within the buildings of the Louvre Palace, although it is independent of the museum in terms of administration and conservation. These new galleries were dedicated to presenting as veritable masterpieces some of the most beautiful pieces among the collections of the former *Musée des arts africains et océaniens*, situated in the *Palais de la porte dorée* or the *Palais des colonies* (see below). In the Louvre’s pavillon, the pieces are exhibited according to an extremely purist form of modernist ‘white cube’ display. The message expressed by the new pavillon was that in this place the arts “premiers” were housed under the same roof as some of the greatest masterpieces of Western art, such as the Venus de Milo and the Victory of Samothrace.

Administratively, this museum has become a kind of permanent antenna of the *Musée du quai Branly* (2006), an ‘embassy’ (the term employed on the museum’s own website) for extra-European art, lending to this most recent national museum creation a part of the Louvre’s aura of artistic universality, and placing this project firmly in affiliation with its values and its public image. It is interesting to consider this policy also as a way of distancing the collections from the colonial context that was of course related to their presentation in the *Musée des arts d’afrcains et d’océanie* of the *Palais des colonies*, constructed for the 1931 colonial exhibition (the *Palais* initially housed the *Musée de la France d’Outre-mer*, and it was during the Malraux ministry that it was transformed into a fine arts museum).

#### **‘L’Universel qui nous rassemble’<sup>4</sup>**

The creation of the Quai Branly Museum was met with violent debates, with participants opposing the supporters of Chirac’s project for a new museum contesting those who defended the extant institutions, in particular the curators of the *Musée de l’homme*, who claimed that it was important for these objects to remain attached to the context that ethnographic studies had established for them in the Trocadéro (Dupaigne, 2006). The project for the new museum meant that this collection of cultural artefacts, but also of elements pertaining to physical anthropology,

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<sup>3</sup> “L’objectif est de conforter la vocation universelle de cette prestigieuse institution afin qu’elle puisse mieux faire connaître à son vaste public la contribution exceptionnelle des civilisations de l’islam à l’histoire de l’humanité .” <http://www.teheran.ir/spip.php?article988>.

<sup>4</sup> Quotation from Jacques Chirac’s inaugural speech taken from the front page article of *Le Monde*, which titled on 21st of June 2006 : “Jacques Chirac rend hommage aux ‘peuples humiliés et méprisés’ .”

would be split in two, leaving only the elements pertaining to the latter in the palace of the Trocadéro.

In order to simplify a complex debate, many professional ethnologists esteemed that the new project for the ethnological collections from the *Musée de l'homme* would eliminate an ethnological perspective by embracing a purely aesthetic (universal) vision of extra-European arts, a strategy which they regarded as constituting a displaced form of eurocentrist thinking by presenting exclusively “a beauty of our own construction” (Jacques Hainard quoted by Price, 2010: 12). This opinion was reinforced by the influence of the initial instigator of the project, Jacques Chirac’s close friend, the art dealer and collector Jacques Kerchache, who died in 2001; but a purely formalist appreciation of the collections represented what the project’s detractors considered to be the underlying flaw of the project. As observed by Sally Price, the “heavy reliance on people whose professional lives dealt with buying and selling the arts in question struck me as particularly important in lending a unique flavor to the conceptualization of the MQB” (2010: 15) and it has remained a critical matter of controversy. It was of course continuously repeated that such a museum would do more to promote the art market than it would the ‘dialogue’ between civilisations.

Jacques Chirac’s inaugural speech presented the official ideology of a museum intended to be a means of turning the page from the violent history of colonialism by finally “granting justice to the infinite diversity of culture”<sup>5</sup> and celebrating the “genius of people of the civilisations of Africa, Oceania and the Americas,” “societies that are today often marginalised, fragilised and menaced by the unstoppable machine of modernity”<sup>6</sup>. Chirac went on to stipulate that the museum conceived of itself as a refusal of ethnocentrism, and of the false evolutionism which claimed that certain societies were as though frozen in an early stage of human evolution, and that their so-called primitive cultures served only as subjects of the studies of ethnologists, or as sources of inspiration for Western art.

Hugely successful in terms of visitor numbers, counting nearly a million entries in 2008, the museum quickly established a firm place for itself in the already densely populated world of Parisian museums. Its permanent display was however criticised from the onset, more specifically in the Anglo-Saxon world of museum studies, for its reductionist, purely aesthetic perspective (Price, 2007). Worse still, to many journalists, especially foreign ones, the presentation appeared implicitly laden with negative values and prejudices, ironically, precisely those that it had set out to combat; it was too dimly lit and obscurely labelled, and gave the impression that the extra-European world was one plunged in the penumbra of the rainforest (Price, 2009: 12).

Although the initial critics of the museum may still be heard, today a more balanced view of the museum has become possible as a more differentiated vision of the museum’s mission appears through other activities: debates, exhibitions, research programmes. The cultural offer of the institution, which is much more than a permanent exhibit, has contributed to developing issues in a manner which is new to France, and for the first time has provided a very public forum for the discussion of post-colonial approaches to cultural and social matters. Meanwhile, the removal of the collections of the MAAO to the MQB offered another opportunity for public

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<sup>5</sup> Quotation from Jacques Chirac’s inaugural speech taken from the front page article of *Le Monde*, which titled on 21st of June 2006 : “Jacques Chirac rend hommage aux ‘peuples humiliés et méprisés’ .”

<sup>6</sup> Quotation from Jacques Chirac’s inaugural speech, taken from the front page article of *Le Monde*, which on 21 June 2006 bore the title: “Jacques Chirac rend hommage aux ‘peuples humiliés et méprisés’ .”

policy to develop a project for the future of the building that had housed France's colonial museum.

## **Diverse Publics**

### **The representation of migrant minorities in French museums**

In order to understand the importance of representing France as a multi-cultural society, it seems necessary to provide a short history of this question in France's museums before the creation of the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*. The *Musée dauphinois* was inaugurated in the wake of major renovation in 1968, as a *Musée de société* (as opposed to a *Beaux-Arts* museum). It was dedicated to the ethnography, archaeology and history of the former province of the Dauphiné in the southeast of France. The exhibitions that it began to dedicate to the minorities present in the region – Greeks, Italians and North Africans – are the first examples of the recognition of immigrant communities and their history in French Museums (Poulot, 2007: 307). According to their curator, J.-C. Duclos (1999), 'regional museums of heritage cannot consider their role to be complete if they do not widen their horizon beyond their own regional history and origins'. Following this policy, the museums conceived and organized a series, opening in 1989, dedicated to the memory of members of foreign communities: *L'Italie des Pouilles* (Corato - Grenoble en 1989), *Greeks* (*Des Grecs* en 1993), *Armenia* (*D'Isère et d'Arménie* en 1997) and *North Africans* in 2000, (*D'Isère et du Maghreb, Pour que la vie continue...*). These exhibitions were rooted in the scientific examination of transplanted identities, and their objective was 'to constitute a collective memory and to contribute to teaching difference and respect for other cultures, and to the idea of sharing a composite culture' (Duclos, 2000). The analysis of the visiting public undertaken in these exhibitions concluded that the museum may teach us to recognize differences. The adopted museography, relying on the presentation of an individual figure to serve as the voice of a whole community, was based on a North American model of museography which calls upon authentic life stories and witnesses, or even on fictional narratives, in order to give the visitor a sense of being confronted with an interactional point of view (Poulot, 2007: 308). The influence of this precedent of using foreign models would also be felt in the establishment of the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*.

### **The establishment of the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration**

Surrounded by controversy, the establishment of the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* (CNHI) is the most recent transformation of the former site of France's first and only major colonial museum, inaugurated in 1931. The chief political aim of the new museum was to change the image of the term 'immigration' from a dominantly negative one, by providing a clearer historical and sociological explanation of the phenomena, thus also providing a different and more inclusive narrative of French citizenship, "getting rid of a sense of shame that promotes exclusion" (Blanc-Chaléard, 2006: 131, transl. by the author)<sup>7</sup>. The history of immigration became a true subject of study in France at the same time as 'immigration' was discovered to be a relevant issue related to social inequalities and problems in the 1990s. For Marie-Claude Blanc-Chaléard, member of the original planning committee of the museum, it belongs to a traditional type of

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<sup>7</sup> "Aider par une réalisation d'envergure à en finir avec cette honte génératrice d'exclusion, tel est, entre autres, le pari osé de ceux qui participent à l'entreprise."

museum which employs history as a means for achieving a civic objective, but which had been designed for the purpose of reversing the traditional definition of the nation: “The moment seemed ripe to let the hidden diversity emerge from behind the myth of the unified nation, all the more so as diversity was becoming a culture value in its own right”<sup>8</sup>.

The project for a museum of immigration did indeed take some time to ripen – it developed in parallel with the development of the history of immigration as a subject of academic inquiry in the 1990s, and then stagnated for about ten years; it was only after the election of Jacques Chirac in 2002, having defeated the candidate of the right-wing party of the *Front national*, Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose aggressive anti-immigration politics are well known, that the idea gained clear political support. It was under the guidance of Jacques Toubon, former minister of culture, from 2003 onwards, that the project would come to fruition.

The transformations undergone by the museums and collections housed in the *Palais des colonies* have reflected over a period of nearly a century the changing politics and positions of the French state in relation to its colonial Empire (Murphy, 2007: 45). The most obvious of these was instigated by the ministry of André Malraux in the 1960s, entirely reorganising the collections and reinterpreting them aesthetically to create the *Musée national des arts africains et océaniens*, thus to a large extent displacing the colonial question from the museum’s theme and museography. However, the building and its profuse colonial iconography remained the historical frame of the collections, and a reminder of the museum’s former denomination. The rupture became more profound with the departure of the collections for the newly opened *quai Branly* – which, as discussed above, placed these partially colonial collections in an historically neutral space dedicated to “universal values.” The creation of the *Musée du quai Branly* had the material effect of emptying the building of the former colonial exhibition/museum of the collections that constituted the *Musée national des arts des arts africains et océaniens*. Finding a suitable site for the museum had always been at the core of the problems encountered by the project. Often cited as an example, Ellis Island, situated close to the statue of Liberty, is part of the national mythology of the United States, and clearly highlights the role of immigration. But whilst this example gained much support for the idea of an immigration museum in the 1990s, it remained paralysed due to the absence of an equivalently symbolic site on which to establish a *lieu de mémoire* of immigration to France (Blanc-Chaléard, 2006: 132). In choosing to situate an immigration museum within the walls (2004) of the former *Musée des arts des arts africains et océaniens*, the new institution was faced with the challenge of reconciling or articulating France’s colonial history and the story of its migrant populations (Dixon, 2012). Indeed, as underlined by some of the creators of the museum, the idea of the migrant was at this stage nearly completely assimilated into the idea of populations hailing from regions that were now former colonies.

Furthermore, in addition to the challenge of establishing a suitable site for the museum, immigration museums are, more generally speaking, not part of a French or European museum tradition, unlike other museum types, such as the *Beaux-arts* museum. They were first conceived in the United States, Canada and Australia, beginning in the 1980s, before making their appearance in Europe and simultaneously importing the idea of the museum as a space for the representation of a ‘multi-cultural’ nation (Baur, 2009). In the course of the last fifty years, French museography has increasingly been seeking out models elsewhere, also considering

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<sup>8</sup> “Le moment semblait venu de faire émerger la diversité cachée derrière le mythe de la nation unitaire, d’autant que la diversité était devenue une valeur culturelle.”

international museum models, thanks to the close affiliation with international networks, such as ICOM and more specialized associations. More than ever, the new museums of the last two decades show clear traces of the influence of foreign models. Fittingly, the most significant example of this is the program of the *CNHI*. Indeed, Jacques Toubon travelled around the world in search of other immigration museums as sources of inspiration for his team (Poulot, 2009).

The museum project was developed under the banner of being “a museum for all” (Blanc-Chaléard, 2006: 131), and looked to the advice of the multitude of associations dealing with issues relating to immigration. The accent was placed on the diversity of migrant backgrounds, but also on individual narratives and on the personal experience of those having immigrated to France. Drawing on this perspective, the museum established a donations gallery, calling on the public to contribute and to help make the display relate directly to the visitor.

It would seem that the existence of the museum has remained a political conundrum. The inauguration of the museum in 2007 was a discreet event, in opposition to the elaborate occasion that was made of the opening of the *Musée du quai Branly* in 2006, and the absence of the recently elected president, Nicolas Sarkozy, has since repeatedly been mentioned as a conspicuous sign of the relative indifference that his government has shown with regard to this new museum and its mission. The opening took place in the presence of shouting demonstrators, and strong police security. The museum has since become a site of public contestation – in October 2010, it even had to close its doors as *sans-papier* workers attempted a sit-in in order to attract attention to their precarious social situation (Sherman, 2011). This case proves that the path to civil harmony does not run smoothly, in spite of the well-meaning ideology that has been presented as underlying the establishment of this museum at the site of the former colonial museum: “This place, built to glorify the civilising mission of France, will become a cultural institution which will make all French people aware of the significant contribution of European and colonial immigrants to the creation of this country” (Jacques Toubon, quoted by Blanc-Chaléard, 2006: 138).

### **Development of the ‘Musée des civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée’**

In parallel with the creation of the *CNHI*, one might consider the transfer of the collections from the already discussed *Musée national des arts et traditions populaires* – the museum established by Georges Henri Rivière – to Marseille, to be redeployed in the *Musée des civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée*, which is scheduled to be inaugurated in 2013, to coincide with Marseille’s year as European cultural capital. The policy behind this as yet embryonic institution was developed in the interest of dealing with the ‘crisis’ situation of the museum of national ethnography and folklore, increasingly considered as being too closely associated with certain overhauled nationalist principles (Mazé, 2010: 230). The idea to change its geographical location and to reframe its territorial perspective evolved from the early 1990s onwards. The reorganisation of the museum and its collections was confided in 1996 by the director of the DMF, Françoise Cachin, to the new director, Michel Colardelle (former curator and director of the *Musée dauphinois*, discussed above). The final decision to decentralise the collections by displacing them to Marseille was made in 2000, and the collections were transferred to a new building that was to become part of a major urban restructuring project, *Euroméditerranée* (Mazé, 2010: 236). It is largely financed and piloted by local and municipal political entities.

The museum project’s website provides us with an official description of its future mission, proudly announcing it as the first museum to be dedicated to the cultures of the Mediterranean:

“The MuCEM will consider the Mediterranean, its history, its societies and its heritage. As a twenty-first century museum of civilisation, the MuCEM will focus mainly on the culture of the Mediterranean, adhering to a comparative perspective and a pluridisciplinary approach, in which are largely represented Europe and the other continents which border the Mediterranean. It will serve to establish a novel perspective on the cultures of the Mediterranean”<sup>9</sup>. The rather heavily underlined intention is clearly that of deflecting the focus away from the national frame of reference, and of providing a cultural vision straddling national borders – in a museum that faces the sea and the North African coast. In an interview given in 2004 to the *Journal des arts*, Colardelle states that the museum is not a break with the past, but rather an innovation. He claims that it was impossible to present popular French culture without situating it within a European context, and without taking into account the cultural contribution of immigrant populations (Batard, 2010). Yet the proposition is nearly inverted in the 2006 official press release issued by the Ministry of Culture. In an effort to justify such a marked change in respect of its frame of reference, this official text states that in the case of France, the division between the territory of the nation and other territories is, culturally speaking, particularly artificial; in fact it claims that “If there is any country that can provide a compilation of Europe and the Mediterranean, then it is indeed ours” (Ministère de la Culture, 2006)<sup>10</sup>. By widening the perspective, the press release goes on to state that it is possible to break down the illusion of a nation built upon the principle of an atemporal, natural cultural community, a concept “that we know to be devoid of scientific foundation, and which has served as a pretext to dramatic situations in the course of the last two centuries” (Ministère de la Culture, 2006: 4)<sup>11</sup>. In order to dispose of the notion of cultural continuity, the emphasis is to be placed on mobility, exchange and diversity. At the same time, it expresses the tightrope balancing act that is the rejection of cultural relativism, whilst inviting open exchange: “Even if it is possible to legitimately consider the possibility that not all cultures are equally acceptable from a moral point of view, increased knowledge and a higher appreciation of their historical importance and the circumstances of their development, is the only path to a better mutual understanding, and to the establishment of a dialogue” (Ministère de la Culture, 2006: 4)<sup>12</sup>. Again the idea of a museum based on the notion of a collection is rejected, and it is clearly stated that the institution aims to be a forum and a space for debate, more so than a museum (Ministère de la Culture, 2006: 6), or in any case a museum that pays as much attention to material collections as to immaterial elements of heritage, such as music and language. Frédéric Mitterand, in his inaugural speech, underlined that he was laying the

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<sup>9</sup> “Le MuCEM offre désormais un regard sur la Méditerranée, son histoire, ses sociétés et son patrimoine. Musée des civilisations du XXIème siècle, le MuCEM s’intéressera principalement aux cultures de la Méditerranée, selon une optique comparatiste et pluridisciplinaire dans laquelle l’Europe et les autres continents bordant la Méditerranée occuperont une grande place. Il offrira un regard neuf sur les cultures de la Méditerranée.” <http://www.mucem.org/fr/leprojet> (consulted on the 5th of October, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> “S’il est un pays qui, à lui seul, représente un abrégé de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée, c’est bien le nôtre.” : 4.

<sup>11</sup> “Vouloir inscrire et contenir la culture populaire dans des frontières nationales c’est créer l’illusion d’une nation reposant sur le principe d’une communauté culturelle atemporelle, immanente, naturelle - concept dont on sait à la fois l’absence de tout fondement scientifique et les drames auxquels, durant deux siècles, il a servi de prétexte.”

<sup>12</sup> “Même si l’on peut légitimement penser que toutes les formes culturelles ne sont pas également acceptables d’un point de vue moral, leur meilleure intelligence et la juste appréciation de leur importance historique comme des circonstances de leur émergence sont la seule voie praticable vers une compréhension en retour, donc à l’instauration d’un dialogue.”

first stone – not of a museum, but of a new way of thinking about “our common history, of constructing our memory and perceiving the dialogue of culture” (Mitterrand, 2009)<sup>13</sup>.

However, beyond the rhetorics of policy-making, such a strategy cannot help but to remind one of the twisting of the kaleidoscope: the image has changed, yet the constitutive elements remain the same – as the former collections must be exhibited and preserved despite a new, expanded, focus. This museological trick of the light is arguably somewhat questionable from the point of view of the collections themselves, and has given rise to misgivings within professional circles. However, the museum’s collection policy is to borrow European and Mediterranean elements from other extant collections: the *Musée de l’homme*, Islamic art from the Louvre’s collection (which are not on display in the shortly to be opened department of Islamic arts), and the *Musée du quai Branly*. Indeed, the press release goes on to conclude that, together with the CNHI and *quai Branly*, this trio of newly founded institutions will form an exceptional *ensemble* of institutions whose perspective lies seek to break with the national frame of the national museum. Interestingly, the current formulation of the MuCEM’s future mission is very much in line with the territorial frame of a political project proposed by Nicolas Sarkozy for the creation of a *Union of the Mediterranean* (2008), as referred to by Frédéric Mitterrand, minister of culture, in his 2009 inaugural speech. As an economic and environmental project for international cooperation – the *Union* is not however destined to deal with the more challenging questions of cultural differences and immigration – and neither is this museum, though it will be open to the sea more than to the city, symbolically placed to face the coast of North Africa.

## Museum Reform

### Financial reform and commercialisation: The Louvre as an international export

In light of the emerging pressures to develop independent financial resources, major national institutions have in the course of the last twenty years developed three novel strategies (Vital, 2011:26) in order to help fund their administration and acquisition costs: 1. high entrance fees to major temporary exhibits; 2. lending of works and 3. the transfer of expertise to museums within France and abroad by franchising and branding the museum itself. These new strategies have allowed museums to expand, to decentralise inside of France and to globalise their impact by developing a presence outside of national borders.

In 2007, a new Agency of Museums (*Agence France Museum*) was created with the intent of providing support to an important international project, the *Louvre* in Abu Dhabi (in fact, eleven of France’s major national museums will contribute to this project – projected to open in 2013); another example of such an international agreement is the Centre Pompidou in Shanghai, not yet opened. These examples will be interesting to follow, as they will determine the way in which France’s national museums function in the context of a global society, where museums such as the Louvre export their expertise and their image, whilst remaining nationally funded institutions.

Although this evolution might generally be considered a positive expansion of national institutions into an international context, the Louvre’s initiatives have in certain cases given rise to strong resistance and lively debate on the subject of the commercialisation of art and the

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<sup>13</sup> ‘Il s’agit d’une nouvelle manière d’envisager notre histoire commune, d’une manière inédite de bâtir notre mémoire et de percevoir le dialogue de nos civilisations.’

question of the inalienability of France's national collections, considered as a founding principle of the national museum.

The issue was initially raised in the context of an agreement between the Louvre and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta in 2005, with reference to the organisation of a series of temporary exhibitions which were to be transferred to Atlanta, illustrating the history of the Louvre's prestigious collections in exchange for money. This was the chief issue, as the museum was not lending out works in exchange for other works, but rather for financial gain, and more precisely for the 13 million dollars needed to finance the renovation of the eighteenth century galleries of decorative arts in the Louvre.

The debate was engendered by an article 'manifest' published in the daily newspaper *Le Monde*, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2006, by three eminent personalities of the world of French art history: Roland Recht, Françoise Cachin and Jean Clair. Bearing the title "Our museums are not for sale," the text became the basis for a petition that would be signed by more than 1400 French museum curators and art historians. It was especially critical of the loan of some of the most famous pieces of art on display in the museum, such as Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego* and Raphaël's *Baldassare Castiglione*.

The debate concerning "loan fees" was accentuated by the project for the establishment of a *Louvre* in the small Arab state of Abu Dhabi, headed by the Ministry of Culture. The text attacked the agreement with the High museum, and also accused France's politicians of offering the artworks of the Louvre to Abu Dhabi as a political and diplomatic present (albeit in exchange for money). The contractual agreement signed in 2007, creating the *Agence France-Museum*, is financed by the emirat government. Firstly the *Agence* is mandated to organise the lending to the new museum of a limited number of temporary exhibitions using artworks from a number of participating French museums while at the same time developing Abu Dhabi's own collections with the aid of expertise piloted by the French agency. The terms of the debate surrounding its creation oscillated between thinly disguised expressions of an elitism that would reserve culture for those capable of its apprehension – implicitly expressed in the terms "Coca-Cola city" (Atlanta) and the "culture of petrol money" (Abu Dhabi). Whilst those on the side of the policy makers attempted to market the projects ideally as an expansion of France's humanist culture to those less well endowed in reference to the 'Universal values,' that had already formed the ideological basis for the foundation of the Louvre in 1793. The figures speak more clearly of the real motivation behind this project as indeed the Louvre will receive over 400 million euros for the copyright of the name of the museum alone, additionally the agency has received a total budget of 164,5 million and 25 million have been donated to the Louvre to support the development and finalisation of the new department of Islamic arts to open to the public at the end of 2012 (Cour des comptes, 2011: 56). In total it has been calculated that French museums will receive about 700 million euros altogether in relation to a museum project that is being built by the French architect Jean Nouvel; the museum is set to open in 2013.

Although the project is ongoing, the debate has to a certain extent served to force the *Agence France Museum* to communicate on the issue, and to "sell" its project through official press conferences etc. The museum will face many challenges in terms of the *dialogue of cultures*, as has already been shown in questions related to the display of religious as well as 'erotically suggestive' art. The absence of transparency makes it relatively difficult to assess the current status of this project.

### **Regional satellite museums: Louvre-Lens and Pompidou-Metz**

In parallel to these projects, which are related to an international tendency of museum globalisation, as may be observed in the case of the Guggenheim, but also the British Museum and the Ermitage, the French situation also offers cases of national museum regionalisation – especially remarkable on account of the extremely centralised geographical situation of France’s national museums.

The precedent for these projects was a series of operations, headed by the Ministry of Culture, which aimed to aid in the representation of the museum in the regions. One such operation, named “22 loans for 22 regions,” was initiated in 2002, for the purpose of placing major artworks from the Louvre on display in France’s chief municipal museums. Since 2000, a number of projects and initiatives towards the creation of a regional antenna for the Louvre have been initiated. Having compared the projects of several candidate towns (notably Bordeaux), the choice ultimately fell on the town of Lens, situated south of Lille in the north-east of France. The Louvre-Lens, due to open in 2012, will display 300 works of art from the Louvre, characterised as “major and significant.” The project was to give the collections a new life thanks to a presentation in a novel context, mixing elements from various departments thematically and establishing temporary exhibitions which, when presented in a regional ‘antenna,’ would attract a new category of public to the museum.

Since May 2010, the Centre Pompidou-Metz has been open to the public, and has enjoyed an exceptional success, with more than one million visitors after just over a year. It describes itself as a sister institution of the Pompidou Centre in Paris. It is entirely financed by the region of Lorraine and by other local instances, so it benefits from financial and executive autonomy, yet remains affiliated with the national institution. Beaubourg’s most recent experiment in decentralisation has pushed the principle as far as the establishment of a *Beaubourg en kit* – a mobile museum which is capable of taking the museum on the road<sup>14</sup>.

Such new regional ‘branches’ of the Louvre and the Centre Pompidou represent an entirely new type of effort to decentralise France’s national collections. These initiatives are due to the efforts of local administrations in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture. Though piloted with expertise from the Parisian museums in question, they are financed by the regional council and not by the budget that finances the Louvre or Pompidou (Cour des comptes, 2011: 131). Additionally they are experiments with limited possibilities – it is difficult to imagine that the Louvre, with its finite collection, could support a multiplication of such ‘satellite’ sites (Vital, 2011: 82). The national association of curators, whilst welcoming this initiative, has pointed to the fact that the attention granted to the value of national collections and their importance for cultural development should not lead to a depreciation of other regional or municipal collections, perhaps at times neglected alongside more ‘important’ national *ensembles*.

### **War museums (1960-1990)**

The theme of “fair” memory, to quote Paul Ricoeur, or more largely speaking the critical revision of national *lieux de mémoire*, have transformed the museum into a new site for the expression of civic power of a specifically republican kind since the 1990s, as institutions styling themselves as citadels against the rise of the extreme right or the multiplication of symptoms such as anti-

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<sup>14</sup> Florence Evin, “Un Beaubourg en kit bientôt sur les routes de France”, *Le Monde*, 3 septembre 2011, p. 20.

Semitic incidents. The national political agenda has become involved in their conception – sometimes at odds with certain associations and local powers. Jean-Yves Boursier (2005: 241) observed, with reference to museums of the Second World War, that we have gone from museums created and supported by a specific interest group, to museums which serve to express a normative kind of moral discourse in the form of elaborate operations of communication. Today there are about 400 museums in France dealing with themes related to military conflicts, 20 of these are directly dependent on the Ministry of Defence for management

Interestingly, the museums dealing with the world wars established from the 1960s onwards may foremost be described in terms of a multiplication of small private and local museums dedicated to the history of the wars, and more especially to the Resistance movement. For example, the Museum of National Resistance was founded at Champigny-sur-Marne in 1965; situated in a large nineteenth century home on the banks of the Marne, in a park named Vercors – the pseudonym of the founder of the secret *Editions de Minuit* – it assembled the most important collections pertaining to the French resistance during the Second World War. It was the product of more than 2000 donations and private and public deposits. This associative museum also aimed to deal with French social history from 1929 to 1947.

From the end of the 1980's onwards, a generation of major projects related to the world wars served to completely change the museography of military history in France. Although not strictly speaking "national" museums in terms of financing, as they were mainly supported by regional governments, they may be considered as such in terms of their ambition. The Memorial of Caen (1988) and the *Historial de la Grande Guerre* in Péronne (1992) both represent, in different ways, a new generation of war museums: one as a museum of ideas and humanistic implications – the other to a greater extent as a history museum, through the display of authentic objects. The museum of Péronne was directly headed and conceived of by a research centre of professional historians, which has come to be adjoined to the museum proper.

Together with Caen, the museum of Péronne has been developed as a self-conscious *lieu de mémoire*, and both clearly break with the classical notion of the military museum, embodied in France by the *Musée de l'armée*, the army's extant historical museum, was founded in 1905 as a fusion of the Artillery Museum – which had been born during the Revolution and established in the *Invalides* from 1871 onwards.

In Caen, the attempt was made to create a "new kind of museum," offering to take the visitor on "a journey through history," thanks to a highly theatricalised scenography. For various reasons, the Caen memorial crystallised a debate waged between historians and critical intellectuals in the 1980s and 1990s. The memorial's reception was rather contradictory, making it a turning point for the representation of history in French museums.

The Péronne museum also attempted to work against the grain of the tradition of history museums, adopting the term *historial* – intended to situate it between the memorial and the history museum. Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau, a historian closely associated with the institution, wrote in 1992 that it is indeed both. In 1987, the Historial organized a movement called «Bring your name into the museum,» for the purpose of collecting objects from donors offering to have their names mentioned in connection with the activities of the Historial – whilst their objects would become part of an inalienable national historical heritage.

Both museums have contributed to transforming the concept of the history museum in France. In 1996 the conference organized by the *Historial* of Péronne and coordinated by Marie-

Hélène Joly and Thomas Compère Morel, entitled *Des musées d'histoire pour quoi, pour qui?* and edited as *History museums for the future* (1998), constituted what may be called the “disciplinary” moment of the history museum in France (Poulot, 2012: 38).

### **The tradition and renovation of the Musée de l'armée**

In a direct sense, the *Musée de l'armée* (1905) was established in the same mode of national glorification as the museum created by Louis-Philippe at Versailles in 1837 (Barcellini, 2010: 13). By the end of the nineteenth century, following the crushing defeat of 1871, the military theme had taken on a particular significance, and the creation of this museum appears as a strategy to grant France renewed faith in its military power (Barcellini, 2010: 11). The museum's mission was clearly expressed from the onset as one of providing a place for patriotic and military education and vocation, to provide models and information for painters of military history, and, finally, of course, to celebrate the glories and the grandeur of the French army (Barcellini, 2010: 43). Although the museum only ever entertained a very tenuous relationship with the French army proper – for instance, it never directly received any material for displays (Westrate, 1961: 90) – it was able, with the aid of various donations and acquisitions, to accumulate considerable amounts of material during the Great War. The site itself is of course directly related to the army's activities, as it is indeed a hospital for injured military soldiers and a site of military rituals (burials, commemorations etc.) (Guillet, 2012: 74).

Throughout the First World War, the museum had managed to remain open becoming a place of popular pilgrimage, so that after 1918, it continued to develop more memorial or commemorative forms of display. This period served to reinforce the army-nation relationship and the role of the museum in the discourse of national unity. Its museography has been described by Westrate (1961: 84-86) ‘as topical, and no efforts have been made to provide a comprehensive description of French military history’. He points to the disproportionate attention given to the figure of Napoleon, with a hall dedicated to his ‘family and personal items ranging from dishes and clothing to the bed in which Napoleon died. Such objects normally are not found in a military museum’. He praises the display of armour as one of the best in Europe, and pointed to the existence of an unusual display dedicated to model soldiers from all nations.

In 1995, Daniel J. Sherman wrote: “In France, the museum-memorial distinction is rooted in an opposition to an earlier museum-type, the military museum, epitomized by the Musée de l'Armée at the Invalides” (Sherman, 1995: 50). However the *Musée de l'armée* could not remain indifferent to the changing museography of war in France's youngest museums, and the 1998 conference helped to guide an important process of renovation. Robert Bresse, the director of the National Army museum, in charge of the museum modernisation programme begun in 2000, writes: “My mission is to transform a museum of objects into a history museum.” In the course of the last ten years, museography has undergone a complete overhaul under the auspices of the so-called *Athena* project.

The project of renovation (1996-2010), which served to entirely reorganise the *Musée de l'armée's* displays (Delage Irène, interview with E. Robbe, 2010) has to a large extent toned down the shrine-like aspect of its museography, discussed above. The space and symbolic place occupied by Napoleon had with time come to be considered by the museum's current curators as too overbearing (Humbert, 2005), and in the context of the museum's renovation, the predominance of his place came to be questioned. A good example of how this change has come

to be expressed museographically is the place granted to the famous sword wielded by the Emperor at Austerlitz. As a relic, it had, for more than a century, been either placed directly on the tomb of Napoleon itself, or in the aforementioned gilded display case. Today it has been relegated to an almost insignificant position, discreetly displayed in a lowered display case on the windowsill of the room dedicated to Napoleon in battle, easily overseen and absolutely understated.

The effort to establish a more narrative-based history museum that would contrast with the former display, presenting collections of arms, has had its impact, although the museum still to a large extent invokes the visual impact of the object. The arms displayed in the main gallery/corridors appear very much like artworks – in a presentation which borrows much from the dark, spot-lit vitrines of the *Musée du quai Branly*, whilst the adjoining rooms reveal an attempt to construct a more narrative-based presentation, integrating pedagogical materials, maps and audio-visual supports. The attempt to break with the museum's former antiquarian presentation of militaria has perhaps only been partially accomplished.

The most spectacular new addition to the *Musée de l'armée* is the *Historial Charles de Gaulle* (2008). It is conceptually and physically a national audio-visual monument, without any objects on display. Despite its very modern aspect, it is of course very much in the traditional vein of glorification offered to great military leaders that characterises the *Musée de l'armée*; indeed, the circular underground structure closely resembles that of the tomb of Napoleon.

In the conclusion of her study of the museum's history, Barcellini (2010) comments on the present role of the museum, and its future, stating that although professionals have called for important changes to be made in terms of the exhibition, and ideological principles of history museums generally, this cannot be applied to such institutions as the *Musée de l'armée*, nor to military museums in general. She maintains that these institutions do not chiefly aim to provide a scientific history of military questions, but that their main mission is directly related to an ideological and commemorative role, a fact that constitutes the essence of the museum itself, and as such cannot be altered. Whilst Westrate (1961: 87) writes that: 'Its future is well assured because it functions as an instrument of patriotism and plays a somewhat supporting role in the suitable memorialization of a major national hero,' Barcellini (2010: 240) points out that the cessation of mandatory military service in France, and the changing nature of the army-nation relationship, present a direct 'menace' to the museum's future. The *Invalides*, which houses the *Musée de l'armée*, had in recent years also been considered as a possible site for a future museum of national history an idea that has since been abandoned.

### **The status of the history museum in France**

As illustrated by the example of the war and military museum, today France's history museums are changing rapidly, through a series of constructions, renovations and announcements for new projects. The past twenty years have also been characterised by a reflexive turn that has made curators more aware of their role in bringing contemporary academic research to the forefront of historical exhibits.

This general tendency to modernise the institution emerged in the wake of an institutional and intellectual movement that had begun to transform the nature of the art museum in France from the 1960s onwards. One might remark on the fact that the considerable success of the French historic school of the 1960s to 1980s did not manifest itself immediately in the renewal of history

museums and exhibitions (with the exception of such museums as the Péronne Historial). Whilst the most eminent historians published widely, appeared on television etc. – they participated little, if at all, in museographical projects.

French historians only really began to show an interest in history museums at the beginning of the 1990s. As mentioned above, a series of major conferences contributed to a reformulation of the intellectual and civic mission of the history museum. The interest shown by art historians in the question of museums is older in France, but has been limited to considering the relationship between the artists and the museums – or simply focused on the history of its decorations (Poulot, 2007).

It remains a fact that in France the history museum is often mentioned with condescension by a majority of historians – in some cases expressed by direct appeals to the government, as addressed by historians themselves. In response to this, we find the no less stereotypical discourse of curators and other professionals concerning the specificity of their work and of the presentation of museum media. In short, it is as though historians deplore the fact that they no longer control the history museums, their discourses or scenographies, and that they aspire to conquer them back – to rediscover a lost scholarly activity, a reference to a tradition that never really existed (Poulot, 2007). This has never been as true as in the context of recent debates surrounding the creation of a *Maison d'histoire de France* (see below).

The initiatives with regard to museums in the twentieth century generally emanated from those who had been part of history – deportees or resistance fighters of the Second World War, for example – or passionate collectors. Whenever coming from local or national political entities, the decision to establish history museums in contemporary France has always been viewed as a reaction to a specific current topical issue. For example, the creation of the House of the Children of Izieu, a museum in Lyon dedicated to deported Jewish children, was decided upon in 1987, during the tribunal hearing of Barbie, one of the leaders of the Gestapo in Lyon. Similarly, it was the commemoration of the bicentenary of the French Revolution that led the department of the Isère to open a museum of the Revolution in Vizille – although at the time it had no specific collections to display (Poulot, 2007).

The beginning of a new wave of interest in the history museums coincided with the bicentenary of the French Revolution, which was celebrated on a major scale across the country – lending itself to a series of events and exhibitions. It might be noted that this eminently foundational national event also led to the establishment of two regionally funded museums, but not to any national institution.

The second of these, the *Historial de Vendée*, appears as a foil against which one might read the challenges for policy makers in establishing a national history museum today and satisfy the inevitable choir of differing historical opinions and positions. The *Vendée Historial*, opened in 2007, is managed by the Regional council and situated close to La Roche-sur-Yon, in Lucs-sur-Boulogne. This small village lay at the heart of the region most heavily involved in the counter-revolutionary movement and has established itself as an important site of the *Guerres de Vendée* (1793-1796), the bloodiest civil war in the history of France.

Its presentation grants the status of martyrs of the Revolution to the local victims of the war waged by the counter-revolutionary factions, notably regional members of the clergy. In so doing, it employs a Universalist discourse with reference to other anti-revolutionary movements (e.g. by

showing the discourse of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn) thus creating a form of counter-national narrative.

### **The birth and death of a political project - *La Maison d'histoire de France***

Generally dedicated to aesthetic concerns, presidential projects and museums that are the result of major national museum projects have, surprisingly, remained to a large extent impermeable to directly political themes, and have thus not been questioned as tools of ideological instrumentalisation or manipulation of the past. In France, the role of the museum has, until recently, not given rise to any real or sustained debate concerning the role of museums in civic education and national history (Poulot, 2008: 199). This changed with the project for a national history museum announced by Sarkozy in 2009, which appeared from the outset to be an essentially political museum intending to honour national “values” – as it has been explicitly presented as a new forum to examine questions of national identity. In a series of articles, published in most major French daily and weekly newspapers, an interesting, rapid-fire discussion opposed the world of academia and the government in the matter of the establishment of a new museum of national history, to be named the *Maison d'histoire de France*. The project is on hold since the election of François Hollande, the political left-wing adversary of Nicolas Sarkozy and as announced in August 2012, it will doubtlessly take on the more informal aspect of a network of already existing institutions and a series of coordinated projects – possibly related to the creation of a website dedicated to French history.

The debate remains of interest in order to understand cultural policy in France, although it was, of course, baited and drowned by layers of other political issues, more or less pertinent to the consideration of the matter at hand: concerning the location of the museum (to be situated in the *Archives Nationales*), but also fuelled by the vexation of historians dealing with other educational reforms, and by reactions to a series of unfortunate presidential attempts to deal with historical questions – provoking exacerbated debates, for example at the infamous 2007 speech given at the University of Cheikh-Anta-Diop in Dakar, where the president made awkward claims about the place of Africa in a world history of progress.

Often replaced by notions such as citizenship, the term “identity” resurfaced in a new way with the establishment of a Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Solidarity in 2007 by the Sarkozy government project. The ministry of “National Identity” was founded for the purpose of centralising government efforts in terms of immigration control – a task that was established alongside a policy of developing a “memory and the promotion of citizenship through the principles and values of the Republic” (decree of the 31st of May, 2007). On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2009, the mission letter sent by Nicolas Sarkozy and François Fillon to the new minister, Eric Besson, specified that he would be involved in considering questions of national identity in relation to the future museum.

National identity, as an outmoded term too closely related to older ideologies of nationalism, provoked a wave of initial discomfort across the political spectrum, and the pertinence of referring to this term was a central point of discussion in the media at the time. Exponents of the left pointed out that the need to underline the notion of national identity in the context of a specific ministry dedicated to the question of immigration could only contribute to imply the idea that the national paradigm was under threat from outsiders, more specifically from foreigners within, or entering, the country.

This means that the reaction to the president's declared intentions to establish a new national history museum have been particularly strong and negative – given the (rather too) obviously ideological nature of the project. Indeed, the preliminary report, produced by Hervé Lemoine in 2008, based its opening argument on what he identifies as the illness of "Clio, the favourite muse of the French; France's history and identity are suffering." By placing identity and history so clearly on the same level, the project immediately related what appeared as the ontological desire for a definition of French identity, to a historical explanation. It posited the existence of the identity of the nation-state as a historical product that might be clearly defined. In so doing, it has increasingly irritated a number of critically minded historians, from Christophe Charle and Jacques le Goff to Pierre Nora, as expressed in the article cited above, published in *Le Monde*, 'La Maison de l'histoire de France est un projet dangereux'.

All of the debates concerning this 'dangerous project' boiled down to the same problem – the fact that an increasing number of highly renowned and esteemed French historians believe that the museum will become a direct instrument for the expression of an 'identity' expressing specific right-wing political values. According to their reading of the project, it defined identity narrowly and traditionally, through an updated yet nevertheless somewhat official historiography. They were uncertain as to whether it could be free to reflexively deal with the darker sides of French history – from Napoleon to Algeria, it has been noted for example that of all the armed conflicts that France has been involved in, those related to the colonial enterprise are grossly absent in the museum (Laurier et al, 2011: 10) – or whether it would serve to widen and profoundly question the notion of identity, to include the history of all the nations related to France.

The debated raised important questions: should we be establishing a museum of national history today, and if so, then why? Are national borders the ones that we should be looking at? Does society still wish for and need to be defined uniquely within of the frame of the nation-state? Do all histories presented from this 'national' perspective serve a political agenda? The authors of the October 2010 article considered the notion of Europe as the more pertinent, larger, and more balanced frame within which to contemplate French history, asking why it was not the principal geographical reference for the museum's development. In relation to this argument, one might consider the policy that has been developed in relation to the MUCEM (*Musée des Civilisation d'Europe Méditerranée*).

These arguments were at the time disclaimed by the minister of Culture, Frédéric Mitterand, interestingly however the minister pointed to the need for a new museum in order to re-establish a balance to the "fragmented" history produced by the great variety of historical schools. This again echoes Nicolas Sarkozy's call for a history of France that could be told as a "coherent whole" (Sarkozy, 2009). In reaction to this general position and in order to underline their role as the more legitimate experts, the press articles that were published in the space of the last three years, by France's historians, sought to defend exactly this necessary plurality of history.

Aside from the protests of historians, the proposed *Maison* also intended to federalise eight major national museums whose collections mainly comprise art works and archaeological objects; this part of the project may well be preserved. It will perhaps now be less of a point of contention, as the curators of these institutions did not necessarily wish to be part of a project that they feared would ideologically taint the identity of their prestigious institutions (Vital, 2011: 49). The museum project was perceived from the point of view of these institutions as a kind of 'takeover' operation – and it was feared that their respective collections would be partially

absorbed, as in the case of the *Musée de l'homme* with the creation of *quai Branly*, which led to widespread rejection in professional curatorial circles. This is no longer possible as the creation of a mother museum, so to speak, has been excluded by the new minister of Culture, Aurélie Filippetti. The museum was set to open in 2015 in the centre of Paris; the projected costs were about 80 million euros (including the 7 million euros already spent on developing the concept) a prohibitive factor that in addition to the change of government led to the recent announcement that the project is to be abandoned but that a website will provide a common space to link the institutions forming the newly defined network of France's national history museums.

Those historians and museum professionals, who spoke out against the project, did so with a view to halting or suspending it. However, presidential projects have a tendency to go ahead, in spite of the polemics, as may be observed in the case of other recently established museums, from the *Musée d'Orsay* to the *quai Branly*. One might add that a similarly violent debate accompanied the opening of Berlin's *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, where once again a large number of intellectuals (mainly left-wing) expressed concerns that Helmut Kohl's personal declarations concerning the museum would place it directly under the banner of a right-wing, conservative view of history.

In France, it remains that there is a certain mistrust of history within the museum; these articles give the distinct impression that for many historians, history does not deserve a place in the museum. To quote Michèle Riot-Sarcey, "What Republic should be displayed? The one that refused to give women the vote; the one that legitimized colonialisation; the one that produced the monumental crime of the Dreyfus Affair? It is a plural, contradictory, conflicting history. A conflict may be reflected on, it may not be put into a museum" (Michèle Riot-Sarcey, 15 October 2010). This is a strong opinion that shows an absence of knowledge about recent museographical efforts and developments, to be explained by the fact that in France, the museum exists first and foremost for art. As is indeed clear from the official administrative definition, the *musée national* as an art museum is fundamental and traditionally central to the idea of what the national museum is in France. As Riot-Sarcey states in the same article, museums should display "the way in which artistic creation transcends reality." The reality of history, to say nothing of national history: is it too messy for the museum? Clearly there is something to be learned here from considering history museums and exhibition projects in countries where these have played a far greater role in the general public's appreciation of national history, a role which is not necessarily purely ideologically, nor uncritical.

## Conclusion

Contemporary ideological tendencies are reformulating France's Universalist ambitions as a desire to represent diversity and to establish places of cultural dialogue, very much present in current museum policy. Such intentions are of course implicitly related to polemical issues in French society today, such as the expression of multiculturalism, the integration of immigrants and the rising popularity of the extreme right (as in the 2002 presidential elections). On the other hand, traditionalist notions of the nation's origins and 'glorious' past have, in recent decades and to a more or less limited extent, come to be reframed through the establishment of more trans-national narratives or by considering challenging episodes of the past from a less glorifying perspective. One might, however, underline the fact that the general desire to address challenging aspects of the nation's past and present seems to give preference to strategies that one might

define as neutralising rather than explicative. Although, in the formulation of new museum projects, emphasis is consistently placed on a supposedly novel desire for openness and inclusion, their initial conception in many ways does not actually seek to confront challenging issues head on. However, their establishment and development do provide new financing, and thus new opportunities and forums for debating these issues, while the wide scope of questions raised by the temporary exhibitions of the *Musée du quai Branly* (with more than ten exhibits per year) shows that these institutions have an impact that is evolutive and transcends the formulation of a fixed project for a building and a permanent collection. The demonstrations outside of the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*, and the violent polemics surrounding the project for the *Maison d'histoire de France*, prove that from the undocumented worker to the historian professor, civil society in France makes a claim on the museum as a space for a dialogue in which it intends to take an active part.

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# Norwegian Cultural Policy and Its Effect on National Museums

Lill Eilertsen

## General Characteristics

Museum institutions in Norway, as in the other Scandinavian countries, were established with the aim of supporting and developing notions of a national identity, and they played an active role in the Norwegian struggle for independence, which culminated in the separation from Denmark in 1814, and from the personal union with Sweden in 1905. They continued to serve the Norwegian project of nation building during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, as parts of the official cultural policy, providing an authorized national narrative of cultural unity and predestined development (WP3 report, Oslo). Most minority cultures were portrayed – if at all – as primitive or lower cultures unworthy of being associated with the nation’s cultural history. The initial reactions to the prevalence of nationalism in the Norwegian museum field were prompted by the Norwegian Nazi party – *Nasjonal Samling* – who would abuse the national narrative as constructed and presented in Norwegian museums for dubious purposes (both before and during the Second World War) (Myhre 2003). Criticism of the ethnocentrism displayed by European museums grew stronger with the anti-colonial movement emerging in Europe from the 1950s onwards, and served to improve awareness among the Norwegian indigenous Sámi people of their rights to their own cultural heritage. In the 1970s and 1980s, national museums faced mounting suspicion from pressure groups (among others, the Sámi) questioning the representativeness of their exhibitions. Thus, the conception of the Norwegians as a culturally homogenous people, developed and communicated in Norway’s national museum institutions, has long since come to be challenged.

Professor Katherine Goodnow, editor of the UNESCO publication “Scandinavian Museums and Diversity,” claims that Scandinavian countries offer a special opportunity for investigating the ways in which “different kinds of cultural diversity” are dealt with in the museums, as the minority groups in question reflect both recent and older waves of immigration, as well as indigenous peoples. In the last two decades, Norwegian museum politics have largely been concerned with the question of how to consider and interrelate these cultures.

The Norwegian Museum of Cultural History (Norsk folkemuseum), the Museum of Cultural History (Kulturhistorisk museum), the Armed Forces Museums (*Forsvarsmuseet*) and the National Museum of Art, Design and Architecture – all situated in Oslo – will serve as key cases in the investigation into the manner in which private and public national museums have come to redefine their aims in order to adapt to the official museum policy of the Norwegian government. National papers and documents recording the changing role of national (and other) museums will be presented, as will political, rhetorical and practical strategies applied by policy-makers and national museums in order to stimulate these changes.

This report will also document the ways in which Sámi and national art museum institutions have been affected by the comprehensive museum reform initiated in 1999.

## The impact of leftism and regionalism on Norwegian museum politics

As an introduction to the Norwegian museum landscape, I will be providing an overview of the regional focus maintained in museum politics across the centuries, as well as the strong decentralization trends from the 1950s onwards, which were responsible for the large number of museums in the first place. I will be arguing that the history of leftist-supported regionalism has prepared the ground, to a certain extent, for the egalitarian perspectives that dominate today's museum politics in Norway.

Regional voices in Norwegian museum politics are strong, and always have been. In 1905, administrative authority over archaeological pre-reformation material was divided between five regional museums (Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø), thus preventing the establishment of a *formal* national museum of cultural heritage (NOU 2002:1; WP3, Oslo report). The Liberal Left Party were greatly influential in the development of Norway's cultural politics during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, represented among others by folklorist, regionalist and language reformer *Knut Liestøl* (1881–1952), who acquired a central position in language committees and national broadcasting, and who served as Minister of Church and Education from 1933 to 1935 (Norsk biografisk leksikon). Folk and city museums mapping local and regional culture soon came to be the prevalent type of museum in Norway, and an interest group, the National Norwegian Museum Association (*Norske museers landsforbund*), was established in 1918.

The focus shifted, however, in the interwar period, from the preservation of objects to a strengthening of the educational perspective within Norwegian museums (Talleraas 2009:172-184), and after the Second World War, the Norwegian Labour Party seized the baton in Norwegian politics (Vandvik 2011:70). In fact, prime ministers representing the Norwegian Labour Party have served uninterruptedly between 1935 and 1965, 1971 and 1981, 1986 and 1997 and from 2000 until the present ([www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no)). In 1951, historian and cultural politician *Halvdan Koht* (1873-196) published a book entitled “Towards a Socialist Culture,” preparing an ideological platform for the cultural politics of the Labour Party, including and engaging the working class in cultural activities (Talleraas 2009:283-285). The regional museums were now strengthened even further by a still more intensified decentralization trend than before, developing in a prosperous period of employment and economic growth. A museum committee (*Hove-komiteen*), appointed by the Ministry of Church and Education, presented a new system of grants in 1973, which served to stimulate the establishment of new regional museums (Østby 2009). From now on, museums were committed to a focus on industrial workers, and parallels were drawn between the safeguarding of their “vanishing culture” and the compilation of Old Norwegian rural culture in the 1800s (Amundsen 2003; Talleraas 2009).

In the 1970s and 1980s, Norwegian policy-makers and museum professionals were additionally influenced by European democratization trends (introduced by France's Cultural Minister *Andre Malraux*, and by UNESCO), in accordance with the wishes of museums to reach a wider audience. The so-called “widened concept of culture” served to blur the distinction between fine and popular culture, and subsumed museums under what may be understood as “a cultural experiment aiming to create a new and more flexible understanding of belonging, democracy and decision-making” (author's translation), (Vandvik 2011:69-85; [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no)). Even if the late 1980s – in accordance with the recession in Northern and Western Europe – witnessed the introduction to the Norwegian museum sector of the concept

of New Public Management and the idea of museums making their own profits, the field nonetheless still remains heavily influenced by public authorities, as indicated by the fact that 69% of the total income of Norwegian museums is covered by them (Østby 2009).

### **A shift in cultural politics**

Until the 1990s, government influence was merely of an organizational character, and did not frequently address the content of museum exhibitions. This would change in the next couple of decades, as a White paper was presented in 1992 entitled *Kultur i tiden* (WP61, 1991-1992), meaning “contemporary culture.” This paper presented an outline of new cultural areas and topics of priority within the museum field: the technical and industrial developments in the 1900s, coastal culture, and the conservation of vessels. Documentation of the recent past and of contemporary life were also named significant areas for museum exhibitions (Østby 2009). The great number and diversity of museums under development in Norway in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (211 in the 1980s, 95 in the 1990s) resulted eventually in a museum field rich in complexity, difficult to manage and administer, short of funding, and wanting in the requisite professional guidance. For this reason, the need to limit the emergence of fledgling establishments was signalled in the aforementioned WP61 (1991-1992). In 1994, an advisory agency, Norwegian Museum Development (*Norsk museumsutvikling*), was established for the purpose of implementing official cultural politics in Norwegian museums. Reports developed by a newly formed committee (*Velure-utvalget*) stressed the role of the museums as institutions of social criticism social institutions. A long overdue Museums Act capable of regulating the Norwegian museum sphere<sup>15</sup> has yet to be introduced, but general guidelines were established as part of a museum reform initiated in 1999.

### **Museum reform, 1999**

The regional focus in Norwegian politics may be interpreted as one of the reasons for Norway’s refusing to enter the European Union. The nation’s history of two union dissolutions and a national narrative stressing the independence of Norwegian farmers provide constant fuel for the Norwegians’ fear of centralization (Neumann 2001). Notably, when the government introduced a museum reform in 1999, which would come to reshape the Norwegian museum landscape over the next decade by means of stringent processes of consolidation, they stressed that the idea was *not* to centralize museum institutions, but “to promote a regional co-organization in order to raise the professional level” (White paper 22, 1999-2000:8).

The reform was part of a key focus on culture launched by “the red-green coalition” (a coalition between the Labour, Socialist Left and Centre parties), with the aim of increasing cultural funding in the state budget to 1% within 2014 (Østby 2009). It was implemented gradually from 2002 onwards, in order to facilitate administrative processes, and to secure active professionals milieus. The principles for the reform were outlined in White Paper number 22 (1999-2000): “Sources of knowledge and experience” (*Kjelder til kunnskap og oppleving*), and further developed in White Paper 48 (2002-2003): “Cultural Politics towards 2014” (*Kulturpolitikk fram mot 2014*).

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<sup>15</sup> White Paper 22 (1999 - 2000) presents arguments for a separate Museums Act capable of regulating the wild growth of museum institutions, and thus preventing a fragmented and vulnerable museum society.

Two key elements of the reform, which was basically intended as a quality reform (NOU 2006:8), is the wide-ranging consolidation of museums and the establishing of two structures of museum networks: *professional* networks (counting 24 in 2011) and *national* networks (counting 20 in 2009). The national networks are simply constituted by regionally consolidated museums, providing strengthened museum administration, management and communication, while the professional networks are intended to stimulate cooperation and distribution of workload between the museums responsible for exhibition topics or research disciplines, which require specialized competence, and to aid in their development into critical and self-critical social institutions. These networks are also entrusted with the responsibility of securing a professional context for museums and exhibitions, a sustainable economic situation, and of aiding in the search for new knowledge. Common investments and projects is a desired result (White Paper number 49: 2008-2009). For every professional museum network, a certain institution is appointed “responsible museum.” For instance, the “National Museum of Art, Design and Architecture” is the responsible museum with regard to “art” in Norway.

An independent agency – the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority, ABM (*ABM-utvikling*) – was established in 2003 with the aim of following up the reform work and easing the cooperation between the university museums (which were not organizationally influenced by the reform) and other museums. ABM was a merger of three existing government units (*Norsk museumsutvikling* and two library organs), and was therefore dedicated to coordinating, not only the museums, but national archives and libraries as well. The development of a database for digital photo galleries was part of a national strategy of digital preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage, in White Paper number 24 (2008-2009) *Nasjonal strategi for digital bevaring og formidling av kulturarv*. However, museums were the main focus of this agency (Østby 2009).

Regional consolidation structures have, since 2002, served to reduce about 800 individual museum and collection units to a number of about 80, with 60 being the desired number (White paper 49, 2008-2009; NOU 2006:8). The new structures, along with extended assets<sup>16</sup>, had two primary goals: the stimulated development of regionally sustainable museum administrations, and a museum landscape capable of securing, developing and exchanging expertise (NOU 2006:8). Except from the university museums, all museum institutions directly or indirectly receiving state funding were to join the networks. Not all museums were attracted to the idea, and some responded by reserving themselves from the process (e.g. Eidsvoll 1814 and Maihaugen, Sandvig’s collections), having found that they would not benefit from consolidation with other institutions (Bugge 2009; Østby 2009). However, most state-funded museums could not afford to refuse the proposition, since the extended museum grants (an additional 700 million NOK) were reserved for network members. Other museums welcomed the reform, and there were active debates in the national newspapers in the 2000s between those museums and professionals who were satisfied with the result of the reform, and those who were not.

The restructuring phase was the most turbulent. In advance of the consolidation of the Oslo City Museum (*Oslo bymuseum*) with the Theatre Museum and the Intercultural Museum in 2006, director Lars Roede (1944–) denounced the reform in the national news, claiming that the extra

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<sup>16</sup> The permanent funding was doubled as a consequence of the museum reform, and lump sums of fresh capital were also distributed to the museum sector – 220 million NOK in 2009. (<http://www.aftenposten.no/kultur/article3227559.ece>).

work would demand too much of their resources, and would therefore pose challenges to the daily management. He also expressed doubts as to whether the reform would result in a reduction in expenditures for the future museum management. The director of ABM-utvikling (museum authorities), Jon Birger Østby (1945–), replied that a decline in visitor numbers was to be expected in a restructuring phase, and that a major grant following the reform (100 million NOK since 2002) would certainly strengthen the economy of Norwegian museums (NRK News 28.06.2004).” An article in the newspaper *Aftenposten*, published as late as March 2008, revealed that directors of art museums in the southwestern counties were opposed to the consolidation of art museums and other types of museums, such as botanical gardens and museums of natural history. They claimed that the art-interested audience they wished to address differs from the visitors of other institutions, and that they felt that the reform was being “forced upon them.” Despite this opposition, Minister of Culture Trond Giske (1966–) stressed the importance of fulfilling the reform plans in a final stadium, but remained prepared to discuss the need for local practical adaptations and adjustments (*Aftenposten* 28.03.2008).

However, a status report developed by ABM-utvikling in 2006 confirms that museum assets in general have been extended (in some counties significantly) as a consequence of the museum reform, that most museums are willing to and capable of adapting to the new situation, and that the dialogue between ABM and the other administration offices, as well as between museums, are functioning well. It has been described as a weakness of the process that museums outside of the area of responsibility of the Department of Culture are not touched by the reform, that the art museums are not integrated with other types of museums, and that some regions have shown reluctance to any major change in their museum sector (ABM-utvikling 2006). Another status report from the final phase of the reform period was included in White Paper 49, 2008-2009, which presents the reform as having attained general success: Dissemination activities have been strengthened, visitor numbers have increased on average by 30% (5.9 million in 2008), and the museum staff have in general increased. When responding to a consultation letter issued by the Department of Culture, 60% of the museums reported that they were satisfied with the effect of consolidation, whereas 40% gave more mixed feedback. Around 65% of the museums reported that they had experienced that their administrations had been significantly strengthened and professionalized during the reform period, and many found that the reform had been the proper choice. What was presented as requiring improvement was the museums’ collection management; 55% of the artefact collections were considered below the required standard. 95% of the museums reported the need for rehabilitation, or for new buildings. Still, the overriding tendency described in WP 49 is that consolidations had, by most museums, gradually been found to be fruitful to the development and sharing of professional expertise.

The rather optimistic perspectives expressed in WP 49 on the new consolidation structures and the ability of the reform to develop professional competence are not, however, to be traced in the debates which preceded the merger of four particular national art museum institutions, and the reorganization of the permanent exhibitions in the former National Gallery. These debates engaged a broad spectrum of the public, and resulted in a media storm quite exceptional for the museum field in Norway. These debates deserve independent treatment, and will be presented in a later chapter on the National Museum of Art, Design and Architecture.

## **Museum reform and the Sámi museums**

Another segment of the museum field, which remains far from satisfied with the reform, are the Sámi museums, governed since 2002 by the Norwegian Sámi Parliament. Eleven independent institutions are organized within six “siidas” (consolidated museums), from North Trøndelag to Finnmark, engaging altogether 30 museum employees, but the reorganization has been difficult to implement. According to Lars Magne Andreassen (1967–), chairman of the Sámi museum association, the *Sámi* museum reform has not been embraced by the government’s financial boost over the last decade. In an article published in number 1/2011 of the Journal *Museumsnytt* (Museum News), he details a hopeless situation for the Sámi museums as a result of a lack in finances. When the Sámi Parliament was first established, in 1989, it was allegedly urged to prioritize other challenges than the development of museums. Thus the Sámi museums initially held a lower standard than other Norwegian museums, and the national goal of an enhanced focus on management, research, dissemination and renewal in Norwegian museums is not realistic in respect of these less resourceful institutions. Minister of Culture Annicken Huitfeldt (1969–) addresses all complaints with reference to the freedom of the Sámi Parliament being to use their state funding in other ways in order to strengthen their museums, but Andreassen argues that the cultural field, intended to be taken care of by the ordinary assets, includes both theaters and publishing houses, as well as music and festivals, and maintains that the Sámi museums, as a consequence of the reform, are being discriminated as compared to their Norwegian counterparts. He asks if the cultural history of the Sámi is not worthy of attention, if Norwegians have nothing to learn from it, and refers to an understanding of Norwegians and Sámi as constituting one and the same people prior to the period of nation-building (Andreassen 2011). Another weakness in the museum reform, with reference to the Sámi museums, is the database chosen for digital documentation of museum items, *Primus*, which is not compatible with Sámi as a registration language (National Sámi museum network 2010).

## **Diverse Publics**

### **The reflection of cultural diversity in Norwegian national museums**

The part of the museum reform, which underlines the need for bolstering the role of the museums as institutions of social criticism presents “cultural diversity” as a key challenge to be prioritized in the years to come (WP 22 1999-2000:6.11.1). Thus, the multiculturalist perspective is introduced along with a reminder of the nation’s long history of migration and minority groups, among which the Sámi represent one of several minority cultures in Norway. The question of how to treat and inter-relate the *different forms* of cultural variety in the museums has, however, not presented an easy task for cultural politicians and museum managers, as the minority groups in Norway differ both with regard to expressed desires and needs, visibility, numbers and national status.

### **National minorities and the indigenous Sámi population**

The term “National Minority” is new to Norway only in the sense that it has come to prevail within politics and administration. It refers to groups of *old* immigrants with “lengthy experience within the national borders and attachment to the country they lived in” (Goodnow 2008: X). Denmark has identified only one such group (a German minority in the south), while Norway,

Sweden and Finland have recognized several – yet not the same groups, and without applying the same categories to all peoples. In Norway, five such groups are recognized: Jews, Gypsies/Rom people, Tatars/travellers, Kvens and Forest Finns. These minority populations have, along with the Sámi, been the victims of stringent political assimilation strategies from the 1850s onwards, partly as a result of the unifying project of nation-building, and partly due to foreign and security policy considerations regarding “the Finnish Danger” along the borders of the North (Niemi 2008:3-4; ABM-utvikling #25, 2006). While the Sámi are considered a national minority in Sweden and Finland, this ethnic group were awarded the status of an indigenous people when Norway ratified the ILO convention 169 in 1990, which served to grant the Sámi population specific cultural, political and judicial rights. Already from the 1940s/1950s onwards, Norwegian authorities had begun to accept the Sámi as an indigenous people in accordance with international trends and the voices of early Sámi ethno-political organizations. The Sámi movement was radicalized from about 1970, as a response to impulses from the growing international indigenous peoples’ movements. Following a conflict ca. 1980 over the damming of the Alta-Kautokeino River for hydroelectric purposes, the government appointed two Sámi political committees: the Sámi Rights Commission (*Samerettsutvalget*) and the Sámi Cultural Commission (*Samekulturutvalget*) (Niemi 2008:4-5), and from the second half of the 1980s onwards, a new and strengthened Sámi policy was under development. The Norwegian Sámi Parliament was established in 1989, as were a series of separate Sámi museums in the 1970s, -80s and -90s. The strong legal function associated with the status “indigenous” contributes to reducing the interest of the Sámi in being characterized simply as a minority, and thus they retained their status when Norway in 1999 ratified the Europe Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities (Goodnow 2008:X).

According to WP 22 (1999-2000), a lot has been done in order to award to the Sámi cultural heritage a just place within the complete dissemination of the historical development in Norway, with substantial investments in museum buildings and exhibitions, of which more are being planned. Prior to the report, the Sámi Parliament had presented a series of requests with regard to requirements for their museums (8 at this point of time):

- Strengthened work with regard to Sámi natural sciences, nature and landscape terminology
- Improvements in Sámi cultural self-understanding and language measures
- Documentation of Sámi cultural heritage, environments, knowledge and crafts
- Strengthened research
- An overview of Sámi heritage material
- Identification of requirements with regard to the protection and technical conservation of collections

In 2002, the Sámi Parliament was entrusted with the responsibility of managing all post-Reformation cultural heritage material older than 100 years and located in the Sámi area (they were however not entrusted with the authority to manage Sámi cultural heritage outside of Sápmi). This was also the case for the other Nordic Sámi populations, and a cross-national project was initiated in 2006 with the purpose of mapping all Sámi material in museum institutions in Norway, Sweden and Finland. The older national folk museums in Sweden and Norway in particular possess substantial Sámi collections, which are scheduled to be repatriated

in part in the years to come (Harlin 2007; Pareli 2011). The undisputed status of the Sámi is most clearly expressed in White Paper 49 (2008 - 2009) "The Museum of the Future: Management, Dissemination, Research, Renewal" (*Fremtidens Museum: Forvaltning, formidling, forskning, fornying*). The paper emphasizes the importance of museums reflecting the cultural diversity of the Norwegian society, addressing both old and new minorities, and contains a separate chapter (7) dedicated to Sámi museums. Yet the Sámi museums are still struggling to reach their goals. The 2010 State budget provided no financial boost for the Sámi museums, and the frustration is growing. The needs of the Sámi museums are currently being documented and mapped as a part of ongoing processes (White paper no 8, 2011 – 2012, "The Activities of the Sámi Parliament 2010").

Compared to the Sámi, the Kven minority is not quite as well-established with regard to the protection of cultural heritage, with only 4 museum institutions or departments dedicated to presenting and preserving their culture, and without any individual treatment from the other less numerous national minorities (ABM-utvikling #25, 2006; WP. no. 22, 1999-2000). The first Kvens migrated from the Finnish regions to the Arctic coast as early as the late Middle Ages, and have since arrived as immigrants during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and once again as a new wave of immigration beginning ca. 1830, with the result that this people, according to the census of 1875, constitute 25% of the population of Norway's northernmost county, *Finnmark* (Niemi 2008:3). The Norwegian Kven Association was established in 1987, and in 1990 Kven representatives issued demands for a renewed minority status, without reference to the term "immigrant." This was done as a protest against the two-part hierarchy existing in Norwegian minority politics: indigenous and immigrant minorities. The demands were refused until 1999, when Norway ratified the European Council's framework convention for the protection of national minorities (Niemi 2008:6). The Forest Finns joined the Norwegian Kven Association in 1995, but prior to this they had not been recognized as Kvens, although they too are of Finnish origin. Three museums in the south-eastern part of Norway are dedicated to the culture of the Forest Finns (ABM-utvikling #25, 2006).

All of the Norwegian national minorities have expressed the desire to establish separate mono-cultural museums or museum departments, which attend to their specific culture (Rekdal 1999:52). Preservation of their culture constitutes an important part of Norway's official museum politics, yet White Paper 15 (2000 - 2001) "National Minorities in Norway" claims that it is often preferable to develop extant museums in order to display the cultural interaction between different peoples typical of the area, than to establish new institutions for each group. Such exhibitions were to be developed on the premises of representatives for the specific group(s). From 2001 onwards, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development has distributed an information letter on the official politics with regard to national minorities. Several exhibition projects, departments and institutions promoting the culture of national minorities have been developed over the last two decades, most of them during the 2000s (ABM-utvikling #25, 2006). Nevertheless, there is little doubt as to whether they are faced with divergent priorities by the Norwegian Government, depending on their international status, their legal rights and their own efforts and resources.

No separate museum institution has been established for exhibiting or communicating the long traditions of the Rom people (Gypsies) residing in Norway, however a department at the Holocaust centre is dedicated to this minority, and a second is being planned in the Oslo City

Museum. Because Norwegians in the past have been neither able nor willing to differentiate between Rom people (Gypsies) and Travellers/Tinkers (*taterne*), the history of these two minority groups are not certain; however, it is likely that the Rom people have resided in Norway since the late Middle Ages (Niemi 2008:2). The culture of the Travellers has also been neglected in Norwegian museums, yet an exhibition dedicated to their culture has been established in *Glomsdalsmuseet* in south-eastern Norway. The Travellers are probably the ethnic group that has been most frequently exposed to persecution in Norway, with regular “hunts” having been practised in some villages. Both minority groups have been, and are still, considered problems with which to be dealt by the government, and “civilizing funds” as well as housing initiatives were initiated in the 1800s and 1900s. These have not proven to be successful, and, seen from a Gypsies’ or travellers’ perspective, the main problem appears to be a lack of respect for their mobile life-style (Niemi 2008:2). A National Tinker Association, “Free as the bird” (previously called the National Association for the Romany-People), has existed since 1995, with the aim of promoting the culture of the Travellers ([www.taterne.com](http://www.taterne.com)). A number of temporary and mobile exhibitions of Gypsy and Romany culture have come to be developed in the past two decades (ABM-utvikling #25, 2006).

The Jews are represented by three museums: a Holocaust Centre, established in 2001, a Jewish museum in Trondheim (Mid-Norway), and the Oslo Jewish Museum, established in 2008 in the old Synagogue. This minority was actually denied access to Norway with reference to a “Jewish paragraph” in the Constitution of 1814, which was abolished in 1851 following 20 years of dispute. Jewish immigration increased, and by the Second World War, between 2000 and 2500 Jews were living in Norway (Niemi 2008:2). The Holocaust was a catastrophe for the Norwegian Jews, and the historical and moral settlement of the economic liquidation of Jews in Norway resulted in the Norwegian parliament agreeing to return 450 million NOK to the minority. Forty million NOK were earmarked for the establishment and management of a politically and ideologically neutral centre for Holocaust studies and for studies into the religious minorities in Norway (St. Prp. 82, 1997-1998; [www.hlsenteret.no](http://www.hlsenteret.no)). The centre was established as a foundation in 2001, and it cooperates with the University of Oslo in order to comply with its comprehensive mandate. Genocide, racism, anti-Semitism and the violation of human rights are the topics which are being studied here, as well as the conditions of religious minorities in the modern society, and the centre displays a prominent permanent exhibition. The more modest aim of the Oslo Jewish Museum is “to collect, preserve and do research into Jewish history and culture in Oslo and Norway” ([www.jodiskmuseumoslo.no](http://www.jodiskmuseumoslo.no)). In addition, it displays exhibitions and hosts cultural events which focus on Jewish religion, tradition, culture and history.

### **Recent immigrant cultures**

More recent immigrant cultures reflect a rather novel challenge to the Norwegian museum field, further complicating the situation for those museums entrusted with the responsibility of managing both old and new national identities. Even though the number of Pakistanis living in Norway has long since surpassed that of the Sámi, and about 40% of all school children in Oslo have immigrant backgrounds (Rekdal 1999:57), these have not been awarded a museum of their own. Nor has a proper museum of migration, such as the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* in Paris, or *the National Museum of World Culture* in Göteborg, been established in Norway. While Sweden has three rather impressive museum institutions dedicated to immigrant culture, Norway

has but a small institution named Intercultural Museum (*Interkulturelt museum, IKM*), established in Oslo in 1990 as an activity centre and museum. Its aim is to promote understanding of and respect for cultural diversity, and art created by ethnic Norwegians as well as by people with immigrant backgrounds is on display in a small gallery. Yet IKM does not have any collection or a permanent exhibition. In 2006 – the same year in which it was merged with the Oslo Museum – it was voted Museum of the Year (Møller and Einarsen 2008:140-145). The museum is, however, not very well promoted in the media, and little information about IKM is to be found on the websites, which it shares with the Oslo Museum.

With reference to Norway as a pioneer in developing local democracy, and along with a growing awareness of the culturally diverse population (especially in the northern areas), Norwegian politicians have been responsive to the political ideal of multiculturalism which has come to be established in Europe in the last decades. Challenges met in the field of cultural integration of the rapidly growing immigrant population have additionally caused decision-makers to identify the need to educate the Norwegian people on the subject of cultural diversity. The role of museums, national and otherwise, has accordingly been redefined in order to create a more tolerant public sphere. This process began already in 1993, with the problematization of multiculturalist perspectives on museum dissemination at the common annual meeting of the Norwegian Institute for Museum Development (*Institutt for museumsutvikling, NKKM*), the National Association of the Norwegian Natural Historical Museum (*Norske Naturhistoriske Museers Landsforbund, NNML*), the Norwegian Museum Association (*Norges museumsforbund, NMF*), and the Committee of the Norwegian International Council of Museums, ICOM.

The next step was a mandate given to a museum committee in 1993 for effecting a thorough official museum report – for the first time in over 25 years – resulting in a national report entitled Museum, Diversity, Memory, Meeting place (NOU 1996:7 *Museum, mangfold, minne, møtestad*). In this report, Norwegian museums were evaluated in an overall perspective, and their role as social institutions was underlined as well as their relation to the protection of cultural and natural heritage. The report stressed the need to make the multicultural society a field of priority in Norwegian museums, and it was flanked by White Paper 17 (1996-97), “On the subject of immigration and the multicultural Norway” (*Om innvandring og det flerkulturelle Norge*).

Multiculturalism was – as we have already seen – also presented as a field of priority in the museum reform of 1999-2000, and from 2003 onwards the National Archives, Library and Museum Authority produced a series of documents and reports on cultural diversity (ABM-publication #12, *Museums and the Multicultural Reality*).

In 2004, the Norwegian government – at this point managed by a coalition of the Labour, Socialist Left and Centre parties – introduced an historical investment in the field of culture with fifteen explicit promises, which they referred to as “The Cultural Initiative” (*Kulturløftet*). As a result, in 2007, cultural investments were secured for the future in a separate Act (*Kulturloven 2007*), which committed the government to support a wide range of cultural activities. Between 2005 and 2009, the cultural budgets were extended with 2 billion NOK. All fields of culture were included in this initiative, both Sámi (allocated with 29, 4 million NOK) and general multicultural arenas (allocated with 48 million NOK). White Paper 17 (2005-2006) additionally announced that 2008 was to be a year “dedicated to cultural diversity” (*2008 som markeringsår for kulturelt mangfold*). The government thus aspired “to stimulate new and existing milieus promoting cultural diversity” and “to strengthen the cooperation of cultural institutions with both practitioners and audiences

with minority backgrounds” (Ministry of Culture 2006). Oslo houses 1/3 of all immigrants in Norway, and as one of many initiatives by the Oslo municipality in that year, a multicultural city archive was established ([www.byarkivet.oslo.kommune.no](http://www.byarkivet.oslo.kommune.no)). In 2007, Norway ratified the UNESCO convention of October 20<sup>th</sup> 2005, concerning the protection and promotion of cultural diversity. White Paper 48 (2008-2009): The Museum of the Future: Management, Research, Dissemination, Renewal (*Framtidas museum: Forvaltning, forskning, formidling, fornying*) was the first paper to explicitly redefine the role of national museums so as to reflect cultural diversity and create intercultural dialogue. The Norwegian Museum Association responded positively to this proposition, and by the end of the 2000s, multiculturalist ideals had come to dominate Norwegian cultural and museum politics. Still, exhibitions and museum projects which serve to reflect the diversity of the Norwegian society are mostly temporary in nature, or limited to the digital sphere, e.g. *Kurdish Virtual Museum: a presentation of stateless heritage* (Goodnow 2008) and *Aisha tells her story* ([www.byarkivet.oslo.kommune.no](http://www.byarkivet.oslo.kommune.no)).

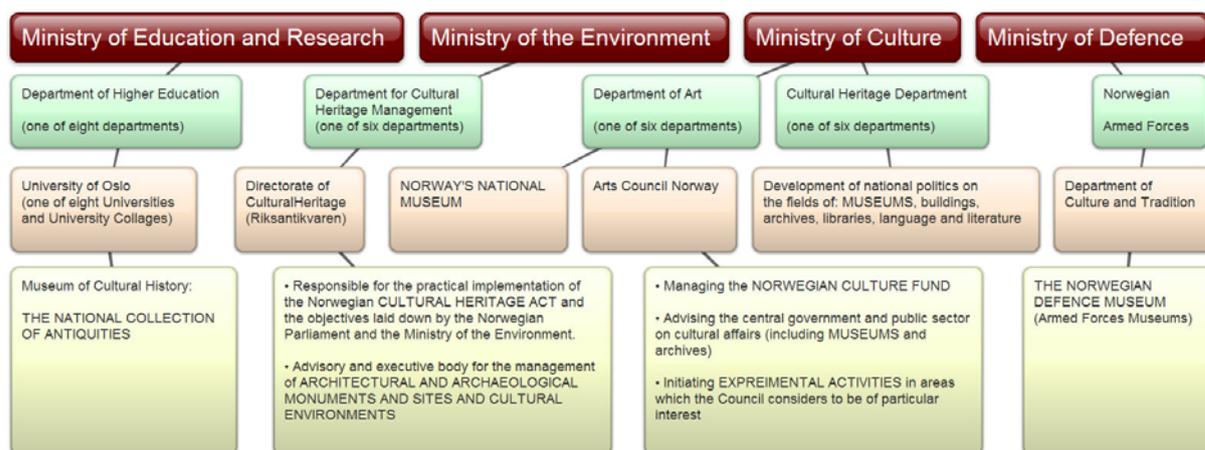
Before presenting the impact which the new trends in museum politics have had on individual national institutions such as the Norwegian Folk Museum (*Norsk Folkemuseum*), the Museum of Cultural History (*Kulturbistorisk Museum*) and the National Museum of Art, Design and Architecture (*Nasjonalmuseet*), a general presentation of Norwegian museum management and administration may serve to clarify.

## **Museum Reform**

### **Museum administrative structures and cultural politics**

Apart from the Norwegian Folk Museum, which is a private foundation, and the Sámi museums, which are subject to the Sámi Parliament, the national museum institutions in Norway are administered by three Ministries: 1) the Ministry of Culture (*Kulturdepartementet*), responsible for the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design (*Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design*), 2) the Ministry of Defence (*Forsvarsdepartementet*), which administers the Defence and Armed Forces museums (*Forsvarsmuseet*), and 3) the Ministry of Education and Research (*Kunnskapsdepartementet*), responsible for six university museums, with the Museum of Cultural History and its National Collection of Antiquities practically (if not formally) serving the role as a national institution. Additionally, the Ministry of the Environment (*Miljøverndepartementet*) is responsible for the practical implementation of the Norwegian Cultural Heritage Act, and for national monuments, sites and environments by means of the Directorate of Cultural Heritage Management (*Riksantikvaren*). The Directorate is engaged in European cultural heritage through the EEA and Norway Grants, and is increasingly involved in international partnership projects. The Ministry’s Department for cultural heritage management ensures that Norway fulfils its obligations in accordance with UNESCO conventions on cultural heritage protection (the Hague Convention of 1954 and the World Heritage Convention of 1972), and is additionally responsible for following up the European Council conventions on cultural heritage ([www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no)).

**Fig. 1, Museum administrative structures:**



Art Council Norway (*Norsk kulturråd*) was established in 1965 as an advisory organ for the government on cultural affairs in the public sector, including museums and archives. The Council also manages the Norwegian Culture Fund (*Norsk kulturfond*), an overall allocation provided by Norway's National Assembly (*Stortinget*), which in 2011 amounted to 512 million NOK ([www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no)). The Council consists of artists, actors, musicians, authors, academics and museum professionals, and maintains an independent position. Yet one of its central tasks is to initiate experimental cultural activities in areas of particular interest, in accordance with past and present political incentives ([www.norskkulturrad.no](http://www.norskkulturrad.no)).

### Political measures for redefining the role of national museums

During the 1990s, the previously mentioned Norwegian Museum Authority encouraged museums to challenge ‘established truths,’ and to present alternative or controversial topics seldom presented in the museums. A conference held in 1999, entitled “When tradition comes in our way,” discussed whether museum traditions might conceivably hinder critical debates. A project named “Norwegian museum dissemination and the multicultural challenge” (*“Norske museumsformidling og den flerkulturelle utfordringen”*) was initiated under the management of Per Bjørn Rekdal (1945–), executive member of Norwegian ICOM and at that time also manager of the Ethnographic Museum (a sub-department of the University’s Cultural Historical Museum). The project was inspired by the NOU 1996:7 document (Museums, Memory, Diversity and Meeting place), and in a summarizing report published in 1999, Rekdal outlines a series of challenges and possibilities with which Norwegian museums are confronted in the area of multiculturalism ([www.ABM-utvikling.no](http://www.ABM-utvikling.no)). Practical museum pedagogical advice is provided for the various types of museum – ethnographic museums, folk museums, local museums, natural historical museums, science centres and technical museums, as well as art museums. Cultural historical museums are addressed with a widened responsibility with regard to the documentation of ongoing changes in the cultural field, but the museums are also urged to serve as arenas for knowledge and mutual understanding in which everybody should be able to develop a positive attitude towards their own roots. Rekdal uses examples from Norwegian and Northern European museum exhibitions to demonstrate his points, not the least of which are ones that he himself has contributed to in his own institution. In between the more successful examples, we also find those, which illustrate the risk associated with an inventive or critical perspective; for instance, an exhibition on Bhutan,

which contained critical catalogue and exhibition texts on the significance of Buddhism to attitudes towards women and impoverished people resulted in protests from the Norwegian Association of Buddhists (“Tordendragens rike” 1995).

Four years later, in 2003, ABM-utvikling (*museum authority*) initiated a project entitled *Brudd* (meaning ‘fracture’ or ‘the act of breaking’) inspired by similar projects in Sweden, once again with Rekdal serving as a source of inspiration and a partner in discussions. *Brudd* invited nine museum institutions to tell “difficult stories” about taboos which are seldom encountered in museums; for instance, the Natural Historical Museum (*Naturhistorisk museum*) arranged an exhibition on homosexuality in animals, while the Trøndelag Folk Museum told the marginalized story of deaf people. In the publication, which followed *Brudd*, Rekdal made the declaration that – to him – the museum of the future is not an institution, which clings to the conception of correct stories and authentic objects, arrogantly considering other institutions to be less serious. Instead, he claimed that the museum of the future is one which dares to ask questions, and which appears reflected, not “cocksure.” Rekdal’s attitude reveals an experienced museum professional who is comfortable with redefining the role of national museum institutions. In reading his project report, we find that one of Norway’s oldest museum institutions – established in 1857, during the period of nation building – is a bold pioneer in reinventing itself and challenging its own museological premises. This is true not only of the Ethnographic collections, but of the Museum of Cultural History as a whole.

### **The Museum of Cultural History, KHM (Kulturhistorisk museum)**

In that it houses the National Collection of Antiquities (established in 1811), and exhibits the famous Viking ships in an external building, there is no doubt as to the role of the Museum of Cultural History as a national museum institution. It is a university museum, which also retains an Ethnographic collection and a Coin cabinet. *Anton Wilhelm Brøgger* (1884–1951), manager of the National Collection of Antiquities between 1915 and 1950, let both the museum and his research fuel the project of nation building, and a national narrative of “bold Vikings,” which was partly developed here, remained unchallenged until the 1990s (WP3 Oslo report). Interestingly, this significant author of Norway’s national narrative inspired voices of criticism among the post-war archaeologists with his controversial scientific perspectives. A line runs from the National Collection of Antiquities to the (relatively new) university disciplines of Ethnography and Anthropology, through some of his students. Gutorm Gjessing (1906–1979), manager of the Ethnographic Museum from 1947 and of a separate university institute from 1963, in particular contributed to reshaping general museum politics in accordance with general post-war perspectives, in that he developed a critical view of nation states and the way in which minorities and indigenous peoples were being treated. He would gradually emerge as a radical socialist, denouncing the evolutionism and imperial perspectives of the past (Bergstøl & al. 2004). Developing a critical view of the treatment of minorities and indigenous peoples, he concerned himself in particular with the Norwegians’ treatment of the Sámi, and was responsible for transferring the Sámi collection (initiating the Ethnographic museum to begin with) to the Norwegian Folk Museum in 1951, where it was exhibited alongside Norwegian folk art as part of the Norwegian cultural heritage. Gjessing also opened the academic arena to the famous social-anthropologist Frederik Barth (1928–) (Bergstøl & al. 2004; Store Norske Leksikon).

A contemporary social anthropologist, Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1962–), is one of the most respected and quoted critics of ethnocentricity and nationalism in Norway. Having set the tone in debates on multiculturalism during the 1990s and 2000s in promoting a cosmopolitan ideal for cultural identity, he has become an academic “media star.” Hylland Eriksen has indeed contributed to the establishment of a new cultural political consensus, which is also reflected in Norwegian museum politics. As the research director of the strategic university program entitled CulCom (Cultural complexity in the new Norway, 2004 – 2010) he has explicitly aimed to “redefine Norway.” Being a university institution, the Museum of Cultural History is naturally influenced by this research program.

A primary example of the results of the CulCom program is a project bearing the lengthy title “Co-existence and oppositions in a multicultural borderland: Representations of ethnicity and ethnic relations within museums in Finnmark” (not yet completed). Inspired by South-Varanger Museum’s main exhibition, “The Pasvik River – One River, Three Countries,” project manager Olav Christensen mapped the museum field in Finnmark County, inquiring to what extent a thousand years of mixed ethnicity (Sámi, Norwegians, Kvens and Russians) may be traced in local and regional museums. He found that most museums maintain an ethnocentric focus (Khazaleh/CulCom 2008). *Kultrans* is another interdisciplinary research field, which conducts studies in cultural changes in disciplines and nations in an historical perspective, and KHM-milieus also take part in the network of PluRel (Religion in Pluralistic Society), established in 2008 for the purpose of investigating what happens when religions and views on life are challenged by changing values in society ([www.uio.no/forskning](http://www.uio.no/forskning)).

The social engagement of Gjessing and later anthropologists persists safely with the previously mentioned Per B. Rekdal. He has strong merits on multicultural perspectives, serving today as a senior advisor at the Museum of Cultural History. In 2010, KHM and the Norwegian Museum Association published a study into the use of museums by immigrants (*Kunnskap om – medvirkning av – formidling for mangfoldige museumsbrukere*). Even if Norwegians are eager museum visitors, a majority of non-educated people and immigrants are reluctant to enter museum institutions, and this project aimed at preparing the ground for an improved understanding of how to reach a broader spectre of the public. Rekdal served as project manager, and in the project plan, he states that by the end of 2008 – the Year of Cultural Diversity – knowledge about the multicultural society still is limited, and he asks how a fruitful co-existence may be established between old national symbols and contemporary cultural diversity, ABM (*ABM-utvikling*). Rekdal has contributed to KHM maintaining a critical as well as curious attitude towards cultural diversity in the Norwegian society, by means of research projects, reports and exhibitions.

Egil Mikkelsen (1945–), museum director since 1999, when KHM was established as an organization, has contributed to developing the institution into a modern museum with a social responsibility. His archaeological and professional work ranges from Norwegian Stone Age cultures to reindeer herding and studies of Islam and Buddhism. Part of the museum’s official priorities (adopted 15.09.2008), is to expand our knowledge of the social significance of material culture, in a geographical as well as historical perspective. The university museums are given a special responsibility for research into and dissemination of Norway’s cultural heritage (White Paper 15, 2007-2008), and Viking Age research is a second area of priority to KHM, along with Stone Age research ([www.khm.uio.no](http://www.khm.uio.no)). In 2001, KHM adopted a 7-year project, entitled *Revita*, to provide an overview of the collections and to improve documentation and conservation of the

artefacts ([www.khm.uio.no](http://www.khm.uio.no)). It is not, however, just the professional and social profile of the museum which Mikkelsen has contributed to developing. He has also engaged himself in the plans for a new museum building in central Oslo, to unite the collections currently housed in today's Historical Museum, and the Viking ships exhibited on Bygdøy (a peninsula outside of Oslo proper). These plans have caused debates in prominent newspapers (e.g. *Aftenposten*, *VG*, *Dagbladet*, *Dagsavisen*, *Morgenbladet* and *Klassekampen*) as well as in academic forums (*Forskerforum*, University websites, Norwegian Museum Association and the Society for the Preservation of Norwegian Ancient Monuments), and in the national news (NRK). The dispute revolves around the efforts of dissuasion by some of the employees from relocating the fragile Viking ships and sleighs, which has caused the Directorate for Cultural Heritage to consider the possible preservation of the Viking Ship Museum and its content in accordance with § 22 of the Cultural heritage Act (Museumssnytt 2, 2007:15-16; *Aftenposten* 15.11.2010). Mikkelsen himself was, in fact, among the initial sceptics, but changed his mind in the wake of reports, which suggested that the Iron Age vessels were robust enough to be moved.

The Viking Ship Museum is Norway's most visited museum, and KHM's director was hoping that a larger building would attract even more visitors, and that it would increase the income (Museumssnytt 2, 2007). Mikkelsen's vision for a new museum is among other things intended to create an arena for cultural understanding in the multicultural society, with experience-based learning (as with the Ethnographic Museum in Amsterdam), as well as to afford proper housing to the museum collections, as the current buildings are too small (Museumssnytt 2, 2007:15-16). He wished for this museum to be built in Bjørvika (Bispevika), as part of Oslo Municipality's Fjord City project. "The Fjord City"-plan was adopted by the City Council in February 2008, after a thorough zoning of Bjørvika and adjoining areas (Tjuvholmen, Akershusstranda and Sjursøya) had been completed (2003-2005). The plan will contribute to a comprehensive development of the areas that constitute Oslo's waterfront and it is regarded as an historical possibility for designing parts of the city structure from scratch.

A report developed by consultant companies *Metier AS* and *Møreforskning Molde AS* on behalf of the Norwegian government (the Department of Knowledge and the Financial Department) concluded, however, in October 2009, that the best alternative for KHM and the Viking Ship Museum, with regard to financial outcome as well as to practical risks, would be to construct a new museum on Bygdøy, thus leaving the ships at their current location. As a result, state council Tora Aasland (1942–), representing the Social Liberal Party, decided in 2010 to halt the plans while awaiting more thorough situation analyses (Forskerforum 22.11.2010). The Society for the Preservation of Norwegian Ancient Monuments (Fortidsminneforeningen), which was instrumental in the excavation of the Gokstad ship in 1880, additionally composed a letter to the International Expert Committee concerning their position on the proposal to relocate the Viking ships, highlighting the importance of the extant building designed to house the Viking ships, as well as the risk of moving them (Fortidsminneforeningen, Jr no 58/11). The plans to move the ships were finally abandoned, as affirmed by Minister of Education Kristin Halvorsen in the national newspaper *Aftenposten* in May 2012 ([www.aftenposten.no](http://www.aftenposten.no)). KHM's new director (from October 2011), Rane Willerslev (1971–), wishes to focus on today's buildings, and is happy with this final decision ([www.morgenbladet.no](http://www.morgenbladet.no)).

## The Norwegian Folk Museum

The Norwegian Folk Museum (*Norsk Folkemuseum*) on Bygdøy was established in 1894. Its founder, Hans Jacob Aall (1869–1946) wished to place on display ethnographic material capable of reflecting Norwegian culture. In presenting the rural districts and their peasant culture, NFM gained a leading role in developing national pride and sentiment prior to the dissolution of the Union in 1905. But Aall wanted the Folk museum to be a monument of urban life as well, and a “Miniature Norway” soon developed on Bygdøy, representing high and low, farmers and poets, pharmacists and politicians. In accordance with the growing focus on the working class society in national cultural politics, Aall’s successor, (1904–1978), incorporated the culture of industrial workers in the exhibitions of NFM. A separate department dedicated to the research into and collection of “working class memories” was established in 1950 (*Avdeling for arbeiderminner*), and its curator Edvard Bull (1914–1986) argued – as Aall once did on behalf of the rural culture – that times are changing rapidly, and working class memories are in need of a rescue operation (Amundsen 2007). The study of working class memories in the Norwegian Folk Museum must be considered (at least partly) as a reaction to the rigid, complacent rhetoric associated with the national narrative enclosed by historical perspectives and rural romanticism. The time had come to widen the concept of Norwegianness in an even broader sense than before, as is also demonstrated in NFM receiving the Sámi Collection from the Ethnographic Museum in order to exhibit it as part of the Norwegian cultural heritage.

With the changing political climate in the museums towards multiculturalist perspectives in the 1990s and 2000s, Aall’s aim of “strengthening national pride and identity” was replaced by the aim of “promoting tolerance and understanding through historical and cultural plurality.” Thus immigrant culture has found its way to the NFM. The challenge has been – and still is – to find a means by which to reflect the growing diversity and at the same time to protect and make use of the old collections. One solution has been to cooperate with external institutions and stakeholders to develop documentation and exhibition projects. What may serve as an example is how NFM has been working to document Norwegian-Jewish culture in Norway, which has resulted in a mobile and digital exhibition called “The Children of Wergeland – Jewish life in Norway 1851-1945” ([www.norskfolkemuseum.no](http://www.norskfolkemuseum.no)). The exhibition is a co-production between NFM, the State Library Authorities and The Mosaic Community in Oslo, and toured Norwegian libraries between 2002 and 2004 (Norsk Folkemuseum/The Mosaic Community in Oslo).

A museum director at NFM who has been particularly dedicated to multiculturalist perspectives is Liv Hilde Boe (1938–), who managed the museum in 2000/2001. The “OBOS yard (Wessels gate 15)” was opened with eight apartments reconstructed for the purpose of presenting Norwegian interior styles of different epochs and social classes, one of them being a Pakistani apartment from 2002. Boe served as chief curator both before and after her years of service as director (from 1991 and 2002), and in 2004 she suggested that a mosque be erected in the outdoor arena of NFM, which caused some minor media controversies (NRK, Newspapers). When a “Festschrift” was published in 2008 in honour of Boe and her work, it was given the title “Tradition and renewal.” One of Boe’s greatest accomplishments is probably an extensive documentation project launched in 2002, in cooperation with the International Culture Centre and Museum (today’s IKM), which aimed to create the widest possible source material for a multicultural archive. The project was entitled “Norwegian yesterday, today, tomorrow?” (*Norsk i går, i dag, i morgen?*), addressing the fact that Norway has to an increasing extent become a

culturally diverse society in the course of the last 20-30 years, as a result of mass immigration. The experience of arriving and establishing a family in Norway is stated to be an important aspect of Norwegian history, worthy of being preserved, and individual immigrant stories were collected. The archives are intended to serve as a basis for future research, and have already been used to develop several museum exhibitions<sup>17</sup> ([www.nyenordmenn.no](http://www.nyenordmenn.no); Boe 2008). The project was however heavily criticized for its purported lack of methodological and scientific qualities in a report produced by Norsk kulturråd in 2006 (Haukelien 2006).

NFM has also been influenced by the strengthened Sámi museum politics, which have been developed after 2002, the year in which the Sámi Parliament gained responsibility for Sámi material in Sápmi. Sámi material outside of Sápmi was mapped in a cross-national project entitled *Recalling Ancestral Voices*, in 2006-2007, which identified about 4400 collection artefacts in NMF. Half of this collection is scheduled to be returned to Sámi museums in Sápmi as soon as conditions for preservation and storage are adequate (Pareli 2011).

### **The National Museum of Art, Design and Architecture**

While museum and cultural politics frequently fail to engage a wider audience, debates regarding museum institutions are usually limited to professional forums, and seldom reach the public level (Engeset 2006:35). We have correspondingly seen that the new museological consensus that has developed over the past two decades with the aim of problematizing “old truths” and national canons in Norwegian museum institutions has in fact met with relatively insubstantial opposition. Instead, the majority of museums have been more than willing to adapt to the new trends in museum politics, and without objections from their visitors. Thus, the media storm prompted by the merger of four prominent art museums in Oslo in the 2000s demonstrates an exceptional situation in Norway.

A project of reorganization in respect of the national art museums in Oslo has been ongoing since the museum reform was first initiated, in 2003, resulting in today’s conglomeration of five units: The National Gallery (*Nasjonalgalleriet*), the Museum of Contemporary Art (*Museet for Samtidskunst*), the Museum of Architecture (*Arkitekturmuseumet*), the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design (*Kunstindustrimuseet*), and (from 2005) also the National Touring Exhibitions (*Riksutstillingene*). The official aims of the new museum were to “raise the level of knowledge about and commitment to the visual arts, architecture, the decorative arts and design, develop critical faculties, stimulate new perceptions, increased historical consciousness and tolerance of diversity” ([www.nasjonalmuseet.no](http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no)). Interdisciplinary exhibitions capable of challenging their audience were also encouraged. The museum’s new policy did not refer to a specific national canon of artists or artistic works, or to Norway as a nation, something which became very clear when the permanent exhibitions in the National Gallery was reopened in 2005, with new arrangements of the collections.

The National Gallery was established in 1836 by the Norwegian parliament, with the aim of placing on display international works of art for a Norwegian audience. The aim was changed from ca. 1850 towards collecting high quality pieces of Norwegian art, and in 1882 a separate building designed by prominent architects was constructed to house these collections. Works by 19<sup>th</sup> Century national artists such as August Cappelen (1827-1852), Johan Christian Dahl (1788-

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<sup>17</sup> A Country for Me? Immigration from Pakistan to Norway (2002); Norway. Land of Possibilities? (2002-2003); See Me As I Am! Travelling exhibition (2004).

1857), Thomas Fearnley (1802-1842), Adolph Tidemand (1814-1876), and Hans Gude (1825-1903) have comprised a national canon, untouched until 2005. The Gallery also accumulated collections of works by the internationally famous painter Edvard Munch (1863-1944), which since 1937 has been extended with the construction of a separate gallery situated in the eastern part of Oslo. In 1990, the National Gallery's collection of post-1945 art was established as a separate museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art (*Museet for samtidskunst*) (WP2, Oslo-report).

Responsibility for the new thematically arranged exhibitions (as opposed to the former chronological arrangement) in the National Gallery rested with the Swede Sune Nordgren (1948–), museum director since 2003. Nordgren argued that Norwegian artists should be contextualized and displayed in an international perspective (Munch was displayed next to van Gogh in the new exhibition); however, he was met by a harsh public, which led him to resign in 2006 (Burch 2011:228). Ordinary visitors, artists and academics, as well as a profound segment of museum professionals (e.g. Knut Berg, Director of the National Gallery from 1973 to 1995, and Kirsti Strøm Bull, Chairman of the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design) revealed – perhaps unexpectedly – some very traditional expectations of a national art museum in protesting against Nordgren's new perceptions of art, architecture and design. The protests demonstrate an exceptionally potent public debate in the cultural arena, which serves to refute the widespread suspicion that national museums are perceived as tedious or irrelevant by most people (Burch 2011:226; Engeseth 2006:35).

Yet it was not just the new permanent exhibition that provoked the public. The consolidation of the museum, along with the museum reform, was in itself experienced as a threat to the character and professional authority of the National Gallery and the other institutions, especially as the Norwegian government, in 2008, with Trond Giske serving as cultural minister, decided to build a new National Museum in Oslo (Burch 2011:228). The plan provoked stormy protests, but was embraced by Nordgren's successor, Allis Hellelands (1953–). This time, an authoritarian Danish director overruled every objection from employees to her priorities with regard to professional decisions, collecting activity, and administrative strategies, which served to further augment the growing mistrust towards the museum board. "We are to build a fantastic museum unmatched anywhere in the whole world," was one of her final announcements before she too withdrew from her position, in 2008 (*Aftenposten* 12.10.2010). The plan was followed up by her successor, Audun Eckhoff (1958–). In October 2010, he presented the new plans for a future art museum institution capable of reflecting the continuity between historical and contemporary art, of stimulating new perspectives on epochs and interdisciplinary art styles, and of facilitating the work situation for museum professionals. The decision to build a large, overall complex at *Vestbanen* (close to the waterfront in the western part of Oslo) would, according to Eckhoff, serve to strengthen the National Museum as a national institution as well an international agency. He found that the success of the popularized Norwegian Opera House, inaugurated in 2008, would serve as a model for the visual arts as well (<http://www.nrk.no/nett-tv/indeks/235151/>; *Aftenposten* 12.10.2010).

Reactions to Eckhoff's plan were diverse, yet the need to evacuate the old national museum institutions, like the National Gallery (and the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design), in order to establish a new museum was questioned by prominent intellectuals (e.g. Rune Slagstad in *Aftenposten* 18.10.2010, Øivind Storm Bjerke, Ina Blom, Anny Fremmerlid, Kari Hoel, Espen Johnsen, Kristine Kolrud, Lena Liepe, Leif Holm Monssen, Erik Mørstad, Brigitte Stolpmann,

Marit Werenskiold, and Anne Wichstrøm in *Aftenposten* 25.03.2009). A website entitled “Save the National Gallery” (Redd Nasjonalgalleriet) was launched by a number of artists, architects and art theoreticians, engaging hundreds of demonstrators to join hands to form a symbolic chain around the building, on 28 March 2009 (Burch 2011; reddnasjonalgalleriet.blogspot). The website states that:

Without going through parliament, the Government has decided to relocate the National Gallery, The Museum of Decorative Arts and Design and the Museum for Contemporary Art to Vestbanen. The Minister for Culture Trond Giske and the Ministry for Cultural Affairs have been resolute in their decision-making, and all debate has been stifled. (...) We, the organisers of this action, cannot accept this (reddnasjonalgalleriet.blogspot).

The museum’s visitor book was abruptly removed as a result of the turbulence in this period (Burch 2011), but the museum employees were dissatisfied with the situation at the National Museum as well. A report issued mid-2008 revealed mistrust, conflicts and reduced motivation in the internal workings of the museum.

The museum board was additionally heavily criticized in a panel discussion organized by a group of art critics, *Kritikerlaget*, in December 2009. The panel posed the question of whether the museum reform has been a success, basing the discussion on previous criticism from Lotte Sandberg (1956–), an art and architecture critic in the newspaper *Aftenposten*. She claimed that the National Museum’s role as a driving force of competence and inspiration has failed. Representatives from the authorities (*ABM-utvikling*) and from two prominent newspapers (*Klassekampen* and *Aftenposten*) attended the meeting. Reference was made to the fact presented on the national news in 2008 by lawyer and chairman of the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, Kirsti Strøm Bull (1945–) that the hasty process as well as the final result of the consolidation serve to break the contract between the state and the individual museums. According to Bull, the old institutions were to join the network as separate units with a clear identity, and the real merger was not to be carried out until a new building, still existing only on the drawing board, had been established. Instead, the new museum board accelerated the process and forced the museum staff to enter interdisciplinary departments established seemingly without any professional goals, and the Cultural Department did nothing to prevent the situation (<http://www.nrk.no/kultur-og-underholdning/1.6192730>). Bull suggested in her initiatives that the conflict has its cause in the messy and forceful consolidation process, and Sandvig obligingly pointed to the more successful merger – with regard to visitor numbers as well as exhibition quality – of the Bergen museums, where each institution to a larger extent retained its character and sovereignty (Frivik 2008; Kritikeralong 2009). Åsmund Thorkildsen (1954–), director of the consolidated art museums in Drammen, who was satisfied in general with the results of the reform in his own city, also claimed that the wilful and ignorant museum board was accountable for the failure of the National Museum. Art historian Ina Blom (1961), on her side, found that the consolidation was in itself the cause of the failure, as the principle of mixing disciplinary competence and fields was an artificial way of reorganizing the specialized museums. ABM-utvikling’s representative, senior advisor Espen Hernes, actually admitted that the reform was not ideal in respect of a large institution like the National Museum, yet the editor of the internet journal “Art Forum” (*Kunstforum*), Nicolai Strøm-Olsen (1982–) claimed that ABM was responsible for the failure, as they refused to answer any questions about the synergistic effects of

the consolidation in advance. On the question of who really has the power, ABM replied that it is merely an advisory organ, and that it was the Ministry (of Culture) that had been in charge of implementing the reform (Bugge, 2009; Kritikeralong).

Debates on the topic of the National Museum have been prominent in a wide range of newspapers, media agencies and public forums throughout the 2000s. *Aftenposten*, *Dagbladet*, *Klassekampen* and *Morgenbladet* are newspapers known for presenting cultural material, and the most prominent contenders published articles in these papers, but the debates also reached financially oriented newspapers such as *Dagens Næringsliv*, as well as the populist *Verdens Gang*. NRK, the national broadcasting agency, presented debates on the news, as well as in live panel debates, such as the one conducted in the House of Literature (*Litteraturhuset*) in August 2009 ([www.litteraturhuset.no](http://www.litteraturhuset.no)).

In April 2011, a new exhibition opened in the National Gallery, named after Edvard Munch's famous painting "Dance of Life" (*Livets dans*), which presented, in chronological order, Norwegian and international paintings from antiquity until today, while emphasizing traditional and institutionalized masters like Edvard Munch and J. C. Dahl in separate rooms. The exhibition focused on Norwegian Romanticism, Realism and the New Romanticist period of the early 1900s, confirming the old national canon of historical painting, and was not aimed at provoking anybody (<http://www.nrk.no/nett-tv/indeks/261511/>; [www.nasjonalmuseet.no](http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no))

### **The Armed Forces Museums**

Despite the arrangement of the collections of the National Gallery in accordance with the traditional art canon, and the delegation to the University Museums of the responsibility of studying and communicating the Norwegian cultural heritage, no processes relating to the explicit revitalization of more traditional national concepts and strategies may be traced in museum policy-making in Norway; quite the contrary. The single cultural political paper produced in this decade which does not stress a multiculturalist perspective, but instead addresses the museum's national function, is White Paper 33 (2008-2009) "Culture to Defend: About the Armed Forces' Cultural Management towards 2020" (*Kultur å forsvare: Om kulturvirksomheten i Forsvaret frem mot 2020*). The paper states that the cultural activities of the Armed Forces are important because they are part of the nation's history and identity, and serve to remind us that the Armed Forces are not just about defending a territory, but also serve to protect democratic values (WP 33:4.3).

The Armed Forces Museum can trace its history back to 1860, but was not properly organized as a museum until 1976, when it was rearranged and opened to the public in the original building of the Artillery Museum, close to the fortress area. Thus, the environmental framing of the museum experience is most appropriate, and the building well suited for the display of historical weapons, uniforms and other military equipment. But even the most conservative national museum institution in Norway is subject to the new consensus of transforming national institutions into arenas for critical debate, as demonstrated by the art project "Hærverk," the title of which refers to an Old Norse term with the double meaning of "the work of an army" and "havoc/malice," which opened in the Armed Forces Museum in 2010. The artist, Morten Traavik (1971–), was affiliated as a resident artist with the mandate to freely create and comment on contemporary military-related issues, and was already known to have arranged a beauty contest between women who had lost body limbs by stepping on land mines, resulting in the touring "Miss Landmine Exhibition" (2007-2010). During his stay at the Armed Forces Museum,

Traavik attracted some media attention after placing a large condom on a missile rocket he had found in an abandoned military camp, but his act did not cause any major controversies of the size provoked by the rearrangement of the National Gallery exhibitions.

## Conclusion

The role of the national museums in Norway has changed in accordance with European cultural political trends in the past decades, and cultural politicians have been eager to ratify a great number of international conventions stressing the museums' role as institutions of social criticism. A major museum reform has, since 2003, transformed the professional and administrative museum landscape in Norway, encouraging the consolidation of several important national museum institutions, as well as experimental exhibition strategies.

In spite of the fact that cultural diversity is a field of high priority in Norwegian cultural politics, no migration museum has of yet been established in Norway, with the exception of a small intercultural centre with a gallery. Exhibitions reflecting cultural diversity are frequent, and part of national museum programs, yet mostly on a temporary basis. National minorities are the only minority groups, along with the indigenous Sámi population, which are represented with separate museums, thus a hierarchy is revealed within the Norwegian museum political field, linked to the historical background of the minority groups, with the indigenous Sámi population ranging on top – with regard to the number of museums, to protective legislation and to financial support. This situation may be explained by the fact that Norway is a young nation with a historically rather homogeneous culture, left alone the northern regions, yet boasting a strong tradition of presenting regional variation. Regionalism and nationalism are deeply entangled within Norwegian museums, and even the collections of the national institutions consist of material from all over the country. The mass immigration, which has been ongoing in the last decades, presents a challenge to a museum field the egalitarian principles of which are chiefly linked to the promotion of cultural diversity in relation to Norwegian regions. Therefore, an egalitarian and including attitude is poignant in political strategies, yet incapable of producing measures, which in any real sense affect the main character of the national museums – so far. The Fjord City project initiated by the Oslo City Council and supported by the Norwegian government, aims to establish a new city centre in order to strengthen Oslo's profile as an international and environmentally concerned capital, and old monumental buildings from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries constituting national public museum institutions will be emptied in order to create a new modernized and internationalized public arena.

The plan provoked harsh debates, especially on behalf of the National Gallery, which houses the most famous historical Norwegian art works. It is tempting to interpret the exceptionally strong protests against these changes as expressions of a nationalistic attitude, but that would not make much sense. It is in fact difficult to trace any processes of revitalization connected to more traditional national concepts in museum policy-making in Norway today, as cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism are embraced both by left and right wing parties in Norway. The only political party in Norway explicitly seeking a more traditional focus in the arts, and a less culturally heterogeneous society, is the populist (conservative-liberal) 'Progress Party' (*Fremskrittspartiet*), but they were not heavily represented (if at all) among the crowd which mobilized against the future plans for the National Gallery in 2009. These were intellectuals and professionals not formally representing any specific political party. Sociology professor Sigurd Skirbekk (1934–) is one of

few academics in Norway who actively defends national ideologies, and a cross-political milieu of nationally oriented intellectuals was in fact established in Norway in the 2000s, through the website “www.document.no.” They are however by no means reaching or engaging the museum field. The only national museum institution in which we may trace an orientation towards a traditional national concept is the National Gallery, where the permanent exhibition once more serves the role as a preserver of a national canon of art and artists. But this is a temporary arrangement, as the museum collections are scheduled to be moved.

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# **Museum Policy in Transition from Post-Soviet Conditions to Reconfigurations in the European Union**

Kristin Kuutma & Paavo Kroon<sup>18</sup>

This report will present three case studies in Estonia: The History Museum, the Estonian National Museum, and the Art Museum. Estonia will serve as a case in point with regard to the Baltic countries of the former Soviet Union, in defining the socio-political rupture in Europe in the past two decades (the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist system, and the extensive enlargement of the European Union in the 21st Century), with an additional overview of the changes which have affected these three museums, along with museum policy and the general media coverage in the past two years. Such a detailed study should serve to provide supplementary exploration into the impact of interaction on a member state of the European Union.

With regard to the time-span in question, this report will initially cover three relatively distinct periods: 1987-1995; 1996-2003; 2004-2010; with a supplement for 2011-2012. The analysis focuses on the following interlacing aspects:

- transitions and economic contingencies within cultural and museum politics;
- different phases in the articulation of the political and cultural roles of the National Museum;
- political, rhetorical and practical strategies applied;
- media and topics concerning public debate;
- processes of revitalisation based on traditional national agendas;
- the contested presence of old and new minorities in National Museum representations;
- critical voices against the limitations of national ideologies.

## **General Characteristics**

### **The post-Soviet condition, 1987–1995**

The Estonian cultural landscape of the period was defined by the profound changes which had begun gradually in 1987, but which took shape more visibly in 1988, the year in which the Ministry of Culture of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic was reorganised, becoming the ESSR Cultural Committee. This office no longer functioned as a body, which implemented Soviet cultural politics, but rather served to elaborate its own initiatives for preserving Estonian national culture (Gutman 2009: 77). Soviet cultural politics had been targeted towards mediating and legitimising the system by means of propaganda, homogenising cultural expressions, and centralising and controlling state institutions. The Cultural Committee was transformed into a coordinating state office, which embraced public debate on cultural politics, in concurrence with

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<sup>18</sup> The present report was co-written by Laura Kipper and Marleen Metslaid, of the University of Tartu and the Estonian National Museum, respectively).

the changing socio-political system, which would lead to the restoration of the independent Republic of Estonia in 1991.

Accordingly, this process initiated the downfall of the previous centralised and Moscow-governed museum system: the ideological supervision disappeared along with its former apparatus, and museums devised their own display and collection principles, although state ownership and financial support remained operative in the case of the central institutions. With the general surge of public interest in the restoration of previously prohibited representations of Estonian national history, museums also gained recognition as places of public display in the process of reclaiming, reinventing and representing anew the nation's history. All three museums changed their names, to cast off the reference to the Soviet system, and similarly changed their display policies. The smoothest transition in this respect probably took place in the Art Museum, which turned its active temporary exhibition practice largely towards artists whose works had been banned under Soviet rule, and to those who had fled into exile during the calamities of the Second World War. These works also constituted the majority of the new additions to the museum's collections. Ironically, the History Museum had opened as late as December 1987 in an annexed exhibition hall – the Estonian SSR History and Revolution Museum – but the museum personnel readily changed the display according to the swiftly progressing developments and public events; this testifies to the swift changes, which were taking place during this period. The Estonian National Museum, in turn, acquired an important symbolic status – this museum, which had practically become an ethnographic archival collection during the Soviet period, came to symbolise the restoration of independence in reclaiming the pre-war premises of the Museum which had been turned into a Soviet military base and airfield, in order to rebuild the ruined museum facilities.

Thus, the museums took the initiative to open new (usually temporary) exhibitions that would re-write national history, restore the previously prohibited memories of the past, and display objects or works of art hidden in (closed) deposits. Such restoration of national history was bolstered by wide media coverage and public political support. In the late eighties and at the turn of the nineties, exhibits depicting Stalinism in Estonia, mass deportations, exiled Estonians, and the political history of the pre-war independent republic were widely covered and introduced by the media, who showed a dedicated interest in the 'forbidden' history. It all served the purpose of 'restoring' memories and tangible materials representing and idealising everything that once had been, i.e. before the Soviet era. On the other hand, the general emergent public activism and urge to reinstate a democratic system formed the basis for establishing, among numerous voluntary associations, the Estonian Museum Association, founded in 1988, in the interest of consolidating museum professionals throughout the country.

Thus, from the cultural and political perspective, the national museums played a rather significant role at the turn of the decade, and these initiatives were generally supported by the governmental office. However, a conflict soon emerged between the surge of interest in the restoration of history and the gradual decay of the economic sustainability of the museums, particularly after independence had officially been established: in the course of 1992, the Constitution was adopted, and legislative power (the parliament *Riigikogu*) and executive power (the Government) were installed, and the monetary reform was implemented.

With the decline of financial support from the state in conditions of general economic hardship, the museum landscape also changed: those museums, which had only had ideological

significance as Soviet propaganda institutions were closed. With the disappearance of various economic units, such as the collective farms and the branches of all-Soviet industrial colossuses, their museums demised with them; new collections, and subsequently museums, were established by means of private initiatives. The socio-political change denoted also certain re-distributions of collections. For example, art from the discontinued Soviet facilities was donated to the Art Museum, parts of the pre-war collections, which had been displaced under Soviet rule, were returned to their original owners, and private collections were more readily donated (or bequeathed) to the national museums. In the case of the national museums, state support for the remuneration of museum personnel and care of the collections still continued, albeit in reduced form.

However, the largest crisis arose with regard to museum buildings, in respect of the Art Museum and the Estonian National Museum. Plans for building new facilities for the Art Museum (which had actually originated in the previous decade, see Teder 2008) became very urgent at the end of 1991, when the decaying Kadriorg Palace, which housed the museum needed to be closed for immediate repair, and the art collections had to be relocated to another building. As the ENM lacked facilities for permanent display altogether, there was the concurrent need for another new museum building. These were undertakings requiring dedicated initiative on behalf of the museums, and benevolent collaboration with the Government and its political decision-making, as an unavoidable state responsibility. In this context, certain interesting aspects of the public position of these two museums were revealed. The Art Museum began actively searching for support from and possibilities of cooperation with the neighbouring Nordic nations of Finland and Sweden (initially via the embassies; cf. Valk 2002: 46), while the supporters and personnel of the ENM organised public fund raisings and donation collections among Estonians on a grassroots level.

If the previous Soviet period of cultural politics was characterised by totalitarianism, the cultural politics of Estonia in the first half of the nineties have been identified as a 'post-totalitarian lack of paradigm' (see Lagerspetz & Raud 1996). This was a period of incoherent legislation within the sphere of culture, of uneven distribution of state financial support, and of the general decline of the public image of culture as acknowledged through state support. It is illustrated by the frequent reorganisation of the state office: in 1988-89 it was called the ESSR State Cultural Committee, in 1990-92 the ESSR Ministry of Culture, and in 1992-95 it was reformed into the Ministry of Culture and Education, while the ministers would change rather often, the shortest period of office being only a couple of months.

By and large, the cultural institutions – including the museums – were left to their own devices, apart from covering the most basic costs mentioned above. At the same time, following the tumultuous revolutionary years, the museums also seemed to fall into a lethargic lack of mission and vision, becoming relatively introvert institutions mainly focused on 'dusty' research (Raisma 2009: 102). There was a decline in museographic management, in addition to a general museological vacuum, which was further exasperated with the onset of a phase of profound public neglect. This may be illustrated with reference to statistics: in 1990, there were 77 museums in Estonia (counting 475 exhibitions), while in 1995, their number had grown to 118

(754 exhibitions), whereas the earlier visitor numbers per year had dropped by half (from nearly two million to 975,000).<sup>19</sup>

The attitude of Soviet ideology towards culture was ‘aggressive, subordinating, and filtering,’ which at the same time guaranteed the (Soviet-type) social activism of cultural politics (see Lepik 2000 and Raisma 2009). But subsequently the public (or the museum) perceived its significance only as an object-centred mediator of the past, whereas it could not be recognised as a communicator of different narratives, or of the present. There was a profound neglect of alternative histories and new minorities, while both public and professional interest was focused on the older minorities, so to speak ‘invisible’ during the Soviet period (the Coastal Swedes, and to some extent the Baltic Germans).<sup>20</sup>

The problems with regard to the museum buildings demanded serious political decision-making at the governmental level, considering the level of expenses implied. Consequently, success in securing governmental, i.e. necessary, political support in order to further favourable decisions appeared to depend on the political engagement and activism of museum professionals. In that respect, the Estonian National Museum was in a more favourable position, relatively speaking, than it had been during the early nineties. On the one hand, the idea of the restoration of the national memory (and its representative building) was concurrent with the general public view<sup>21</sup>. On the other hand, the director of the ENM at the time was an active (and eventually influential) member of the leading conservative political party. This museum had come to be a symbol of Estonian cultural heritage in the public debate, and the first architectural competition for the future ENM building was staged in 1993, although it did not result in any actual construction work, on account of a lack of funding (Raisma 2009: 100). Nevertheless, in 1994 the museum finally managed to unveil a permanent exhibition in an appended building that had been granted to the Museum, as a temporary solution to the lack of display facilities. The newly inaugurated display clearly presented an exclusive national narrative, focused preeminently on the ethnographic representation of the peasant culture of the past.

The Art Museum managed to open its relocated permanent display within its temporary facilities (the Knighthood House, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century building in the Old Town of Tallinn that had previously housed the National Library, which had been moved into a special, recently completed building) in 1993,<sup>22</sup> and staged an architectural competition for the new museum facilities the following year. The latter undertaking was supported by the Nordic countries, especially by Finnish professional organisations (cf. Valk 2002: 47).

In 1994, the Cultural Endowment of Estonia was founded, as a legal entity in public law under the Ministry of Culture, signalling the onset of project-focused policy in sustaining culture.

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<sup>19</sup> Statistics provided by the Statistics Board and published by the Ministry of Culture, see [www.kul.ee](http://www.kul.ee) (last accessed on 03.01.2012).

<sup>20</sup> The Museum of the Coastal (Estonian) Swedes was opened in 1992. At the History Museum, there were smaller exhibitions arranged on the topic of Baltic Germans, on Russian culture in Estonia and also the Jews in the pre-war Republic of Estonia.

<sup>21</sup> One might say that the restoration agenda remained socio-politically urgent until the foreign Soviet (Russian) military bases and troops retained their positions in Estonia, as in 1992 there were still 40,000 soldiers of the Russian army in 570 military units throughout the country. These foreign military forces withdrew from Estonia as late as August 31st, 1994. (Tannberg et al 2002.)

<sup>22</sup> This switch had been campaigned for already in the end of the eighties by the then director of the Art Museum (Teder 2008).

### **In transition, 1996–2003**

The dedicated transition of the country, and eventually its cultural politics, became obvious in the relative swiftness of integration of Estonia into the European structures, together with the remaining two Baltic States of Lithuania and Latvia, regardless of the economic and transitional hardships experienced on the way, and in contrast to the initial anticipation. In 1993, Estonia acquired full membership in the Council of Europe, concluding in the following year the free trade agreements with the European Union, followed in 1995 by association agreements (Kiaupa et al 2002: 213).

Within the field of museum politics, the ongoing decay and the disastrous economic conditions, as well as the lack of museological regulations, came gradually to be recognised, as indicated by the initiative to establish a Museums Board (Council) by the then Minister of Culture and Education in 1994. The successful campaign for a legislative act found support in the Parliament, and the Museums Act was passed in 1996, providing the basis for the activities of museums and the organisation of museum collections, and regulating the activities of state museums, municipal museums, and also, to a certain extent, museums of legal persons in public law (private museums). The Minister of Culture, who proposed the Act, explained that about 80 per cent of the Estonian museums had been founded within the past thirty years, as elsewhere in Europe, and that the proposed legal ruling had been elaborated with reference to the 1980 Danish museums act. The arguments presented indicated that the recent turbulent years had induced a severe lack of unified regulations for the registration and preservation of collections and individual objects; it seemed necessary to regulate the property rights that would guarantee ‘the preservation and functioning of the cultural heritage deposited in the museums’ (*Riigikogu stenogramm*, 25.09.1996). The Museums Act defines museums as independent institutions, but their collections belong to the State, and the management of the collections is likewise monitored by the State.

The country and its system of policies were still in a state of transition, as indicated by the continuation of the unsettled ownership of museums as institutions in the following years, and the necessity to amend the Museums Act annually between 2000 and 2004.

Following the adoption of the Museums Act, the Minister reorganised the Museums Board by 1997, to work as an advisory body to the Ministry for addressing the issues raised. The Museum Board was reorganised once more in 2000, in order to secure a wider circle of public representation (besides museum professionals, also a Member of Parliament, a number of county administrators, and a representative of higher education), whereas at the end of the period in question, museum professionals once again prevailed on the Board. According to § 7 of the Museums Act (redaction of 2004), the Museums Board is an advisory body operating within the Ministry of Culture, and consisting of representatives from and founders of museums; it makes proposals and expresses opinions on relevant issues, and retains the right to examine the activities of a museum and the condition of museum collections.

Another legal act, which to some extent concerned museum politics, was the Heritage Conservation Act. However, a more important initiative within the cultural politics of the time was the document ‘The foundations of the cultural politics of the Estonian State,’ approved by the parliament *Riigikogu* in 1998. This document established among its priorities also the improvement and modernisation of the material and technological bases, as well as the expositions, of the museums. Here, museums are defined as ‘repositories of national culture that

need to become attractive and active participants in the socialisation and patriotic education of the younger generations.<sup>23</sup> The document outlined a plan of action for the Government to implement the policy: define the position of museums, their number, their status of ownership, and the provisional restructuring of the museum system; as well as the changes in the material basis, focused mostly on renovation of the existing facilities, and the construction of new buildings.

The issue of new construction ventures took a relatively serious turn in 1996, when the Estonian parliament *Riigikogu* made the decision to support the construction of three novel cultural institutions: the Art Museum of Estonia, the Estonian National Museum and the Estonian Music Academy. The plan was to build them one by one, moving to the next only as soon as the previous one had been completed, with the construction of the Art Museum planned to begin in 1999, and the ENM in 2002. However, regardless of the dedicated efforts to sustain cultural landmarks important in the national self-representation, the economic situation was far from favourable to such initiatives. It should be pointed out that no dedicated museum building had been constructed in Estonia until the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, denoting a general lack of local experience in this area, and a certain inclination to search for expertise abroad. On the other hand, most of the central museums were housed in prestigious historical facilities – e.g. the History Museum, contained in the medieval Great Guild Hall in the centre of the Old Town of Tallinn, with a more spacious annex in a 19<sup>th</sup> Century merchant's palace in the suburbs.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the Kadriorg Palace as well as the substitute Knighthood House were both impressive locations for housing the national gallery, albeit insufficient for displaying the variety of growing collections. A common remaining problem was the limited space with regard to depositories.

The decision to construct new museum facilities actually fell on fertile ground, with the obsessive construction debates that have made an influential impact on cultural politics in Estonia largely in the past decades. There has been a continuous desire to provide significant cultural institutions with new permanent housing, while simultaneously competing for limited state subsidies as the sole financier of the venture, and with each institution claiming priority as a vital symbol of national culture. These questions have excited heated coverage by the media, often fostered by leading figures of the competing cultural institutions. This applies similarly to the discussion concerning museums, which reached the media in the late nineties and onwards. The public debates in the press and on television focused on the physical construction of museum facilities.

The national agenda and narrative have yielded a significant background for this process, but the Art Museum eventually appeared more successful in playing the European and more cosmopolitan card, which probably resonated better with the general political agenda of working towards accession with the European Union. However, this was far from being a smooth process, but rather lingered for years. Support from the Nordic neighbours once more appeared significant: the Kadriorg Palace was eventually renovated with the support of irrecoverable financial aid by Sweden between 1998 and 2000 (Teder 2008). The construction of the national gallery was eventually completed, several years later than planned, and only the next decade, impairing the efficiency and distribution of financial aids: the construction works began in 2002,

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<sup>23</sup> *Rügi Teataja (State Gazette)* RT I 1998, 81, 1353 (last accessed on 03.01.2012).

<sup>24</sup> The History Museum focused its plans for expansion onto the reconstruction of the latter, the Maarjamäe/Orlov Palace, from 2000 onwards.

and the new building was inaugurated four years later.<sup>25</sup> Priority in incurring state support appeared to be determined by relative success in the media, as well as by government lobbying by the then directors of the museum institutions.<sup>26</sup>

The other important issue, to which the Ministry of Culture would eventually more seriously attend by the end of the decade, was the ownership of museums. The end of the nineties witnessed a sudden growth in the number of museums, fostered by municipal and private interests. This served to place added pressure on the Ministry, through an increase in applicants for state subsidies, in addition to the fact that they were losing track of the institutional landscape. By 2003, the number of registered museums had grown to 200 (with 1417 separate exhibitions),<sup>27</sup> while the visibly growing number of visitors reached 1,636,000.<sup>28</sup>

Around 2000, the Ministry engaged the Museums Board for the purpose of designing the plan for a museum reform, where the main agenda was to regulate the roughly 15 county museums in state ownership (many of which had local branches in the region): they were considered too similar, relatively stagnant and old-fashioned in their display, lacking in public interest and costly in maintenance. The plan was to merge them into larger administrative and financial units with more viable institutions, or with other central museums.<sup>29</sup> This idea was not supported by museum professionals on the Board, however, while the aspect of the reform which did appear to be acceptable was the plan to construct larger joint depositories within strategic regions (north, west, and south-central) of Estonia. Another change which was gradually taking shape was a spin-off of the basic reform, however this was carried out (partly) in only one county – the establishment of a public law agency, a foundation (*sihtasutus*), which would eventually join together eight larger or smaller museums (Sihtasutus Virumaa Muuseumid) among the total of twenty-one in this county in northern Estonia.

The 2003 redaction of the Museum Act in its initial paragraphs makes the following claims:

§ 1. The purpose of the Act

This Act provides the basis for the activities of museums, and for the organisation of museum collections.

§ 2. The scope of the application of the Act

- (1) The Museums Act regulates the activities of state museums, municipal museums, and museums of legal persons in public law.
- (2) This Act regulates the activities of private museums only insofar as it is directly specified in this Act. For the purposes of this Act, a

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<sup>25</sup> The first original design (by a Finnish architect) that saw the beginning of the actual construction works was eventually the Art Museum in 2002, but as this undertaking lingered, the very first special museum building that opened in Estonia was the Museum of Occupations in Tallinn in 2003, designed by Estonian architects and built in eight months. This is a private museum, though, funded and constructed with private money donated by exiled Estonians.

<sup>26</sup> The previous, perhaps more efficient director of the National Museum had become a professional politician, and was elected to *Riigikogu*.

<sup>27</sup> The most abrupt jump was from 117 museums in 1998 to 179 in 1999.

<sup>28</sup> One of the factors which influenced this growth was definitely the growing impact of (both international and domestic) tourism that had reduced drastically in the early nineties.

<sup>29</sup> Obviously, it was not a single plan for reforms in the country, but it is correlated most significantly with the continuous plans and debate for administrative reform on a municipal level in general that has been hindered by conflicting political interests.

museum operating as a legal person in private law, or its structural unit, or a museum belonging to a natural person, is considered a private museum.

§ 3. Legal status and museum function

- (1) A state museum is a state agency within the area of government of, and administered by, a ministry or a state agency administered by a county government.
- (2) A municipal museum is a local government agency.
- (3) A museum of a legal person in public law is a structural unit of the person.
- (4) A museum shall collect, study and preserve things of cultural value relating to humans and their environment, and relating to a specific field, and shall organise the communication thereof to the public for scientific, educational and entertainment purposes.
- (5) A museum shall operate pursuant to this Act, other legislation, and international agreements regarding safeguarding of the cultural heritage and its statutes.

§ 4. Definition of museum object and museum collection

- (1) A museum object is a thing of cultural value registered in a museum.
- (2) A museum collection is a collection of museum objects located in a museum, which may be divided into sub-collections according to the groups or types of museum objects.<sup>30</sup>

The protection of cultural heritage on a national level was thoroughly reorganised in 2002: the Department of Cultural Heritage was established within the Ministry of Culture, to co-ordinate issues in the field of libraries, museums and cultural heritage. The Department is supervised by the Undersecretary of Cultural Heritage, while the field of museums has been directed by the Museums Councillor.

Estonian museums are divided into four groups, based on the forms of ownership: state-owned museums, sub-units of public law agencies, municipal museums and privately owned museums. A number of the state-owned museums function as central museums, while their collections provide a thorough overview of their areas of specialisation, and they are obligated to provide methodological guidance to other museums in their respective fields. County museums and some specialty museums are also state-owned.

In this period, additional funds allocating financial support via the Ministry of Culture appeared: the Cultural Endowment of Estonia as a legal entity in public law under the Ministry of Culture (although support to museums was largely limited to research related to culture, but more importantly extended to the construction and renovation of cultural buildings of national importance), and the Gambling Tax Council (established under the Gambling Tax Act in 2002), supporting programmes and events related to culture and sports (including construction ventures).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Rügi Teataja (*State Gazette*) RT I 2004, 28, 188 (last accessed on 03.01.2012).

<sup>31</sup> Information provided on the Ministry of Culture homepage [www.kul.ee](http://www.kul.ee) (last accessed on 03.01.2012).

In general, it could be stated that besides the trials and tribulations related to the physical buildings of the national museums, the issue of their content remained rather marginalised in the public and media debates. They seemed to be in a phase of transition, while waiting for the new facilities. For example, the permanent display of the Estonian National Museum opened in 1994, simply as a temporary solution, until the presumably soon to be, thorough reorganisation and reinvention of the display principles in the new facilities, but it is still there today. However, regardless of the relative insignificance of national museums, which have struggled with agendas of self-reinvention under difficult economic circumstances, the organisational activities of museum professionals gradually began to play a role. The Estonian Museum Association continued its important task of joining its members (whose number by now exceeds 300) of museum employees from public and private museums or museums administered by legal persons in public law 'to acknowledge and value the work of professionals preserving and protecting cultural heritage at museums'.<sup>32</sup> The Museum Association organises professional training, fieldtrips, and, since 1998, an annual festival to promote innovative and successful exhibitions; it publishes an educational series called *Varahoidaja meelepea* (A Treasurer's Notebook), but more importantly, since 1995 it has issued a professional journal, *Muuseum*, which began in 1991 as a flimsy newsletter (see Peterson 2006). This journal most prominently fosters critical debate and self-reflection among the museum professionals with regard to their status and position. The headquarters of the association are located in the National Museum.

The museum activities and museum policy-making has considered the principles and understandings of ICOM to be the leading guidelines in the field from the early nineties onwards, when Estonian museum professionals joined the organisation. This is one of the aspects of international cooperation considered gradually more decisive in operating within the modern museum field. The Museum Association is also a member of NEMO. As one of the obvious drawbacks in the professional training of museum workers in Estonia is the lack of a specific department or degree programme in any of the universities (although lecture courses and individual programmes are available), Estonian museum workers are forced to resort either to special training abroad, or to the Baltic Museology School, which arranges shorter summer courses with an international faculty.

Besides the new distribution of responsibilities on the governmental level (i.e. ministries) and explorations in cultural policies, it has been stated that the cultural politics of the period since 1995 have developed to become 'elitist-preservationist' (cf. Lagerspetz & Raud 1996). The narrative, which required preservation as deemed by the adopted agenda of cultural politics, was the national one. With the transition to EU membership, the national history is on the defensive as well as seeking to question the previous givens – museum agendas began to change gradually, but this process was not always recognised by the public. Museum professionals became relatively marginalised in drafting and adopting policy decisions, while the national agendas presented were governed by practicalities. The cultural and political role of the national museums was considered important in rhetoric and for political gain, which reflected strong individual interests or conservative national ideologies. The public debates began to circle around the possibility of losing national identity, selfhood, or integrity as a part of the European conglomerate, whereas the opposition claimed to recognise and promote Estonia as a country

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<sup>32</sup> See <http://www.muuseum.ee/en/organisatsioonid/> (last accessed on 14.01.2012).

and culture, which had always been a part of Europe, even if the West had forgotten or ignored it. These debates did not, however, directly influence or concern the national museum representations, as these were perceived as a given: the representation of the oldest pieces of art in the Art Museum presenting European art as an established entity of origin, and the Estonian national art forming an interwoven narrative, albeit displayed in a distinct separation; the History Museum presenting a socio-political narrative depicting different phases of political and economic rule by Western Europe, upon which were developed the ethnic nation-building phases; the Estonian National Museum was perceived as the given ethnographic representation of the peasant past of the Estonian people. *Eesti Rahva Muuseum* – literally ‘the museum of the Estonian nation,’ and in this context the assumed ethnic distinction and exclusiveness still prevail.

These were narratives which cultural politics and museum policy preserved in general. Questions concerning the role and function of museums within contemporary society, as well as the state cultural policy in respect of museums, had nevertheless been posed on the professional level, particularly in connection with an attempt at a museum reform of 2000 (as documented in the Museums Board meeting protocols<sup>33</sup>).

In the case of the national museums, the minorities still remained largely invisible, particularly as their narrative did not correspond to that of the restored national narrative. On the other hand, the influx of new museum initiatives played its part here as well, when the minorities began seeking opportunities for establishing their own museums. This representation of minorities were completely dependent on local or private initiative, and end of the nineties witnessed the founding of museums dedicated to the Old Believers (Russian) communities in the eastern coastal region of Estonia, and the Seto farmstead museums to represent their ethnic group in the south-eastern border region.<sup>34</sup> Still remaining on the planning and preparatory level is the Russian Museum in Tallinn, which will represent the different phases of Russian culture in Estonia (including the Soviet period), seemingly at a halt due to continuous internal strife between the different personalities involved.

## Contemporary Policy

### The ‘New’ Europe 2003–2010

This period is defined by the relevant socio-political, but more importantly economic, developments relating to the process of becoming integrated in the European Union, to which Estonia gained accession in 2004 (together with Latvia and Lithuania, of the former Soviet Union). The museum landscape of 2009 already included 296 museums, which may be divided as follows: 26% (78) state museums or museums subordinated to state institutions; 26% (78) municipal museums; 19% (55) museums belonging to non-governmental organisations; 10% (30) belonging to public law agencies; 9% (26) private museums; 9% school museums and 1% museums of some other type.<sup>35</sup> According to content, the museums are divided into central, county, city, and small museums.

Among the state museums, 11 are ordained central museums in Estonia: the Estonian History Museum, the Art Museum of Estonia, the Estonian National Museum, the Estonian Open Air

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<sup>33</sup> See the Ministry of Culture homepage <http://www.kul.ee/index.php?path=238> (last accessed on 03.01.2012).

<sup>34</sup> These are municipal museums; only the Museum of the Coastal Swedes is a state museum.

<sup>35</sup> Statistics provided by the Ministry of Culture, see [www.kul.ee](http://www.kul.ee) (last accessed on 03.01.2012).

Museum, the Estonian Maritime Museum, the Museum of Estonian Architecture, the Estonian Theatre and Music Museum, the Estonian Sports Museum, and the Estonian Health Museum, under the governance of the Ministry of Culture; the Estonian Museum of Natural History, under the governance of the Ministry of the Environment; and the Estonian Agricultural Museum, under the governance of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The museum field is covered by the following legislative documents, i.e. museum-related legal acts:

- 1) The Museums Act<sup>36</sup>,
- 2) Procedure for retaining weapons collections within national and municipal museums<sup>37</sup>,
- 3) Regulation by the Government of the Republic Designating Central Museums<sup>38</sup>.

The Ministry of Culture, as a governmental office, is responsible for the management of the museums field in Estonia, but the museum policy is largely developed by the Museums Board and by the museums themselves, as has been clearly demonstrated in the negative outcome of the attempted museum reforms during the first decade of the current century. Public debates have become more versatile, with different agendas coming to be represented; the governmental administrative strategies are more openly debated, and eventually reformulated with the wider participation of museum professionals. They have been the principal authors of the policy and development strategy document *'Museums of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Development Guidelines 2006–2015'* (with a linked Action Plan), adopted by the Government in June, 2006. This strategy document aims at 'providing the conditions for the development of museums as a valuable part of society, as custodians of cultural heritage, as dynamic organisations and cooperation partners, in order to preserve the uniqueness of Estonian culture as a part of the cultural heritage of Europe and the rest of the world' (the Information Centre of Estonian Museums)<sup>39</sup>

The general restructuring of policy-making, long-term planning in cultural politics, including the sphere of cultural heritage (i.e. museums), was directly related to the new situation facing Estonia in the EU. On the other hand, it served to reveal new opportunities, which revitalised the museum system in a novel manner, first via the availability of unprecedented funding from the EU structural financial instruments. This was directly targeted towards county museums (but also to others), mainly through projects relating to the development of tourism. At the same time, it indicated the potential shift in museum audiences and in their expectations, forcing the museums to speed up their 'reinvention' agendas. Some were more successful in this regard than others, particularly in grasping the idea of guaranteeing the sustainability of their institutions.

This period of revitalisation also brought with it the need for developing another aspect of communication: development of information technology. The onset of the IT revolution in the national museums concurred with this development in Estonia in general: adoption and integration of new database systems, the role of webpages, and the opening of virtual museums. There is a museums information system, MUIS, which operates the Museums Public Portal

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/742417?leiaKehtiv>; in English: <http://www.legaltext.ee/et/andmebaas/tekst.asp?loc=text&dok=X90003&keel=en&pg=1&ptyyp=RT&tyyp=X&query=muuseumiseadus> (last accessed on 14.01.2012).

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/572565> (last accessed on 03.01.2012).

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/25256> (last accessed on 03.01.2012).

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.muuseum.ee/et/politika/> (last accessed on 14.01.2012).

(<http://www.muis.ee><sup>40</sup>). Information and access to everything concerning museums in Estonia is provided by the Museums Information Centre (<http://www.muuseum.ee>), and the virtual system of exhibitions is available at <http://virtuaalmuuseum.ee>.

The latter part of this decade has brought about the need for rethinking the role of ‘memory institutions,’ on the administrative as well as the political level, while the construction agenda has continued, and having to a certain extent attracted the most vivid media attention. In the course of these debates, the issues, regulations and prospective manipulations relating to financial means have obviously been the most intriguing topic with regard to press and TV coverage. But in this context, the role of the national museums, and their representative power, have been discussed, although most significantly in a traditional celebratory rhetoric, to justify the cause of applying for state financial support. The KUMU (*KUnsti MUuseum*) opened in 2006, as the new main building of the Art Museum of Estonia, an impressive architectural achievement that has granted the Museum an opportunity to rearrange and redefine its position, and it quickly became the most popular museum in the whole country. The eventual feat of opening a new museum building also resituated the role of construction and the position of museums in public debates. The new displays at KUMU embraced the historical aspect of Baltic German art as a part of the national narrative, having previously remained compartmentalised outside of the national self-representation; and, even more importantly, the display of post-war Estonian art addressed the political representation of Soviet agenda with a new perspective, in opposition to the previous tendency to ‘write it out’ or gloss it over in the national narrative of art.

In spite of the governmental endorsement, the Estonian National Museum continues to be a project without physical manifestation in the form of construction. As the national gallery construction was finished several years later than planned, the efficiency and distribution of financial aids became impaired, until it reached a phase of another drawback with the recession. But international architectural competitions have been staged, and blueprints drawn up, while the work and the entire development of the Estonian National Museum in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is strongly influenced by the planning of the new museum facilities. The debates concerning the permanent display have been carried out in large part by the special professional boards, where occasionally conflicting opinions have been presented, although still within the framework of the traditional imagery of the presentation of ethnographic culture. These internal discussions have not been publicised. In the meantime, the National Museum attempts to address contemporary issues and representations of recent experience or lifestyles with temporary exhibitions.

The History Museum has also undergone a process of change, as its main hall in the Old Town of Tallinn was closed for renovation for several years during the last decade, with the new display scheduled to open only in 2011. The Maarjamäe Palace has housed various temporary displays, the most recent of which was dedicated to the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Estonian Republic, with the representation of the national narrative as a constant pursuit of independence (see Raisma 2008), but recognising the ideas of new museology and the contemporary processes of rethinking historical narratives from an international perspective.

In general, it may be stated that in the context of the inauguration of new facilities and displays, the cultural role of the national museums has come to be reinvented; a gradual repositioning of national history within general European history has also taken place, in the

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<sup>40</sup> This is an upgraded continuation of the KVIS system (Information system of cultural heritage), started already in the early nineties.

recontextualisation of the national experience with alternative narratives from different perspectives. The Estonian national is gradually, though slowly, seeking wider contextualisation in the EU and global framework.

The limitations of national ideologies are recognised to a somewhat greater extent, and the new displays aim at a more inclusive narrative. But the representation of minorities is still prominent in local and private initiatives via particular identity institutions, while the national museums attempt to gradually restructure and rearrange their representation. For example, in 2008 the first Jewish Museum was opened in Estonia, housed in the newly built Synagogue and cultural centre in Tallinn.

The end of the decade was strongly influenced by the onset of recession and reconsiderations affecting the economic status of museums, which have in turn affected the obsessive plans for new constructions. 2009 witnessed a new ascension of debates between ministerial policy-makers and museum professionals about the restructuring of the museum system. Largely following the example of Norway and Sweden, the Undersecretary of Cultural Heritage proposed launching the project of a joint administering and technological support-providing institution for the county museums. This idea was met with vehement opposition from the museum directors, who were anxious about the loss of independence and identity, and eventually the Ministry of Culture was forced to abandon the plan. This process found active resonance in press, which was working towards once more bringing the debate on museums onto the public level, but this time from the perspective of rationale and content of the institution as well. This issue found a resolve by the establishment of the department of local cultures (the Department of Folk Cultures) at the Estonian National Museum in 2010, to coordinate a joint exhibition politics, and the activities in collection, research and preservation: this office is engaged in drafting developmental strategies for the museums, organising trainings, and marketing issues; they organise the Summer Seminar of Museums and the Museums Craftsmen Class, and conduct projects in order to receive funds for study trips for gaining experiences in international museum reform and organising conferences. This initiative has already gained recognition from the Nordic Council of Ministers via a Norden Grant for the project 'Development of knowledge exchange and transfer of know-how of museum reform and innovation between Nordic and Baltic countries: structural changes, economic incentives and new solutions in communication services'.<sup>41</sup> The debates about the role and significance of the Estonian National Museum continued, however, in connection with the projects and plans for the financing of the construction, while the Government and the Ministry of Culture renewed their pledge of support.

### **2011–2012: State policy for museums**

In the course of the last few years, state policy with regard to museums has been largely concerned with collections and collecting. This interest has been developed on the basis of the audit of museum collections conducted by the National Audit Office of Estonia. Several critical issues were raised during the audit, one of which was the lack of a nationwide collecting policy. As a consequence, museum collections in Estonia are among of the fastest-growing in Europe: Estonian collections grow 3.3% annually, against the European average of 2%. The Ministry of Culture has thus assigned the Museums Board, under the Ministry, with the task of developing a

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<sup>41</sup> See <http://www.erm.ee/en/visit/county-museums> (last accessed on 14.01.2012).

more coherent nationwide policy. All the museums have been assigned to formulate their policy by spring 2012.

In terms of museum policy, one of the most important developments of the recent years has been the establishment of subcommittees under the Museums Board of the Ministry of Culture. The subcommittees are targeted towards dealing with specialised fields such as exhibiting, marketing, collecting and conservation, museum science and museum research, as well as heritage protection. One of the stated aims of these subcommittees is also that of identifying and awarding professional excellence in specialised museological fields.

From the point of museum experts, one of the most vexing problems for the museum professionals is their confusion with regard to the expectations of the Ministry of Culture, and the lack of a clearly stated vision as to the future of the museums. On the other hand, politicians and government officials hold contrasting positions, where they expect bottom-up initiatives and wait for the museum professionals to present their programs, considering museum professionals to be experts who should be conducting developments in the field.

Some of the county museums still see the museum as an elitist temple of culture, intended to accommodate the needs of more sophisticated and educated tastes. This elitist concept of museums seems to be rooted in the Soviet legacy, and may be connected with the past role of museums as centres of national cultural resistance in the context of the pervasive Soviet occupying regime, when museum personnel saw their main calling in assuming responsibility for the preservation and promotion of national heritage under the political constraints imposed. Many museum professionals have worked in the field for 25 to 30 years, and have not managed to fully adapt to the contemporary situation. Museological thought is still mainly concerned with the material dating from the 19th Century, the decades of initial independence during the 1920s and 30s, whereas the Soviet period remains largely outside the scope of interpretation.

Similarly, county museums in particular have been relatively unsuccessful in engaging the community and asserting their contemporary educational role or significance as places of active interpretation of heritage for the wider audiences and institutional partners (i.e. co-operation with local tourism cluster). The more attractive role of the museums is partly restricted by the constrained academic view of museum work. This deficiency could conceivably be remedied by raising the limitation on the recruitment process of museum professionals to historians, thereby serving to diversify the backgrounds and expertise of the professionals working in the field. In this respect, the Museum of Coastal Folk (*Rannarahva muuseum*) on the northern coast, near Tallinn, proves to be a positive example, having managed to represent maritime history and coastal culture in an engaging manner, whereas the Harju County Museum, having been assigned to consulting the tourism sphere in Harju County, has failed in its efforts to carry out this task.

As already mentioned, the Ministry of Culture initiated a reform plan to consolidate all fifteen county museums under unified management at the beginning of 2009. The need for an optimised management structure was substantiated with reference to the effects of economic crises and the need to efficiently execute developmental projects relying on assistance from EU structural funds. The asserted goal of the reform was to establish a unified and strong organisation capable of acting as a competence centre for the sharing and expansion of museological knowledge, and engagement of the community. These plans were heavily criticised by the current management of the county museums, who reprimanded the ministry for their lack of analysis and their failure to involve museum professionals in the planning process. Eventually, the Ministry abandoned the

initial plan, in part because of the media's response, in which the reform was depicted as a threat to local identities. In the aftermath of the reform plan, the Department of Folk Cultures (*Omakultuuride osakond*) was established under the management of the Estonian National Museum in spring 2010. This 'department of local cultures' is intended to act as a competence centre supporting the development and co-operation of county museums. One of the first major tasks of the department was to co-ordinate the elaboration of developmental plans for the county museums, which were approved by the autumn of 2011. The department is currently involved in the process of co-ordinating a nationwide collecting policy, and is also working closely with the Valga County Museum to prepare an exhibition on Roma culture.

In 2012, the process is under way to restructure the legal form of county museum governance by transforming them into separate foundations, and thereby establishing the premises for involvement of interests and finances in their local communities. However, tensions reminiscent of failed museum reforms have resurfaced in the course of the process. Recently, the majority of the directors of county museums signed a joint statement criticising the actions of the Ministry of Culture, which has allegedly not regarded the museums as equal partners, neglecting their opinions and bypassing them by directly interacting with local governing bodies on issues directly influencing the future of the museums.

### **Debates on the future of the Estonian National Museum**

The political (media) debates surrounding the Estonian National Museum (ENM) in the past few years cannot be described within the framework and limits of the more traditional usage of the term 'museum politics' (i.e. politics of representation). The process towards materialising the new building project of the ENM, *Memory Field*, has established a field of meanings of its own. As the project *Memory Field* continues to exist only in immaterial form, the process in itself has caused a situation where the physically non-existent building of the ENM surfaces in a vast field of social discourses. The ENM and its proposed new building have been frequently mentioned in connection to people and institutions involved in the process over the years, referring to places where it has not been built, and to forms in which it has not been materialised (debates on urban planning and architecture), and in considering finances it has not used. The years 2011-12 have witnessed explosive processes of expansion and rising intensity of debate in this kind of politically charged field.

In the beginning of 2011, the director of the ENM, Krista Aru, expressed her hopes, in a press article, that construction works at the Raadi site (the district of Tartu, and the location of the pre-war museum facilities) might commence in the summer of the same year<sup>42</sup>. As with many previously set dates, this prediction proved too optimistic. By February 2012, it became thoroughly clear that the financing scheme for the development of the project would be impossible to carry out, as the ENM's application did not correspond to the framework of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for granting financial assistance for developing cultural tourism sites. Echoing this incompatibility, the tension between the overlapping and colliding categories of 'tourism' and 'cultural heritage' might be considered the main factor directing and determining the media debate around the ENM in the past year, as discussed here. As funds were sought through the ERDF measure for developing tourism areas, the meaning of the ENM, which had previously been embedded in an internal national discourse, was translated

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<sup>42</sup> *Sirp*. 28.01.2011. Krista Aru – „Eesti Rahva Muuseumi ehituslugu: üle saja aasta kestnud teekond ja viies üritus.”

in the process in order to meet the standards of the tourist economy (and to correspond to the European scale). This shift in meaning disclosed new possibilities and positions in public debates, some of which had previously been considered almost heretical in the context of the national discourse. Considerations by an EU-level management body JASPERS expert commission about the cost efficiency of the museum building as a tourist site were critically reflected on the local level, where the ground for debate had been conditioned and shaped by the reality of economic crises and broader “people *versus* constructions of concrete” cultural policy financing debate.<sup>43</sup> Although the diverse roles of the museum and the content of the future permanent display remained present in these debates, they were largely overshadowed by more powerful pragmatic or existential rhetoric overtones of the opposing agents. Dissonance between arguments was further deepened by the void between incommensurable dimensions, possibilities and ambitions of the past/present and conceived future of the Estonian National Museum.

In order to understand the current state of the debate, it is important to recount in brief some of the events and decisions which have determined the course of public debate in these past few years.

- 2008. The political decision was made on the governmental level to fund the construction of a new ENM building, with partial reliance on the assistance of European Regional Development structural funds. Following this decision, the ENM presented its application to Enterprise Estonia (the institution which implements EU funds)<sup>44</sup> to include their application in the structural funds implementation measure, “Development of cultural and tourism objects of national importance.”
- 2009. The Estonian government confirmed the investment plan for this financial measure. Construction of the ENM’s new building was formally included on the list of cultural tourism objects of national importance. The JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions) expert group<sup>45</sup> was involved in the evaluation process of the project. From 2009 to 2010, the ENM worked closely with Enterprise Estonia and JASPERS to improve the project. At the same time, the rather schematic architectural concept of *Memory Field* was jointly elaborated by architects, engineers and museum professionals into a sophisticated project of a dynamic museum space and a functional building, more appropriate with regard to regional weather conditions than the original idea (the main construction material being glass).
- 2011. In January, JASPERS presented its final report to the ENM. This report caused a heated debate in Estonian media. In March, the ENM opened a public

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<sup>43</sup> Under conditions of limited budgetary means, the question as to whether state finances are better spent on supporting cultural activities or on maintaining and development of cultural infrastructure has often been raised. In December 2010, the National Audit Office of Estonia published its audit on the distribution of investments in the Ministry of Culture, pointing to disproportionate figures spent on real estate. Audit available online on the home page of National Audit Office of Estonia - <http://www.riigikontroll.ee/tabid/206/Audit/2166/Area/16/language/en-US/Default.aspx> (last accessed on 29.04.2012).

<sup>44</sup> Enterprise Estonia (Ettevõtlike Arendamise Sihtasutus) is a state-supported institution promoting business and regional development in Estonia; one of the main implementing units of European Union structural funds.

<sup>45</sup> JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions) is a joint initiative managed by the European Investment Bank and co-sponsored by the European Commission, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, assisting 12 Central and Eastern EU member states by providing technical support for project preparation in the case of large infrastructure schemes which receive finance from the Structural and Cohesion Funds. <http://www.jaspers-europa-info.org/index.php/about-us.html> (last accessed on 29.04.2012)

procurement for the construction of the ENM. The procurement was annulled in June, as all of the bids exceeded the price terms imposed in the procurement.<sup>46</sup> At the end of October, the Ministry of Finance forwarded a revised project accompanied by the JASPERS report to the European Commission.

By February 2012, following a series of consultations, the ENM withdrew its application, as rejection by the European Commission was by that time imminent. In spite of this major setback, both the Prime Minister and Minister of Culture of Estonia were quick to renew their support for the construction, stating that the ENM must be built on the Raadi site, in accordance with the extant project and within the nearest future. The Minister of Culture, Rein Lang, proposed that the construction be financed through a loan, which would be reimbursed in the shape of finances procured from the Cultural Endowment of Estonia. As preparatory procedures for carrying out the proposed solution have been under way since February, the Board of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia is still deliberating the issue. In April 2012, the ENM remained to occupy an important position in the main arena of public media debates.

As an advisory body, the JASPERS expert group based their evaluation of the project on the objective of the structural funds measure, the result being a rise in the site's value as a tourist destination. Bearing in mind that the consulting role of JASPERS meant in essence an evaluation of the project's capacity to meet particular tourist site requirements, the dissonance was almost inevitable. Experts pointed out problems of cost efficiency in the presented application. Their report suggested, first, that it would be reasonable to relocate a tourist site of such magnitude to Tallinn (instead of the second largest city, Tartu, in south-central Estonia), where it would be more accessible to foreign visitors, and, second, proposed to trim down the volume of the building and change its planning, which required the doubling of some functions. The business model presented by the ENM proved to be an object of much scrutiny. The ENM estimated that it would serve about 150,000 ticket buying domestic and foreign visitors annually<sup>47</sup>. In the eyes of the experts, this number was an exaggeration. In addition to pointing out the cost efficiency issues concerning the location and size of the building, the JASPERS experts expressed doubts as to whether an ethnography museum would be capable of attracting such substantial interest.

The JASPERS report found resonance in the media environment, influenced by the realism of the financial crisis and the larger “people *versus* constructions of concrete” cultural policy debate. The content and rhetoric of the public debate developing on the backdrop of the JASPERS report, and formulated in terms fitting the mainstream media discourse, may be generalised in the central concepts of “a large glass building in the field” and “a museum of (only) ethnography.”<sup>48</sup> Both concepts were based largely on the differently perceived projections of the museum's future value and attractiveness to the general public. Whereas the new building would inevitably result in a rise in the ENM's current running costs, the popular perception of the building relied heavily on the shallow visually informed image of the *Memory Field* initial project (photos of which had in time come to receive ample media coverage). Ignoring the developmental process of the original project and its implemented energy-efficient solutions (i.e. land heating technology), the project

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<sup>46</sup> Limits for procurement were set at 38.7 million Euros, bids ranged from 51.5 to 71.9 million Euros.

<sup>47</sup> This estimate was later downsized to 125,000 by ENM - <http://www.erm.ee/et/Muuseumist/Uus-hoone/ERM-vastab-ja-selgitab/vastus-osa-1> (last accessed on 02.05.2012)

<sup>48</sup> These arguments were present in the first critical article on JASPERS report, published in January 2012, which largely set the tone for following debates – *Eesti Päevaleht*. 24.01.2011. Mirko Ojakivi & Raimo Poom - „Eksperdid soovivad ERM-i uuest hoonest loobuda [Ettepanek: ERM Tallinna ja poole väiksemana]“

was ridiculed on the basis of an exaggerated and misinformed idea of a glass structure incompatible with the Estonian (northern) climate and with traditional common sense.

The other main line of critique evolved from the popular concept of “(only) ethnography,” exemplified in popular media by the perception of collecting and describing 19<sup>th</sup> Century material culture objects such as beer tankards, mittens and spinning wheels. The negative image of the ENM as an ethnographic museum emphasised in media discourse may be associated both with the museum’s past existence as an archival museum with very limited space for exhibiting its vast collections, as well as with the function of “ethnography” in the Soviet-era academic system as a petty discipline concerned with research into traditional material culture. This outdated image was, in the pragmatic rhetoric, associated with issues of cost-efficiency and visitor estimates. Critics expressed doubts as to whether Estonia would be able to afford to store its beer tankards and mittens in an inefficient, costly building, and questioned whether those artefacts would attract sufficient interest to cover the museum’s running costs to a reasonable extent.

The doubts expressed illustrate the void of dissonance affecting the arguments presented in media debates. For example, one pragmatic critique compared the estimated 150,000 visitors to the 6000 tickets actually purchased in the ENM Exhibition House during 2010. To retort that comparison, ENM representatives pointed to the limited capacity of the current display facilities (especially in connection to the permanent display designed in 1994 as a temporary solution for a few years), and argued that when including all the events and exhibitions organised by the ENM in its different locations, about 120,000 people had visited the ENM in the course of 2011.<sup>49</sup> Throughout the year, proponents of the ENM’s new building project challenged this negative image by describing the future role and impact as not only breaching the prejudice of “just ethnography,” but also escaping the constraints of “just a museum” by functioning as a capable and potent cultural centre and a hub of museological excellence in charge of preserving and interpreting tangible and intangible heritage.

Among other issues, the general essence of relations between Europe and Estonia was elaborated and interpreted in these debates through the significance attributed to the statements made by EU officials and JASPERS experts. In pragmatic arguments, those officials and experts figured as objective agents uninfluenced by idealistic excesses, being thus capable of seeing the bigger picture. Many critics even expressed regrets that the “common sense” associated with the national psyche had to be sought from the EU, which is often perceived as conflicting with that very notion of common sense on account of its bureaucratic absurdities. However, in opposing arguments, the values of European expertise and Estonian ‘local knowledge’ were interpreted from a different perspective. ENM director Krista Aru reprimanded their position: when responding to problems raised in the JASPERS report, she argued that criticism originating from European officials was understandable, as Europeans were unfamiliar with Estonian cultural history, but that it was incomprehensible why Estonians would wish to repeat those regrettable doubts.<sup>50</sup> It should be emphasised, however, that both ideological perspectives were somewhat different and yet to the same extent unfair, expanding the meaning of expert opinions and evaluations beyond their initial contextual limitations.

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<sup>49</sup> ENM states on its home page more than 117,000 visitors to ENM exhibitions; this figure, however, includes exhibitions in the four locations/branches of the museum and its travelling exhibitions. - <http://www.erm.ee/et/Muuseumist/erm-arvudes> (last accessed on 01.05.2012)

<sup>50</sup> Eesti Päevaleht. 25.01.2011. Mirko Ojakivi – „Krista Aru: ehitame selle Eesti Rahva Muuseumi Raadile valmis!”

On the level of party politics, the issue of the ENM's new building remained practically unquestioned throughout the 2011 general elections campaign (elections were held in March). The issue was more or less vaguely mentioned in the cultural policy platforms of all the major political parties, being accentuated most markedly in the campaign of the Reform Party, which has led the Estonian government coalition since 2007, and which holds, among others, the office of the Ministry of Culture.<sup>51</sup> Unwillingness to approach this sensitive issue more thoroughly may be illustrated by a swift and condemning reaction by the Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica, when at one point one of its running candidates proposed the allocation of state finances for the ENM to the construction of a new railway line instead. However, the complex bureaucratic process, involving numerous agencies, has put the partnership of the Estonian leading power coalition to the test. The EU funds application process relied on close co-operation of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Finance – who was in charge of the project's overall financing plan – and the institution of the Minister of Regional Affairs, who curates the implementation of European structural funds assistance through Enterprise Estonia. Discord in the coalition's resolve on the issue of the ENM's new building surfaced in late November 2011, when the Regional Minister Siim-Valmar Kiisler (Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica) suggested that the Ministry of Finance should not submit to the European Commission the specifications demanded by the commission, and that Estonia should thus abandon its plan to involve ERDF assistance. Specifications were nevertheless submitted to the EC in early December. It might be speculated that the Regional Minister was aware of the low likelihood of success of the applications, and was under pressure to use ERDF assistance in time for different, supposedly more successful projects, but different positions between coalition partners were not carried out on the party-political level, but resulted instead in heated exchanges between Minister Kiisler and ENM director Aru. Two articles by the Regional Minister were published in major Estonian newspapers in December 2011 and February 2012. In these articles, Kiisler blamed the project's failure on mistakes made by ENM officials.<sup>52</sup>

The topic of “money for the ENM” is however not limited to discussions about the use of ERDF financing assistance or the sphere of cultural (construction) policy. This vague sum surfaces as a kind of comparison, constant and opportunity in practically every debate concerning proposed state-financed, large-scale construction projects. For instance, a controversial plan for relocating the Estonian Public Service Academy from Tallinn to Eastern Estonia was recently framed as being “even more costly than the construction of the ENM,” and as misguided as the hopes for the positive effect of the ENM on the tourism market.<sup>53</sup> In the context of Estonia's conservative fiscal policy, with its strict limitations on budgetary deficit and loan obligations, many large-scale construction projects in the cultural sphere are currently on hold or in an uncertain state.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, the competition for financing between various institutions has

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<sup>51</sup> The Estonian Reform Party and the Union of Res Publica and Pro Patria have been in power since the Estonian general elections of 2007. Redistributions of government positions have taken place in 2009, when the Social Democratic Party left the coalition, and following the general elections of 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Special section of the ENM web page titled *ENM answers and explains* responds to the arguments published in December 2011. <http://www.erm.ee/et/Muuseumist/Uus-hoone/ERM-vastab-ja-selgitab> (last accessed on 02.05.2012)

<sup>53</sup> *Eesti Päevaleht*. 09.04.2012. Raimo Poom - „IRL-i sisekaitseakadeemia Virumaale kolimise projekt on veel kallim kui ERM.”

<sup>54</sup> Projects of the Estonian Academy of Arts and National Broadcasting new buildings and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre are just some examples illustrating this situation.

intensified under these limited conditions. The ENM is involved in the arguments between proponents of different projects for providing a comparison concerning both an overall meaningful value and a position of public priority. Although the following example may be somewhat unbalanced, this argument might be illustrated by an article written by the chairman of the board of Estonian Public Broadcasting, who recently compared the ENM's projected 150,000 visitors per year with the one million viewers and listeners relying on public broadcasting channels every week.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to changes which the commitment to completing the ENM's new building would bring about in the broader cultural policy strategy, the shifting roles and opportunities in the museum policy environment have also been debated, although these debates have been limited to specialised cultural media, with a smaller audience. In March 2012, art historian Enriko Talvistu raised a question concerning the impact that the ENM's broadened capacity and heightened need for resources would have on the local (i.e. Tartu) museum community. Talvistu estimated that the need for filling the large building with content, and the necessity to justify its construction, would result in the concentration of technical and intellectual museological capacity at the ENM at the expense of other museums, which in turn would have reduced means by which to use and exhibit their collection.<sup>56</sup> In addition, he raised concerns about the suitability of the idea of a universal national museum in a contemporary context, suggesting that this kind of universal ambition, originating from the era of Romantic Nationalism, does not adhere to the contemporary idea of the Museum, to argue that museums specialised on more specific themes would be in principle more dynamic in fulfilling their role. To illustrate his point about problems concerning universal ambitions, Talvistu mentioned the ENM's recent statement encouraging visitors to bring along their most regretted purchases, from which to create a museum exhibit. The ENM planned on including these objects in an exhibition of contemporary consumer culture. In Talvistu's opinion, the ENM was thereby demonstrating its lack of carefully considered collecting policy, by assembling objects of no importance whatsoever. In the context of Estonian museum policy, issues raised in the public debate by Talvistu need to be addressed in the forum of developing museum policy concerning the future of the collecting and governing of museums initiated by the Estonian Ministry of Culture in 2012.<sup>57</sup> Considering the more specific debate at hand, ENM research director Pille Runnel and research assistant Ehti Järv, responsible for designing the aforementioned exhibition on consumer culture, have responded to this critique by explaining and defending the versatile and dynamic roles of a modern national museum – which should breach the limits of the “just ethnography” prejudice presented in Talvistu's argument – and an attempt at involving its audience in a relationship of dialogue aimed at interpreting the surrounding contemporary life-worlds.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Postimees*. 25.03.2011. Margus Allikmaa - „Uus hoone tähendab uut kvaliteeti.”

<sup>56</sup> *Sirp* 18.02.2012. Enriko Talvistu - „Pärast Eesti Rahva Muuseumi uue hoone valmimist Raadil.”

<sup>57</sup> The Estonian Ministry of Culture is currently working towards centralising the activities of county museums under state control. ENM is seen and already acting as a competence centre in the framework of this process. Referring to National Audit Office of Estonia audits of 2005 and 2011 which (among other concerns) have criticised the lack of central collecting policy, the commission of collections working under the Board of Museums of the Ministry of Culture has been assigned to work out the principles of the collecting policy for state museums. Wider debates concerning the future of the collecting policy should surface among in Estonian museum community in May 2012, as the deadline for the state museums collecting policy principles has been set to 15 of May 2012, after which the process should already involve the national museum landscape as a whole.

<sup>58</sup> *Postimees* 28.03.2012. Ehti Järv & Pille Runnel - „Me ei kogu seda, mis näppu juhtub.”

While the issue is not addressed uncritically, there seems to be a sense of consensus, at least among the majority of public debaters in the niche of cultural media, on the necessity of following through with the current project. A central argument to this point of view is the fact that the mere duration of this process leaves no other options (the special building having been planned for a hundred years, in addition to the recent undertaking of the past decades). Amongst the pragmatically oriented critical camp, this kind of determinism is interpreted as an unreasonable strategy for avoiding discussion on the issue. Therefore, the ENM project's lengthy trajectory may be viewed as an argument both for and against completing the project. In pragmatic rhetoric, the project needs to be reconsidered precisely because the circumstances have changed, and because Estonia is at present no longer able to afford an overoptimistic project driven by unrealistic patriotic ideology and by the confidence of the economic boom. The opposite position could be exemplified by the recent joint statement of proponents of the ENM<sup>59</sup>, and by a column by the ENM board member and professor of ethnology at the University of Tartu, Art Leete.<sup>60</sup> Leete argues that writing off years of intellectual effort and funds allocated to the technical development of the project would inevitably mean that the building finally constructed could be neither better nor cheaper than *Memory Field*. Although he, like others, has accentuated the ENM's active and important role in maintaining and actively negotiating the national discourse through means of a contemporary museum, the most recent statements by ENM director Aru have carried a more powerfully contrasting existential tone. She has warned the public of the clear and current danger to tangible heritage of national importance, which is deposited under unfitting conditions, in buildings, which have, in the hope of a new building, received only minimal maintenance and repair in the course of the last decade. In her recent article, Aru raised the rhetorical question of whether the ENM should donate the original national flag of Estonia<sup>61</sup> to the Finns, who would be more capable of depositing such a treasure under decent conditions.

As the ideological field associated with the ENM has expanded vastly over the recent years, it is also worth noticing that, regardless of many setbacks, the activities and functioning of the ENM may be seen in dimensions overreaching its present conditions and more fitting to possibilities of its planned new building. This present state of the ENM's role and impact, however, relies heavily on hope and enthusiasm, and cannot be sustainable in the long term, if the present uncertain status of the ENM's new building project is prolonged or abandoned altogether.

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<sup>59</sup> Statement published in web page of ENM and in major Estonian newspapers - <http://www.erm.ee/et/Soprade-Selts/Uudised/147/ermi-toetajad-poordusid-avalikkuse-poolle> (last accessed on 28.04.2012)

<sup>60</sup> *Postimees* 03.04.2012. Art Leete. „Art Leete: muuseum udus.”

<sup>61</sup> *Postimees* 07.04.2012. Sulev Valner – „Aru: Kas anname esimese Eesti lipu varsti soomlaste hoida?” The Estonian national flag was originally the flag of the Estonian Students Society, and the first blue, black and white ‘trikoloor’ consecrated in 1884 is currently deposited at the ENM by the Society.

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# Museum Policies in Hungary 1990 – 2010

Péter Apor

## General Characteristics

The museums and the museum infrastructure in East-Central Europe have been profoundly reshaped following the dismantling of the socialist dictatorships in 1989-1990. One of the most important principles of this process appears to have been clear from the very beginning: to decouple the museums from ideological constraints and heavy state infiltration in order to increase the level of cultural and professional autonomy, and the role of civil societies. However, the models proposed for integrating these societies into the emerging market economies and consumer societies were contested. On the one hand, it was difficult to develop new models for financing museum activities in a region where post-communist states were typically in short of central budgets and civil societies are traditionally less resourceful than their Western counterparts. On the other hand, the particular profiles of the museums were also subjected to occasional fierce debates: whether they should focus on traditional scientific, in many cases elitist, activities of preservation and education, or, rather, prioritize programs for generating income and meeting the expectations of wider audiences, which would often expose the museums to sheer consumerist orientation and interest. This report confronts these issues, using Hungary as a detailed case study.

The infrastructure and institutional frames of the national museums in Hungary are comprised by two major laws, which correspond not only to two separate approaches to legislation, but also to two ways of understanding the roles of the museums and the public administration. Whereas the initial 1997 Act on museums was passed virtually unnoticed by the general public, and even by political decision makers, the 2010 initiative for a substantially modified new law proved to be largely controversial, and triggered remarkable criticism both by political opposition and various professional organizations.

The dismantling of the Communist party state in 1988-1989, and the election of the first post-Communist democratic government, generated the conditions by which the role, function and regulation of public cultural institutions including libraries, archives and museums could be reconsidered. Whereas, before 1989, museums were a part of the state-owned, centrally funded system of the official network of cultural institutions, which viewed their function to be that of educating the population in the values of the official socialist, patriotic, revolutionary and materialist ideology, the post-communist political and cultural elite criticized this as an ineffective, unjust and limited dictatorial practice oppressing a variety of cultural or spiritual values which various social groups were seeking to cultivate.

Post-communist parties, as a consequence, came to agree on one of the most important principles of the new model: the limitation of state intervention into the activities of the museums in order to reshape them as non-political, public institutions, openly accessible to all members of the society. Besides, the common emphasis on cultural diversity and European focus, visions of cultural policy among the new parties, served to emphasize the importance of protecting and fostering indigenous national cultural values and aspects.

Yet, with the exception of two documents, the new political parties made little effort in the way of articulating their cultural or museum policy programs. The two exceptions included the official program of the new government, led by the conservative-liberal Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) (*A nemzeti megújulás programja*, 1990), and the political programme of the prevalent oppositional party, the liberal-leftist Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) (*Elefánt a porcelánboltban*, 1990.) Both had in common the idea of radically decreasing the role of the state in managing public cultural institutions and museums, but also of maintaining the inherited institutional infrastructure in a form better integrated with the emerging civil society. These considerations reflect the main concerns of the emerging post-communist democratic politics: dismantling the institutions of state repression and surveillance, while at the same time maintaining the structure of public institutions and securing their finances through public funds.

At the same time, the two documents showed remarkable differences. The conservative-liberal cultural policy saw museums and cultural institutions as important means of constructing, preserving and protecting the national culture. “National culture” had a double meaning for the conservative-liberals. On the one hand, it reflected the priority of domestic canons of arts, intellectual thought, creative thinking and cultural traditions. On the other hand, national culture was conceived in broader linguistic-ethnic terms and was understood to embrace all Hungarian-speaking cultures and traditions. As a consequence, this type of cultural policy, while acknowledging cultural diversity in the form of various regional, linguistic and ethnographic sub-cultures, emphasized unity and homogeneity as important means for fostering social cohesion and equal accessibility to cultural capital, thereby at the same time downplaying the importance of ethnic or linguistic cultural minorities such as the Roma, or recent migration tendencies from Southeast Europe, Southeast Asia and Africa, as well as differences between contemporary urban sub-cultures and more rural-based popular cultures.

The liberal-leftist alternative, in turn, highlighted museums and institutions of culture as crucial conveyors of civil society. This policy programme considered cultural institutions as the asset of various autonomous social and cultural groups and as important means for constructing and maintaining their identity. Museums and similar institutions should have been inherently associated with various civil social groups, and governments should have encouraged these to freely construct their priorities and institutions. The liberals, however, did not consider this proposal to lead to the decrease of central state funding. The state was supposed to retain the commitment and resources to keep the institutions running; nonetheless it was expected to do so according to three principles. Firstly, the state was called to support the cultural demands of social groups with insufficient resources to fund their own activities. Second, state financing would supposedly take the cultural diversity of Hungarian society into consideration. Third, cultural policy was expected to encourage the private sponsorship of museums and cultural institutions.

The principle of viewing the state as producing the institutional frames of culture, and not commanding it, was the manifest programme of the second democratic, socialist-liberal government, which proposed the first post-Communist professional museum legislation in 1997, the “no. CXL 1997 Act concerning the Protection of Cultural Property, Museum Institutions, Public Library Services and Public Education.” Although the liberals, who were responsible for the cultural policy of the government via Bálint Magyar, SZDSZ Minister of Culture, cultivated the ideal of autonomous civil cultural activism, employees of museums, libraries and other public

institutions demanded institutional guarantees for funding these activities. This social demand contributed to the preparation of the comprehensive professional regulation of museum policies. As municipal administrations in the country were increasingly short in funding, which threatened not only the continuity of cultural activities, but also work-places in the system, the government decided to develop a system of central funding and institutional guarantees for museums and museum work. The 1997 legislation thus served to guarantee basic state funding for museums to cover personnel and basic infrastructural costs, and a special public fund administered by the Ministry of Culture for occasional the expansion of collections.

The 1997 legislation considered the museums as institutions associated with cultural heritage, universal as well as and national, and, because free access to the common heritage was considered a fundamental democratic right, meant to provide spaces for appropriating and learning such heritage. Policy makers appreciated the new law as crucial in securing the function of the museums of preserving, professionally interpreting and making publicly available the goods of cultural heritage. Accordingly, the law regulated property rights with regard to objects considered part of this cultural heritage: the sale of such objects was prohibited without special permission from the minister. The law maintained the principle of free foundation and operation of museums, allowing both private and public bodies to engage in museum activities. Nevertheless, the Ministry retained the right to supervise and withhold permits in the case of unprofessional management. In order to secure professional operation, museums were obliged to employ adequately qualified staff only.

To maintain the quality and standard of museum work, the 1997 law also outlined the institutional requirements with regard to museums. A museum, according to the document, was comprised of scientifically organized collections of cultural goods. Besides that, a museum was an institution, which simultaneously collected, scientifically interpreted, preserved, and displayed objects of cultural heritage, and which employed appropriately qualified professional staff. Policy makers divided museums into various categories, such as national, regional, territorial (such as local village or town museums and various homeland museum houses) and thematic, reflecting their individual territorial concerns and national significance. The law intended to contribute the necessary funding from the state budget to the secure management of museums. State-owned museums were funded by the budget of the Ministry of Culture, regional and territorial museums from the budget of the Ministry of Municipal Autonomies, and all public and private museums alike were entitled to apply with the Ministry of Culture for acquisition funds. However, the law only guaranteed the covering of personnel and management costs for the museums, which, while creating a predictable future for staff and administration, rendered acquisition policy random and tedious. In 1998, the Ministry of Culture established the Directorate of Cultural Heritage for the purpose of supervising and monitoring the protection and definition of cultural property within the country. In effect, this organ, which served as a department of the Ministry, oversaw not only the operation of the museums, but also the protection of monuments and architecture.

The legislation was passed in Parliament on 9 December 1997, following a debate on suggested modifications. The conservative opposition, in particular MDF representative Péter Takács, stressed the necessity of highlighting the role and the duty of the state in maintaining the institutions in charge of cultural traditions, and criticized the law for inadequately addressing this issue (See the records of the Hungarian Parliament <http://www.parlament.hu/iromany/04747/0009txt.htm>) Conservative criticism continued to produce ideas about the

involvement of the state in cultural production. In its electoral programme, titled “Liberty and Future,” in 1998, the would-be victorious Fidesz party criticized the socialist-liberal government for not devoting sufficient energy and attention to protecting and renovating architecture and other objects of material heritage. The conservative suggestion was to centralize the tasks and organs of cultural activities, and to increase state participation in the process. The conservatives understood heritage as embracing culture, monuments and architecture, and tourism, while education was viewed separately. The Fidesz, therefore, largely with reference to the British model, established, after its electoral victory, a new Ministry, the Ministry of National Cultural Heritage, which would go on to shape museum practices. The museums were expected to play a special part in accordance with the Fidesz programme: they were intended to shield citizens from the alleged damages expected to be inflicted by global culture by creating firm grounds for cultural identities, and subsequently confirming those. Nonetheless, the major investment the Fidesz-government made into culture did not consider the museums: the most spectacular cultural initiative was the celebration of the millennial anniversary of Hungarian statehood in 2000. The intention of the government was to mark a radical shift in cultural policy concerning the alleged purpose of cultural activities: “The citizens of Hungary, growing more confident with themselves and the nation, may gain the ability to tackle the global challenges of the world, and to create cultural goods which serve to enrich the culture of the world and of Europe.” These considerations implied the concentration of state resources in the interest of improving cultural activities.

Sceptical Hungarian intellectuals regarded the cultural policy of the government as potentially leading to a strengthening of the state’s intention with regard to appropriating cultural heritage. Art historian Ernő Marosi and archaeologist János György Szilágyi, in a 2000 January conference at the Collegium Budapest, called to evoke and reconsider those intellectual traditions connected to museum objects and architecture with reference to the value of such material heritage in its capacity to integrate universal relevance and national identity. This capacity, in their opinion, could serve to prevent the state from profoundly appropriating their use and meaning (Erdősi 2000).

The concept of cultural heritage, which was also instrumental to the 1997 legislation, was crucial in framing the museum policy of the new conservative-nationalist government in the context of a broader cultural policy. The parliament elected in 1998 passed the legislation on protecting cultural heritage in 2001. The 2001 legislation differed from the 1997 museum law in two important aspects. Firstly, it concerned the concept of cultural heritage as the subject of cultural policy, shifting the emphasis from tangible museum practice to a more abstract philosophical-ideological notion. Second, it also shifted the emphasis on the balance of national and universal culture to a distinctly and uniquely national heritage, to which the government accorded special protection since it was allegedly subjected to the menace of globalization. These transformations implied the idea of a homogeneous and unitary national culture, which, in turn, appeared clearly demarcated from other sets of national heritage.

In contrast to the previous legislation, which considered museums the professional specialized institutions with regard to cultural heritage, the new legislation, in accordance with commensurable European processes, extended the concept to embrace monuments (e. g. the Heroes’ Square monument in Budapest), architectural heritage (Buda Castle, Festetics Castle in Keszthely, archaeological zones (the Archeopark by Motorway 3), spiritual and intellectual

production (literature, scholarship), works of art (paintings, sculptures), landscapes (the national parks) and botanical gardens (e. g. the Jeli Arboretum). As a consequence, public bodies acquired a greater capacity for effectively protecting targeted objects outside the museum infrastructure proper. The government set up a network of specialized organizations, Cultural Heritage Protection Offices, which served as administrative authorities supervising the management of cultural heritage in their respective territories (2001. évi. törvény a kulturális örökség). The functions pertinent to the 2001 legislation were also acknowledged by the subsequent socialist-liberal government, which modified the regulations in 2005, and further expanded the competence of the Cultural Heritage Protection Offices. This government, however, would attempt to restore the balance between universal and national heritage by introducing the concept of “global heritage,” which also implied an approach to the global system of world heritage sites.

Envisaging the entrance into the European Union, this government expressed grand plans to improve the museum infrastructure and accessibility within the country. It promised to apply for the title of European cultural capital, and introduced free entrance to state-owned museums. This measure, while in principle rendering museums more accessible, in practice deprived the system of important income, which would prove to be very difficult to substitute. The government emphasized its European priorities and its intention to guarantee the autonomy and diversity of cultural activities. Symbolically, perhaps, its manifestation was its major investment in the museum field: the establishment of the Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art (*Ludwig – Kortárs Művészeti Múzeum*), which has since developed into an important European centre of contemporary arts.

## Contemporary Policy

The conservative-nationalist government elected in 2010 announced its intention to modify the legislation on museums. On 5 November, at the National Conference of Museum Directors in the city of Szeged, the state secretary of culture defined museums as modern knowledge centres that performed complex roles and functions in contemporary societies. These roles included education, cultural activities, the functions of community centres and various public services concerned with information and knowledge. Géza Szőcs emphasized the importance of developing a predictable career model for museum staff in order to secure the resources needed for the accomplishment of these complex tasks. The government also introduced the option of entrance fees for temporary exhibitions in state-owned museums for the purpose of generating more income for the institutions. The concept of museums as crossovers of collection and professional interpretation is evidenced by the restriction on the rights of archaeological excavations to museums, universities and scientific institutions (*Heti Világgazdaság* 5 November 2010). The severe budgetary crisis of the Hungarian state, however, prevented the government from implementing its ambitious plans. On the contrary, museums were stricken with serious budgetary cuts in 2011, which in many cases endangered their basic activities. Museum directors, including the head of the National Museum, began to raise complaints about the insufficient levels of funding, which in his case were viewed as a threat to the maintenance of exhibitions, opening hours, and preservation of collections. Similarly, staff members in the Natural History Museum called attention to the fact that the decrease in funding had even led to the heating system in their museum being disconnected (Magyar Múzeumok online 11 November, 16 November 2011).

In general, the reshaping of museums and their identity after 1990 was impacted by two important, broader themes of post-Communist public culture: the need to redefine scholarship and scientific activities, and the demands of emerging social and market expectations. Whereas museums typically attempt to define themselves at the intersection of scholarship and sophisticated entertainment, the focus of public debate is usually the question of how to establish a balance between the two, or to realize the priority of either one or the other. On its official website, the Hungarian National Museum, as the foremost authority within the museum infrastructure of the country, stresses the need to represent in a balanced way the achievements of the sciences, technology, history and the arts, thus serving its visitors, while at the same time keeping alive their original scholarly focus ([http://www.hnm.hu/hu/magun/mag\\_muzeumi\\_munka0.html](http://www.hnm.hu/hu/magun/mag_muzeumi_munka0.html)). Museums, as it is emphasized, have departed from their role as temples of scholarship and the arts, moving towards the more complex social role of serving the needs of public education and sophisticated entertainment activities. Nonetheless, as the National Museum officially argues, museums should not ignore the scientific component of their vocation: the research, retention and preservation of material heritage.

The round-table discussion and debate organized on 13 January 2010 by two of the prevalent think-tank institutions of the conservative-nationalist party, the Lajos Batthyány Foundation and the Foundation for Bourgeois Culture, and the comprehensive proposal written by museum specialists half a year before were instrumental in shaping both official museum policy and the subsequent public debates on museums in Hungary (Távlatok és teendők, 2010). The study instigated by museum specialists focused on the museums as key institutions in preserving national public property, and in shaping national and local identities and the image of the country abroad. Besides, it emphasized both the scientific nature and the spiritual-intellectual assets possessed by the museums. In order to keep these functions alive, the museum specialists called for a new comprehensive museum legislation delegating partial economic and full professional autonomy to museum bodies.

In general, participants in the debate initiated by the moderate conservative-liberal review *Magyar Szemle*, and continued at the 13 January conference of leading museum specialists, art historians and historians, were struggling with the problem of how to save an elitist conception of the museums as places of scholarship, and how to simultaneously further their integration into contemporary society. Some, like the authors of the proposal, Imre Takács, art historian of the government body Office of Protecting Cultural Heritage Sélysette Somorjay, and Balázs Balogh, director of the Institute of Ethnography, criticized governments and public bodies for not paying enough attention to the damages caused by economic dependence and globalizing culture to the intellectual and professional independence of museums in Hungary, and in a few cases called for an escalation in state funding. Others, like Judit Tamási of the Office of Protecting Cultural Heritage, emphasized rather the need to develop techniques and modes, by which could be justified those museum activities within contemporary society, which were conceived as far from being taken for granted. Although many, in particular the director of the Open-air Ethnography Museum in Szentendre, Imre Cseri, admitted that the notions of “social expectation” and “public culture” were inadequately defined, they encouraged museums to develop into “open institutions” so as to more readily meet the demands of visitors ([http://www.magyszemle.hu/cikk/tudomanyos\\_kozintezetek\\_vagy\\_kozmuvelodesi\\_intezmenyek\\_-\\_vitaest\\_az\\_orzagos\\_muzeumok\\_jovojerol](http://www.magyszemle.hu/cikk/tudomanyos_kozintezetek_vagy_kozmuvelodesi_intezmenyek_-_vitaest_az_orzagos_muzeumok_jovojerol)).

## Diverse Publics

At present, the attitude of policy makers within the museum field towards ethnic and cultural minorities is ambivalent. In principle, the major legislation, the 1997 Act, declares the right to, and value of, preserving and cultivating minority cultural traditions. This approval, however, has not occasioned any major governmental investment in minority museums as of now. To some extent, organizations representing minority communities in Hungary appear to be content with the current situation. Their representatives have made no requests for special museums or museum sections in national museums for displaying their cultural heritage. Instead, they tend to promote particular regional or local minority museums associated specifically with individual minority communities. Important examples of this kind of museum are the Polish and Ruthenian community houses and museums in Budapest, church institutions such as the Serbian Orthodox Collection of Religious Art in Szentendre, the Christian Collection of Croats in Hungary in the village of Peresznye, the Greek Orthodox Collection of Religious Art in Kecskemét, and the Romanian Cathedral in Gyula. Nevertheless, none of these are national museums, and thus do not benefit from any regular national budgetary support. Besides these, regional museums in Mohács, Tata and Békéscsaba, which are sustained by central budgets, preserve and display southern Slavic, German and Romanian, Slovak collections, respectively.

The most salient exception to this general rule is the relatively visible efforts of the Roma community to set up a permanent central and state funded Roma national museum. Leading Roma intellectual Ágnes Daróczi initiated a debate on the future museum in Hungarian public media in 1993. Her idea was to create a complex institution based on the achievements of the Hungarian Institution of Public Culture (an organ of centrally funded civic and minority education, and her place of work), a centre for education, which would embrace art, educational programmes and a museum. Nonetheless, due to a lack of funds and sufficient political will, the initiative has not as yet come to fruition. Daróczi returned to the idea of the museum in 2004, in a critical article in a leading Hungarian newspaper (*Népszabadság*). She explained her disappointment with Hungarian governments in general for ignoring the rights and desires of the Roma community, and restated the argument for the necessity of a central Roma museum. Roma intellectuals and politicians, in general, shared the idea of the museum as an institution crucial to creating community identities. The National Roma Autonomy (the official organization representing Roma community interests) set up an exhibition room for Roma artists in its Budapest headquarters in 2004.

In 2005, young Roma intellectuals called for the establishment of the Roma Museum of Contemporary Art, and in 2006, a number of galleries devoted to contemporary Roma art were inaugurated by Minister of Culture András Bozóki, and subsequently by the National Roma Autonomy. These initiatives, however, could not resolve the issue of a central Roma museum. The debate continued in 2006, when the Hungarian Institution of Public Culture and the Ernst Museum organized a public debate on the future of this very idea. The Hungarian Institution of Public Culture remained the foremost advocate of the initiative: its director, Erika Borbáth, insisted on the necessity of establishing the Roma museum in a 2008 conference concluding an exhibition in the National Gallery devoted to contemporary Roma art. Nonetheless, in 2010, critical intellectual Iván Bächer could still raise complaints about the lack of the Roma museum in his article in one of Hungary's leading dailies, *Népszabadság* (17 Jan 2010).

In 2010, the Office of the Ombudsman of Minority Rights prepared a report concerning the fulfillment of minority cultural rights. Holding museums to be the crucial means for constructing and preserving minority identities, the report criticized current museum practice within the country. Firstly, it expressed appreciation for the efforts of the national museums – the historical exhibition of the National Museum, the Museum of Ethnography and the National Gallery – to respect and represent minorities in their exhibitions, the report showed dissatisfaction with the integration of minorities within the representation of broader Hungarian culture. It claimed that the exhibitions were in general unable to give expression to the role and extent to which minority groups had played in the history and culture of the nation. Second, it criticized the dispersal and fragmentation of minority collections in regional museums and, third, it showed dissatisfaction with the state of the idea of the Roma museum. Therefore, the Office proposed the establishment of a House of Minorities with a central location that could host a museum, and called for the rapid construction of the Roma museum. (Kállai Ernő, 2010).

## **Museum Reform**

The government initiated ambitious plans to reorganize the museum field in Hungary in February 2011. Government decision no. 1353/2011 (*Magyar Közlöny* 20 October 2011) announced its plans to establish a new “museumsquartier” in central Budapest, connecting the National Gallery in the Castle with the Museum of Fine Arts in Heroes Square. In October, Minister of Culture Géza Szócs appointed director of the Museum of Fine Arts László Baán the government commissioner of this project. In a press conference held on 6 December, the Minister explained that the legacy of historic architecture and art in central Budapest, already represented on the UNESCO world heritage list, was worthy of more effective and spectacular demonstration and situation, as the focus of touristic interest. Although the government gave consideration to the possible economic benefits of the project on account of the expected increase in property development and building industry, Baán himself has focused on a sophisticated concept of re-designing the role of museums in Budapest. At the core of his vision lay the situation of Hungarian art in its international context, both in order to provide a better understanding, and to further the international recognition of domestic art. Therefore, Baán suggested the merging of the National Gallery and the Museum of Fine Arts, and the construction of a super-museum of arts, which would allegedly attract more tourism and funding interest, which was, in fact, approved, by a government decision on 29 September 2011. The museum director, who has been involved in Fidesz cultural policy since 1998, argued that the new institution was more likely to be able to meet the challenges of contemporary museum audiences and tasks focusing on complex projects which integrate research, exhibition, entertainment and funding, and would also be more effective in channelling state resources, as stated in his address delivered in the 17 November 2011 conference organized by the Ferenc Pulszky Association, the federation of domestic museum related intellectuals. Baán considers museums a means of safeguarding and promoting culture and civilization, and of protecting the values of European high culture, even within the new, sometimes damaging, context of contemporary internet society (See his paper on the official website of the Museum of Fine Arts).

The government decision was fiercely criticized in the newspapers, both by Hungarian museum professionals and international organizations. First, the director and personnel of the National Gallery are concerned for the loss of the gallery’s independence and its ability to

appropriately exhibit Hungarian national art. In a communiqué issued on 26 October 2011, the National Gallery accused the government of considering the elimination of an important public institution, hastily and without prior professional dialogue. The Hungarian section of the Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art formulated a similar criticism (Magyar Múzeumok online). Art historian Ernő Marosi argues that it is difficult to interpret domestic art according to international references; in his view, it is rather Hungarian art which might aid in the reception of broader European and global tendencies. András Rényi, head of the Institute of Art History at Budapest ELTE University, pointed to the fact that smaller, more flexible museum units were normally more efficient at meeting the challenges of project-oriented thinking, favoured by Baán, than larger institutions. Nonetheless, whereas the debate continued in the press, e.g. in *Népszabadság*, *Magyar Narancs*, *Magyar Hírlap*, *Heti Világgazdaság* and *Élet és Irodalom*, as well as in art related online fora like Magyar Múzeumok online and Artportal, and likewise on television (Duna Television, *Éjjeli Őrjárat*, 11 November 2011), the debate concerning the controversial points of the plans proved unsuccessful. Although the ideas and concepts share many similarities, and it is difficult to divide them into two opposing camps according to their alleged support or rejection of the government plans, officials of the new state initiative and lay professionals hardly engage in dialogue besides manifesting their positions in various media. Typically, albeit the government commissioner of the new museum-in-planning was present at the conference of the Pulszky Federation, he was not addressed by questions relating to the concepts, visions and infrastructure of the new museum.

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# **From Ivory Towers to Visitor Centres?**

## **Hungarian Museum Policy in the Context of the European Union**

Gábor Ébli

### **General Characteristics**

Although the European Union does not articulate any specific cultural policy, its indirect impact on cultural institutions within the member states may be identified in a number of ways. The following examination of selected issues in the development of leading national museums in Hungary, based mostly on interviews conducted in spring 2012 with Hungarian museum managers and curators, representatives of the Ministry of Culture, as well as independent museum experts – in particular, specialists on the financing of cultural institutions through EU grants – reflects this double-sided situation. As we shall see, the acquisition of membership in the EU in 2004 appears to have had no immediate influence on the museums in Hungary; yet in a number of areas, mostly with regard to funding, management and the visitor-friendly approach, the country's museums have been indirectly shaped by the Union.

### **Internationalisation after the fall of the Iron Curtain**

With the fall of the Iron Curtain, museum work in Hungary began increasingly to adopt international standards. Contacts with museums abroad, even in Western Europe, did exist under Communism, and had gained in frequency from the early 1980s onwards, with the gradual weakening of ideological control; from 1990 onwards, democracy and the market economy brought new opportunities for international integration. First, collaboration across borders expanded along bilateral agreements. One of the earliest projects was initiated by the Dutch Museums Association in 1992, and proved to have lasting effect. Although Dutch interest was rooted in assuring the proper conservation and presentation of one particular collection unit in Hungary – the Flemish paintings retained in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest – the programme covered a broad range of subjects, and involved various Hungarian museums.

Organised under the umbrella of the Pulszky Society – Hungarian Museums Association, with considerable political support from the ministries of culture of both countries, and funded by the Dutch government, the programme offered intensive one-week training sessions on special museum issues to Hungarian museum staff hand-picked by Dutch professionals, during the whole 1990s. In a sense an immaterial export of Dutch museum expertise, the programme was mirrored elsewhere in Eastern Europe, for instance in Slovenia and Russia, and may be regarded as having pioneered the implementation of Western European know-how within the museum field in Eastern Europe. The training sessions introduced categories such as 'project,' 'mission statement' and 'management' for the first time to many, otherwise well-qualified, Hungarian museum professionals, and attempted to challenge the traditional mindset of the participants as to what a museum is about, and who it is for. Whereas for most Hungarian attendants a museum's foremost stakeholder was the state, one of the ends of the training was to cause them to depart from this legacy and to turn their attention instead to the visitors as the leading factor in the services provided by a museum [Vásárhelyi 2004].

The focus on visitors as the *raison d'être* of the museums was questioned, and to date remains an item of dispute for many within the Hungarian museum field. Numerous professionals – including István Matskási, the then President of the Hungarian Museums Association, who is today Director General of a leading national museum – declined to adopt what they called the ‘consumerist’ turn in museum work right from the beginning of the Dutch-Hungarian Museum Management Workshops. Many influential people in the profession still strongly believe that museums are first and foremost scholarly institutions, and that serving the public is a secondary task. This globally relevant debate has by now become a key issue in Hungary, and may be seen as an example of recent international impact on museum work in this country. By no means entirely novel, the topic of visual education for the public by museums had been on the agenda since the early 1970s, when, in the course of the post-1968 reforms the Communist regime began to promote ‘public education’ (*közművelődés*), i. e. education beyond schooling, yet the question only seriously advanced to the forefront with the international opening in the 1990s [Pálfi 2009].

In 2003 the Ministry of Culture – the name and institutional setup of which has changed several times since 1990, so that I shall be using the ‘Ministry of Culture’ as a general label – developed a museum strategy for the first time following the transition to democracy, when the Soviet-type five-year-planning had ceased. One of its two tenets was the visitor-friendly approach. Focussing on the other hand on pre-emptive conservation, the strategy was published as an Appendix to the 2003 March issue of *Múzeumi Hírlevél*, an informative official monthly newsletter of museums in Hungary. This was the first time the ministry had decided to publish an official document of fundamental importance to the whole museum community; and indeed, visitor-friendliness has since proved to be the most powerful buzzword in governmental museum policy. The same year, the ministry launched a specific programme, Museums for Everyone (*Múzeumok Mindenkinék*), with numerous projects taking place under its umbrella ever since [[www.muzeumokmindenkinék.hu](http://www.muzeumokmindenkinék.hu) gives specifics on the history, the structure and the publications of the programme]. In 2006, the programme, run initially by the ministry, institutionalised on its own, and the Museums Education and Research Centre (*Múzeumi Oktatási és Kutatási Központ*, MOKK) was called to life jointly by the ministry and the Open-Air Museum of Ethnography in Szentendre, one of the most visitor-centred museums [Török 2006].

Ranging from the Director of the Open-Air Museum to the Director of MOKK, most managers of this new institution and of its forerunner programmes had participated in the Dutch workshops, without the effect of which these new schemes might not have come into life. These schemes did have its precursors prior to 1989, especially as the Central Museums Directorate (*Központi Múzeumi Igazgatóság*, dissolved after the fall of the Iron Curtain) had from the 1970s organised workshops and published guidelines on visual education within the museums; yet many of these were ideologically tainted, and were discontinued after 1989. Visual education and visitor-centred thinking enjoyed a modest tradition in Hungarian museum work, and so were in need of a revival and thorough re-interpretation of content in the course of the 1990s, for which international influence was decisive.

The adoption of these foreign models had as yet little to do with European integration. Freed from the shackles of the Soviet Union, Hungarian museums aspired to establish links abroad, making use of seemingly banal factors, such as the freedom to travel. International travel had been facilitated even by the old regime in the course of the 1980s, enabling a number of museum

professionals to harvest experience from museum work abroad. After 1989, the gates opened much wider, a range of scholarships became available, private and professional travel prospered, and Hungarian museum professionals received considerable inspiration from observing Western museum practices. Visitor-friendly museum work was at this time globally one of the foremost subjects within the Anglo-Saxon museum world. Furthermore, the Dutch model of turning museum work into a public service, measured by efficiency indicators, may be interpreted as a rational, market-oriented import to Hungary from the Northern and Western part of the world. The effect that these model countries, e. g. the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands, had on Hungarian museum concepts was in the 1990s by no means yet associated with European integration, but rested rather on the country's seeking a new, Western orientation following decades of Communism.

## **Contemporary Policy**

### **Indirect impact of the European Union**

With the admission to the European Union in 2004, visitor-friendliness, among those Western museum values approximated by Hungarian museums, became still more important, albeit indirectly. The chief impact of the EU on museums in Hungary may be identified in select EU funds providing financial resources. Besides specific funds and programmes, there being no specific large-scale and systematically disbursed budget for culture in the EU, the funds used indirectly for cultural development fall largely under the label of structural and regional development, the means of which may be the dissemination of knowledge, the promotion of tourism, and various other elements, as chosen by the individual member states. Within museum work, these pragmatic priorities translate most easily as opening up the museums to visitors, and modernising the infrastructure and management of these institutions. In short, as the financial means of the Hungarian museums came largely from the Structural Funds of the EU – which foster general values, such as wide access to cultural goods – providing ever-broader services by the museums to their public is indispensable to all EU applications for funding. With this financial motivation, the EU contributes significantly to visitor-friendliness in Hungarian museums. While the 1990s and the early 2000s saw the opening up of the museums to various strata of the public, chiefly through the sheer contrast of suddenly revealing the differences in museum work between Eastern Europe and the rest of the world, the second stage of this development, from the mid-2000s until now, has strengthened the attention to visitors due to the pressure of securing EU funds, largely conditioned indirectly on a broader access to culture [for one of the earliest publications on this issue, still prior to accession to the EU, by a civil servant in the Ministry of Culture, see Rónai 2002].

With many museum professionals still regarding their institutions as strongholds of scholarship, the adaptation to visitor expectations is often involuntary in Hungary today, and is carried out only half-heartedly, to the extent required by the Ministry of Culture or by specific grant applications. The EU Structural Funds are at the disposal of the member states, to be spent on projects, which they deem relevant to achieving a higher level of cohesion within the Union. In Hungary, various government bodies – such as, currently, the Nemzeti Fejlesztési Ügynökség (National Development Agency) – oversee the application process for these funds as part of large modernisation programmes, such as the Új Magyarország Fejlesztési Terv (New Hungary

Development Plan), Széchenyi Terv (Széchenyi Plan), and Nemzeti Fejlesztési Terv (National Development Plan). Most of these include funds specifically allotted to visual education and/or touristic development in the museums. If awarded a grant, a museum may first use the money to procure items relevant to infrastructure, such as projectors, needed for the training sessions; and second, to produce publications, such as workbooks for the attendants of the workshops, as well as to pay for the work done in preparation of, and in the course of, the workshops. Each of these is a vital source of money. Standard museum budgets barely cover a small portion of necessary infrastructure purchases, making these EU funds an essential source for procuring hardware and appliances of various kinds. Similarly, without these funds, publications would not materialise, nor would methodically rigorous, long-term visual education programmes be worked out [for an overview by one of the most EU-centred museum managers in the country, see Sári 2009].

For the users, a great advantage is that whereas visual education programmes must normally be financed by the school or by the adult group wishing to attend them, these EU-funded projects are free of charge for attendants. Another key difference from standard museum education is that while the participants will normally request the training programme from the museum – and funds being sparse in schools or civic associations, co-operation with museums is mostly occasional, and rarely frequent and lasting – for these projects the museum is required to secure partners, such as school classes or other groups within its public, in advance. Co-operation between the museum and the school has to remain regular over the whole duration of a grant cycle, for instance a year. Also, social integration is aimed for by prescribing the involvement of disadvantaged groups in these visual education programmes [Hatházi 2007 gives a complete account of the application regulations for these EU funded grants]. Grants often cover as much as 100% of the costs of the programme, although in those cases when the museum's own financial contribution (önrész) is also required, museums find it difficult to guarantee the availability of these funds from their own budget. Most EU grants are co-funded by the Hungarian government, with the EU paying for roughly 90% of the costs, on average.

A further advantage of these funds is that they may not be spent on other purposes, whereas other grants that also cover visual education, but only as part of more extensive and varied museum development plans, eventually often find the visual education component either left out or channelled towards other use. This restriction on the use of EU funds is, on the other hand, a disadvantage in the eyes of many museum managers, who argue that, museums in Hungary being chronically underfinanced – not only in the current crisis, but having been so for decades now – there are other priorities in museum work that would be much more important to attend to and to support financially. From this point of view, receiving a grant for visual education may not be a cause for happiness for certain museum directors, but rather a concern, in that not only can these funds not be used for other purposes, but visual education will also take up plenty of time of museum personnel, inducing further deterioration of other tasks within the museum. Another risk associated with these funds is that they oblige the museum to continue to offer the same services of visual education for two years after the grant expires, with the given frequency, free of charge, and including the written hand-outs. With normal museum budgets being what they are, these programmes are not sustainable beyond the end of the grants, giving some museum managers grounds for caution as to whether they should apply for one at all, or, if awarded one, urging them to attempt to purchase as many of the assets needed for the subsequent two-year-period afterwards as well, which is, however, unpredictable. A final problem is that many of these

funds serve to limit applications to the collaboration of museums with schools, although professionals argue that visual education should target a broader audience.

### **The role of official Hungarian guidelines**

In order to understand this complex situation better, it is worth looking at the approach delineated in official museum guidelines on visitor-friendliness in Hungary. Mária Káldy, Director of the Museums Education and Research Centre (MOKK), traces the recent interest in visual education in museums back to the so-called Millecentenarium in 1996, the commemoration of 1100 years of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, when large-scale exhibitions required museums, as depositories of national history, to offer more user-friendly programmes [Káldy 2011]. Whereas from the mid-1980s recurrent budget cuts had forced museums to pool their funds with regard to their collections, and to scholarly research – which they considered their traditional core activities – and thereby to neglect services for the public, these grand exhibitions suddenly placed them in the political limelight, prompting the development of a more visitor-friendly profile. It may be added that the year 2000 engendered further events of this kind, as the Millennium coincided with the commemoration of 1000 years of Hungarian statehood and Christianity. Museums, as retainers of objects essential to the nation's memory, faced new expectations and underwent a critical examination by the re-established Museums Supervision Authority (2000), a governmental body initially set up in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but discontinued with the regime change in 1990. Between 2001 and 2003, the supervisors (*szakfelügyelő*) carried out specifically visitor-centred checks of close to one-hundred museums across the country, and the deficiencies they found forced the Ministry of Culture to launch several programmes for the purpose of advancing visitor-friendliness in the museums [on empirical museum research, cf. Deme 2007].

The so-called ALFA Programme contributed funds to the re-arrangement of permanent exhibitions in 73 museums between 2004 and 2008 [for the aims of the programme, cf. its initiator, now a high-ranking civil servant in charge of museums in the Ministry of Culture, Víg 2005]. Furthermore, the Museums for Everyone Programme provided museums with financial and methodological assistance for offering programmes to various strata within the public, primarily to the schools. Additionally, the Museums in Focus initiative – also co-ordinated and co-funded by the ministry – functioned as an umbrella for a broad range of activities, such as the May Day of Museums (initiated as early as 1995, in concurrence with the annual World Museums Day in May), the Museums Night (begun 2003), the Autumn Museums Festival (since 2006) and the Autumn Museums Night (2009). Many of these benefit from financial support from the EU Structural Funds, with the Museums for Everyone Programme being an explicit case in point. Directed since 2006 by the Museums Education and Research Centre, this network of small projects has been receiving funding repeatedly through two major governmental schemes – the Társadalmi Megújulás Operatív Program (TÁMOP, Social Modernisation Operative Programme) and the Társadalmi Infrastruktúra Operatív Program (TIOP, Social Infrastructure Operative Programme; for details see [www.nfu.hu](http://www.nfu.hu)) – which belong to those broad programmes that disburse the Structural Funds provided by the EU for Hungary.

Known as a 'lead branch project' (*kiemelt ágazati projekt*), the Museums for Everyone Programme has been the single largest beneficiary of these kinds of EU funds within the overall cultural budget of the 'branch' of museums [*ágazat*, 'branch,' is the formal designation applied by

the ministry when distinguishing the areas of culture; cp. <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/kultura/kozgyujtemenyek>]. As the programme had been selected for this position by the ministry, this support has arguably been the strongest statement of Hungarian museum policy in the EU context so far. One of the grants received by the Museums for Everyone Programme covers – in the order of over 1.5 million euros in the space of 2008-2013 – the development of methodology and the organisation of workshops for museum educators, while the other, smaller one, is focused on developing what it designates a ‘school-friendly’ attitude for museums, both in terms of know-how and of infrastructure, such as maintaining workshop rooms in museums and ensuring public access to study collections. Among the programmes run by the Museums Education and Research Centre, attention should also be directed to the research projects carried out by its staff in the space of several years, in various Hungarian museums, with regard to current practices and future requirements for visual education and visitor-friendly developments, as well as the training sessions administered not only for visual instructors and other disseminators of educational programmes in museums, but increasingly also for museum managers. As of now, the Centre has published close to a dozen manuals on visual education in museums, with a further number of works on museum pedagogy in Hungarian having recently been published by university presses and other publishing houses [among the latest and comprehensive ones, cf. Bereczki and Sághi 2010, with further references].

One of the reasons for calling Centre to life was the fact that in present-day Hungary, little more than half of the number of visitors attends the museums as compared to the years prior to the fall of the Iron Curtain. Visitor numbers had come to increase in the 1960s, when consolidation of the Communist regime in the aftermath of the 1956 revolution had allowed for growing liberties in culture, with generous state funding for museums attracting more and more visitors. Mandatory school visits to museums also boosted visitors numbers; and entrance fees were anyhow nominal since culture was considered ‘free’ by the regime – as an ideological statement against Capitalism. This development peaked in 1985, with twenty million visitors attending that year, a stunning number never even approximated since. Due to the economic and political crisis of the Soviet-type system, budgets pertaining to culture, including museums, were severely curtailed from the mid-1980s onwards. Also, as international travel became much less restrained than previously, and entrance fees to Hungarian museums began to rise, many citizens chose to attend museums abroad rather than at home. These factors led to sharp decreases in visitor numbers for each subsequent year, until the bottom was reached in 1992, with ten million attendees. Data provided by the Ministry of Culture indicates that the development of the number of institutions registered officially as museums has been similar over the past half-century. In 1970 there were as few as 183 museums in Hungary, but by 1980 their number had risen to 487, and subsequently to 754 by 1990, peaking in 2000 at 812. Then decline set in, with the number of museums dwindling to 635 by 2006, and remaining roughly at this level since. Following a similar pattern, yearly visitor numbers have oscillated during the past decade, around 11 million, with one short period from 2004-2007 being of particular interest to us.

Spurred by the example of the British Labour government, the Hungarian government announced ‘free entry to museums’ in 2004 [for an assessment, see Paálné 2005]. In reality this meant free access to the permanent exhibitions of the twenty-four largest national museums, excluding all temporary exhibitions, as well as excluding the permanent and temporary exhibitions of museums outside of Budapest, which were traditionally non-governmental

institutions, with their status changing only now, in spring 2012, to that of museums sustained partly by the local authorities and partially by the central state. Although the government communicated the partial cancellation of entrance fees as part of the harmonisation package with admission to the European Union, and the measure having taken effect on 1 May 2004, the date of Hungary's accession, the move was neither required by the EU, nor did it prove long-lasting. At the end of 2007, it was revoked in reaction to continued protests from museums, claiming that the lost income – a yearly total of ca. 1.5 million euros for the twenty-four museums involved – was very difficult for them to recompense, and that visitor numbers had barely increased due the lifting of entrance fees. [cf. Puckó 2010, entirely in English, the most complete recent empirical research study on museums in Hungary] In retrospect, the 'free entry' campaign was a passing effect of admission into the EU, and more a move of political communication than a long-term strategy. Today, the Museums Education and Research Centre (MOKK), with its Museums for Everyone Programme, may be seen as an alternative tool for boosting museum attendance, mostly indirectly, by facilitating programmes and training sessions with the intention of enabling museums to attract more visitors.

### **Dovetailing the work of the Ministry of Culture with EU priorities**

While the MOKK, as a research centre sustained by the ministry and a museum, indirectly articulates the governmental priorities for museums, cultural policy also possesses powerful direct means by which to influence museum work. In Hungary, the Ministry of Culture exerts considerable impact on museums because the tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century set-up of a well-organised state museum network, and the decades of centralised museum policy under Communism, define the close relationship of the government to the museums. Although the 1990s saw this collaboration weaken as the nascent democracy attempted to distance itself from the legacy of centralised state control over culture, around the Millennium a new trend set in, seeking to respect the autonomy of museums, yet at the same time proclaiming select elements of a new nationwide museum policy that all museums would be expected to adopt. Behind this intention to modernise museums lay the pragmatic aim of the ministry to render museums more useful to broader groups within the society, and to harness these institutions in the service of public education. The need for this reform had been realised by the end of the 1990s partly in the course of Dutch, British, French and other Western museum practices having been presented to Hungarian professionals, and Hungarian museum specialists travelling on official visits and workshops in these countries.

The Division of Public Collections – which includes the Department of Museums, next to that of archives, libraries and other public collections – in the Ministry of Culture, regularly sent civil servants, among them many of whom had previously been employed in museums, and thus possessing a fair understanding of museum work, to these training sessions at home and abroad, and these in turn attempted to implant foreign practice into Hungarian museum policy, including legal changes [Juhász 2000]. The ministry was invited to participate in numerous working groups on the European legal harmonisation of various museum issues, the strongest effect of which materialised in decisive revisions of the role of museums in the Hungarian system of export permits of cultural goods. By the mid-2000s, Hungary had also joined several pan-European organisations, such as the European Museum Forum and the Network of European Museum Associations. Beyond the Union as a community, several individual Western European countries

actively promoted this exchange of know-how and exhibitions, motivated by their wish for cultural diplomacy and economic interests to export their achievements to the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. France transferred its grandeur mainly in the form of exhibitions, such as that of Monet and other Impressionists in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest (2003); the Dutch brought management, while the British proposed their institutional set-up to follow, which materialised when the ministry modelled the Museums for Everyone Programme on educational schemes in UK museums.

Western museum culture was a service marketed to Eastern European countries after the fall of the Iron Curtain, which the Hungarian Ministry of Culture absorbed as it met with several of the country's goals. The reconstruction and expansion of museum buildings – such as the Museum of Natural History, the National Museum, the Petőfi Museum of Literature and the Museum of Fine Arts – was long overdue by the time of the end of Communism, with the planned new, and renovated old, buildings calling for professional exhibitions management. The modernisation of the infrastructure and of the buildings of museums had been on the agenda of the ministry and several museums, with the trend of blockbusters and the programmes to accompany them coming in from abroad. The great exhibitions attached to the Millecentenarium (1996), the Millennium (2000) and the bi-centenary of museum development in Hungary (2002), as well as the exhibitions imported from abroad, required a broad scale of infrastructural upgrades within the museums, which the ministry would often finance, increasingly on the condition that the museums provide programmes of visual education, multi-lingual catalogues, audio-guides and many other visitor-friendly services which they had traditionally neglected [Vigh 2006].

From around 2003, museums were required to submit a visual education programme along with their application to the ministry for the funding of exhibitions, just as they were required to submit strategic plans when applying for funds from the ministry for acquisitions for their collections. Initiated in 2001, a medium-term marketing plan came to be a mandatory part of submissions to the Ministry of Culture, as a condition for receiving state funding. As a result, full-fledged departments of marketing and/or communication were set up, among others, in the Hungarian National Gallery in 2003, in the Museum of Fine Arts in 2004, and in the Open-Air Museum of Ethnography in 2006. The ministry aimed to identify the best practices among the museums, set up specific funds for financing public relations work, and attempted, through a series of other incentives, to motivate the museums to include in their mission the service of the public, instead of solely focusing on scholarly merits [for a theoretical reflection on these measures, see Puczkó 2006]. In response to diplomatic pressure from a number of powerful foreign countries, the ministry also incorporated representative international travelling exhibitions in the yearly bilateral agendas of culture. In total, with low awareness of European integration, by the mid-2000s, the ministry had gradually introduced requirements for museum management and visitor-friendliness that should soon prove useful in the context of the EU, following accession. From the point of view of governmental policy, the years preceding Hungary's admission to the EU in May 2004 offered a fortuitous coincidence of state funds becoming available on a much larger scale than since the decline of the Hungarian economy in 2006 onwards, and of the ministry directing more and more systematically the modernisation of museums within the country, with an increasing number of museums motivated, by their own experience, to approximate international standards.

Accession to the EU confirmed this development in two ways. First, without specific attention to culture, the EU urges for wide access to goods and services, including those of culture, which suddenly came to echo the priorities outlined by the ministry for Hungarian museums in the preceding years. Second, EU funds became available to museums in Hungary, mostly as part of the Union's budget in 2007-2013, at a time when funds for museum modernisation provided by the Hungarian government had recently begun shrinking drastically. Although this was by no means a planned, deliberate effect of accession, EU membership came to strengthen the preferences of Hungarian museum policy both in rhetoric and by way of financial support. Had the EU rhetoric of access to culture been without funding, "visitor-friendliness" might in retrospect have remained the slogan of a brief period in Hungarian museum policy, as the government would not have been able to finance it on its own since about 2006. Had the EU provided funding, but with a different rhetoric and with different priorities, visitor-centred thinking might likewise have retreated into the background, as museums would have adopted the new goals in order to obtain EU funding. In this respect, new museum policy in the early and mid-2000s in Hungary proceeded smoothly under the auspices of the EU. In allocating the EU Structural Funds, the Ministry of Culture has, in the application guidelines, consistently focused each year on cornerstones of visitor-friendliness in museums. In turn, museums have apparently quickly acquired the techniques for applying for these grants, and the principles of serving the public, as the museum sector has successfully spent the entirety of EU funds available each year since the accession to the Union. Beyond the funds obtained, among the indirect benefits of this learning process, the application routine and the expertise in project management gained may be identified through a review of these EU programmes [on the management skills of museum staff in Hungary, cf. the Deputy Director of the Open-Air Museum of Ethnography, T. Bereczki 2009].

The flipside of the coin is that all those areas of museum work suffer enormously in museums in Hungary. They may no longer be financed by the Hungarian government due to continuous budget restrictions since 2006, nor be maintained with the aid of EU sources due to these sources being available only for activities with direct public benefit. As we have seen, these endangered areas cover the core tasks of the museums, such as acquisitions for the collection, scholarly research and many other, non-spectacular but essential background functions, driving a wedge between proponents of classic museum work and those who focus primarily on visitors. While these two aspects should actually complement one another, the lack of funding for the base activities has led to resentment on the part of traditionally-minded museum professionals who criticise the use of EU funds for promoting the less essential tasks of museums instead of supporting the indispensable ones. As the EU cannot be expected to fund the core activities of museums in Hungary, this dichotomy will need to be resolved by the country itself, yet currently, with the further annual dwindling of the cultural budget, there is no solution in sight.

The other challenge related to the EU-funded ascension of visitor-friendly museum policy in Hungary rests with the fact that, with the current budget (2007-2013) of the Union soon coming to a close, these new museum programmes in Hungary will need to be sustained by the country itself. If funds from the Union discontinue support for these programmes from 2014 onwards, and neither the ministry nor the museums themselves are likely to be able to finance these activities, visitor-centred museum work will hardly be sustainable in the country on today's scale. No matter how active, civic initiatives – such as the Foundation for Museums and Visitors

(Múzeumok és Látogatók Alapítvány), one of the most efficient non-profit cradles of museum pedagogy in Hungary, established in 2004 by a one-time teacher of English who had been attracted to museum pedagogy through her experiences in Great Britain – are still insufficient to replace EU funding in the future [www.mlalapitvany.hu, with a link specifically to EU funded projects]. It is the current ambition of the ministry to secure at least the legal foundations for the continuation of visitor-centred programmes by proposing to amend the law on museums (1997) by defining a more access-centred museum model, instead of the incumbent notion of the museum as mainly focused on its collection. New criteria are being developed for the accreditation of museums as keepers of national cultural wealth, not for the sake of knowledge in and of itself, but for the benefit of the public. It remains to be seen whether these principles will be adopted, and how such a visitor-centred museum model may be financed, once EU funds are directed elsewhere.

### **Does EU funding come without European impact on the content of museum work?**

Some EU funds may be applied for directly through various EU organisations, exempting applications from national control. Beyond such programmes directly administered by the EU on youth, education, lifelong learning, and other priorities that may inspire museums to apply, it is the Culture framework programmes that have specifically attracted several consortia applications involving Hungarian museums. Hungary having been eligible for the Culture programmes already prior to joining the EU, since their commencement in 2000, the first ten years (2000-2010) proved a welcome opportunity for which to draw a balance, and the Culture Point Office in Budapest, in charge of promoting this EU programme in Hungary, published a bulletin of one-hundred projects selected from the altogether 340 successful projects which included a Hungarian institution over the ten years [Székely 2011]. These numbers indicate that various Hungarian cultural institutions participated actively in projects financed by Culture 2000-2006, and by Culture 2007-2013. It seems that Kaleidoscope and Raphaël – the two precursor funding programmes of the Culture Programmes in the first and second halves of the 1990s, respectively, which had already welcomed consortia applications with participating institutions from Hungary – had provided sufficient application routines for Hungarian cultural managers. Observers, for instance researchers of cultural policy in Eastern Europe at the non-profit Budapest Observatory, also surmise that Hungarian cultural institutions performed so well in gaining EU funds because the steady decrease in funding from the national government had left them with practically no option but quickly learning the EU grant mechanisms [cf. informative research findings of the Budapest Observatory, entirely in English, www.budobs.org; while on the effect on museum funding of governmental budget cuts already before the current crisis, cf. the then Head of the Museums Committee of the National Cultural Fund, Bencze 2005].

The Culture Point Office – established in 2000 in Budapest, initially with an influential group of specialists, regular publications and a broad scale of programmes, but, as a result of budget cuts, by now reduced to a modest information centre – offered trainings on application writing, and in its first years even aided in the reworking into English of applications submitted in Hungarian. Its experts gave lectures on cultural projects within the European Union, and also specifically on museum issues, for instance in the ‘The Future of Our Past’ conference series, organised by the Hungarian National Museum, and arranged every second year [the series has been initiated by a civic association of archaeologists, including high-ranking managers at the

National Museum; cp. [www.ace.hu](http://www.ace.hu), also with links to more of their EU projects, such as the European Textile Network, in which Hungary participated via the European Industrial Heritage Routes programme, involving ten countries, funded by Culture 2000]. Persuaded in the early 2000s by the argument of Culture Point, the National Cultural Fund, the major government sponsor of culture in Hungary (NKA), also offered supplementary funds for co-financing projects which had secured financial support from the EU [on the NKA, see, by a former museum director, and influential decision-maker on the Museums Committee of NKA, Viga 2006]. Furthermore, a number of private agencies specialised in writing EU applications for the museums. However, museums appear in a disproportionately small number of the 340 winning Culture projects with Hungarian participation, compared for example to the dense coverage of events and institutions within the performing arts.

As with the Culture programmes, nothing accurate may be retrieved about the way in which the project leader dispenses the amount granted between the participating institutions, nor is the activity provided by the Hungarian museums explained in any detail, even the few instances of museum participation tell us little about the true extent to which the Hungarian museums were involved in European projects. We do have some records of evident success. First, some projects – such as the Dutch-led Collections Mobility 2.0, with the participation of the Museum of Fine Arts from Budapest (2009-2010) – have been communicated broadly by the participating Hungarian museum. Second, in other cases it may be indicative of the success of Hungarian participation that the Culture Point Office had invited the Director of the Hungarian Museum of Commerce and Husbandry to give presentations of their completed project to future applicants. Third, it is also telling that some Hungarian museums, for instance the Matrica Museum and Archaeological Park, about an hour's drive south of Budapest, feature in more than one successful project. Fourth, certainly the biggest achievement, the only Hungarian museum to have won a grant in the Culture Programme as project leader, and not as project participant, is the Open-Air Museum of Ethnography, with its project, Culture and Nature: The European Heritage of Sheep Farming and Pastoral Life (2010-2014, the 2009/2 issue of the journal *Múzeumi Közlemények* provides details on this, and other Culture-funded Hungarian museum projects). But beyond these instances, the benefit of the Culture Programmes to Hungarian museums is difficult to quantify.

Comparing the impact of the two major sources of EU funding – the Structural Funds operating under various Hungarian names (e.g. TÁMOP, TIOP) and the Culture Programmes – is not easy, as they are quite different in set-up, and detailed data on the applications is barely available. Structural Funds offer far greater amounts of financial support, are allocated nationally, to individual applicant museums, for projects of broadly-defined modernisation pertaining to the improvement of museum services. In contrast, the Culture Programmes are administered directly by the EU, and the projects must include several participants, with their content specifically tied to cultural institutions. As we have seen, the participation of Hungarian museums in the Culture Programmes has been modest, yet the few positive examples contribute to Hungarian museums becoming adapted to co-operation with partners from other countries, defining common goals, and adopting methods for efficient project management.

If we wish to identify more precise elements of Hungarian cultural policy, we need to focus on the Structural Funds, for it is up to the given nation state what it spends these funds on. Having entered the Union in May 2004, Hungary benefitted from these funds first for the remaining 2.5

years of the EU budget of 2000-2006, and subsequently for the budget of 2007-2013. In the course of these application periods, funds have been repeatedly offered to museums, mainly in the fields of modernisation of the institutions, enhancement of visitor-friendliness and co-operation with schools. The fact that these targets have been formulated recurrently indicates that during the intra-Hungarian political negotiations on how to apportion these EU funds, cultural policy was successful in securing funds for museum purposes, and has, within that field, pressed consistently for the same priorities. When, at the Annual Meeting of Museum Directors, held in Széphalom in May 2008, the ministry announced its new Museum Strategy for 2008-2013, entitled 'Promoting Competitive Public Services by Museums,' it was largely the same categories of client-friendly, result-oriented and transparent museums that surfaced, which the ministry had already promoted as part of the Museums for Everyone Programme since 2003 [Múzeumi Stratégia 2008]. The keywords – schooling and adult education, as well as innovative, socially responsible and visitor-centred approaches as museum focus – imply the continuation of largely the same ministerial priorities for Hungarian museums for the whole period of 2003-2013. Although this focus on life-long learning, edutainment, the dissemination of knowledge, and generally the public use of museums, rather than academic advancement and the expansion of collections, is liable to criticism by advocates of classic museum virtues, the consistency of the ministry in underlying these priorities, which coincide with those of the EU, is without doubt one of the main reasons why Hungarian museums have increasingly been able to secure financial support from the EU funds in the course of the past decade.

It is instructive to draw a comparison between application-based funding available to museums from the largest Hungarian grant-giving state authority, the National Cultural Fund (NKA), and the EU Structural Funds [for a broader comparison with more generous funding from other Hungarian government sources earlier, see, by a former decision-maker for these NKA funds, currently President of the Hungarian Museums Association, Deme 2003]. Large national museums usually receive considerable funds from various sub-programmes of the National Cultural Fund, e. g. in 2010 the Museum of Contemporary Art was awarded 50.000 euros, the Museum of Applied Arts had successful applications in the overall amount of 200.000 euros, the National Gallery received 230.000 euros, the National Museum 250.000 euros, and the Museum of Fine Arts 270.000 euros; just as museum managers always rank fairly high on the committees of the NKA which decide on the distribution of funds [all decisions by, as well as the often-changing set-up of, the committees of the NKA are retrievable on its website]. As smaller museum projects may each claim around 100.000 euros from the EU funds, and larger ones three to four times as much, the financial contribution of the EU to modernising select areas of museum work in Hungary is likewise quite significant. The adjective 'select' underlines the fact that the hands of Hungarian cultural policy and museums to invest these funds in whatever museum objectives they might deem the most urgent, are tied, in the sense that culture, not being an objective in and by itself that the EU finances, these Structural Funds follow broader economic goals of modernisation and EU cohesion, with museums only being eligible to apply if their projects serve such goals. In effect, as we have seen, these funds aid in practical museum issues – such as visitor-friendliness, wider access, more convenient facilities and the upgrading of museum infrastructure – while rarely touching upon such core elements of museum work as the collection, research and other scholarly work, and exhibitions. By way of the Structural Funds, the EU injects considerable amounts of money into the Hungarian museum system, led through

indirect priorities at a more user-friendly functioning of these institutions, yet leaving their content, their vocation and self-understanding largely unaltered.

While not interfering directly with museum work is natural in the light of culture as belonging to the competence of the member states, and not being high on the EU agenda at all, a few critical points arise. Funds in this financial range being unavailable to Hungarian museums from other sources, the institutions are strongly motivated to apply for these grants, yet respond diffidently to the application criteria of visitor-friendliness which they would otherwise often not wish to follow, and instead of which they would spend their energy and funds on other, more scholarly purposes, were these eligible for application [on the background of this situation, see Puczkó 2009]. In providing funds for purposes that are often not among the urgent priorities of museums, the EU implicitly motivates the museums to make opportunistic compromises in order to adopt these goals, often leaving proper issues of content aside. As the museums are mere means of regional development in these Structural Funds applications, core parts of their work – such as the strengths of the collections and the messages of the exhibitions – are left untouched. By exerting this indirect effect, the EU Structural Funds often modernise the assets and infrastructure of museums, the content of which is unchanged, having an impact mostly on the external appearance of, rather than the internal semantics offered by, these institutions. Not affecting the content of museum work also means not opening to the Europeanisation of museums – however that would be defined, for instance in a comparative approach of European nations and phenomena – but rather leaving many Hungarian museums traditional and national in their set-up and content, as they had been.

## **Museum Reform**

### **The (re)location of museums**

Building upon the overview thus far, let us now examine characteristic responses to the EU context by select national museums in Hungary. The first case study shows that museums occasionally succeed in adjusting their own priorities to the funding criteria of the EU in a sensible way. Looking back upon a history of over two-hundred years, the Hungarian Museum of Natural History had for a long time been lobbying for a proper building which would allow it to pool its departments, which for many decades had housing at various rented locations. In the course of its history, fifteen different plans had been drawn up until, in 1991, the building of the former Ludovica Military Academy was allocated to the museum. Renovation began in 1994, the first units moved in the year after, and a small section of the permanent exhibition opened in 1996 [Természettudományi 1996; all data cited is publicly available on the museum's website]. The reconstruction of the vast building continued, costing between 1995 and 2002 ca. 30 million euros, with a further ca. 25 million euros and completion planned by 2008. Yet already in the middle of the 2000s – long before the current crisis – financial cuts in the cultural items of the central government budget, which had funded renovation, caused works to stop and, in 2011, the new government announced an entirely new set of plans for using the half-renovated building for other purposes. With its future currently being uncertain, one attempts to have the museum function as attractively as it can within those sections of the building that have already been renovated.

Sixty percent of the visitors – the yearly total of whom oscillates around 200,000 – being children, natural history had always striven for visitor-friendliness. As one of the most active attendants of the Dutch-Hungarian Workshops in the 1990s became Deputy Director General of the museum, attention to the public came to be seen as a priority among the management as well. This museum was the first in the country to reorganise its staff of public education into a joint department with an exhibition management, suggesting that visual education did not begin after an exhibition had been mounted, but rather that the didactic and the professional aspects of a show needed to be harmonised from the onset. The museum was also among the first in Hungary to experiment with interactive exhibition techniques. With a particular view to the model of the Natural History Museum in London, the museum also hosted numerous workshops on museum management held by colleagues from London, and financed by the British Council. Based on this manifold commitment to a dynamic understanding of museum work, in 2009 the institution applied successfully for a noticeably large grant of ca. 700.000 euros from the EU Structural Funds, for a combination of renewing the permanent exhibition mounted in 1996, staging several temporary exhibitions, setting up a workshop room for visual education, and working out a programme of eco-conscious education. For each year since the mid-2000s, the museum had also directed other, smaller projects which received funding from different EU sources, targeting research, its dissemination, and even its harmonisation with European partners.

Totalling ca. 100.000 euros per year, these funds may appear almost negligible in comparison to the yearly museum budget of ca. five million euros, yet taking into account the support received from the two leading Hungarian governmental agencies for the arts and sciences (NKA and OTKA, the Országos Tudományos Kutatási Alap, the National Fund for Scientific Research; all winning projects archived on the web-site), each around 100.000 euros per year, and the overall revenue from ticket sales, ca. 400.000 euros per year, the EU funds represent an important source of income for the museum. Perhaps of even higher significance than the amount received, is, first, the variety of purposes for which the museum dispenses EU funds, and second, the recurrent presence of EU co-funded activities in its Annual Reports. Apparently, this museum – the collections of which rank among the top ten in Europe – attempts to re-invent itself as a public collection of European stature by bridging scholarship and service to the visitors, as well as complementing the traditionally high expertise – which was not compromised by Communism due to natural science being ideologically quite neutral – of its staff of ca. 180 with recently acquired international skills in museum management and communication [Gréczi 2012].

The Museum of Ethnography, our second brief case study, is another example of recent successful application for EU funds of various kinds. Here, again, the compromised location plays a central role. Although its collections have by now accumulated over more than a century and a half, the museum still has no purpose-built home, but has been erected in different locations in the course of its history, currently occupying two-thirds of the former Palace of Justice since 1973. Designed to be House of Parliament, but eventually built in 1896 across from Parliament, as the seat of the Supreme Court, this vast eclectic palace had been used since World War II to house various museums, including the Museum of the Working Class in the 1950s and the National Gallery in the 1960s. Although the building is inept to properly house any museum, the Museum of Ethnography has defended it resolutely as its headquarters against repeated attempts of successive governments in the years since the fall of the Iron Curtain to turn it into a

centre of jurisdiction or government again. The museum fears – probably rightly – that instead of finally receiving a proper new museum building as its permanent home, it would likely be relocated to an even more compromised location, if and when it should need to vacate the building [Balázs and Fejős 2003 demonstrates that these fears date back to the last decade, and prompted the Deputy Director General and the Director General, respectively, to publish their plea for the museum not to be relocated elsewhere]. Then suddenly came EU funding. In an attempt to cement its position within the building and to improve its service functions as a museum, the museum in 2008 successfully applied for EU-financed support from the Regional Operative Programmes (ROPs, part of the Structural Funds), and completed a partial modernisation of the entrance area of the building, at a cost of one million euros.

Entitled *From Palace to Museum*, and accompanied by a useful booklet by the same name, the project intended already in its wording to prove that the transition from a former administrative-political palace to a museum was final, and no longer up for discussion [Granasztói, Sedlmayr and Vámos-Lovay 2012]. At the time of the writing of these paragraphs, plans within the government to relocate the museum, and also to reduce its independence by subsuming it under another institution, being still alive, it is worth noting that not only our previous example, the Museum of Natural History, housed in a former Military Academy, but also the National Gallery, located in the Royal Castle, are liable to being relocated to buildings as yet unknown. Should these plans come into effect, their current homes, all politically charged monuments to the end of the nineteenth century, will come to be used for other purposes. While these plans may be interpreted as government intentions to re-functionalise historical monuments rather than continuing to use them as museums, as became the trend of the times following World War II, the future of these plans remains uncertain. For the moment the fact remains that, pressed by these government plans, the Museum of Ethnography had actualised the opportunity offered by EU funds, and argued in its application persuasively that the modernisation of the entrance area of the building served visitor-friendliness, and thereby cultural tourism. As a result, the grant finally facilitated the long-overdue revamping of the museum box offices, shop, café, entrance area, and film screening corner, as well as the installation of a multi-language touch-screen information system. Simplifying the case somewhat, one might say that repeated government threats towards the location, and towards the autonomy of the museum, had motivated it at long last to move ahead with adopting the proper infrastructure of a museum. The renovation, financed by the EU, will ensure that the museum – the Hungarian and universal collections of which are of much higher quality than what is implied by the modest number of ca. 100,000 visitors annually – becomes more attractive to visitors [the museum's webpage, [www.neprajz.hu](http://www.neprajz.hu), gives a detailed account of these modernisation projects, but only in Hungarian].

The second EU-funded project in which the Museum of Ethnography has recently come to participate is a programme for improving the library services of eight museums in Budapest (2010). The third EU-funded programme, operating in 2011 and 2012, is devoted to systematic visual education involving eleven schools, with – by Hungarian standards – a remarkable budget of ca. 180.000 euros. Fourth, at the time of the writing of these paragraphs, the museum is launching a large-scale consortium application, as lead applicant – which has been very rare with Hungarian museums so far – jointly with other museums of ethnography in Central Europe, with a research topic on contemporary urban culture. Given that the annual budget of the museum is around three million euros, of which around 15% are sourced from various other grant

applications, mostly by the National Cultural Fund (NKA), these EU-funded projects are by no means negligible [cf. the Annual Reports of the museum on its webpage]. As a fifth factor, it may be added that during the half-year Hungarian Presidency of the European Union in 2011, the building of the Museum of Ethnography – located across from Parliament – functioned as one of the official sites of ceremonial events, granting an opportunity for the museum to present its riches to an EU elite. With funding by, and focus on, the EU having surfaced in different projects courtesy of the Museum of Ethnography since 2008, the museum appears to be in the process of acquiring the skills to apply for, and make use of, these opportunities. Nonetheless, it remains a challenge for the future whether and when the museum will be willing and able to transfer the new methodology of its high-quality temporary exhibitions to its conservatively cemented permanent exhibition [cf. the innovative programme of its Director General, Fejős 2003]. This dichotomy characterises numerous Hungarian museums: project-based funding and a few, internationally versed curators contribute greatly to the renewal of temporary exhibitions and programmes of visual education, with the permanent exhibitions changing only slowly [György 2007].

### **Museum construction and cultural tourism**

The combination of visitor-centred thinking and reliance on EU funding is most clearly marked in the Museum of Fine Arts, our third case study. Again, modernisation of the building is a key element in the situation. Established in 1896, and built as a vast Greek Revivalist and neo-Renaissance palace in 1906, this nationally leading art museum has undergone radical change since the mid-2000s. In the 1990s, its yearly visitor numbers ranged between 200,000 and 250,000, as compared to a blockbuster exhibition of Monet and other Impressionists in 2003 which in itself attracted 250,000 visitors – mostly Hungarians – which indicates a thirst among the public for shows of this kind. The following year, a new Director General took office, who through his particular programme envisaged a regular staging of powerful exhibitions and a positioning of the museum in the top international league by mobilising many of its other assets. While fierce criticism of his programme has not abated to date, visitor numbers did increase to around 500,000 a year, with the pinnacle so far being 2007, when the one-hundredth anniversary of the opening of the museum (December 2006 – December 2007) included a Van Gogh exhibition, which itself attracted 450,000 attendees, and for that one year catapulted the museum into the group of the 50 most visited museums in the world.

Beyond the popular exhibitions, the Director General's programme, articulated according to rather similar values in his 2004 application and in the Medium-term Development Strategy, submitted at his re-election in 2009, with his first priority being 'The museum belongs to everybody,' set in motion two tools for attracting visitors [Főigazgatói pályázat 2004, the first occasion on which applications to the position of the Director General of several national museums were made public; the 2009 programme is available on the museum's webpage]. While in the early 2000s workshops of visual education in the museum ranged yearly between 200 and 250, their number had grown to around 3,000 per year by the end of the decade, with special focus on the socially underprivileged. Second, the large-scale reconstruction of the museum building not only continued, but gained momentum by targeting EU funds for an explicitly tourism-oriented expansion of the building. With costs amounting to ca. 15 million euros, this project required lobbying and negotiating far beyond the usual scope of applications, with the

special agreement on funding to come to 90% from EU Structural Funds and to 10% from the Hungarian government, signed in December 2008. Although the project – heavily criticised by many in the profession, in large part exactly for its orientation on tourism – never did commence, and was indeed officially cancelled in February 2011, the Director continued with his plans, and the government announced, in October 2011, a much more extensive project for expanding the complete museum area in the vicinity of the Museum of Fine Arts with an approximate budget of 150 million euros, spread over the years, by 2017, and to be financed, if the application were to be successful, from EU sources.

While details of these two expansion plans would go beyond the limits of this paper, and only the future will tell if any part of the second construction project materialises at all, the situation itself highlights what is currently the most relentless conflict in Hungarian museum policy. With a staff of ca. 180, a yearly budget of around 10 million euros, and sponsoring agreements for its blockbusters in the range of several hundred thousand euros – sums unheard of in other Hungarian museums – as well as extensive international collaboration, the Museum of Fine Arts is the flagship among art museums in the country, and the most talked-about museum in the country on the whole. The ambition of its Director General defines it as an active agent of the culture industry, a kind of professionally managed non-profit institution that turns the treasures of its collections and the scholarly merits of its staff to the maximum possible effect to the enjoyment and benefit of visitors. This idea of access to culture being central to the Structural Funds of the European Union, applying for funding for various elements of this programme – from the small visual workshops to large construction plans – lies at hand. The priorities of the museum may be financially supported by the EU and, vice versa, significant funds in Hungarian culture being available almost exclusively from the EU, the priorities of the EU of promoting cultural tourism for purposes of economic growth and intellectual prosperity serve to motivate the museum to develop along these lines, and to consider classic values of scholarship less important.

Many professionals resent the combination of blockbuster exhibitions, visitor-centred programmes and tourism-driven expansion of the building, and specifically question whether these are the objectives on which the country should spend its EU funds. While a realistic assessment of the conflict between the Director General and his opponents would extend beyond the framework of this paper, the museum's modernisation programme is certainly one of the most ambitious plans among Hungarian cultural institutions for working out a new strategy in the context of the EU, and furthermore for gaining EU funding for it. Let us make a brief comparison with the two museums discussed before. Our first case study, the Museum of Natural History, is successful in EU funded visual education *despite* the fact that the modernisation of its building has come to a standstill. In the second case, the Museum of Ethnography has only lately discovered the benefits of EU funding, and because of government plans *against* its building and its autonomy. In contrast, the third example, the Museum of Fine Arts, offers a complete and coherent set of responses to the new EU situation, its programme resting on service to visitor expectations *and* the modernisation of its building with the precise aim of acquiring the infrastructure necessary for mass cultural tourism. One may very well criticise this programme, yet from our current point of view, the EU effect on museums, this is a logical all-round reaction. Let us add that the Open-Air Museum of Ethnography in Szentendre – which I have excluded from these case studies because its Museums Education and Research

Centre (MOKK), with its large-scale EU funded programmes, features recurrently in this study – can be identified as the other large national museum in Hungary, with the most coherent programme in reaction to the new EU context [articulated quite early on, see, by its Director, Cseri 2002]. It comes as no surprise that both museums rank among their highest priorities visitor-friendliness and efficient management, as well as trying to draw to the largest possible extent of EU funds for modernising their exhibitions and buildings.

### **Changes in the permanent exhibitions of old and new museums**

As we have seen, financial support from the EU Structural Funds mostly helps to market the exhibitions to a broader public without perceptibly marking their content, yet the international context does exert a certain influence upon select exhibitions in Hungary. First, in preparing for accession to the EU, a few exhibitions specifically addressed the position of the country in European history. The largest of this kind was the 27<sup>th</sup> exhibition of the Council of Europe, entitled *The Centre of Europe*. Initiated by the Council in 1997 with the explicit aim of presenting mutual European roots, as much as national differences in this region, the show highlighted the four so-called Visegrád Countries: Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, which in the late Middle Ages attempted to co-operate, as announced in an agreement signed in the castle of Visegrád in Hungary. The title of the exhibition, The Centre of Europe, was itself a forward-looking political statement by the Council, as it defined this region geographically – as the centre of the continent – rather than along political categories, such as Western, Eastern or Central Europe. As the Council regularly stages large travelling exhibitions of this kind, the choice to devote the one opened in 2000, in a year of great symbolic value, was a statement in favour of re-integrating these countries into the institutional framework of Europe. The starting point of the exhibition was the National Museum in Budapest, from where the show travelled to each of the other three Visegrád Countries, and to Germany [Garam 2000].

The Hungarian National Museum also offers further examples of EU influence. The oldest museum in the country, founded in 1802, with its building dating back to 1847, today has an annual budget of ca. ten million euros, and has 340 employees working in several locations, also outside Budapest. The main attraction in the prestigious neo-Classical building is the permanent exhibition on Hungarian statehood from the settlement of Hungarian tribes in the Carpathian Basin in 896, to the present. The current version was inaugurated in 1996, in commemoration of 1100 years of Hungarian presence in the country [Pintér 2009]. Arranged in the spacious rooms on the upper floor, which were among the first to be renovated as part of the reconstruction of the building, begun in 1994, the exhibition highlights political and military turning points, and traces the history of the Hungarian state, rather than society in Hungary, up to the free elections following the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1990. The most recent item is the pen – a gift of the Prime Minister of Spain – with which the then Hungarian Prime Minister signed the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, by which Hungary regained its independence. As far as issues of society are concerned, high culture, such as the spread of Hungarian language in written documents, stands in the foreground. Each event is perceived from an exclusively Hungarian point of view, with neighbouring countries and nationalities in the country appearing to a minimal extent, and only through a Hungarian filter. The modern sections of the exhibition, notably the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, are more inter-disciplinary in character, and represent a broader range of social history, yet still from a Hungarian point of view, overburdened with references to Hungarian politicians

and other local figures, and with an otherwise impressive array of printed documents, from schoolbooks to street billboards, all in Hungarian, and thus barely accessible to foreign visitors. Very little of the material is given to interpretation; the exhibition is mostly a show of artefacts, the various, often contradictory, meanings of which may be perceived only by visitors with a fair amount of knowledge about Hungarian history.

Compared to earlier versions of the permanent exhibition, this re-arrangement meant a considerable leap forward, and yet it bears the marks of the mid-1990s, when Hungarian museology had only just begun to renew its methodology. The almost exclusively national focus, lacking consideration of the interplay of powers in this region of Europe; the assumption of a great amount of knowledge of Hungarian history; the concentration on statehood, rather than society; and finally the glorification of history, instead of its critical assessment, all testify to the exhibition aiming to flatter Hungarian independence after decades of Soviet rule, and on the occasion of 1100 years of Hungarian tribes inhabiting the Carpathian Basin. Neither a European nor a smaller, Central European perspective is provided; no reflection is supplied on the notion of national identity and on the modern concept of the nation state. In contrast, six years later, in the bi-centenary year of the foundation of the National Museum, the other part of the permanent exhibition opened on the ground floor, with a different approach. This is a presentation of the territory of Hungary from prehistoric times to the foundation of the Hungarian state by tracing aspects of civic life and building on visitor experience, rather than on presupposed knowledge. The deliberate effort to renew the historical message, as much as the visual language, of this part of the permanent exhibition, may also be retrieved from a richly-illustrated book on the process of researching for, and designing the installation of, the exhibition [Vasáros and Rezi Kató n.d.]. It is still a rare occasion in Hungary that curators acknowledge in this manner openly that an exhibition is nothing objectively presented, but rather the fruit of manifold considerations.

While these occasions indicate that some of the large, slow-moving national museums endeavour to adapt their permanent exhibitions to new expectations, new modes of interpretation are mostly to be found in the permanent exhibitions of new museums. Two of the most significant new institutions were set up in the early 2000s for the representation of the traumas of 20<sup>th</sup> century history. The House of Terror – located in the building that was used by the secret police of both the pre-1945 extreme right-wing regime and the post-1945 Communist dictatorship – employs highly emotional stage designs in its permanent exhibition, in order to exert a deep influence on its visitors, rather than adopting an intellectual, reflexive approach. While the conveyance of the central message of the institution – the equation of Nazi and Communist terror – through this multitude of visual effects, can be disputed from scholarly points of view, the institution is one of the most influential examples of spectacular exhibition design, earning wide attention among Hungarian and foreign visitors alike [on this and related museum dilemmas in Hungary, cf. a curator of the Museum of Ethnography, one of the most reflexive authors on museum policy, Frazon 2011].

Opened shortly afterwards, in 2004, in a former synagogue with a new wing added, the Holocaust Museum – actually a documentation and memorial centre, thus strictly speaking not a museum – also offers a highly powerful permanent exhibition which confronts visitors with a multi-media examination of the responsibility of Hungarian authorities and society at large for the Holocaust in 1944, with a crass, self-critical approach of national history never before seen in a Hungarian museum. Although the modes of argumentation employed by, and the political

overtones of, the two permanent exhibitions, are vastly different, what is important to realise in our current context is that Hungary was among the first of the European nations to open two very characteristic *lieux de mémoire* focused on the definitive traumas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that both museums have pioneered ever since – not only in their permanent exhibition, but also in temporary shows, conferences and publications – the renewal of the methodology of museums of history. Neither institution is registered as a museum; each of them can be defined as a memorial site and research centre, yet with the permanent exhibition at the heart of their programme, it is obvious that they aspire to *de facto* museum status. A few other institutions devoted to the art and history of the recent past – such as the Statue Park of large-scale Socialist Realist plastic works in Budapest and the Emlékpont in Hódmezővásárhely – similarly draw a constant flow of visitors from home and abroad alike, indicating that museum-like non-museums play an important role in challenging incumbent practices of representation while the sections on the Nazi and Communist pasts in the permanent exhibition of the Hungarian National Museum merely offer a brief and neutral account of facts, although the institution boasts rich material from both eras in its collection.

Beyond the darker sides of recent Hungarian history, the positive achievements of the country also feature in the programme of some museum-like institutions. The long-standing exhibition Dreamers of Dreams: World-famous Hungarians, at the Millenaris – an exhibition and multi-functional cultural centre in a converted industrial setting in the heart of the capital – attracted 600,000 visitors within its first year in 2002. The exhibition had come about with the explicit government aim of celebrating ‘Hungarian talent,’ and strengthening national identity by featuring past and present contributions to the global world of science and culture. Spurred by the success of this project, plans for a so-called House of Pride surfaced first in 2010, and were officially announced earlier this year, 2012, with the building, modelled on Ernő Rubik’s invention, the Magic Cube, to be erected on the Danube Embankment between 2014 and 2017. According to government plans, the aim of the institution is to show the past and present achievements of the ‘Hungarian spirit,’ along with some foreign examples, in a building of spectacular design with a high-tech exhibition. While neither the Millenaris nor the planned House of Pride can be considered a museum, the impact of either on what visitors perceive as exhibition trends and museum culture can hardly be over-estimated. Just as with the previous examples on the representation of history, in these institutions with the task of generating a new national identity of excellence in international comparison, the exhibition patterns may condition visitors to new modes of presentation, prompting reactions by museums. Precisely because they are not museums, these institutions have more freedom than the museums to experiment with novel modes of communicating their messages to the public, which in turn will serve to force the museums to consider new ideas for their exhibitions. As these non-museum institutions have no collections to consider, they are freed of the academic tasks of the museums, and aim instead primarily at attracting a maximum number of visitors. Although this sense of visitor-centred thinking may differ from museum pedagogy and other reflexive methods proposed by the training sessions on visitor-friendliness, discussed earlier, these new institutions are urging the large national museums to think creatively about attracting the public, or else risk falling behind in the competition for visitors. In this sense, the EU grants, the preferences of the Ministry of Culture, and the competition among numerous exhibition centres with powerful exhibition

designs, all force, although in different ways and with different intentions, the large national museums, towards more attention to the visitors.

### **Museums in public life and the media: the rise of art exhibitions**

As a final factor in the gradual move of museums towards service to the visitors, let us turn to the role, which they assume in public life and the media. In the professional press, museum journals proliferated beyond expectation prior to the current crisis. Reviving earlier editions, first published under the Communist era, the *Museum Newsletter* (Múzeumi Hírlevél) developed in the 1990s into a well-managed, informative and progressive monthly, sustained by the National Museum and by the Office of Cultural Heritage. To complement its fast-changing, monthly supply of mostly practical information, and its reliance on governmental funding, the Pulszky Society – Hungarian Museums Association, a civic body which incorporates mostly individuals (not institutions) ranging from junior museum personnel to senior museum managers, launched its quarterly, *Hungarian Museums* (Magyar Múzeumok), with a more academic profile, longer essays on historical and current issues alike. In a third move, in 2002, the Ministry of Culture re-launched the *Museum Proceedings* (Múzeumi Közlemények) with two editions a year, which had also had its precursor but which now re-emerged entirely re-structured. Although the journal may rightly be considered biased due to the overweight of authors working in, or reflecting the opinion of, the ministry, this fact actually renders it a vital source of information on official museum policy. It is no surprise that this is by far the most frequently referenced journal among the entries of the bibliography of this paper. The *Museum Proceedings* has, to date, been the only Hungarian museum journal with a separate section on museum policy in each edition. The fact that the ministry wished to underline that it does have a museum policy, echoes the fact that, as we have already seen, the first ministerial museum strategy of the post-Communist era was announced at the same time, in 2003. European integration featured high on the agenda of the *Proceedings*. The first special edition of the journal, in 2005, was a reader of translated papers on various museum issues in Europe, edited by the Deputy Director General of a large national museum and by a high-ranking civil servant in charge of museum policy, and of the ICOM National Committee [Balázs and Kóczyánné 2005]. The three journals together complemented each other fairly well, the years in the mid-2000s, when all three were published regularly, probably marking the densest-ever coverage of museum issues by professional journals in Hungarian history.

As budget cuts reached the cultural sphere from around 2005, all three journals fell victim to re-organisation. None of them exists in print any longer, with the *Hungarian Museums* having gone online, and the other two having been completely discontinued. In 2007, a new bi-monthly magazine, *Museum Café*, was launched by the Museum of Fine Arts, and has remained the only museum journal in print ever since. While its close association with the museum is criticised as heavily as is the overall creed of the museum's Director General to press ahead with the visitor-friendly and efficient management of the institution, it is wise, for our current purposes, to bear in mind that *Museum Café*, in the Focus of each edition, addresses sensitive topics, and often publishes controversial opinions by different parties. For instance, the Focus of issue 6 is devoted to de-accessioning, a question normally treated as taboo in Hungary; issue 19 turns to the impact of new Hungarian legislation – passed in the course of EU harmonisation – on museums; issue 22 examines the representation of minorities in Hungarian museums; and issues 13, 14 and 18 all

discuss the pros and cons of museum expansion with the aim of generating cultural tourism, which is an essential component of the strategy of the Museum of Fine Arts. Whereas all three earlier journals catered to the professional community, *Museum Café* admittedly targets the wider public, and can for this reason be understood not simply as a forum for topics of preference of the Museum of Fine Arts, but rather as a tool in its campaign for visitor-friendliness. Notwithstanding the possible critical points with regard to this journal, it has probably been the first museum magazine – not merely a leaflet or a flyer, but a well-conceived and bulky journal – in Hungarian history, with the express aim of writing about specialised, strategic museum issues in a language accessible to the broader public.

Aside from the professional journals, museums are increasingly being written about in an ever-broader circle of monthly, weekly and daily papers. Among the topics most frequently covered, we find two problems – the conflict between museum autonomy and political influence, the discrepancy between long-overdue modernisation or expansion plans and budget cuts – and, an achievement, the rising popularity of art exhibitions and art museums in the country. Traditionally centred on collections and exhibitions related to (national) history, the Hungarian museum community has experienced a marked shift since the fall of the Iron Curtain, towards a focus on art, particularly modern and contemporary art. Whereas Communism favoured a rather narrow and ideologically laden spectrum of art, the past quarter-century has witnessed an almost steady rise in interest in art, with the exception of the current crisis-ridden years, beginning in 2008. The international trend of travelling art exhibitions has affected Hungary just as much as the re-awakening of the local art market, following decades of suppression under Communism, has boosted public interest in art shows, prompting museums to present their art collections in different ways. Beginning with its collections of classical art, the Hungarian National Gallery – transferred in 1974 to the renovated wings of the former Royal Palace in Buda Castle – has been working on broadening its profile from a strictly speaking Hungarian collection to an art museum with a coverage of Central Europe in the historical sense, for which it could make good use of the removal of national borders in Europe [Sinkó 2009]. In fact, its attempt to position itself as a supra-national museum, representing this region of Europe, can be interpreted as a Schengen-effect, and thereby an indirect effect of the expansion of the European Union. Whilst the permanent exhibitions of the National Gallery still call for a methodologically more reflexive re-arrangement, it is an achievement in itself that all collection departments are now duly represented. It was contemporary art which proved the most difficult to integrate into the permanent exhibition, and when the partly chronological, partly thematic sections of contemporary art in the permanent exhibition finally opened, art journals reported on them at length, also recounting the factors that had delayed this process. The subtlest coverage of this issue was provided by *Mű értő* (Art Connoisseur), an art monthly launched in the 1990s with a focus on the rebirth of the art market, but with a growing espousal of museum topics. From its November 2002 issue, *Mű értő* published a series of examinations by leading art historians of the newly installed permanent exhibition of the National Gallery, which would grow into the most complete coverage of any permanent exhibition in a Hungarian museum by a single professional journal ever.

The late 1980s and the 1990s saw the emergence of a specialised contemporary art museum in Hungary. Initiated by a donation from the Ludwig Collection in Aachen, the museum first functioned as part of the Hungarian National Gallery, then gradually became autonomous,

receiving its own name, an annual budget and independent status in 1996. Its transfer to a much-disputed new location became a topic, which *Műértő* attempted to investigate critically, with the issue eventually emerging twice on the front page in 2004, in the April and September issues. Never before had the journal placed a museum issue – not some museum exhibition, but a strategic question of museum policy – on its front page. When the permanent exhibition of the Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art opened in its new location, *Műértő* again invited art historians to express their views on it, the authors being granted a full column in each issue, starting with the July 2005 issue. As modern and contemporary art gained in importance in a number of museums throughout the country, the coverage of topics related to them intensified. From 2006, once or twice a year, a specific museum issue was selected as the focus topic of the given *Műértő* issue, with the selection of topics – e.g. museum re-organisation on account of governmental budget cuts in the 2006/9 issue, museums shops in the 2007/6 issue, museum marketing in the 2007/10 issue, open access to museum storages in the 2008/4 issue – also illustrating the growing relevance of practical management aspects in the non-profit sphere of culture. As most other art monthlies, ranging from the one-hundred-year-old *Művészet* to *Balkon*, launched after the fall of the Iron Curtain, as well as numerous other journals on history, ethnography and other museum-related sciences, also often report, although less systematically, on museum policy, museum issues can be said to enjoy regular coverage in Hungarian journals.

The spread of interest in these strategic issues has also trickled down to the weekly and daily press, and recently to online magazines, with, for instance, *www.index.hu*, one of the sites most critical of cultural policy, following the current debates on museums very closely. In certain cases – such as the various expansion plans of the Museum of Fine Arts having made headlines since 2008, and even more strikingly often since the acceleration of events in the project in 2011 – Internet-based media must be seen as the major forum for professional debate on museum issues, involving everyday bloggers to the same extent as top-ranking academics, cultural politicians and key museum administrators [most museum policy discussions may be retrieved on *www.exindex.hu* and *www.artportal.hu*]. A separate study might be written on the often clearly perceptible and quite immediate impact of these Internet-based debates on certain museum issues. Museums are undoubtedly part of the media and public discourse in Hungary, even if many of the contributors claim that one of the deficiencies of Hungarian museum policy is precisely the fact that decisions are still made in an only barely transparent way, by members of the elite circle of politicians and investors, so that the decision-makers are not accountable to the public. This may well be true, yet in historical comparison, issues of museum policy have never been discussed publicly in Hungary in as much detail as has become customary in the course of the past decade, as a result of a growing interest in the subject, and of the Internet revolution. An achievement on its own, this open communication is also indispensable to the process by which museums are opening more readily to visitors, making the public feel, through democratically accessible debates on key issues, that visitors are among the top stakeholders in the museums. Museums, national museums in particular, are public collections because they are owned and financed by the public, and serve to further the intellectual advancement of the public. Museum issues are therefore public issues, in every sense of the word, their open discussion being a contribution to, and a fruit of, the public mission of the museums.

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# **Cultural Policy in Greece, the Case of the National Museums (1990-2010): an Overview**

Alexandra Bounia

The last two decades, important developments in political, cultural and economic issues have left their imprint on Greece. The final decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, up to 2004, was a period of prosperity, development, progress, and therefore also national pride. Greece joined the Euro zone in 2002, and in 2004 successfully organized the Summer Olympics. The following period was an anticlimax, which would eventually result in the current difficult situation: economic constraints led to a serious financial and social crisis, currently still ongoing, which in turn caused national humiliation and despair. This complex development has influenced cultural policy, and museum policy in particular. In this report, we will discuss the issues that have been at the centre of public debates in the last two decades, as well as the media through which they have been articulated. We will also discuss the ways in, and the extent to, which national museums have proclaimed their political and cultural roles. We will focus in particular on the case study of the new Acropolis Museum and its political importance for some of the most long-standing concerns of Hellenic cultural politics; its inauguration in 2009 marks the culmination of a policy that had its origins in the 1970s. Furthermore, we will focus on the political, rhetorical and practical strategies applied by policy-makers and national museums in order to negotiate and (re)formulate museum policies. As a case study, we will use the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, which was re-organized and re-exhibited during this period. The critical voices against the national ideologies of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as expressed in the national museums, will be discussed in relation to both of the above case studies. Processes of revitalization will also be discussed, along with the role of new and old minorities and their representation in the museums. The creation of the Islamic Art Museum (a branch of the Benaki Museum) will be discussed within this frame, and other similar attempts will also be included. The first part of this report will comprise a brief historical overview, and a presentation of the current legal system in relation to cultural heritage.

## **General Characteristics**

### **Historical Perspectives**

Greece emerged as a nation-state in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, following the War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire, which began in 1821. Under the influence of the Enlightenment, the young Greek state evinced, almost immediately, a strong interest in its classical heritage, and adopted a pioneering and strict legislation on antiquities. The creation of museums for the protection of this heritage was among the first of priorities: in 1829, the first governor of Greece, Ioannis Kapodistrias, established a national museum in Aegina (the first capital of the new state), in order to safeguard and deter the exportation of antiquities (Kokkou 1977 [2009]; Voudouri 2010). Legislation regarding the protection of antiquities was also introduced at the time of the Regency (1833-1835) in 1834, while special conventions were signed in 1874 with Germany for

the excavation of the archaeological site of Olympia, in 1887 with France for the excavation of Delphi, and so on. In 1899, a new legislation, Law 2646, was introduced that granted the exclusive right of ownership of all antiquities to the State.

The museums set up by the end of the century were exclusively archaeological in nature; even though the 1834 legislation provided for the establishment of public museums with varying content (such as collections of pictures and engravings), such a decision was never realized. At the end of the century, two museums belonging to private associations were established, i.e. the Museum of the Historical and Ethnological Society in 1882, and the Museum of the Christian Archaeological Society in 1884. In 1900, the National Gallery was established, although its actual realization took place much later. The Law of 1899 included in its definition of antiquities objects of the Byzantine period, following the tripartite division of Greek history suggested by Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos in his seminal book entitled “History of the Hellenic Nation” (published between 1860 and 1876). The need to support the concerns of the new nation, and to reinforce it against its “enemies” (we must remember that the natural borders of the new state have been the subject of constant re-negotiation throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup>, in the interest of having them coincide with the territories inhabited by the Greek population), focused on a national identity based on a continuous time frame, running from Antiquity to the present day, through Byzantium. This was encouraged by the Christian Orthodox element, which has been the second pillar of national identity next to Classical Antiquity. The first Byzantine Museum was established in 1914, as the continuation of the Museum of the Christian Archaeological Society, followed in 1918 by the inauguration of the first Folk Art, both state museums (see Voudouri 2010, note 35).

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was a period of turmoil for the Greek state, and for the world. Expansion of national borders, the first and second world wars, the Balkan wars, the disaster in Asia Minor, the German occupation and the Civil War represent a list of important events which did not allow for considerable development of cultural affairs (Konsola 1999). Nevertheless, the bourgeoisie of the country did have needs, and did follow the development of cultural affairs in Europe. As a result, other institutions apart from the Byzantine and the Folk Art Museums were also established through private initiatives, such as the Benaki and the Loverdos Museums in the 1930s, but also by the State.

After the end of the Civil War (1948), the victory of the right wing brought with it an ethnocentric ideology, which did not leave much space for everyday culture and common people. On the other hand, and within a framework of economic reconstruction for the country, cultural heritage was already being recognized as an important asset of economic prosperity, mainly in the form of tourism. As a result, the 1960s came to be characterized by the restoration of monuments, the organization of cultural sites and the creation of new museums. A significant number of archaeological museums were built in major cities or near important archaeological sites; nevertheless, the interest was mainly focused on the centre rather than the periphery.

The period between 1967 and 1974 was that of the dictatorship; it was a time of repression of the liberty of speech, and of censorship of the arts and of cultural production in general. But it was also a time of development for the nationalistic ideology, of promotion of the “Greek-Christian Civilization,” and of isolation from the international experience. Nevertheless, this was also the period of the creation of the Ministry of Culture and Sciences, established in 1971. The creation of such a centralized authority in culture followed similar developments in Europe, but

was also an attempt by the colonels to change their image both nationally and internationally, and to present their regime as entertaining a genuine interest in the intellectual and artistic pursuits (Konsola 1999). The new Ministry consisted of the Archaeological Service (which was separated in 1960 from the Ministry of Education, to which it belonged, to become part of the Prime Minister's Office), the two Directions of Letters and Fine Arts of the Ministry of Education, the Direction of International Relations of the Ministry of Press, and some others (Konsola 1999; also Voudouri 2003: 259-60).

Following the restoration of the Republic in 1974, the Ministry gained authority and became the main agency for the creation of cultural policy in Greece, and the top authority for the creation and management of over 230 museums all over the country.<sup>62</sup> The ministers appointed since 1974 have been, apart from politicians, intellectuals, among them some notable artists, such as the actress Melina Merkouri, whose long standing position as Minister (1981-9 and again 1993-5) served to inform major elements in the cultural policy of Greece – and continues to do so (see, for instance, the case of the New Acropolis Museum, further on).<sup>63</sup>

Despite its importance and the wealth in terms of cultural heritage retained by the Ministry of Culture, its budget has always (and today more than ever) been limited. It has been greatly dependent on the EU Community Support Framework, through which many major programmes, including the creation of new museums, have been funded. In addition, the Ministry (which in 1985 lost the section of its title referring to the sciences, and which in 2009 acquired a new part referring to tourism, to lose it in 2012) is financed by the cultural attraction visitor and sales revenues, while for a period, from the mid-1990s until fairly recently, by the lottery fund. At present, the only additional resource for culture is the support from the EU.

More specifically, the 1<sup>st</sup> Community Support Network did not include a complete programme of cultural interest. This changed within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Community Support Network, which financed 64 projects for the amount of 207 million euros within the Operational Programme “Tourism and Culture.” Overall, i.e. including other museum- and regional operational programmes, 280 projects took place in this Framework, for a total of 402 million euros. But most important with regard to Greek national museums was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Support Framework, which included two main axes: one devoted to the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage, and the second to the Development of Contemporary Greek Culture. In the course of this project (2000-2006), and along with a financial package of approximately 1.4 billion euros, it became possible to provide infrastructure for museums and monuments in many regions of Greece. More particularly, almost all the major cities and archaeological sites of Greece were able to acquire new museum buildings and/or new exhibitions. Among these, we should mention the New Acropolis Museum, the National Archaeological Museum, the Archaeological Museums of Thessaloniki, Patras, Herakleion, Ancient Olympia, Rhodes, Ioannina, Thebes, Nafplion, etc. These works were continued during the next phase. The aim of all these projects is for the new museums and exhibitions to “revive the interest of the public and lead to an increase of museum visitation” (Moussouroulis 2007: 143).

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<sup>62</sup> A full list of the museums that depend directly or indirectly on the Ministry of Culture is available from <http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/1/gh12.jsp?letter=01> (last accessed 18/10/2011).

<sup>63</sup> The composer, Thanos Mikroutsikos, was another notable artist who served in the Ministry (see his autobiography Ioannou 2011).

The Ministry of Culture shares responsibility in some cultural matters with other public bodies, such as the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (its current name), which is mainly responsible for the protection of contemporary immovable cultural heritage (i.e. buildings and sites) (see also Voudouri 2003, 261). The Ministry of External Affairs is also responsible for certain matters, as for instance the relation of Greece to UNESCO and the international community.

### **Museum legislation / legal framework**

The main responsibilities of the State with regard to art and culture stem from the Greek Constitution (articles 16 and 24). Policy-making, the establishment of cultural institutions and the allocation of funds for culture are the responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture. Its organization and structure have been defined in Presidential Decree No. 191/2003 “Organization of the Ministry of Culture.”<sup>64</sup>

There are four General Directorates:

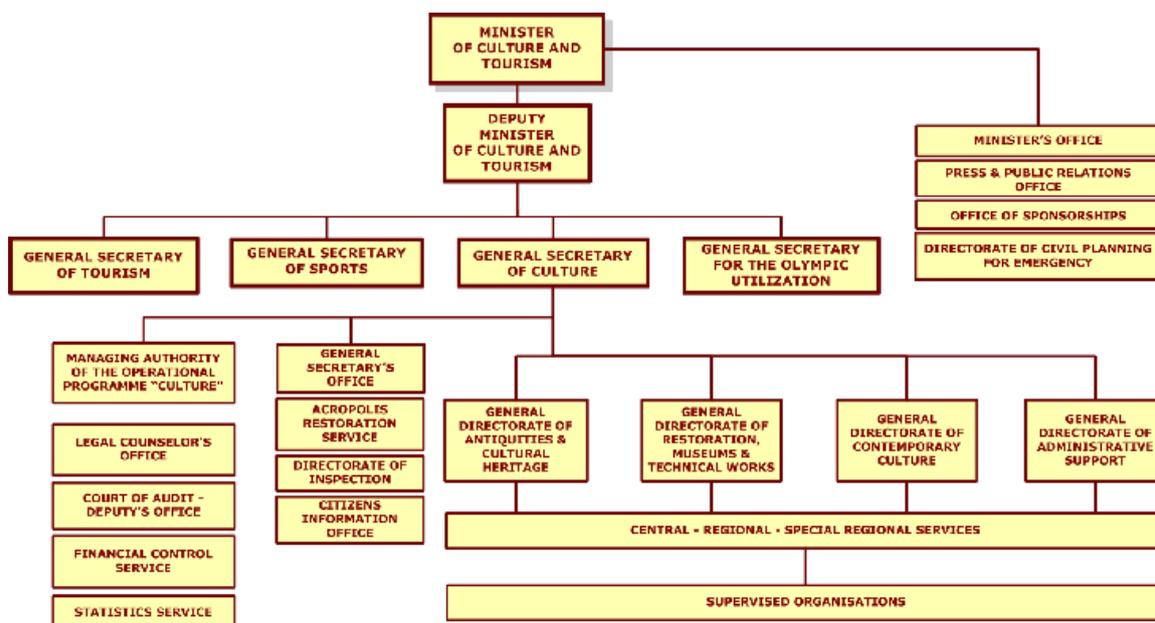
- (a) of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage
- (b) of Reconstructions, Museums and Technical Works
- (c) of Contemporary Culture
- (d) of Administrative Support

To the first General Directorate belongs the Directorate of Museums, Exhibitions and Educational Programmes, which in turn is divided into the following Departments: the Department of Public Archaeological Museums and Collections, the Department of Non-Public Archaeological Museums and Collections, the Department of Exhibitions and Museological Research, and the Department of Educational Programmes and Communication. The Directorate of Contemporary Cultural Heritage (a sub-division of the General Directorate of Contemporary Cultural Heritage) is also responsible for a number of museums through its Department of Museums of Contemporary Heritage. Issues relevant to museum work are also part of the responsibilities of other Directorates, mainly those of the General Directorate of Reconstructions, Museums and Technical Works, which is mainly responsible for the museum buildings, as well as for those projects which involve the actual sites of museums. The Directorate of Fine Arts also has its own Department of Museums of Modern and Contemporary Art, which supervises all of the country’s art museums. In late 2007, a new Directorate of Documentation and Protection of Cultural Goods was created within the Ministry as a result of an increased interest by the then-political leadership in the restitution of cultural heritage illegally exported from the country.<sup>65</sup> The new Directorate generates archives on stolen and illegally exported antiquities, and deals with restitution claims (Ministry of Culture 2008). It is obvious that there is a considerable division of responsibility with regard to the museums, and that the main arrangement takes into account the academic area served by the museum, and not the idea of the museum as a whole.

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<sup>64</sup> For a list of legislation regarding cultural policy in Greece, see Appendix 1.

<sup>65</sup> The interest in the restitution of cultural heritage is one of the first concerns of most ministers, cultural leaders and administrators of the ministry.



The Directorate of Antiquities is divided into 29 Ephorates of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, and 28 Ephorates of Byzantine Antiquities;<sup>66</sup> these are responsible for all local archaeological (including Byzantine) museums in their regions. Each of the Ephorates has its own department of Museums, Exhibitions and Educational Programmes. Special regional service status (equivalent to that of the Ephorates) has been given to the following museums: the National Archaeological Museum; the Numismatic Museum, the Byzantine and Christian Museum, the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, the Museum of Byzantine Culture, and the Museum of Asiatic Art (FEK 146/A/art. 51-58). At arm's-length from the Ministry, yet totally dependent on central government funding, are the National Gallery (Athens), the National Museum of Contemporary Art (Athens), the State Museum of Contemporary Art (Thessaloniki), as well as a number of smaller regional museums, such as, for instance, the Museum-Library Stratis Eleftheriadis-Teriade (Lesvos). Long-term programmatic agreements between the Ministry and the municipalities has allowed regional cultural development (Zorba 2011), whereas a large number of independent folk art, ethnographic, applied arts or local history museums are supervised and funded/subsidized by the Ministry.<sup>67</sup>

As is evident from the above, the majority of the archaeological museums in Greece are in principle incorporated in the legal person of the State, and in their majority form part of the local Ephorates of Antiquities. Exceptions, with regard to archaeological museums, are the Benaki Museum (established by Law 1599/1930 – FEK 138/A) and the N.P. Goulandris Foundation – Museum of Cycladic Art (Law 1610/1986, FEK 89/A). The former, although independent, is still subsidized by the State. There are two further exceptions: these are state archaeological museums that function as public law legal entities: the Kanellopoulos Museum, which was established in 1976 to house antiquities donated to the State by a private collector (according to

<sup>66</sup> Due to the current economic situation, there is a discussion of combining Ephorates, in order to achieve the gradual decrease of the public sector.

<sup>67</sup> Therefore, they are included in the list discussed in note 1 above.

Law 3600/2007, FEK 177/A), and the new Acropolis Museum, established by Law 3711/2008 (FEK 224/A).<sup>68</sup>

Attempts to loosen up the close relationship between the State and the museums have met with strong reactions. The Acropolis Museum, in particular, has been at the centre of many debates, as we will discuss in a following section. The reaction usually comes from the State Archaeological Service, but often from other parts of the society as well. A similar debate took place in 2005, against a government plan to transform a number of archaeological museums into special services within the Ministry, separated from the local Ephorates, as well as to establish a public enterprise in the form of a joint stock company (OPEP) for the promotion of Greek cultural heritage, on arguments against its commercialization (see Voudouri 2003: 296-316). The recent abolishment of this company has been seen by many as evidence of its failure.

The main legal framework with regard to the museums today is provided by Law 3028/2002 “On the protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in general” (FEK 153/A). This legislation, which replaced the previous one of 1932, takes into account contemporary needs and approaches to cultural heritage. It is based on the mandates of the Greek Constitution for the protection of the cultural and natural environment in the context of sustainability (art. 24, par. 1 and 6), as well as on international legal instruments (mainly the UNESCO Conventions, but also other international decisions and agreements). It offers a broad definition of the cultural object, establishing protection of monuments and works of all cultural traditions and historical periods of Greece; it adopts a territorial criterion for their linkage with the country as cultural heritage (thus, remains of all cultures that have been developed in Greece are protected). It also serves to expand the concept of heritage to include intangible heritage as well (Voudouri 2010, 553). Furthermore, this legislation gives emphasis to the social function of heritage (see arts. 3 and 45 on museums). Protection includes (for the first time) the creation of inventories, documentation, study of the protected elements, their accessibility to the public and to scholars, their enhancement and integration into contemporary social life, and public awareness of them (Voudouri 2010, 554). It also establishes legal provisions for the museum sector, introducing stricter control to the provenance of works in private hands and on the art market, and stipulating the public right of access to cultural heritage. Furthermore, regulations for archaeological research, fiscal incentives for the protection of heritage, and strict penalties for offenders, as well as provisions for lending and exhibiting Greek cultural heritage objects abroad, are made available (Dallas 2011, 25).

Article 45 of this legislation refers specifically to museums, and includes a very important provision: that specific requirements are (and should be) in place for the State to recognize private or public entities as museums. These requirements refer to the purpose, the physical infrastructure, the staff and the terms of operation. All state museums, and non-state museums recognized by the state, are required to maintain specific collection management standards, and to provide adequate access for study and for the public enjoyment of their collections. A Ministerial Decision describing in detail all the above was published in November 2011 (“On the Establishment and Recognition of Museums, according to Law 3028/2002/ FEK 2385/26-11-2011).

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<sup>68</sup> For a discussion, see Voudouri 2003.

Article 51 is another important provision of this Law. It is the article that establishes a national advisory council on museum policy (Museum Council). The initiative is not new; it was introduced for the first time in art. 6, par. 1 of Law 2557/1997 (Venizelos 1998). However, the 2002 Law provides for an expansion of the council to include representatives of smaller, non-state museums and academics, in order to play a more active role in the setting of standards, and in museum policy in general. Unfortunately, to this date, its role has not risen up to expectations, and has been limited mainly to administrative issues.

Finally, pieces of legislation which have had an impact on museum policies are the following: two Presidential Decrees of 2006 (no. 2520/2006 and no. 3520/2006), both ratifying the UNESCO conventions on the protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expressions (2005) and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (2003), respectively; Law no. 3525/2007 on cultural sponsorship is also of crucial importance to museums and cultural institutions, especially in the current financial state of the country.

### **Public debates**

The main arena for public debates with regard to cultural matters in Greece in the last two decades has been the major national newspapers. Culture-oriented television and radio programmes are limited in number and influence, whereas the use of electronic media is limited to younger generations of professionals and other interested parties, and even so their use has only been on the increase during the last five years or so.<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, in order to discuss these debates, we conducted a small-scale investigation into the archives of two major newspapers in Greece, *Kathimerini* (which is considered conservative) and *To Vima* (which is to a large extent associated with the socialist party). Both newspapers are well-respected, and their Sunday issues in particular cover a large readership. Both feature cultural columns and extras in which ideas and opinions are expressed by specialized journalists and academics. The research has not been exhaustive, and it has focused more on the conception of an overview rather than on a detailed study, something which remains to be done.

The majority of the articles which we examined (approximately 90), apart from those covering new exhibitions, either in Greek museums or international ones, appear to be concerned with a number of overarching issues: management and financial concerns, usually in relation to visitors and tourism; a debate on the notions of local vs. national vs. regional; and the role of museums in relation to society. Other issues are the restitution of antiquities and the new Acropolis Museum (which will be discussed separately), as well as reviews of special exhibitions (like the multi-venued “Hours of Byzantium,” organized in 2001-2), which become the starting point for the expression of more general concerns or opinions. To these we should add articles written by academics or museum professionals, usually associated with the ICOM International Museum Day or similar celebrations.

In the middle of the 1990s, the idea of modernizing the country dominated, within a framework of European integration and expanded globalization (Zorba 2011). The Second Operational Programme for Culture (1994-2000) supported, with almost 90% of its budget, the protection and display of ancient cultural heritage; the Third Operational Programme (2000-2006) offered a larger percentage to modern culture, but was mainly focused on cultural

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<sup>69</sup> Of course, further research including these categories of media remains to be undertaken. On the role of the media in forming public opinion in relation to cultural policy, see Levitt 2008.

communication events and the completion of infrastructure work in relation to the Cultural and Summer Olympics. Nevertheless, this was a decisive period for the expansion of museums and exhibitions, as well as for the development of private initiatives with regard to the arts, and support by private institutions and foundations. Interest in these issues and relevant debates are evident as we check this period's articles. In 1998, for instance, a young journalist toured the main archaeological museums (all of them national) of the country (Olympia, Delos, Delphi, Heraklion, Vergina, Thessaloniki, Paros, Athens) in order to discuss the current situation of the museums, and found them much wanting (Margomenou 1998). There were no proper labels, re-exhibitions had not finished and the largest of the country's national museums seemed to be badly managed and un-prepared to serve their role of receiving international tourism and promoting the country's image. A year later (1999), the debate becomes more explicit, and the focus shifts to the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, the country's main museum. A journalist specializing in cultural matters, Chara Kiosse, claims that the Greek archaeological museums, and the National Museum in particular, do not show the visitors the respect they deserve, since

the exhibits and their presentation are of course the most important aspect of the museum. The exhibitions should be modern and easy to understand, and should make the visitor feel uplifted. The old habit of code language that speaks only to the limited elite of archaeologists and a few initiated to the arts has failed, and is unworthy. Similarly to how we do not know anything about nautical terms, we know nothing of archaeological ones. Why should a visitor who does not know what the "entablature" is feel illiterate, or one who does not know where Lykosoura is, ignorant of geography? And why should a visitor feel demoted when he/she is in a museum gallery, when obviously nobody, neither the state nor the archaeologists, have made a serious effort to win him/her over?<sup>70</sup> (Kiosse 1999).

Similar concerns came to be expressed the same year, at the first museological conference in Thessaloniki (see, for instance, Vlachou 2001). The article by Kiosse criticizes all aspects of the services offered to visitors, from the coffee-shop to the souvenir shop, and the National Archaeological Museum is regarded as disrespectful to its visitors. Ten days later, the Museum responded through its former director, Ekaterini Dimakopoulou (1999). Apart from a detailed response regarding the Mycenaean exhibition, which had received the most severe criticism by the journalist, a specific concept regarding the National Archaeological Museum, but also the concept of the "National Museum" in general, became apparent:

The National Museum belongs to the category of large state museums created during the former century in classicist buildings for housing precious collections of works of art in permanent exhibitions, such as the Louvre, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Munich Glyptotek, and many more. The National Museum and the collections of Graeco-Roman antiquities of these museums consist of very important works, representative of ancient Greek art. Their permanent exhibitions consciously have an academic character whose value is diachronic, and follow well-tested methods of presentation. For this reason, we should not compare them to the temporary museum exhibitions, which, due to their specific subject, their limited number of exhibits and the special space where they are presented, may appear more impressive. (Dimakopoulou 1999)

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<sup>70</sup> All translations are the author's, unless otherwise stated.

Furthermore, she continues:

the aim of an archaeological exhibition is not only the aesthetic pleasure, but also the transference of the historical knowledge to the public. ... there is a continuous effort by those responsible, so that the Museum responds to its goal/destination of teaching the culture of the ancient Greek world and of transferring the beauty of the ancient Greek art to the crowds of visitors received by the Museum. (Dimakopoulou 1999)

This disagreement between those who claim that the “common people” are not served well by the museums and the museums, which reply that they are doing just that, continues to the present day, as evidenced by a number of examples and case-studies (see for instance Plantzos 2011a and 2011b). The request from the visitors is explicitly stated in many other cases: “A new museum, that’s what we all want. But a museum with principles that communicates with society. A museum with an international appeal. We would all wish that everything was done as it should, without the pressure of time that is caused by the lack of planning” (Vatopoulos 2003). A gap is easily discernible in this case, between society and the museums. And the responsibility seems to fall on those running the museums, whether they are the political leaders, or the archaeologists working within them.

A certain idealism is also evident in the words of the archaeologist. Emphasis on the “beauty of classical art” and a vague idea that this is enough in order to transfer knowledge about classical Greece to the visitors is also evident, along with an emphasis on the classical past, as opposed to the other periods of Hellenism. These are exactly the points upon which critical voices will be raised in relation to the new Acropolis Museum, but also the understanding and promotion of Greek culture in general (see for instance Plantzos and Damaskos 2008).

A few months prior to the 2004 Summer Olympics, complaints about the status of work in the Athenian museums was approaching a climax. “Crime in the Museum” (March 2004) is the headline of the main article of the cultural supplement of *Kathimerini on Sunday*, which suggested that “incomplete programming, lack of ideals and strategy, unforgivable failures, but mainly the arrogant behavior of the previous minister of culture...” had led Athens into an Olympic period without its main museum, the National Archaeological Museum, open to the public. On the contrary, the Byzantine and Christian Museum receives praise for its “supermodern galleries,” as do the Museums of Olympia and Delphi (ibid).

The relation between politics and the museums remains strong, since the latter are often used as examples of limited interest on behalf of the state in the welfare of the citizens. It is actually with this in mind that the new neo-liberal government, in 2004, stated that the Prime Minister would also be the Minister of Culture, yet he left this post soon after the Olympics, with his involvement in the field having been minor.

Public feelings towards the National Museum, but also the other museums, change completely as we approach August 2004. In July, the new exhibition in the National Archaeological Museum is approvingly discussed (Sykka, 4/7/2004), while similar compliments are offered a week later (*Myrtsiotsi* 27/7/2004), and on 1 August for both the Archaeological and the Byzantine Museums (Sykka, 1/8/2004). The chief argument now is that the large Athens museums are finally ready; they have managed to “deal with the challenges of the Games.” It is obvious that the opening of the museums during this event, which was considered of primary importance to the country for

claiming its role in the world, was an important part of national pride. Therefore, the fact that the museums might not have been ready was simply not acceptable by the public.

But problems and complaints return as soon as the lights of the Games are switched off. Apart from complaints that the visitor numbers had not been as high as had been expected during the Games, concerns about the future of the museums return. In 2005, management issues are once more at the forefront: “New shops in wrong positions” (*Kathimerini* 12/6/2005), maintenance problems due to the Ministry’s negligence (*Kathimerini* 27/2/2005), new exhibitions that should have been in place (*Kathimerini* 5/3/2005), and a growing concern about the viability of museums becomes apparent. On March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006, *Kathimerini* (Pournara 2006) refers to three small Athenian museums that “with great passion, but minimum financial support” are struggling for survival; at the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007, interest in encouraging private sponsorship in museums and cultural institutions in general begins to grow. A conference/presentation organized by the art magazine *Highlights* and the Centre of Political Research and Communication, and hosted by the Benaki Museum, is the result of a work already in progress with regard to the introduction of new legislation in respect of private sponsorship in the arts. The event is followed by a series of articles for and against the new legislation, published in *Highlights*, but also in the press in general; in this case, even the financial pages of the newspapers are interested (for instance, *Isotimia* 10/12/2006); the views are divided. But the legislation, a flagship in terms of policy for the then, still neoliberal, Minister of Culture, is passed at the beginning of the following year. The new Law introduces a new system of sponsorship, which offers tax benefits to sponsors, but also aims to control the process more tightly, since all procedures should go through the Ministry of Culture.

Gradually, debates about the financial situation of museums take precedence in the culture pages:

We live in a period in which a museum is no longer a static space of exhibits; in order to survive, it needs to stay alive, in motion, and open to different groups of people. To address the young in a dynamic way. To communicate with an international audience. To organize apart from exhibitions, lectures, music events, screenings, children’s programmes. To inform and to touch, immediately and constantly, more and more people, in different ways, according to the profile of the visitor.” (Marinopoulou, quoted in *To Vima* 8/2/2009).

These views, expressed as they are by the President of the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Cycladic Art, serve to express a new perspective on the role of museums, albeit by a private as opposed to a state museum. Of course, national museums are not unaware of the emerging trends. A year before (*Kathimerini* 5/4/2008), a visitors’ investigation, one of the first to be organized and publicized as such by a State Museum,<sup>71</sup> presents this new, people-oriented approach. “Until the ’80s,” claim the researchers, “museums appeared to be addressing mainly those who had the opportunity to appropriate the value of art, i.e. an elite of prosperous citizens, educated or with cultivated tastes, whereas today the actions of the museums represent a turn of interest towards larger and larger groups: citizens of all ages, educational backgrounds, interests and disabilities in communication, learning, etc.” The director of the Museum, Tzeni Veleni, claims “It is an opportunity to re-introduce ourselves to the visitors.” In spite of the positive

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<sup>71</sup> See also, a year prior to the visitors’ investigation, in the Byzantine and Christian Museum (further below, and also Stamatellou and Philippousi 2007).

views of the museum (a national museum actually caring about its visitors and their views), past concerns with reference to the management and practicalities of the museum facilities, are once again present. The cafes and restaurants, the shops, and the front-of-house staff attract criticism by the press.

The then director of the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens, the late Dimitris Konstantios, claims, in the same article:

it is clear that the working class does not come to the museum. And this is not because of the financial difficulties alone, it is also due to the sacralization of the space [of the museum]. They think that the museum is a value that does not belong to them, but to somebody else. If, for instance, [only] 3% of the population from Egaleo or Peristeri [both working class suburbs of Athens] were to come [to the museum], we should design a policy of intervention.

The number of visitors, along with the representativeness of the audience, has been at the forefront of debates since after the conclusion of the Olympics. A year after, (*Kathimerini* 21/8/2005), Sykka claims that although in 2004, and in spite of the Games, visitor numbers had been low, there had been a slight increase in 2005. Nevertheless, the issue of low visitor numbers in museums attracts the attention of Parliament. It is interesting to follow this discussion: the director of the Byzantine Museum claims that there is a clear difference in the way in which museum culture is being shaped in Europe and in Greece: “In Europe,” he argues, “children, from a young age, become used to visiting the museum as a cultural space, with frequent visits, organized programmes, and along with their families.” The director of the National Archaeological Museum, Dr. N. Kaltsas, believes that the limited number of visitors is due to a “lack of education.” But he is reluctant to reach conclusions about the reasons for this. A similar suggestion is made by Konstantios: “the lack of museum education is our own problem. Our children believe that this space is ‘sacred’ and utterly boring. Of course, steps have been taken in the area of educational programmes. We [in the Byzantine and Christian Museum] have trained 25.000 children.”

Demands for political decision and actions likewise come to the forefront. Konstantios continues:

We are responsible. It is the politicians’ fault that they have not completed a full plan of accessibility. To create a nice exhibition is not enough. An exhibition speaks only to the educated/initiated. In order to be able to talk about a better future, we need policies. Policies about publications that will interest the people and not only the specialists on Byzantium, policies of communication, of advertising, of exhibition-making.

And the big conclusion is that “Those [museums] that make policies which address people, [those alone] will move on” (*ibid*).

The issue of people failing to visit the museums returns almost every year, and each time the authorities present the statistical data on visitor numbers of the previous year.<sup>72</sup> And the debate continues. “Lack of education, boring exhibitions, bored staff” are among the suggested explanations (*Kathimerini*, 2/3/2008). Alternatives are offered by various parts: extension of the opening hours, advertising, temporary exhibitions and educational programmes are some of the

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<sup>72</sup> Complete reports are available from the Hellenic Statistical Authority ([www.statistics.gr](http://www.statistics.gr)) (last accessed 22/5/2012).

solutions offered; the matter comes into the concern of the Central Archaeological Council<sup>73</sup> of the Ministry of Culture, in which a special report is issued on this issue in 2008 (Internal document/Report of the Committee). According to the Committee, there are two categories of reasons: external and internal. To the first category belong the lack of collaboration between authorities in culture and tourism, the unpredictable conditions of touristic trends in different regions (some become popular and then are forgotten, and so on), and the lack of collaboration between local authorities and the Ministry, which leads to lack of accessibility, maps, etc. In the second category, more reasons are identified: inefficient planning on behalf of the Ministry with regard to museum policies; inappropriate opening hours which have not been adjusted to meet the needs of the visitors; the lack of trained museum guards/caretakers; the lack of promotion in the media, and consequently the lack of knowledge about those institutions with regard to the visitors; the old-fashioned exhibitions of many small local museums, which are not really attractive; the lack of services in respect of the visitor, such as libraries, coffee-shops, souvenir-shops, etc.; the limited number of temporary exhibitions organized by the small local museums; and the inadequate restoration and preservation of the museum buildings. It is obvious that there is an agreement on the way in which these problems may be solved, although they have different causes.<sup>74</sup>

Changes in visitor numbers do occur as soon as the New Acropolis Museum (NAM) opens to the public in June 2009. The six remaining months of 2009 during which the NAM is open are enough for it to acquire an increase of 41% in the total number of museum visitors in Greece (Hellenic Statistical Authority Report 2009). This growth continues in 2010 (11,5% increase): out of 3,136,779 visitors to all Greek state museums, 1,355,890 visit the new flagship NAM. And despite the fact that visitor numbers remain similar for the NAM in 2011 as well, overall visitor numbers drop once more in 2011, probably as a result of the global crisis and the decline of the tourist industry, but also of certain other incidents which served to mark a rather eventful summer in the country.

In November 2010, an important policy addressing some of the practical concerns regarding the operation of museums was introduced: an ambitious three-year programme (2010-2013) was initiated for the “improvement of services provided in archaeological sites, monuments and museums.” A year after the introduction of this policy (2011), the Minister of Culture presented the framework of this initiative:

How we treat our monuments says a lot about who we are. How we introduce them to our everyday life says more about contemporary culture than about our traditions. The respect that we show them. The way in which we protect them. The way in which we promote them. The quality of services which we offer to our visitors. They are all indicative of our relationship with them. This relationship is defined by more things than those with which the Ministry of Culture is dealing. It is mostly defined by our education (and I do not mean the Ministry [of Education]).” (Yeroulanos, press conference, Nov. 2011).

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<sup>73</sup> The body, which approves of all decisions and policies with regard to archaeological matters. It consists of archaeologists working in senior positions of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, university professors, architects and other specialists.

<sup>74</sup> It is in this light that we should look at the claims expressed by the then General Secretary of the Ministry of Economics, K. Moussouroulis (2007): “... the main emphasis should now be granted to promotion strategies for improving demand [of museums/monuments] (cards of reduced tickets, educational programmes, networks...” (p. 144).

And he becomes more specific:

Our aim is for our monuments to always inspire us. Both us, the citizens of this country and the foreign visitors. But in order to make this possible, we need to increase our access to them. And this programme of improvement of the services provided in our sites and museums serves exactly this aim.” (ibid).

Within this framework, the archaeological sites and museums of the country were categorized, according to the facilities they offer to their visitors. The first category means that the site/museum offers basic facilities (like water and toilets), the second offers the required facilities (like educational programmes), and the third offers specialized services (special tours or other programmes). The numbers quoted by the Ministry for the first year of the implementation of this programme (2010-2011) are quite impressive: 75 out of 118 sites that lacked basic facilities for the visitors acquired them; 77 sites were upgraded in this regard from one category to the next; 28 sites were equipped with water facilities (!); 17 acquired bilingual labels and panels; and 10 acquired new educational programmes (Yeroulanos, *ibid*).

But in spite of the fact that there have been attempts to respond to the practical issues involved, the ideological needs still demand attention: Konstantios (2008b) had posed this concern about policies and ideology in the most explicit way: “For today we place at the centre of attention not the visitor, but the archaeological exhibit. Then we first have to learn what a museum is and what collections management means, and then we need to search for all those initiatives which will make it attractive.” This perspective, which had already been practiced by the Byzantine Museum, as we will discuss in greater detail in the following section, is currently being slowly introduced to other museums and institutions through the formal method of legislation and ministerial policy. Of course, practical provisions for the visitors are very important, and they do form the first step towards a different understanding of museums and sites. Nevertheless, the role of cultural institutions in the creation of certain cultural or educational standards, and thus the responsibility of cultural institutions and the Ministry as the main body of cultural policy, remains to be acknowledged.

The final issue of public debate focuses on the relation between national and regional or local museums. The location and distribution of State Museums in the country has always been a matter of politics and debates. Local Ephorates, municipal leaders, local authorities and archaeologists were ready to claim that “their” antiquities should be hosted in “their” museums. Examples since the 1980s (see for instance Solomon, forthcoming on the riots in Crete against the export of Cretan antiquities for temporary exhibitions in European museums) testify to the interest of local communities, not in museums as such, or in the past, but in “their” cultural heritage and the prospects of touristic attraction which they may garner. There have been a number of cases of such debates, some of them behind the closed doors of the Ministry, others reaching the press and the public. For instance, the first two meetings of the Museums Council in 2006 were devoted to the decision about the location/museum in which a certain bronze statue would be exhibited. The statue, the so-called “Kore from Kalymnos,” was found in the sea of Kalymnos by a fisherman, who had then given it to the State (as he was obliged to by law). When the statue came to be conserved in the specialized workshops of the National Archaeological Museum, there was debate about whether it should remain at the Museum, which collects important examples of Greek art from all the regions of the country, or be returned to its “hometown,” Kalymnos, for the local population to enjoy and for tourists to have one more

reason to visit the island. The decision was made to return the statue to the island, which satisfied the local community.

In 2010, another debate of similar nature revolved around a bronze vase, a crater of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. This object had been repatriated from the USA (*To Vima* 15/7/2010), and became an “apple of discord” between the National Archaeological Museum of Athens and the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki. The first, through its claim to the title of the “National Museum” of the country, the latter through its claims to the title of “[National] Museum of the region of Macedonia” – a politically sensitive area of Greece. The collection policy of those major national museums, which are not connected to the local Ephorates, and thus are not enriched by the results of the excavations that take place in their area, but also the very concept of the role and political purpose of the “national museum,” were at the centre of the debate. The National Archaeological Museum argued that its collections cover only the southern part of Greece: “how ‘national’ is a ‘national museum’ when half of Greece is not represented in its collections?” was the argument posed by the director of the Museum. On the opposite end, the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki claimed that “The crater comes from Sevasti, of Pieria, i.e. Macedonia, thus it should be exhibited in the Museum of Thessaloniki.”<sup>75</sup>

The role of the national museum is further contested in different contexts. “Do we need so many museums?” is the question posed in *To Vima* (1/5/2008) on the occasion of the International Museum Day of ICOM, in 2008. And the question becomes even more specific: “Fewer and better central museums or more, among which many small, local ones, with great deficiencies?” The creation of many small local but still state museums is attributed to two reasons: “the wish of archaeologists to build a museum next to every archaeological site” and to “the pressure of local societies/communities for the creation of museums regardless of their necessity and of governmental planning.” Small museums, though (i.e. local, regional ones), are not up to the standards of contemporary museology, in the words of both Konstantios and Veleni (both, of course, directors of large, metropolitan museums). “In my view,” Veleni claims, “no museum in Greece operates as it should. ... I may be too demanding, but this is the truth. To be more indulgent, though, I believe that there are 10%, which operate with modern standards. These are only the large museums.”

This line of debate leads to two more major issues: first, the independent legal status of some of the larger state museums, as has been the case with the Acropolis Museum (despite the considerable reaction). Konstantios, a well-articulated supporter of this approach, suggested: “The large museums should be autonomous, and not part of a classic civil service, in which the last employee can reverse the planning of a whole museum. We need to fight for a public museum that does not coincide with a brutal bureaucratic authority.” (*To Vima* 18/5/2008). The request for a new cultural policy with regard to the national museums is therefore explicitly expressed. The request for a new role and character in respect of the national/state museums had also been expressed by the Union of Greek Archaeologists (17/7/2008); but, in this case, the arguments were reversed. The national museums remain connected to the Ministry and the formal structure, and government financial support should be the main source of income, instead of cultural sponsorship and private involvement of any sort. On the contrary, for financing the

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<sup>75</sup> The crater was finally handed over to the National Archaeological Museum, which agreed for it to be loaned to the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, where it is currently (January 2012) exhibited as part of a temporary exhibition on Dionysus and his gifts.

cost of museums, the Union suggested a special tax to be introduced for all tourist related businesses of the regions, which have archaeological museums and sites; thus they claim that the money collected “should be granted for the valorization of cultural remains.” In addition, the Union argues that the low visitor numbers will immediately increase as soon as entrance tickets are abolished. This is a highly political (leftist) approach, which seems to ignore issues of ideology and accessibility on behalf of museums and cultural institutions, and which brings the question to the mere entrance tickets dilemma.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, the additional taxation of the tourist industry seems to share an understanding of cultural heritage as an income-generating mechanism that should be specially taxed as such. This is something both ‘etatists’ and ‘neo-liberals’ share, i.e. the feeling that cultural heritage is an important aspect of economic revitalization, and that it should be treated accordingly. There is no better example of how this perspective operates in the Greek context, than the New Museum of Acropolis, which we will be examining in the following section.

The second issue, regarding large and small museums and their role, is closely connected to the financial concerns of the last two years or so. The first months of 2010 (but also the first week of 2011), the national museums of the country were unable to operate due to a lack of staff, a result of the major financial constraints currently faced by Greece. On the other hand, a number of major and rather active museums in the country, such as the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, have faced enormous cuts in their budgets, and reluctance by potential sponsors.<sup>77</sup> As a result, the creation of “networks of museums” was introduced, both as a central government policy (see, for instance, an interview by the General Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Dr. Lina Mendoni, *Kathimerini* 28/3/2010) and as an initiative on behalf of the museums themselves.<sup>78</sup> The Ministry of Culture supports common strategies by museums in the same region, mainly with regard to their activities, their entrance fees and communication. “By organizing a shared exhibition,” claims the General Secretary, “they [museums] attract visitors, share expenses (like insurance fees) and are advertised, all of them together. The difficult financial situation may lead us to positive initiatives and ideas, which will turn out to be right” (ibid). The initiative was actively undertaken by 5 museums in Thessaloniki, which, on June 16<sup>th</sup> 2010, formed the “Initiative of the 5 museums of Thessaloniki.”<sup>79</sup> Their aims are: to share information and give mutual support to each other’s activities; organization of collaborative major exhibitions; participation in educational or research activities; mutual support on issues of common cultural interest. This is an initiative that probably marks a new era for cultural matters in Greece, initiating a new collaborative understanding of museum responsibility and action. A smaller network had earlier been established by the small museums and cultural institutions of the historical centre of Athens.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Providing free access to museums and art organizations has not been particularly effective in changing visitors’ profiles, according to O’Neill (2008); it only changed the numbers. The same is argued by Gibson (2008, 250).

<sup>77</sup> For an overview see Rigopoulos in *Kathimerini* 25/9/2011.

<sup>78</sup> The academic community has also supported this. See, Konsola 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Apart from the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, the following museums participate in this initiative: the Museum of Byzantine Culture, the State Museum of Modern Art, the Tellogleio Institution, and the Macedonian Museum of Modern Art. The first three museums are national/state museums, the fourth is run by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, whereas the fifth is a private society. For further information, see [www.5museums.gr](http://www.5museums.gr) (last accessed 17/1/2012).

<sup>80</sup> The network was established in November 2009, in order to deal with accessibility, communication, and promotional problems faced by the small museums at the centre of Athens, especially as a result of financial

## Museum Reform

### Articulating the national narrative: the New Museum of Acropolis (NAM)

The demands for the return of the Parthenon Marbles was made officially for the first time in July 1982, by Melina Merkouri, then Minister of Culture, at the UNESCO International Conference of Ministers of Culture in Mexico.

You must understand what the Parthenon marbles mean to us. They are our glory. They are our sacrifice. They are the supreme symbol of respect. They are our obligation of honour to the philosophy of democracy. They are our ambition and our name. They are the essence of being Greek (quoted in Zorba 2011: 17).

The question of the return of the marbles dominated the agenda of the Ministry, and attracted public attention up until the inauguration of the New Acropolis Museum. Along with the Olympic Games, it formed one of the two facets of the new “Great Idea”: symbolic representations of the glorious Hellenic spirit (of the classical era), whose revival would bring Greece to its rightful position in the midst of civilized western society. In other words, this is a nationalistic rhetoric claiming an ideal ‘revival’ of the country, in cultural as well as economic terms. The demand for the marbles had been an obligatory course of every Minister, after Melina. “The symbolic question addressed the fulfillment of feelings of national prestige.” The efforts of the Ministers, until the present day, have been in formulating a diplomatic strategy versus the British Museum and Government, whereas every attempt has attracted (and still does) the public eye and the opinion of the media, both in the country and abroad.

The discussion about a new Acropolis Museum started at the end of the 1970s. On September 26, 1976, the then Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis declared that “a new Acropolis Museum will be built in the area of Makriyianni” (Philippopoulou 2011: 29). The declaration was associated with the optimism and new will that accompanied the recently re-established democracy, but also with the will to protect important monuments and sculptures from environmental pollution, at the time a serious problem for the city. Fouseki (2006: 534) argues that this plan may be understood as “cultural revivalism,” associated with the economic revivalism and the political stability usually following a period of long-term economic and political instability, as in the case of Greece after the dictatorship. The plan to create the museum was part of the need to reinforce national identity by establishing bonds between the present and the past. “The aim was the ‘glorification’ of the present through the enhancement and promotion of a ‘glorious’ past, which in the case of Greece was identified with the “Golden Ages’ of Pericles” (ibid.). The increase of mass tourism at the time, along with a similar revitalization movement in other European countries, also influenced the decision (ibid., p. 535). The new museum could function as a symbol of the “rebirth” of Greece; it would serve to accentuate the European aspect of the country and would prove the motto of the period “Greece belongs to the West” (ibid. 536; Yalouri 2001: 56). The fact that both the liberal government of Karamanlis and the Socialist party’s (PASOK) government, which came to power after 1981, shared this

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constraints. For more information, see [www.athensmuseum.net](http://www.athensmuseum.net) (last accessed 18/1/2012). These museums are not national, neither in scope nor in governance. See also Vatopoulos in *Kathimerini* 28/4/2010.

understanding, is indicative and very interesting (taking into account that very rarely do Greek political parties agree on policies).<sup>81</sup>

The old museum, which was built on the site (the southeastern corner of the Parthenon), was inaugurated in 1886 (although it had been completed in 1874), and it was constructed in accordance with the designs of the Greek architect Panagis Kalkos (Kokkou [1977] 2009). In 1956, the old Museum was re-constructed by another well-known Greek architect, Patroklos Karantinos, and the re-exhibition was completed in 1964 by Yiannis Miliadis, the then director of the Acropolis. After many years of debates on the topic of its shape, form and usefulness, the old museum eventually closed on July 2, 2007.

Following a series of architectural competitions (the first panhellenic, in 1976; the second panhellenic, in 1979; the third international, in 1989; and the fourth international, in 2001), construction of the new museum began, in 2002, with the aim of reaching completion in time for the 2004 Olympic Games – a goal which was not achieved, due to a number of mainly practical, but also political, reasons. Major legal issues, an archaeological site located just underneath the Museum, and fierce opposition from various parts of the society, were among the reasons why the museum was inaugurated only in 2009.

But the debates did not end with the opening of the museum. Since its very presence had from the beginning been associated with the return of the marbles, its political role was understood as only half-complete. With its shape and form, it became a symbol of contemporary Greece, its modern face, and its ability to join the other European nations with a landmark museum. But the museum has been important in many other levels as well. It was the first state, and indeed archaeological museum, to acquire its own legal status, a fact that indicates its perceived importance, but which has also caused serious opposition, particularly from archaeologists.<sup>82</sup> Finally, the museum itself, its exhibition, and the ideology that it represents have been at the centre of attention – we need only consider the colloquium organized in May 2011.<sup>83</sup>

The NAM has been an articulation of political and cultural roles, and the realization of a long-standing political concern. The monuments of the Acropolis have been used politically as symbols of identity, while their treatment by the society and the state as a process towards modernization. The NAM is used to establish the country's profile, and as a powerful argument for the repatriation of the marbles. This event is, in itself, seen by contemporary Greeks as a reconstitution of the glorious Greek past (Fouseki 2007, 544). The debate between the supporters and opponents of the museum represents a debate between two rather different understandings of what constitutes Greek national identity, and how it relates to the world. In spite of the disagreements about whether or not the NAM is effective in its role, there is no disagreement with regard to this role, its content and importance. And, speaking from the point of view of cultural politics, this is rather important.

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<sup>81</sup> Even in the case of the new Acropolis Museum, there have been disagreements between the two main political parties, as to who provided the initiative for the creation of the museum. The government of New Democracy claimed that it was Konstantinos Karamanlis, the founder of that party, who initiated the creation of the new Museum, whereas PASOK claimed that it was Melina Merkouri's dream that had come true. See Bourdaras, *Kathimerini*, 20/6/2009.

<sup>82</sup> See the text issued by the Greek archaeologists in 17/7/2008, which suggests an alternative legal status emphasizing the link between the site and the museum, in <http://www.sea.org.gr/press/pages/viewpress.aspx?PressID=7> (last accessed 18/10/2011).

<sup>83</sup> Symposium "Museum of Acropolis: Ideology, Museology, Architecture," May 20-22, 2011, Athens, Benaki Museum, organized by the Hellenic Society of Museologists and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

In attempting to review the arguments, we should start with the British ones: the British press has been divided between those who consider the museum “the police headquarters of a banana republic” to those who join their Greek colleagues in praising it. On a more academic level, however, James (2009: 1150) believes that the museum has not made its case for the restitution of the marbles. He argues that the exhibition is “myopic,” and therefore does not promote the relation between the Parthenon itself and the sculpture. This is a view shared by others as well. Plantzos (2011a; 2011b; 2009), Gazi (2012) and others criticize the exhibition, appealing to a number of different perspectives. The inadequacy of the explanation, the cryptic way of referring to the material culture displayed on the labels, and the lack of museological theory in the presentation, are among the problems mentioned.<sup>84</sup> But the most severe criticism refers to the triumph of aestheticism and politics expressed by the museum. The creation of the museum is once again recognized as part of “the nation’s international relations and economic strategies, not to mention the agonizing efforts to establish Athens as a world-celebrated tourist destination” (Plantzos, 2011b: 615). In this view, the NAM is only an example of an approach to archaeology and the past defined by colonialism. The museums, in this respect, serve to “generate particular value systems and aesthetic or political hierarchies” (ibid.). This perspective relies very much on the understanding of the museum promoted by the political parties: the NAM was established by the Greek state as a ‘new arc for the nation’ and the then prime minister Kostas Karamanlis appealed to a series of similar references in its inauguration: “symbol of our confidence,” “proof that culture and history unite Greek society,” “eternal source of inspiration for the future” (see Plantzos 2009). The Greek press adopted and promoted this rhetoric, and confirmed that the new museum was built in order to “give the nationalist struggle something to revive and admire” (Plantzos 2011b, 618). The articles and debates on the content of the exhibition, the lack of reference to the “other periods” of the history of the monuments (such as the Ottoman period), the lack of reference to the social or historical context of the sculpture, and so expressed by academics and practitioners alike, have not been taken into consideration. On the contrary, a few months after the museum’s inauguration, another major scandal occurred, when the content of a film created for the museum by the renowned Greek director Kostas Gavras was censored, at the point at which it was presenting the story of the destruction of the Parthenon by members of the early Christian church. The Church authorities in Greece initiated a huge debate on the “negative” presentation of the early Christians, and in particular the priests, and the museum director was quick to delete the disputed scenes, much to the discomfort of the more liberal parts of society.

The political role of the museum (Iordanides, *Kathimerini*, 28/6/2009; also Ntoumas, *Kathimerini* 6/6/2009; and Gotsis, *Avgi*, 21/6/2009) is acknowledged by the majority of researchers. “The Museum of Acropolis is the product of combined efforts. It is a symbol of confidence. It is another proof that Culture and History unite Greek Society, as an unending source of inspiration for the future,” claimed the then prime minister.<sup>85</sup> And the NAM took on exactly this role: the symbol of a glorious Greek history through the ages. It is a product of the national narrative, but also an excellent ambassador of just that.

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<sup>84</sup> For a discussion of the lack of museological preparation for the NAM, see also Scaltsa 2009.

<sup>85</sup> Others called it “a monument of political opportunism” (Ntoumas 2009), or a ‘political tool’ (Gotsis, 2009).

### **Revitalizing and traditional processes: The Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens**

The Byzantine and Christian Museum was established as a state institution in 1914. There had been a period beforehand, when the museum was a private initiative of the Christian Archaeological Society (from 1884 to 1914). The title of the museum, and in particular the second part of it, “Christian,” was a direct influence of the Society, and in particular its leader, Georgios Lampakis. It also reflects the concerns of its time. After 15 years, this part of the name began to be omitted, and the Byzantine Museum, as it was called by its first director, Georgios Soteriou, exhibited archaeological and art objects from the Byzantine period, as well as subsequent periods of the Greek past. Nevertheless, the museum continued to be a vessel of national ideology, and to contribute to the creation of national identity. It was not by accident that Soteriou claimed that all his scientific work of documenting, organizing and presenting the material culture of the Byzantine period had, as its major aim, the vindication of the continuity of the Greek nation (Konstantios 2008: 4). From the 1960s onwards, when Manolis Chatzidakis undertook the direction of the Museum, the priorities changed. Since the continuation of the nation was no longer an issue, emphasis was now placed on the European character of Byzantine art, and the need to promote it academically, so that it might acquire its proper position within the canon of European art and history.<sup>86</sup>

By the end of the '90s, when Konstantios undertook the direction of the museum, it had already been “sacralized,” not in terms of the objects, which it exhibited, but in terms of how and for whom they were exhibited. The museum’s visitors were mostly school groups and specialists (see also below the comment about the visitors of the Islamic Art Museum); the museum staff was focusing on academic research, and no interest towards the visitors was being developed. The exhibition had as its main aims the presentation of the highlights of Byzantine and post-Byzantine art, as a serial, chronological development (Konstantios 2008a: 6).

The challenge faced by the new director was large and important: he decided to completely re-design the policies of the museum, so as to be able to respond to the contemporary needs of society as well as the museum. Konstantios was an archaeologist with a long career in various posts all over Greece. He was also a man influenced by the politics of the left and the social perspective associated with these.<sup>87</sup> In addition, he lent a favorable ear to the theoretical perspectives of archaeology and museology. As a result, and after having re-organized the museum, so as to include new specialties and staff, which shared his views, he proceeded with the active re-organization of the museum. New strategic goals and new policies are at the centre of his interests, as a response to emergent political and economic circumstances. He aimed to change the ideas about the presentation of the past and the focus of the exhibition, and mainly the way in which both the staff and the public perceived the museum. Konstantios was one of the first and most dedicated advocates of a new legal system for the large museums of the country (as previously discussed). But despite his efforts, this has not happened. What did happen was that he was given the opportunity to re-arrange the permanent exhibition, since already in the previous years the building of a new museum had commenced. In 1999, the underground extension of the museum, which had been programmed already in the previous

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<sup>86</sup> A detailed discussion of this aspect is found in Katsaridou and Biliouri (2007).

<sup>87</sup> A set of articles presenting his academic and intellectual affiliations is available in *Ilissia*, 2011.

decade, was partly finished so that Konstantios and his team were given the opportunity to reconsider the story of the museum so as to reflect the new policies.

The main aim was to look anew at the past, and to interpret material remains in a way that would be interesting to the audience of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. They knew that the “Christian” element should be reconsidered, albeit without complete dismissal, and that a new approach to the past was imperative if they wanted the museum to be attractive to new audiences. Besides all sorts of events, one of the main aims was the introduction of a dialogue between Byzantine and contemporary art. In this sense, the museum was aiming to catch up with contemporary developments, to become attractive to the younger generations and refresh its image.

The new exhibition – which was inaugurated in two parts (the first in 2004 and the second in 2010, following the death of Konstantios) – was designed not as a “national story” (Konstantios 2008: 8), but as a social and artistic approach to the past. The aim was to focus on the importance, the use and the value of material culture, which had arrived in the museum as a product of excavations, but also of donations, appropriations, seizures, etc. Instead of a chronological presentation, the museum favored a thematic one: in the first part of the new exhibition, 1.150 objects are presented so as to discuss 16 “short stories.” A similar set appears in the second part of the exhibition. There is an effort to critically discuss aestheticism and the certainties of the national historical narrative, while there is a conscious effort to address the different categories of visitors, and to encourage an interpretative understanding of the past and the process of learning itself (Gotsis 2007, 39; Gotsis 2011). In this sense, the museum was also one of the first to organize a visitor’s study (see also Stamatelou and Philippoussi 2007).

As part of this interest, the museum was actively involved in various educational programmes, many of which were part of European programmes, for bringing into the museum different groups of visitors, mainly what we would call “sensitive groups.” Accessibility to people with disabilities was among the first concerns (see for programmes such ACCU, Konstantios 2008), e.g. educational programmes for people suffering from mental illness (see Gotsis and Vosnidis 2008; Liolios 2008), children of financial refugees and other minority groups, and programmes for the Greek Roma community (part of the Roma Routes European project) (Gotsis 2011).

In other words, the museum has been attempting, in a rather isolated manner, i.e. not necessarily as a part of an overall national policy, to introduce a cultural policy of social integration, community representation and diversity. This has been a personal initiative, which has found fertile soil in which to grow, both inside and outside the museum. It is an example of the fact that museums, apart from being arenas for the application of cultural policy, are also active agents of its creation.

## **Diverse Publics**

### **The Museum of Islamic Art**

The 1990s posed questions about the structures, values and attitudes of Greek society towards multiculturalism and “otherness.” It was the first time that Greece had been transformed from a country of emigrants into a country of immigrants. The presence of a great number of immigrants brought holistic reactions and cultural clashes. An attempt has been made to address some of these cultural problems through education policy: in 1996, the Institute of Education of Compatriots and Inter-cultural Education was established as an arm’s-length agency of the

Ministry of Education; educational programmes were established for the Roma people; and a ten-year programme for positive intervention in the Education of the Muslim minority in Thrace was developed (Zorba 2011). A report on multiculturalism and inclusive policies in education has been published recently (Papadakis 2009).

Greece recognizes a Muslim minority in Thrace, which represents (in 2001 terms), 1.1% of the population. The minority consists of people who identify as Turks, Roma, or Pomaks. The Roma represent approximately 2.5% of the population, dispersed throughout the different regions of Greece. Another major issue of the last years is the large number of migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers (an estimated 7.3 % of the registered population); they have moved to all parts of Greece in increasing numbers from 1990 onwards; more than half of them hail from neighboring Albania. In the last couple of years, the numbers have increased again, and European support (FRONTEX) has come to the country's aid. Yet the effects still need to be studied and understood, while immigration continues to this day to be at the centre of both political and social debates.<sup>88</sup>

The Greek State embraces an approach of socio-economic and cultural integration, along with respect for and recognition of cultural diversity. An inter-ministerial commission was granted official status in 1997, for addressing the issue of Roma integration in society. Within the scope of this policy, the Ministry of Culture developed cultural and educational activities, co-funded by the Third Support Framework Programme of the European Commission, and implemented it in collaboration with local authorities. An "Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Greek Roma" was launched in 2002, and included educational programmes for children and adults. The Ministry of Culture also developed and implemented multicultural educational programmes directed towards children of non-Greek immigrant families in the centre of Athens and elsewhere. Initiatives were also launched for the preservation and valorization of monuments linked to non-Greek cultural heritage, including 42 major Ottoman monuments<sup>89</sup> and several synagogues in all parts of the country (Dallas 2011).

Greece also subscribed to international initiatives on inter-cultural dialogue by UNESCO, the Council of Europe and European Union. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007 Greece ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. A Department of Inter-cultural Issues was established within the Ministry of Culture, the Directorate of Contemporary Cultural Heritage, with the Presidential Decree 191/2003, art. 14. According to this article, this Department is responsible for documenting and recording

the cultural characteristics of various cultural groups, such as the Greek Roma, refugees, immigrants, Greek immigrants returning to the homeland, and other groups with special religious, linguistic or national characteristics living within the Greek State; the preparation of research programmes of inter-cultural character, and the promotion of programmes that aim towards the harmonious integration of those groups into contemporary Greek society; the realization and promotion of publications, the organization and support of events and exhibitions, as well as the promotion, by every possible means, of the cultural characteristics of those cultural groups, in collaboration with academic and cultural institutions from within Greece and abroad.

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<sup>88</sup> See also Lianos, Petralias and Boussoulas 2004.

<sup>89</sup> A large volume on the Ottoman monuments was published by the Ministry of Culture in 2008 (Ministry of Culture 2008).

Within this framework, the department has been promoting the organization of events and educational programmes, and encourages museums to do the same. For instance, an active encouragement policy was launched in 2003 for the “sensitive” or excluded groups. Another possible means of encouragement towards the organization of special educational programs is the financial support received by the museums from the Ministry.

It also supports the Euro-Mediterranean inter-cultural dialogue process. The need to strengthen dialogue between cultures and religions is often evoked in relation to public events and at meetings. Even though Greece was actively involved in the celebrations of 2008 as a European Year of Inter-Cultural Dialogue, and there are many programs, national and international, referring mainly to education,<sup>90</sup> there is a notable absence of concrete inter-cultural dialogue action on a national level, and a proper national policy on this issue (Dallas 2011: 18). On a practical level, there is a Ministerial Committee, in which representatives of all ministries participate in order to reach decisions on various issues regarding minorities, whereas the national legislation regarding the equal rights of all Greek citizens is considered an appropriate umbrella (personal communication with Maria Fakiola, Head of the Dept. of Inter-cultural Issues, Sept. 2011).

In 2004, the Benaki Museum, a foundation established in 1930 through private initiative, but with the goal of presenting the story of Hellenism through the ages, and subsequently, the national character, inaugurated the Museum of Islamic Art, the first such museum in Greece. The museum houses a part of the collection of Antonis Benakis, the founder of the museum, along with a series of other objects, mainly donations. The museum exhibits jewels, glass and metal objects, weapons, ceramics and carvings from the Proto-Islamic period up until the Ottoman era.

The multi-cultural perspective is thus highlighted by the Prime Minister, Kostas Karamanlis, at the time of its inauguration, in the prologue of the museum’s catalogue:

The Museum of Islamic Art of the Benaki offers valuable services. It brings us in contact with the art, the aesthetics, and the creation of one of the most important civilizations in the history of humanity [...] A culture with which Greece, at the crossroads of East and West, conversed in many ways, which it influenced and by which it was influenced, on many levels (2006: 5).

Further on in the same book, Aggelos Delivorias, the director of the museum and one of the most important museum and culture personalities of modern Greece, made the claim that Greeks always feel comfortable as citizens of the world, and that “... culture connects and combines the various partial idioms ... suggesting a ‘globalization’ on a different level, and a different dynamic.” He concludes:

The hopeful perspectives of the European future and the Olympic dimension of the Greek present encouraged the Benaki Museum once more to send a message of friendship and brotherhood to the world of culture. This message is directed mainly to the world of Islamic Culture/Civilization, on the opportunity of the inauguration of this new museum that Greece has devoted to it [the Islamic Culture] on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004 (2006: 10).

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<sup>90</sup> In 2008, a large number of events were organized, such as tours for various groups to the Museum of Folk Art, 7 concerts and 2 seminars on museum education for teachers of music; there was also a seminar for inter-cultural issues organized by ICOM Greece, as well as a series of events in which Greek Roma, but also immigrants, participated in their capacities as musicians, documentary makers, etc. For instance, events were organized by the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, by the Society of Greek Archaeologists, etc.

Yet, in spite of its great expectations, the museum has not managed to find its audience. Even though it is located very close to the part of Athens in which a large number of immigrants live and work, four years after its inauguration Maria Thermou, a cultural journalist, writes (*To Vima* 13/4/2008):

Schoolchildren, with their organized visits during the winter and tourists during the summer – usually alone – are the ones who make the difference. Most Greeks, when they enter, are reluctant.

The museum has not managed to reach the Muslim audience of the city; however, this is not surprising. It is a museum which concerns itself with high art and culture, issues which are not of high priority to immigrants struggling for survival. The Greeks, on the other hand, feel that it does not refer to them ‘... a museum on Islamic culture, planted (sic) in the heart of Athens, continues to look strange’ (ibid). And foreign cultural officials are not sufficient to transform the museum into a frequently visited, lively place. This understanding is in accordance with views already expressed by cultural theorists, such as Bourdieu, when they claim that cultural diversity and multiculturalism is often a smoke-screen concealing social inequalities and issues of power (Bonet & Négrier 2011: 6-7).

A different perspective was taken by the Byzantine and Christian Museum, which in the course of the spring and summer of 2011 organized a series of events about and by the Greek Roma, as part of a European programme entitled “Roma Routes.”<sup>91</sup> The museum, which has come to display a comparatively increased sensitivity with regards to social issues, claimed that in the difficult social circumstances of this period there is only one option for contemporary institutions: “an academically documented and sober approach to historical periods and cultures, the empowerment of the critical judgment of people” (Gotsis, quoted in Sykka, 29/3/2011).

It is also interesting to note that the Greek Roma community shows considerable interest in its presence within and contribution to the Greek society, to be acknowledged and included in museums, and not in the creation of separate museums. “Overall, we do not wish to be separated from other Greeks. We have been here for centuries, and we are Greeks as much as anybody else,” claims Yiannis Georgiou (personal communication, September 2011), an associate of the museum during the aforementioned events. He continues: “We are not included in the museum exhibitions, as we should be. For example, see the Messolonghi Museum. There is no reference to the Roma musicians who accompanied the heroic exodus of the city during the Revolution. Why? They were there, and their presence was very important.”

## Conclusion

In the course of this report, we have attempted to provide an overview of several issues that have influenced and/or defined Greek cultural policy during the last twenty years (1990-2010). Following a brief presentation of the current legal system with reference to cultural heritage in Greece, and a description of the cultural structures, we focused on three main themes: issues of public debate and the media, the relation between politics and institutional needs, and, finally, issues of diversity and multiculturalism. These concerns are at the centre of cultural policy matters in Europe and the world.

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<sup>91</sup> Partners: Surrey Local Authority Council, The Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sindi and Roma, the Ethnographic Museum of Slovenia and the Organization Maramures of Romania.

The relation between museums, their public discourse, the content of their displays and public policies has been greatly debated during the last few years, especially in the case of the UK. It has been argued that museums have been used in the last 30 years “as a means of instrument to attain goals in other than cultural areas” (Vestheim 1994 qtd. in Gray 2008: 210), based on the assumption that “the effects they [arts and culture] have on audiences are generalisable and measurable” (Newman 2011).

If we follow this debate, we may easily reach the conclusion that it focuses on two different perceptions of cultural value: on the one hand, the focus on the “intrinsic” value of culture, and on the other, the focus on “instrumental” concerns, i.e. the interest in justifying public funding of the arts by demonstrating their contribution to broad social and economic agendas (Bunting 2008). In the case of Greece, the importance placed on cultural heritage as a constituent of the nation and the state has favored the first approach, and thus the “instrumentalization” of culture as a conscious attempt to justify why and how public funding is being spent on cultural matters, has yet to take place. The “intrinsic,” self-evident worth of cultural heritage, and thus of the institutions which protect and serve it, has been at the core of cultural policies so far, and has profoundly influenced issues of democratization and access to this heritage. Protection over access, the “intrinsic” values of artworks of the past over valorization of these assets, has formed the backbone of cultural policy over the years. Despite the fact that public debates and the media articulate questions of “democratization,” the “value” of heritage and the need to make it accessible, a deeply felt ideological change, has yet to take place.

The role of museum professionals in setting such an agenda in cultural policy has been prominent, albeit limited in impact. Initiatives undertaken in some museums have not taken the form of cultural policy, but rather of trend; its impact is thus limited, as it is often not coupled with a change in philosophy and understanding. Additionally, it is not based on full-scale planning, but relies on individual initiatives and good will.

The relation between politics and institutional needs is also ambivalent. In spite of the fact that museum professionals lay claim to their need for greater independence, their role is particularly important in serving the “cultural exception,” i.e. what Bonet and Negrier (2011) call “prime responsibility to provide cultural products that do not necessarily have a niche in the neo-liberal economy.” In this sense, finding the balance between the social and political contexts, engagement in the arts and culture based on practicalities of cultural administration and a state-dependent system, while developing programmes that break with elitism, is quite a considerable challenge, which must be undertaken seriously and collectively (see also Gibson 2008).

The notion of diversity is also important. It depends on many issues, and there are many uncertainties involved in the how and why this should proceed. Diversity is a double-edged sword: Greece has been a single-nation country almost until the 1990s. Integrating the new and the different has thus proven to be a challenge with which society is still struggling. On the other hand, Greece is a small country, with small-scale contemporary cultural production and small cultural industries that also need to be protected and promoted in a rapidly globalized world. All sorts of power issues are involved here, both internally and externally. Nevertheless, a need for a deeper and more thorough debate within society needs to take place, and both levels of cultural policy towards diversity need to be taken into account: i.e. both the intrinsic ones (institutionalization, professionalization, and democratization) and the extrinsic ones (economic development, diplomacy, and cultural integration). The examples which we have examined so far

seem to favour the extrinsic values instead of promoting an active dialogue between the two categories.

Hellenic cultural policy has a long way ahead, and the national museums have an important role to play in shaping the agenda and creating the future with regard to diversity, democratization and cultural value.

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## CULTURAL POLICY IN GREECE APPENDIX 1

### Legislation on cultural heritage and museums in Greece

- **Law 2121/1993** “Copyright, family rights and cultural matters” (FEK 25/A/4-3-1993)
- **Law 3348/2005** “Ratification of the Unidroit Convention for the stolen or illegally exported cultural goods” (FEK 144/A/23-6-2005)
- **Law 1103/1980** which ratifies the international UNESCO 1970 Convention on the prohibition of illegal trafficking of cultural goods. (FEK 297/A/29-12-1980)
- **Law 3028/2002** “For the Protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in general” (FEK 153/A/28-6-2002)
- **Law 3527/2007** “Cultural Sponsorship” (FEK 16/A/26-1-2007)
- **Presidential Decree 67/2003** Amendment and completion of the Presidential Decree 133/1998 (FEK A 106) “On the return of cultural goods that have been illegally removed from the nation-state member in accordance with directive 93/7/EOK of the Council of March 15<sup>th</sup> 1993 (L74/27-3-1993), as it has been amended by the directive 96/100/EK of the European Parliament and the Council on February 17<sup>th</sup> 1997 (L. 60/1-3-1997) in accordance with Directive 2001/38/EK (L. 187/10-7-2001) of the Council of Europe and the Council of June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (FEK 71/A/21-3-2003)
- **Presidential Decree 191/2003** “Agency/Organism of the Ministry of Culture” (FEK 146/A/13-6-2003)
- **Presidential Decree 133/1998** “On the return of cultural goods that have been illegally removed from the land of the state-member in accordance with directive 93/7/EOK of the Council” (FEK 106/A/19-5-1998)
- **Presidential Decree 423/1995** “Measures on the implementation of the Regulation EOK 3911/92 of the Council and 752/93 of the Committee on the export of cultural goods” (FEK 242/A/22-9-1995)
- **Ministerial Decree YPPO/GDA/ARCH/B2/F99/30994/1266/9-6-2003** “Characterization of treasury units, dated from 1453 up to 1830 as monuments” (FEK 851/B/27-6-2003)
- **Ministerial Decree YPOT/DOEPY/TOPYNS/34668/11-4-2008** “Appropriateness and operation of antique stores or shops selling modern movable monuments” (FEK 669/B/16-4-2008)
- **Ministerial Decree YPPO/GDAPK/DMEEP/G2/F35/73708/1999/12-9-2005** “Procedure to follow for the availability of goods *επι παρακαταθήκη* in museums, monuments and archaeological sites” (FEK 1417/B/12-10-2005)
- **Ministerial Decree (YPPO/GDAPK/DINEPOK/D/93783/1682)** “Establishment and Recognition of a museum according to Law 3028/2002” (FEK 2385/B/26-10-2011)
- **Common Ministerial Decree YPPO/GDAPK/DMEEP/G2/F51-52-54/81397/2199/12-9-2005** “Definition of fees for: (a) photography, video making, film making in museums, archaeological sites and monuments, (b) publication of photographs of archaeological content for commercial use, (c) electronic publications, (d) use of image on the Web, (e) events in ancient theatres and other archaeological sites, (f) Procedures

for paying for casts, copies and images of movable and immovable monuments that belong to the State, (g) Procedure for paying for the use of movable and immovable monuments for logos...” (FEK 1491/B/27-10-2005)

- **Common Ministerial Decision YPPO/DOEPY/TOPYNS/17759/1-3-2004**  
“Method for proving the import-movement and ownership of imported-moving antiquities” (FEK 455/B/5-3-2004)
- **Common Ministerial Decree YPPO/DOEPY/TOPYNS/17764/1-3-2004**  
“Procedure for export – sending cultural goods outside the Greek state” (FEK 455/B/5-3-2004)
- **Common Ministerial Decree 1008600/37/A0013/15-1-2007** “Setting of issues regarding the discharge of antiquities and cultural heritage in general (par. 1 and 3 of art. 47 of L. 3028/2002) (FEK 237/B/26-2-2007)
- **Ministerial Decree YPPO/ARCH/B2/F99/32741/470/16-7-1991** “Declaration of ecclesiastic works of art dated before 1830 until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as deserving special state protection” (FEK 633/B/7-8-1991)
- **Ministerial Decree YPPO/ARCH/B2/F99/32738/471/16-7-1991** “Declaration of religious icons dated between 1453 and 1830 as historical monuments” (FEK 640/B/7-8-1991)
- **Ministerial Decree YPPO/ARCH/B2/F99/32742/469/16-7-1991** “Declaration of ecclesiastic relics, dated between 1453 and 1830 as historical monuments” (FEK 639/B/7-8-1991)
- **Regulation (European Economic Community) 752/93** of the Committee of the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1993 for the provisions of application of regulation (EEC) 3911/92 of the Council of December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1992 on the export of cultural goods. Regulation (EEC) 752/93 «© Ευρωπαϊκές Κοινότητες, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/>»
- **Regulation (European Economic Community) 3911/92** of the Council of December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1992 on the export of cultural goods. Regulation (EEC) 3911/92 «© Ευρωπαϊκές Κοινότητες, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/>»
- **Instruction 93/7/EEC** of the Council of March 15<sup>th</sup> 1993 on the return of cultural goods that have been illegally removed from the land of a member state. Instruction 93/7/EEC «© Ευρωπαϊκές Κοινότητες, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/>»
- **Instruction (EK) 1526/98** of the Committee of July 16<sup>th</sup> 1998 on the amendment of regulation (EEC) 752/93 on the provisions of application of regulation (EEC) 3911/92 of the Council on the export of cultural goods. Regulation (EC) 1526/98 «© Ευρωπαϊκές Κοινότητες, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/>»

# European Union Approaches to Museums 1993-2010

Maria Höglund

In academic discourse, museums are considered authoritarian places where citizenships and communities can be promoted and negotiated. Not only does the museum exhibit ideas, but it can also be seen as an agent of social change when regarding museum collections as possible sources for collaborations and exchanges between institutions, individuals and countries. With cohesion policies as well as financial and political abilities for implementation, the European Union (EU) has had incentives and opportunities to use instrumental values of museums. This report studies museum-relevant strategies and the EU's efforts for impact on museums and European culture between 1993 and 2010, with a focus on community building aspirations.

## General Characteristics

The EU was launched with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. When adding a historical background to the topic of EU and culture, EU-researchers often start by using a well-known quote by Jean Monnet (a French politician and one of the founding fathers of the preceding European Communities): *"If we were to start all over again, we would start with culture."* There is little evidence that Monnet actually uttered the quote, but that ironically strengthens the point. The European Communities had first and foremost been a technocratic affair, which had its focus on economical and commercial activities (European Commission 1996:1). There was, according to several EU researchers, a so called neo-functionalistic approach to European identity, meaning that a strong emotional sense of belonging to the European community was expected to emerge as a positive side effect from the internal market. When this Europeaness failed to appear there is said to have been a cultural turn. This turn had its start in the early 1980's and is tied to an increasing need for public support in order to expand the European co-operations in tune with its political ambitions (Shore, C. et al. 2006.).

With the new EU came the creation of the European citizen. The European citizenship was claimed to be a complement to the national citizenships, and in the preamble of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union*, it was stated that:

The peoples of Europe, in creating an ever closer union among them, are resolved to share a peaceful future based on common values. Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union [...]. (Official Journal of the European Communities, 2000:10).

Based on shared values, and by placing the individual at the heart of its activities, the Union enjoyed new possibilities and juridical authority to affect the daily lives of Europeans. According to a communication from the European Commission the growing importance of the citizenship – and the increasing need for shared European values – was mirrored in the growing EU investments in education, youth, health, consumers' protection and culture, which were meant to give direct affect at an individual level. These collected efforts, that concerns citizenship, are called holistic integration policy and points to the necessity to combine language skills as well as

social and cultural environment in order to create a stronger European cohesion (Commission of the European Communities. 2004a: 4-5).

Several reasons have been stated why the EU-machinery has needed to work for a stronger European cohesion. One has been the need for political legitimacy. The Maastricht Treaty created something that resembled a state; the European co-operation was given an economical and juridical foundation, which gave the EU the power to make legally binding decisions. The legitimacy is then needed for the EU-citizens to take these decisions seriously and to make them willing to make the sacrifices needed for the common good of the Union. The identity is in addition needed to facilitate agreements and to be able to create a support for the European constitution. The Europeaness is also required in order for the EU citizens to work towards the same central financial goals, since the EU requires a European solidarity that transcends the national borders. A stronger European Community undermines the member states protectionism, which is key to the internal market and the global competitiveness of the Union. The EU has also needed support to expand (which was apparent when referendums overturned the new EU Constitution in 2005) (Demossier, M. 2007 & Pedersen, T. 2008).

The low turnouts in the parliament elections and falling support in opinion polls has, according to the Commission, reflected that many citizens felt a distance towards the EU. Claiming to be a Union that should be based on the principle of democracy, the constant strive for improved political mandate has increased the need for European identity. The large, so called eastern expansion of the EU in 2004 and 2007 (when the member-states increased from 15 to 27), was, in Commission terms representing an *“immense richness of cultural, social and linguistic diversity,”* but also meant a great challenge to the continuing European integration. During the democratic changes, shrinking working-age population, sustained immigration flows, the shared values – such as freedom, fairness, tolerance and solidarity – were argued, by the Commission in 2004, to be the glue that held the European societies together, and therefore becoming more important than ever, making it an argument to increase the efforts made in the culture area (Commission of the European Communities. 2004a:5). Efforts made in the cultural area were considered necessary in order to create a feeling of belonging to the EU and an ability to identify with it:

The notion of European citizenship must therefore be given concrete meaning through direct, personal interaction – be it through participation in dialogue with the institutions, through citizen and youth exchanges, or participation in cross-border projects. By fostering the mobility of citizens, artists, cultural and audiovisual works and events, European citizens can take advantage not only of the opportunities offered by their rich and diverse cultural heritage but also of common elements in their developing European identity, an identity which complements those – national, regional, ethnic, religious - that citizens already have (Commission of the European Communities. 2004a:5).

This is the context in which the EU approaches to museums should be understood; culture as a vehicle for fostering Europeaness and strengthening the role of the EU, both within its borders but also in the competition in a globalized world.

### **Framing museum-relevant EU policies**

The EU can operate in the museum field, but what the Union can and cannot do - and should aim for – is regulated by the fundamental agreements in ‘culture’. These directives are found in

the EU treaties, which are contracts that the member-states have agreed upon and the formal basis of the Union, regulating the authorities of the EU, its organizational structures and how decisions will be taken. Established at government conferences (where heads of state and government have met and agreed upon the core issues) the drafts needed to be ratified by all member-states in order to become valid. Since 1993, culture has an article in the treaties, making it one of 35 *official EU policy areas*. The current article reads in full:

- (1) The union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the member states, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.
- (2) Action by the union shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between member states and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas:
  - a. Improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples,
  - b. Conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance,
  - c. Non-commercial cultural exchanges,
  - d. Artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector.
- (3) The union and the member states shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organizations in the sphere of culture, in particular the Council of Europe.
- (4) The union shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of the treaties, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures.
- (5) In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this article:
  - a. The European Parliament and the Council acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and after consulting the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the member states,
  - b. The Council, on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt recommendations (European Commission, 2010).

Several parts of the article encourage traditional instrumental uses of museums. The cultural heritage of European significance should be *protected and preserved*, implying that there is a selective and reviewing approach on the gathered heritage presented by the included states. The article also instructed the EU actions to contribute to the spreading of the knowledge and history and culture of the European peoples. The culture article has been revised three times since 1993; Culture Article 128 (from the Maastricht Treaty) was used until 1997 (Amsterdam Treaty), when it was replaced by Article 151. The current Article 167 was introduced with the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. The changes in the cultural article during this 16-year period are small; a minor addition about respect and support for cultural diversity was inserted in the 167 version. The small changes in the article do not reflect a stagnant EU cultural field in general.

When creating a policy area, the article established a political permanent administrative base for culture and was given significantly larger amounts of resources to deal with, compared to cultural projects in the EC, consequently making the Union a political actor of potential

importance in the cultural field. However, the culture article has not been a course towards a dirigiste cultural approach. There had for years been fears and debate whether the EU should be able to alter the member-states cultural individuality and the agreements in the treaty article was therefore based on the principle of subsidiarity. This is the reason why the cultural article, to this date, cannot be seen as a cultural policy. Instead it was, and is, a complementary support, aimed to increase cultural cooperation; the Union is set to support and complete the member-states' own actions by improving and spreading knowledge of the European people's culture and history, to protect and preserve the European cultural heritage, to support noncommercial cultural exchanges, artistic and literary creations (including the audiovisual sector), and make sure that cultural aspects are being recognized in the other policy areas of the Union (the article supplements without taking powers from the member-states). This mainstreaming of culture into other policy areas is one of the most important issues in the treaty article, but it makes it difficult to create a complete overview of 'EU culture' or museum-relevant policies and actions. 'Culture' is mentioned in other treaty articles about tourism, quality of life, social cohesion, educational matters and solidarity between the member-states. Museum-relevant cultural efforts can therefore be seen in these policy areas as well.

The focus on culture has notably increased, especially during 2000's, which can be explained by a need for cohesion, accelerated by the large eastern enlargements between 2004-2007 and the subsequent issues in political decision-making and the lack of public trust for or sense of belonging to the EU. The unifying objectives and cohesive potential of the cultural projects are often outspoken at the EU- level since the shift of the millennium. As an example, the EU cultural policy document *European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World* (the Agenda), released by the Commission in 2007, underlines the official EU view of the unifying values of culture and issues Europeans as a distinct social group with special spiritual and material properties in the very first chapter:

Culture is what makes people hope and dream, by stimulating our senses and offering new ways of looking at reality. It is what brings people together, by stirring dialogue and arousing passions, in a way that unites rather than divides. Culture should be regarded as a set of distinctive spiritual and material traits that characterize a society and social group. It embraces literature and arts as well as ways of life, value systems, traditions and beliefs (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 2).

The Agenda is a key document and has even been called EU's first actual attempt to create a real cultural policy since it accentuated and reflected on culture as a vital factor in the integration process, i.e. acknowledging culture a policy agenda in its own right. There had been general documents on EU Culture before, such as the *1st Report on the Consideration of Cultural Aspects in European Community Action* from 1996 from the Commission. However, the earlier reports served as overviews on the current investments made in culture (explaining scattered regulations and taxes) and contained few strategies for the future. Without having any noticeable results yet, the Commission made general appealing recommendations to keep faith in the community-building aspects of culture and to maintain an increase in the efforts (European Commission 1996). But at the time for the new Agenda, the situation was different; funding programmes had been launched and evaluated.

In the Agenda, the Commission pointed out that now (2007) the time was ready to create a common cultural plan with new partnerships and new methods for co-operation with the member-states, the civil society and third countries. This new and strengthened view on culture was supported by other EU organs, which regularly had called for enhanced European co-operation and an organized civil society. The Agenda shows three objectives that were going to guide future EU culture action: promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs and promotion of culture as a vital element in the Union's international relations. Culture was described as an indispensable tool to reach the EU goals for prosperity, solidarity and security – and to make the Union more powerful on the international scene (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 3-6). The intensified focus on culture was credited the results published the previous year by Kern European Affairs (KEA) on request by the Commission; the European cultural and creative sector generated over 6.5 billion euro, which represented 2.6 % of the entire EU GDP in 2003. In the Agenda, culture is therefore called “an essential asset for Europe's economy,” and arguments for increased focus and investments in culture were stated (this economic view on cultural benefits has however been discussed at the EU level several times before, as witnessed in a European Council resolution about promotion of statistics on culture and economic growth from 1995, but the KEA report was one of the first overall attempt to put this into numbers, and has continued to do so since (Council Resolution. 1995 & Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 3-9).

Draft proposals in the culture policy area were decided unanimously in the Council of Ministers between 1993-2003, which made each member-state capable of stopping a proposal that they felt was in contrast to the treaty (and their preferences). With every expansion of the EU, it therefore became increasingly more difficult to agree upon anything, and in 2003 the cultural ministers decided to introduce majority vote. The decisions in the culture area have, since 1993, been made in the Council of ministers and the Parliament (where the Parliament has a veto), after consulting the Committee of regions. Incentives in the cultural area are officially not allowed to harmonize the laws of the member-states, but culture can be affected by harmonization of laws regulating the inner market (such as copyrights and VAT).

The cultural policy debates on EU-level have, according to the EU-law researcher Annabelle Littoz-Monnet, roughly resulted in two general standpoints. On one side there is a wish to let the cultural sector become a part of the inner market, under the EU laws of competition and other market mechanisms. On the other side there is a will to control culture, since it is claimed to have useful symbolic and esthetic values that play a key role in our perception of society and identity. Various policy models has been discussed and suggested for implementation, differencing mostly due to the different member-states views on culture and their national cultural policies. While some propagate for a centralized control, other policies are characterized by decentralized responsibilities. Littoz-Monnet states that it is possible to see tendencies where the southern member-states have been in favor for more political intervention in the cultural area, increased harmonization of the directives and higher grants for culture, whereas the northern countries have supported more liberal and subsidized solutions (Littoz-Monnet, A. 2007: 21ff).

The Commission has, according to Littoz-Monnet, given its support to a more market economical approach, but there have been conflicts between the different Directorates (DG - administrative units of the Commission) that have influence over the cultural sector, which has

complicated the creation of general policy guide lines. The Directorates (which have changed names and assignments over time) have different focuses on problem areas. DG Education and Culture is, for example, responsible for the formulating of culture policy guidelines, but is, at the same time, a very small unit that has had a small budget and therefore a limited influence. DG Information, Society and Media is since 2004 responsible for the audio-visual policy and media. DG Competition is powerful and counteracts the EU control over culture and challenges the cases where national legislations haven't been consistent with EU regulations. DG Regional Policy takes care of the structural funds and the regional programmes, and is therefore controlling enormous grants to, for instance, cultural heritage and tourism. In addition to this, there have also been various power struggles between personal beliefs of the Commission officials, which at large consists of lawyers and economists, and an impact from a considerable amount of lobbyism (Littoz-Monnet, A. 2007: 31-33).

Culture and museum-related material is, as mentioned earlier, somewhat under the rules of the inner market – where people, goods, services and money is allowed to move around freely in the EU. The regulation of museum-relevant culture has been minor, with the exception of a protection of national treasures that was introduced in 1992 and has been altered since (currently Regulation [EC] No 116/2009). The Union mandate to protect national treasures of artistic, historical or archeological value is not allowed to be used discriminatorily or as a disguised control of commerce within the EU. This protection, which aims to safeguard the national cultural heritage from impoverishment, decides which objects should remain in their member-state. The valuable objects are unique and representative examples of old culture (which generally require a certain age and a certain economic value). Another example regulates goods that have no other uses than for death penalty, torture or other cruel and degrading treatment or punishment. These are only allowed to be imported or exported if they are going to be exhibited in a museum due to their historical importance (Regulation [EC] 1236/2005). There are also some EU resolutions that can indirectly be associated with museum activities, such as regulations that have aimed to protect cultural heritage from environmental pollution, resolutions about bringing cultural and artistic activities higher on the agenda in schools and in education, promoting new technology, cultural digitization and increased publications on the internet.

Museums have also been made interesting in a number of unregulated EU policy efforts and ad hoc-projects: a work-plan for tourism, for example, was created in 1993, and a green-book with EU-strategies for tourism was released in 1995 that considered tourism as an important asset for employment and to strengthen marginalized regions. The first action plan for tourism (PHILOXENIA) was created in 1996. Moreover, culture has been a tool in the actions to improve the co-operation between the EU, third countries and other international organizations, such as the Council of Europe. Several projects have been introduced to strengthen specific areas, most notably actions to safeguard Mediterranean cultural heritage. A report from the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (under the Commission) from 2002, for instance, calls the Mediterranean a cradle of many civilizations, making it a shared legacy and a shared responsibility (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership 2002:7). It adds an ancient background to the EU-project and serves as a good example on how museums can be funded to help heritage protection and create international partnerships at an individual level.

There have been several educational ad hoc-projects involving museums, which shows an interest in teaching young Europeans. The European Commission has, for an example carried a

project concerning teaching science and technology, in which museums were used as examples of meaningful learning contexts (European Commission. 2007a). A large educational project from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights is *Discover the past for the future*, which has been discussing the role of historical sites and museums in Holocaust and human rights education (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2010).

EU-researcher Paul Kearns has made some general observations about EU and the cultural policy. The first one is that an explicit cultural policy neither exists nor is in tune with the *aquis communautaire*, which makes the EU cultural area hard to grasp and deal with. Instead, there are a large number of diffuse small regulations that can be related to culture, without being connected to each other directly. Another general observation is that it is very difficult to evaluate how well functioning the EU efforts in the cultural juridical area are, when the objectives are so vague and general (or even non-existent). A third observation is that the overall EU-vision of culture isn't very elitist (i.e. based on high-culture and fine arts), but rather an attitude that is equally interested in sports and TV such as national treasures and the moral rights of artists. The cultural perspective of the EU rights isn't classical but blasted with popular culture, which, according to Kearns, is characteristic of a post-modern era trying to erase traditional hierarchies (Kearns, P. 2004: 404-405). It is true that the EU organs have discussed and invested large resources into the audiovisual sector and media programmes. The efforts put into DG Education and Culture and the structural funds, however, have been focusing on socio-economic structures in the production of cultural actions, and there is, therefore, by tradition, a focus on institutionalized high-brow culture, such as cultural heritage and art projects, which have been of benefit to museums.

## **Creating Museum Policies through Practices**

Although the culture articles in the treaties have banned harmonization of laws and regulations in the member states, the EU efforts in the museum field have aimed to harmonize national and regional museum practices and policies. Apart from EU grants for museum projects (projects that are trans-European collaborations that—as with EU structural funds—aim to create standardized guidelines for employment), the harmonization is noted in *ad hoc* projects on museum collection mobility which have had outspoken synchronizing ambitions, and also in EU-initiated larger projects that serve as both role-models and umbrellas, collecting several museums under the same framework of practices.

### **Harmonizing collection mobility practices**

Museums, and specifically the mobility of museum collections and workers, did not become a hot EU topic in its own right until the early 2000s. Debated on initiative of the European Council (the member-states' culture ministers), the Commission, other European politicians, and experts in numerous conferences and seminars all over the EU (mostly related to the EU rotating presidency), these discussions culminated in a central message that the rich European collection resources needed to be more beneficial to the public, the museums, and the EU. By creating good practices for exchange, the EU could work towards making a shared European cultural area, based on dialogue and diversity. Museums were called bridges between Europe's common heritage and forums of intercultural dialogue in the EU - institutions which already had a long tradition of sharing cultural objects (OMC Expert Working Group on the Mobility of

Collections. 2006: 2-4). The outspoken aim was to make EU citizens understand and enjoy the diversity of the common European cultural heritage, adding that: “The acceptance by museums in the European Union and the commitment of all stakeholders of the loan process are crucial for the realisation of the commonly agreed objectives” (OMC Expert Working Group on the Mobility of Collections. 2006: 2).

The first key document that came out of the project was *Lending to Europe - Recommendations on Collection Mobility for European Museums*, published in 2005, which confronted issues such as loan fees, copyright, insurances and overall trust between museums. The report *Action Plan for the EU Promotion of Museum Collections' Mobility and Loan Standards* was published the year after, and dealt with collection practices (administration, valuation, networking and digitization). The action plan pointed out key issues and recommended actions, and was the result of analysis of a questionnaire that had been sent to the museum institutions of the member-states. The work continued in 2006-2007, resulting in recommendations, definitions, surveys and model agreements (OMC Expert Working Group on the Mobility of Collections, 2006: 5-6).

The work was well noted by the DG Culture and Education. The previously mentioned key document *European agenda for culture in a globalizing world* from 2007 and the *Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010* (a strategy document from 2008 created from the Agenda) both issued and followed the recommendations. In the Agenda, museum collections are encouraged to become more movable within the Union, and museums are also mentioned in the work to support third countries (e.g. by establishing and repairing museums). The work plans dealt with planning the realizations of the objectives in the Agenda, and workgroups were assigned to create general European loan standards, to improve support and simplify cooperation initiatives for the exchange of objects, and to strengthen the trust between different museum-actors. The work group was also to study the possibilities for decreasing juridical and administrative obstacles on the national level to increase the access to culture and museums in general, and strengthen exchange practices to prevent stealing and improve the returning of stolen goods. The work group argued for investigating the possibilities of harmonizing national laws that affect museums (Notices from European Union Institutions and Bodies, Council, 2008: 11 & Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 6).

The ambitious efforts made by the work group resulted in a large amount of documents and reports and finally, in 2010, in an action plan which included guidelines on immunity from seizure, mobility of professionals, state indemnity and shared liability agreements, long term loans, prevention of theft and illicit traffic, implementation of due diligence and inter-operability of databases.

The workgroups had different assignments. One group focused on long-term loans, and asked museum actors about their willingness to participate in lending and borrowing objects from museums in other European countries. As a result, it was apparent that many museum actors did not consider the idea of long-term lending and borrowing to be widely known in the EU, and the practices also varied between countries and museum orientations. The work group also acknowledged that this touched on the sensitive subject of restitutions of disputed objects, and pointed to the fact that the defining of general rules could add a sense of trust and safety to compensate the felt risks of lending material (Long-term Loans and Collection Research Working Group 2008–2010, 2010: 3ff).

Another workgroup examined the mobility of museum workers and concluded that it was likely that the mobility of collections had a double effect; moving museum collections also creates movements in people, such as workers accompanying the collections – and the travelling of collection staff was also likely to increase movements of museum collections. The workgroup stressed that special attention needed to be paid to museums without smaller funds in order to make the sharing of collections a very inclusive activity, and in this context the eastern enlargement was issued. A key question posed was how museums in older member-states could benefit from exchanges with museums from Central and Eastern Europe, which had little collaboration between themselves. The older member-states were attributed an advance, since the EU had created informal networks over the decades, and a suggestion to solve the problem was, according to the workgroup, to earmark funds to newer member-states to access existing networks. Increasing EU grants was also considered important in order to include smaller museums in the efforts to create museum mobility (Working Group on Mobility of Collections. 2010:2ff).

### **EU-initiated umbrella projects**

The projects initiated by the EU are an important contribution to an overall EU museum policy, since they are created and used to spread and conceptualize EU cultural policy and common European culture, and they are often created to be influential nodes in networks. A late trend in the museum-relevant EU initiatives, that comprises several actions, is the digitization of European culture. In a communication from the Commission from 2008, called *Europe's cultural heritage at the click of a mouse*, the benefits of digitization are community-building:

Europe's cultural institutions — archives, museums, libraries, audiovisual archives — hold a hugely valuable resource, representing Europe's collective memory. Information and communication technologies provide powerful tools to exploit this heritage, for the benefit of all citizens. [...] It will enable them to appreciate their own past as well as their common European history. (Commission of the European Communities 2008: 4)

The first big project was launched in 2005, when the Commission, with strong support from the Parliament and the Council, created the *Digital Libraries Initiative* (DLI) in order to make European cultural and scientific heritage available on the Internet. It was a part of a strategy called i2010 for the information society. Europe's museums were described as having rich collections that represent Europe's history and cultural diversity, and digitization and accessibility of cultural material was named a priority area that needed addressing at a national level. In the communication, the Commission describes the progress towards the digitization of the European culture, addressing the issues (technical, legal and organizational) that the initiative was facing. The Commission called on the member states to hurry up and make common heritage more accessible, supporting the goal by policy actions and funding programmes. By making culture accessible on the internet, the material could be consulted and reused by Europe's citizens for leisure, work or studies. In the communication, the urgency of the initiative is apparent. The Commission called for "Europe's cultural institutions to join forces and work towards the creation of a common multilingual access point to digitised resources across Europe" (Commission of the European Communities. 2008: 4ff). As a part of the DLI, Europeana was launched. Europeana is a digital multimedia platform created in 2008 on the initiative of the

Commission, the Parliament and the Committee of Regions, and it aims to give open access to Europe's heritage online through publishing the material of Europe's museums, archives and libraries. The target group is "everybody interested," but is expected to particularly attract students, researchers and school children. The impact on museum workers is likely significant but implicit. The material uploaded is selected by each EU country and its cultural institutions. The project aims to have *at least 15 million digitized objects by the year 2015* and the member-states are prompted to digitize their heritage to prevent uneven balance between the contributors. Museums could (and can) apply for EU grants to digitize their material. During the period 2009-2010 119 million euros were earmarked for this, in the Framework 7 programme (for research) and Competitiveness and Innovation programme. The EU has instructed the member-states to support Europeana by informing national culture institutions, such as museums, to invest in digitization, make Europeana known to the public, and sponsor the database by making direct financial contributions (Commission of the European Communities. 2008: 6).

Europeana is constructed by so-called *content suppliers*, a large and varying number of networks created for the Europeana project. Several are outspoken museum-networks, such as *Athena* (that collects museum contents and promotes digitization standards for museums), *BHL-Europe* (that includes natural history museums with an aim to present European biodiversity), *HOPE* (based on museums that focus on social history around the 19-20<sup>th</sup> century), *MIMO* (which is gathering information about musical instruments in European museums), and *Natural Europe* (that is digitalizing collections from natural history museums). There are, in addition to these, a dozen content suppliers with more general approaches that include museum-activities, such as *CARARE* (that digitize European cultural heritage) and *Europeana 1914-1918* (that promotes the remembrance of the First World War). Each content supplier is an ambitious project. For example, Athena is a 30 month-long assignment, introduced in 2008 and coordinated by the Italian culture ministry, with partners from 20 member-states and Azerbaijan, Israel and Russia. In 2011, 109 museums were connected to Athena, creating expert groups (on topics such as legislatures and museum contents) and information campaigns, educating about digitization, and conducting its own research. The Athena project has conducted a report on the existing digitization standards of European museums. Each content provider represents long partner lists where several national museums can be found. The consequences of this extensive networking project are intended to put a dramatic European imprint on regional and national culture, but also to harmonize museum practices and consuming, not only within the Union but beyond the EU borders.

The EU is also constructing a museum – the *House of European History* (HEH). This initiative was undertaken in 2007 by Hans-Gert Pöttering, the former president of the European Parliament. His vision of HEH was expressed in a speech to the Parliament:

I should like to create a locus for history and for the future where the concept of the European idea can continue to grow. I would like to suggest the founding of a "House of European History." It should [be] a place where a memory of European history and the work of European unification is jointly cultivated, and which at the same time is available as a locus for the European identity to go on being shaped by present and future citizens of the European Union (Committee of Experts 2008:5).

This became a proposal that was ratified in the Parliament in 2008 and is planned to be launched in the Brussels EU district in 2014. The museum was conceptualized in a work plan from 2008, written by a committee of historians and museologists. Based on this report, the museum exhibitions and archive are described as an information center created to give Europeans of all generations a chance to learn more about their background. According to the committee, European history will be presented in a way that will make it credible and easier to understand. The museum will explain why European cooperation was initiated and built on free will. In the report, the committee argues that the key message of the museum is that the Union is a peaceful, civil and freedom promoting product sprung from the rejection of nationalism, dictatorship and war. The exhibitions, it emphasizes, are going to present a world of progress, where Europeans are living in a united Europe with common values. The museum is also going to provide information on the decision-making processes in the united Europe (Committee of Experts 2008:5).

The most important part, in this context, is that the HEH is aiming to be very relevant to other museums, since it is planned to become a meeting place for museum actors, projects and networks - and some of the HEH exhibitions are meant to be travelling to museums in the Union. It is also planned to present the material in all official EU languages. According to the Parliament, the museum aims to give different perspectives on interpretations of history to show the complexity of the subject, and is therefore supposed to be a center for debate. In addition, events, publications, educational material, and an extensive website will be created, to help communicate the messages of the exhibited material. The museum's permanent exhibition will focus on the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the large European unity project (Committee of Experts 2008:6-9).

The committee report contains a long list of European historical events that are considered relevant to the HEH, which implies that this museum will present a canon of European history. In an ironic turn, the museum, which obviously is aimed at creating European unity, became controversial--not only due to its essentialist approach to history but because of the large costs implied, which has resonated badly with the financial crisis in Europe. There has also been scepticism about the museum's ability to create singular narratives that suit all 27 member-states on loaded issues such as World War II (Waterfield 2011).

In 2008, the European Council also agreed upon creating a *European heritage label*. The Commission was assigned to create a work plan and to reflect on expected consequences. This was initiated in 2009 and resulted in a report to the Parliament and the Council of the European Union in 2010. It was later processed by a cultural committee consisting of experts appointed by the member-states. The Commission proposition was finished in late 2010, and the plan was to create a high-quality system based on voluntary participation (Europeiska Unionens råd. 2010:3). The idea was not new – a European heritage label has existed since 2006, but in the shape of an intergovernmental project created by 17 EU member-states and Switzerland. The label and the 68 already marked heritage sites were therefore adopted by the EU. The Union had supported this initiative from the start, and the adoption aimed to make the label more credible, visible and prestigious. In the work plan by the Commission, the older version was considered a good initiative, but the concrete results were not impressive. The label was not well-known even within the European heritage field. This was partly explained by the fact that the label was relatively new, but also that the problems that the label was established to fix were too complex and old. In addition, the old selection processes were considered arbitrary and opaque (each country

appointed their own labels). They had also neglected the educational and networking aspects of the heritage sites. These were all aspects that the Commission considered the EU more capable of dealing with (Europeiska Unionens råd. 2010 & Europeiska kommissionen. 2010:2).

The European heritage label will be different from existing heritage labels (such as the UNESCO world heritage list), since it is based on European symbolic values rather than esthetic or architectonic ones – the chosen sites are ones that have played an important role in EU history. Young Europeans especially will be presented new possibilities to learn about the rich European cultural heritage and the democratic values on which European history and integration are considered to be founded. The expected effects are mostly social and cohesive, but economic effects are also expected from increased employment and tourism. The label is going to open up possibilities that the member-states cannot achieve on their own, even with EU-funds (Europeiska Unionens råd. 2010:2ff). This is museum-relevant, since most of these sites are presented in a museum context (e.g. the Acropolis, which is listed).

### **EU Funds for Museum Projects**

While the museum-related regulations and culture agreements have been vague, EU-funding has had sharp rules and specific objectives. The funding created effective opportunities for the EU to affect museum practices directly, unlike the overall cultural policy (that is largely subsidized and made a national responsibility), and it allowed the EU to make sure that the knowledge of a common European culture has been visualized, constructed and easily accessible for EU citizens. A written guide for actors applying for the Culture Programme 2007-2010, for instance, pointed out that it was mandatory that those who were involved in EU-sponsored projects took every opportunity to promote their patron in appropriate local, regional, national and international press coverage:

The objective is to ensure that all participants are aware of the fact that they are involved in the Culture Programme, but also to show the wider public that the European Union is supporting a high-quality project of direct interest to them (European Commission 2009:34).

This marketing was important and had to be prioritized early in the planning of the projects. The EU logo had to have prominent placement in all publications, posters, programmes, and other products created under the co-financed action(s). If evaluating EU officials did not consider that this requirement had been met to a sufficient extent, the grant could be reduced (European Commission 2009:34). By helping museums, then, there was obviously an aim for EU promotion.

To give a further understanding of applied museum-relevant culture policy, this chapter will now deal with such official aims and strategies for some of the EU grants that have been applicable for museum projects.

Since 1993, numerous programmes have distributed grants to museums. They have all had in common that they were prohibited from affecting the competition on the inner market, which has been seen as irrelevant for museums, with the grant mostly considered necessary in order to provide a good quality of artistic and cultural standard. The most obvious museum-relevant type of EU funding was and is distributed by the *Culture Programmes*. These were strictly bound to the EU cultural political objectives and regulations. All policy areas have had programmes, and the culture programmes were therefore created as a direct consequence of the cultural articles in the

Treaty. In a communication from 2004 the Commission stated, with support from independent evaluations, that the existent culture programme was considered necessary in order to implement the culture articles (Commission of the European Communities 2004a: 10-11). All funds have been managed by the Commission, which is the executive organ of EU. As previously mentioned, the Commission is divided into General Directorates (DG), which are administrative units. The DG responsible for the culture programme has changed over time (the most recent being DG Culture and Education). The executive committees of the various programmes in the Union consist of participants from all member-states (other European states can also take part, but have lacked a right to vote).

The culture programmes have always been small in comparison to the number of actors in the cultural sector, making the number of granted projects low. None of the types of funding that have been available have been earmarked for museum projects. This is especially noticeable in grants for museums outside the DG Culture and Education (such as the structural funds, where the funds are given to strengthen marginalized regions and even lack a cultural focus), but there is also a lack of museum focus in the culture programmes. The constructed categories have instead been cultural heritage, visual and performative arts, literature, etc., and since 2006 the applying projects are encouraged to be intersectoral. Statistics over museum involvement in the projects funded by the culture programmes have been made, but not until recently (after the studied time period) (Miladinov, P. 2011 Oral ref.).

During the analyzed period (1993-2010) two cultural programme periods have been implemented and one is still ongoing (finishing 2013). The evolution of these culture programmes shows the terms and objectives that the European museums adapted to in order to receive funding. It also shows the obstacles that the EU as an actor has faced in a museum-relevant policy field, and the solutions created to overcome these.

### **1996-2000**

With the experience of a number of completed pilot projects within the fields of cultural heritage, literature and cultural activities, the Commission around 1994-1995 found time to discuss the creation of three larger culture programmes. The aim of the Maastricht Treaty – to mark a new era of the European integration process – was apparent with the creation of European citizenship and an expansion of the EU policy areas, such as culture. After a decision in the Council of Ministers and in the European Parliament, the first generation of culture programmes was ready to launch between 1996 and 1997. The first programme, *Caleidoscope*, was introduced in 1996. The programme was planned to run for three years, but was extended until 1999. It was budgeted at 36.5 million euros, and 518 projects were funded. The focus of the programme was to support artistic and cultural creations with a European dimension, which meant that the projects were co-operations between a minimum of three European states. *Caleidoscope's* objectives were to encourage artistic activities organized in partnerships, to support innovative European projects, to assist in the improvement of the professional skills of cultural operators. The programme was also to contribute to a mutual knowledge of European cultures. The applicants were cultural networks or partnerships between operators within performing, applied and visual arts. *Caleidoscope* also managed the European city of culture and European culture month, the cultural involvement of third countries as well as specific measures such as related studies and publicity for the programme (Commission of the European Communities 2004b: 3-5).

The Decision made by the Parliament and the Council in 1996 (Decision No 719/96/EC) stated that the most tangible and influential aspects of Europe as a whole were not its geographical, political economical and social features, but its culture, and that the perception of Europe and its position and strength was closely linked to its cultural values. The funded projects were incorporated in a plan to encourage all EU citizens, but especially the young, to become more involved in European culture and therefore “increase the mutual knowledge and respect and to promote the idea of citizenship of the European Union.” The cooperation was meant to break down national and regional barriers.

The second programme, *Raphaël*, was a cultural heritage programme introduced in 1997 which lasted until 2000. The material considered cultural heritage was here buildings, places and objects, archaeological heritage, historical monuments, areas with museums, collections, libraries and archives, and *Raphaël* was therefore the most museum-relevant programme of the first three. The budget was 30 million euros, and 222 projects and 18 European cultural heritage laboratories (projects linked to technically complex operations on monuments or sites of ‘exceptional interest’) were funded during the four years - 1500 actors in the cultural heritage field. The programme budget also had to cover funding for common European manifestations such as cultural heritage days and Europe day. The programme had several objectives: to support conservation and restoration of the European cultural heritage, and to encourage cooperation and exchanges of experience, techniques and know-how in the cultural heritage protection. It also sought to increase public access, awareness and participation in the European cultural heritage. This was supported by the uses of advanced information technology and multimedia. Funds were distributed to create arrangements on a European level in various ways, such as museum exhibitions and museum-relevant educational material such as brochures and signs. *Raphael* also encouraged cooperation with third countries and international organizations. All projects had to have a European dimension and the EU contributed with a maximum of 50% of the total costs. Countries in eastern and central Europe which were not members of the EU were allowed to participate, as well as countries in the EES-countries. To a large extent, the programme also dealt with selecting cultural heritage, which was considered to have unusually high historical values and/or conservation which required complicated scientific actions. This created the European cultural heritage laboratories, in which conservation problems and methods were explored and exchanged (Commission of the European Communities 2004b: 6). There was a focus on the economic potential of the cultural heritage field but a decision by the Parliament and Council also stressed the fact that the investment in cultural heritage affected the day-to-day environment of ordinary people and improved the quality of life in several ways. The special audience for this programme was also young people. When presenting the scope of the programme, cultural heritage was split into movable and immovable heritage, with museums listed as a first example of the latter, showing their importance (Decision No 2228/97/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 October 1997, establishing a Community action programme in the field of cultural heritage [the *Raphaël* programme]).

The third culture programme was not museum-relevant: *Ariane* supported literary fiction and translation.

The three programmes had the same annual selection and monitoring processes, initiated by a pre-selection process where programme managers from the Commission read all applications and verified that they met the rules specified in the call for proposals. A selection of these was chosen

by an anonymous group of experts who had been nominated by the member-states and put together into a committee by the Commission. The monitoring of the projects followed a general EU programme standard; documents were controlled systematically and samples were studied by financial employees from the Commission (Commission of the European Communities 2004b: 5ff). The DG for Education and Culture evaluated the first generation of culture programmes in 2003, in order to be able to make recommendations for the following programme-actions. In the evaluation, documentation was analyzed and key persons were interviewed (project organizers, such as museum actors, that had received or been rejected for grants, people from the culture departments of the member-states, administrators and programme managers). It became obviously impossible to carry out the evaluation as planned, since the total population of sponsored projects were impossible to recreate; too many years had passed and the administration had not been as well organized as it should have been. The evaluation interviewees also had great difficulties remembering aspects of their projects. The results were therefore inadequate, which encouraged the EU to make the culture programme administration more effective. The evaluation also showed that there were doubts about the relevance of the programme overall; there had not been a systematic evaluation of the needs of the target groups/projects before creating the programmes, and the organizers that had received grants claimed that the programmes lacked sufficient European ambition on the field of culture. Since the main organizer of the project often controlled most of the activities, many people involved considered the co-operation aspect only a formality. The difficulties of providing an overview of EU cultural efforts were consequently shown even down on a programme level.

It was also considered problematic that the programmes had had very little visibility, even among cultural operators such as museum workers. Another problem was that the application process was considered too difficult by applicants. The procedures were going to be simplified and more transparent. Lastly, the projects had not led to any permanent jobs. However, valuable networks had been tied together all over Europe, according to the Commission.

Overall, the total evaluation considered the culture programmes useful, and argued for their continuing. The budget needed to be increased and work had to be done to make the programmes more visible. The visibility aspect was especially prioritized by the Commission, both in the selection processes, in the type of action that the EU was to support and in the implementation of the projects funded by the EU. The programmes were also going to be made more attractive to potential applicants by improving the searchable websites, including a bigger promotion budget, and increasing the dialogue with culture operators (via conferences, forums, a better home page, newsletters and so on). An improved dialogue with the Commission was also recommended, to make sure that the EU objectives of the article were covered. Last but not least, the evaluation team claimed that the purpose and effectiveness of the culture programmes needed to be improved by merging the programmes into one, and by doing so also making it cheaper and easier to administrate (Commission of the European Communities 2004b: 8-13).

### **2000-2010 – promoting inter-sectoral projects**

The old culture programmes were considered an informative trial-and-error period to the EU, which was to extend its role within the European culture area. The results of the evaluation of the first generation of culture programmes were obviously taken into account, because the Commission advocated for a sharper strategy for culture and a more well-defined policy network

for the culture programme; in 1998 a proposal was made for one combined five-year cultural programme, *Culture 2000*. The projects were going to be larger, more visible and lead to durable co-operations. Most of all, the European dimension was going to be more obvious and the European co-operation was going to be bigger (the projects had to include more actors from more countries).

The divisions that the programme was set to fix were even apparent in the creation process, due to the opposition from some of the member-states in the Council of Ministers and parts of the Parliament that this programme was undermining the value of and respect for cultural variety – the programme was not ratified until 2000, with the consequence that the old programmes had to be extended to 1999 (Commission of the European Communities 2004b:13-14). In a Decision from the European Parliament and the Council, the programme was called for by the need to exploit the important intrinsic values that culture was claimed to have to all people in Europe, and by declaring culture an essential element of European integration the programme was set to contribute affirmation and vitality to the European model of society (a society funded on freedom, democracy, tolerance and solidarity) and the EU's reputation on the international scene. Special attention was given to educating young people (Decision No 508/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 February 2000, establishing the Culture 2000 programme.).

Culture 2000 lasted until 2006 and had a budget of 167 million euros. It was a programme that gathered the three former programme areas under one financial and policy framework: music and performing arts, cultural heritage, plastic and visual arts and literature and books. Interdisciplinary projects and projects that used new media could also be supported. The aim of the programme was to create a cultural dialog and a mutual knowledge of the culture and history of Europe. Museum projects were supposed to contribute to the cultural creation, improve the mobility of actors and help to spread works of culture. They were also supposed to highlight and spread knowledge of the European cultural heritage and promote its protection. European cultural diversity was to be encouraged. An important objective was also to promote the idea of culture as a factor that creates social integration, public participation in societies, and economic growth of the EU (Commission of the European Communities. 2006).

Two kinds of projects were sponsored by the programme: innovative and experimental one-year long projects that were collaborations between organizers from at least three states, and multi-annual projects between at least five countries or more. At most, the funding could be 50% and 60% of the project budget. During the programme period, each project had to deal with at least one of the following three themes: the citizens in centre, new media/technology in creative actions, and tradition and innovation (a link between European history and the future). The conditions to receive funds from Culture 2000 were that the projects had to have a clear European dimension, a European interest, and a perspective that transcended the local, national and regional interest. The projects also had to be non-profitable and all kinds of cultural organizers (not private persons) from the member-states and the EES-countries could apply. From 2001, the ten candidate states from Central and Eastern Europe could also apply, as well as Malta and Cyprus in the end of the programme period (Riksantikvarieämbetet, Riksarkivet, Statens Kulturråd & Svenska Filminstitutet 2002: 33-35).

The assembling of the culture sectors was met by a common critique, that it was too general and over-reaching, which made the programme unproductive. As a result, the grants were spread

too thin across the culture area and potential applicants had difficulties knowing which criteria led to approval or rejection. In the middle of the programme period, the large eastern enlargement took place, which affected the programme; many new member-states with extremely limited national funds for culture projects all of a sudden had improved opportunities to apply. This led to a reduction of grants to the older member-countries. This was criticized: the programme had sky-high ambitions but the budget was too small to be able to execute them. Compared to other programmes Culture 2000 had less funds—the budget of the Media programme, for instance, was more than twice the size of the Culture 2000 budget. The Commission was also criticized for not discussing the idea of ‘culture’ enough – giving it a narrow definition that favored high-culture and material culture above spiritual and symbolic dimensions of culture, which resulted in a weak position toward strengthening the public accessibility of culture (Craufurd Smith, R. 2004: 65ff). This can, however, be considered to have been positive for traditional museum projects.

The current culture programme, *Culture Programme 2007-2013*, was introduced by the Parliament and the Council in late 2006. It comprises the categories of cultural heritage, performing arts, literature and design, and the budget is 400 million euros (more than twice the size of the previous culture programme, illustrating the expansion of museum-relevant EU culture activities). The main objective is a very explicit European unity-building:

The Programme has been established to enhance the cultural area shared by Europeans, which is based on a common cultural heritage, through the development of cooperation activities among cultural operators from countries taking part in the Programme, with a view to encouraging the emergence of European citizenship (European Commission 2009: 8).

Unlike the previous culture programmes, this one has an inter-sectoral focus, which means that artists, institutions and other cultural actors from the various culture categories are encouraged to cooperate in the funded projects. There is an overall strong conviction that this inter-sectoral approach has a positive effect on the European integration at large and that culture should hold a key role in the efforts toward social and economic development in the EU (Ecorys. 2010:III-IV). As a consequence, the inter-sectoral format makes it difficult to see if the projects are museum-projects.

The programme was designed to improve mobility in Europe, to support the movement of cultural products and to promote dialogue between European peoples – and at least two of these objectives must be clearly met in the applications in order to be approved grants. This programme is more extensive than its predecessors, which is apparent when comparing the programme areas. The activities of Culture Programme 2007-2013 are divided into three programme areas, which all have several subcategories with their own applicant conditions. The first programme area is the funds for annual and multi-annual culture projects, various co-operation efforts and special initiatives (such as awards and culture capital cities). This programme area is created to help institutions like museums cooperate with other organizers and to help spread their work across the borders. The second programme area is funds for European organizations, such as ambassadors, festivals and networks. The third programme area is supporting research and information projects, such as grants for the cultural contact point-offices, spreading information about the EU cultural work and analysis on cultural co-operation. The applicants for funds from programme areas 1 and 2 must have a minimum of at least three to six

co-operation partners (depending on if it is an annual or multi-annual project) from different European countries. About 77% of the programme budget is estimated to go to projects in the first programme area, which is also the most relevant area for museum projects (European Commission 2009: 8ff).

The aspect of European integration is interesting. The method and criteria of the selection process is described in a large culture programme guide for applicants (which contains all information needed to create a correct and relevant project application), in order to make the procedures become more transparent, equal and non-discriminating. In addition to the formal application criteria (such as the number of cooperating countries, which countries are allowed to apply, the rules of non-commercialism and the fact that these projects are not allowed to receive grants from other EU-programmes at the same time), a set of practical, financial and legal terms (the applicants must be able to prove that they are economically capable to manage the projects, which require non-EU-related co-funding), the guide also present the criteria for “European added values” (which are graded on a scale from 1 to 20 points). Among these criteria there is, for example, the ability to create a stronger European cultural area shared by Europeans, the ability to create a project that has a larger impact on a European level than a national, and, of course, the ability to create European added value (European Commission 2009: 41ff).

In an interim evaluation of the programme, it was stated that the application process has been made a lot easier for the applicants, the selection procedures have also become more defined and shorter, which has also been credited the increased effectiveness of the cultural contact point offices (European Commission 2009: 18ff & Ecorys. 2010: VI-VII). Cultural contact points have been established in every member state that can take part of the culture programme. The contact points are instructed to promote culturally relevant activities by the EU, and the culture programme in particular. They are assigned to make sure that as many culture actors as possible are aware of the European cultural exchange endorsed by the Union. They can assist in the application processes as well as give advice on how to find project partners, and they have therefore often been the first stop for the applying museum-actors (Lindqvist, M. Coordinator, Culture Contact Point Sweden, 2011. oral ref.).

### **Using EuNaMus results to show the museum relevance of culture programmes**

So what can be said specifically about the role of museums in the EU culture programmes? The official culture programme documents do not use museums as a category until late during the Culture Programme 2007-2013. When looking for museum representations in the lists of the funded projects before 2011, one needs, therefore, to know the title of the searched-for museum and search for it individually. Neither are there EU-provided statistics on funded museum projects or museum representation. The information given is annual lists of successful applicants, with no information on rejected applicants. The differences between the programmes create problems to compare the museum representations of funded projects; while Culture 2000, for example, gave funds to separate sectors (e.g. cultural heritage, visual arts, performing arts and multi-disciplinary creativity), the Culture Programme 2007-2013 is inter-sectoral and the projects are therefore combinations of these sectors.

In the EuNaMus work package 2, *Mapping and framing institutions 1750–2010: national museums interacting with nation-making*, close to 500 museums in 38 European nations have been identified as national museums by the use of one common definition (Aronsson, P. & Elgenius, G. [ed].

2011). The period 2000-2010 was studied, which comprises one and a half cultural program periods, both Culture 2000 and Culture Programme 2007-2013. These are the first culture programmes to include all cultural sectors (art, cultural heritage, etc.), except the audio-visual, and were therefore relevant for all kinds of museums. The results of the study show that the EU cultural policy was not only relevant to museums inside the Union borders. Eligible applicants were projects from member-states, candidate-states and EEA-countries. The large EU expansion during the middle of the time-period therefore changed the opportunities for the EuNaMus-nations to apply. During the first programme, museums from 34 of the 38 states with EuNaMus-nations were permitted applicants (29 of these were member-states, two were candidate states and two were EEA countries, and since 2006 Turkey was allowed to apply). During the second programme period, 36 of the states with EuNaMus-nations were allowed (three countries had become new member-states and Serbia was a new candidate) and in the end only two states – Switzerland and Bosnia-Herzegovin – were left out (the latter was, however, included in the programme a year later).

In the mapping of national museums, some nations have been attributed only a few museums whereas other have a very long list. This makes comparisons between national representations in the granted EU-projects irrelevant, but it is still worth noting that 34 states with EuNaMus-nations had national museums which received programme grants between 2000-2010 (the excluded countries were Cyprus, Iceland, Malta and Turkey – which all had other granted projects in the culture programmes). This is an indicator of the quick expansion of the EU in the culture area, and it also shows that the EU had influential means to affect museum activities in countries that were excluded from the decision-making processes.

In total the two programmes gave the projects with defined national museums over 36 million euros (roughly 24 million euros during Culture 2000 and roughly 12 million during Culture Programme 2007-2013 [which was only studied until the half-period]). These were 103 funded projects (69 in the Culture 2000 and 34 in the Culture Programme 2007-2013). The 103 projects consisted of 166 EuNaMus-museums, which means that the funded projects often were co-operation between multiple national museums. It is interesting that the approved projects often had EuNaMus-museums as associate partners (these are not always reported in the lists and cannot be counted). This means that some national museums were included as partners in the application without receiving any funds, and it is likely that these museums, such as the Louvre in Paris, as partners added experience and credibility to the overall applying project.

Most of the museums listed by the EuNaMus-researchers have been defined with more than one orientation (e.g. art *and* cultural history) and all of these have been included in the survey, which shows an over-representation of cultural history (archaeology and history) and art (fine arts, modern arts). The EU interest in cultural heritage is not surprising, considering the culture article, which instructs the involved participants to support European cultural heritage, and the numerous targeted and indirect efforts made to preserve it. Art became a more dominant museum orientation after the establishment of the large Eastern expansion between 2004 and 2007. As an overall tendency, the older member-states (and especially the original six of the European community) dominate the Culture 2000 projects. During Culture 2000, 13 of the 69 museums were from the countries included in the Eastern enlargement (most of them in the later part of the programme), and during Culture Programme 2007-2013, 17 of 32 museums were from these new member-states.

Museum researcher Ayie H. Köksal, who has studied Turkish national art museums, has suggested that art, like historical objects, can be loaded with narratives of past and intentionality to affect the future. Modern art was especially important to the Turkish modernization, according to Köksal, since “modern” referred to “what was new and western,” and therefore a way to forge the national identity into a modern package with relations to the West (Köksal, A.H. 2010:164). Karolin Kaluza has studied the effects of Poland’s EU membership (which was one of the members of the Eastern enlargement), and she makes two relevant points. One is that the inclusion created an increase of new museums in Poland, since it created a general financial growth and created possibilities to apply for EU funding. The other one is that the political instability of the Polish past – for a long time Poland only existed as a memory – had led to the creation of museums to preserve and reflect on this memory of a nation. In this process, contemporary art was given a special role since it represented personal freedoms (Kaluza, K. 2010:156). During Culture 2000 at least 12 of 39 funded art museums were contemporary, and during Culture Programme 2007-2013, 18 of 45 art museums were contemporary (and many of the “general” art museums have a material which is defined as from a historical point and onwards, insinuating that it also can comprise contemporary art). There is, in other words, a great deal of modern art, which was increased around the Eastern enlargement. Following Köksal’s analysis, this can be an approach to an already defined EU culture which was considered interlaced with western connotations.

The inter-sectoral aspiration of the Culture Programme 2007-2013 did not end up in a notable amount of museum projects with mixed orientations. The projects often had an overall narrow orientation that matched the museum orientations (e.g., mostly cultural heritage projects with only archaeological museums and art projects with only art museums). In Culture 2000, 22 national museums were listed as head organizers and 82 as co-organizers. In Culture Programme 2007-2013, eight were head organizers and 54 co-organizers. The head-organizing responsibility means that the projects have been administered by a national museum (from application to implementation and reporting). These head-organized projects are especially interesting in this study. As it turned out, five of the 30 museums were recurring head-organizers (2-3 projects each). Just like the overall trend, art and cultural heritage dominate the projects, and while more granted projects are cultural heritage-oriented during the first programme, art becomes bigger in the second. Of the 14 projects in Culture 2000 only two are from the Eastern enlargement countries (both led by the national art gallery in Czech Republic) and during the second programme, three (two art projects and one cultural heritage project) of the eight projects are from there.

### **Other Programmes’ Funds for Museum Related Activities**

The most prioritized issues on the EU agenda have been to strengthen financial progress and to encourage social integration and welfare in the EU. Since ‘culture’ has been considered a useful tool to attain this, cultural projects have been included in a number of EU programmes, all in accordance with the cultural article that ordains that the EU Community “shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of the Treaties, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures.” Museums can find relevance in a large scope of EU-interests: developing exhibitions, educating staff, restoring cultural heritage, promoting creative industries, making facilities more available and interesting to the public and contributing

to making marginalized regions more attractive. This can, for example, be linked to regional aids, education funds and research grants. Some examples are presented below, which shows how museums can be used in different EU purposes. The budget of these programmes also gives an indication of how prioritized they are on the EU agenda, and provides a comparison to the culture programmes.

The *structural funds* are administrated by the DG for regional policy. In the EU funding context, the cultural programme resources were small. The larger grants to culture have come from the structural funds, which are an important part of the EU regional policy. Social and economic differences are equalized and the interregional collaboratives are strengthened with the structural funds. All of these have given grants to cultural projects (which mostly deal with cultural heritage, environmental issues and making regions more attractive).

The selection process is handled by representatives from the member-states, and like the cultural programmes, the structural funds are divided into time-periods of six years (with separate budgets and objectives for each fund). Each member-state also decides which structural funds should be used in their countries, and where. The structural funds are the second largest expense of the EU, estimated at 347 billion euros during the current 2007-2013 time period (which is a third of the entire EU budget), of which 6 billion euros are expected to be given to culture-related projects. In an evaluating report from 2010 on the structural funds effect on culture, ordered by the Commission, it is stated that it is difficult to analyze these funds, since they operate on a large number of levels, with various policies and objectives. Each programme period has had a theme and the overall objective for this time period is to create integrated guidelines for employment and growth (which prioritize increasing the attractiveness of the regions, supporting entrepreneurship and creating more jobs). Culture is included in these funds because it is considered a useful tool to make regions more attractive for investment and work, and to attract the right kind of people to live and visit marginalized places (Centre for strategic and evaluation services 2010). The success of the funded projects are evaluated by measurable indicators such as the number of new jobs, visitors, and completed activities, i.e., developments that makes a region more attractive for inhabitants and visitors. It is mostly tourism-related cultural heritage projects and cultural environments that receive grants from the structural funds, in order to preserve heritage sites and create interesting cultural infrastructure (such as museums and theatres), but grants are also given to strengthen local identity and self-esteem. A Swedish example of a museum project funded by the social fund (ESF) was a professional development project in Örebro county museum, which aimed to increase the co-operation between different actors in the cultural heritage sector, archives and education (Centre for strategic and evaluation services. 2010).

The *rural development programme* is funding for several types of environmental and cultural projects. The grants are sponsoring sustainable environmental and cultural heritage projects. Many of the funded museum projects within this programme have had connections to tourism. An example is a museum in the Swedish region Västerbotten, which was given grants to assist the access to the sights by building wheelchair ramps, developing audio guides and routes.

The *media programme* funds projects within the audio-visual field, and the current programme, MEDIA 7, which runs during 2007-2013, aims to strengthen the cultural diversity of the EU by supporting its film heritage, spreading European media and strengthening the competitiveness of the sector on a global market.

The *lifelong learning programme* supports education for all ages. A relevant project within this programme has focused on museum educators and other cultural mediators that organize adult educations in museums. The programme is created to distribute didactic material and training practices. An example is the INTERMUSE, which is embracing the museums as a valuable resource in intercultural education. The project stimulates new methods to motivate learning, mostly focusing on upper-secondary school pupils, who are confronted with issues of cultural diversity, language-training, intercultural dialogue and school-museum cooperation.

The EU has a programme for young people, called *Youth in Action* (which is the fourth youth programme since 1989), with an overall aim to make young Europeans more active EU citizens by adding more solidarity and tolerance – fostering cohesion in the EU - and making young people more involved in the shaping of the EU as well as understanding the Union systems and capabilities better. It runs 2007-2013, just like the culture programme (and shares the same DG) and has a budget of 885 million euros during the period. The programme promotes mobility (not only within the EU), non-formal learning with a European dimension and intercultural dialogue. Each year, thousands of projects are granted support by the programme, which focuses on projects with "a strong 'European dimension' and [that] non-formal learning 'with a European dimension' is where museums can play a role in the programme. There are various sub-actions where museum actors can be included, such as 'Youth democracy projects'. The programme has involved so called 'national agencies' to inform about it, administer the selection processes at a decentralized level, seek cooperation and good forums to implement it and monitor the actions taken. Even though young people (13-30 years old) constitute the target of the programme, these people are reached through promoters, and the terms for participation for both young people and promoters vary on the country in which they are based. The promoters can be museum-organizations, and are given a grant for the realization of the project). They must be non-profit-making and have activities that cover at least eight of the participating programme countries (European Commission 2008: 13-16). In a publication from 2011 by the Youth unit, 'Good practice projects' of the programme are listed, and there are several museums as examples, such as a project hosted by the Anne Frank House in the Netherlands with an educational programme aiming to teach critical reflection on World War II and xenophobia. Another successful project is based in Northern Ireland and uses museums to debate issues of social and financial problems (European Commission 2011: 19 & 43).

The *Europe for citizens programme* is focusing on organizations of the civil society, but there are examples of granted museum projects within this programme, where educational collaborations have been made between institutions, larger organizations, and NGO's.

The EuNaMus project is funded by the *Seventh framework programme [for Research and Technological Development]*. This programme has a budget of over 50 billion during the 2007-2013 time-period, and has increased dramatically compared to the previous versions, showing a major EU involvement in research. The programme (FP7 in short) is, according to the Commission, created to respond to the Unions needs to create jobs, make Europe competitive and maintain leadership in the global knowledge economy. Most of the funds are given to research, technological development and demonstration projects, and the selection processes are based on peer-reviewed applications. The projects must have a European added value, in which transnational (mostly European) cooperations is one aspect. Like the culture programmes, the FP7 has National Contact Points set up to help and advise potential participants, which can be research groups,

companies, enterprises, civil society organizations, etc. An example of a museum project funded by the FP7 is MeLa (European Museums and Libraries in/of the Age of Migrations), which aims to outline new missions for museums in a globalized world and support its communities, workers, experts and policymakers in doing so.<sup>93</sup>

### **EU-funded museum networks and organizations**

There are a number of organizations associated with museums that are funded by the. *Network of European Museum Organizations* (NEMO), an interacting platform which represents 30.000 museums in Europe and EU associated countries. It was founded in 1992 as an independent organization but has become partly sponsored by the EU. It works in two directions. While it informs and influences European institutions such as the EU on policy issues and lobbies for the interest of the museums (e.g. financial, cooperative and educational needs), it is also assigned to increase the co-operation between the various museums of Europe and establish trust between its organizations. NEMO has an informative mission to increase the awareness of the European cultural heritage, and it does so by arranging and supporting campaigns on EU policies and projects (NEMO information folder).

Another museum related organization is *Europa Nostra*, which claims to represent individuals and organizations active in the cultural heritage field. It is partly sponsored by the EU (and also by UNESCO and Council of Europe). Europa Nostra has existed for almost 50 years and is making efforts to show that cultural heritage is a key factor in the creation of a European community, economy and identity. They have presented the annual European cultural heritage prize and campaigns are constantly created to support a common European history and "the unity in diversity of our common culture."<sup>94</sup> EUROCLIO (the European Association of History Educators) is, since 2006, partly sponsored by the Commission's lifelong learning programme. It was established in 1993 and promotes responsible history teaching, considering history the most important school subject for the political and civic growth of young people. Its mission is to work against the misuse of propaganda and political indoctrination and contribute to the reduction of nationally oriented curricula on history. The history propagated by EUROCLIO is deconstructing historical myths and negative stereotypes, and minimizing tensions between countries. EUROCLIO claims to work as a network between the educators of historical knowledge, promoting exchange and implementing new educational material and procedures. EUROCLIO is often invited to take part and present ideas to the EU organs and platforms. *EMII* (the European Museums' Information Institute) is an older European museum network, which was established in 1999 and funded by the Sixth Framework programme (EU's funds for research, technological development and demonstration activities between 2002-2006, aiming to increase industrial competitiveness and increase the quality of life for the European citizens – a programme later replaced by the seventh framework programme). EMI served to generate use and inspiration from the information found in the European cultural heritage by the establishing of long-term partnerships between European museums (and other cultural institutions), promoting a European perspective in international cultural heritage initiatives, and improving the online access to European cultural heritage.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> The MeLa-project: <http://www.mela-project.eu/project/mela-in-brief> [2011-12-20].

<sup>94</sup> The Europa Nostra website: <http://www.europanostra.org/about-us/>[2011-12-20].

<sup>95</sup> The EMI website: <http://emii.eu/info.htm> [2011-11-01].

## Conclusion

Apart from EU policy agreements, there have been substantial actions: networks, digitization projects, heritage labeling, increased mobility of collections and museum workers, in all of which museums have been included, ), including European national museums (possibly taking part in several actions at the same time, which is important to remember). The key words of the museum-relevant EU strategies are mobility, visibility, and identity – and they are strongly intertwined, strengthening a European mindset that issues general European practices rather than museum (or even cultural) policies. The inter-sectoral and inter-policy framework of EU-funds to museum projects is an example of this.

The roles of museums, as well as museum-relevant efforts made in the cultural policy area, have all openly aimed at European community-building. National museums are not mentioned (neither at the policy level nor in official texts about funding and EU-initiated projects). The written objectives often copy the culture article in treaties, especially when repeating the importance of working towards the acknowledgment of and civil identification with a common European culture and heritage, which at the same time is being built upon recognizing and supporting cultural diversity. The actual practicalities on how this seemingly contradictory mission is going to be executed has, however, not been explained, leaving it to be a rhetorical figure. There are instead several examples where cultural diversity has been pointed out to be problematic, and it is obvious that the increase of cultural diversity has been compensated for by an increase of EU efforts in culture (each culture programme has grown larger than its predecessor, an agenda and work plan for culture has been created, and the number of potential participants in the Union's cultural initiatives has increased rapidly). This has upgraded the intensity of the Union's museum-related investments, explicitly shown by large projects to encourage the mobility of European museum collections, Europeana, the House of European History and the European heritage label. These, as well as the grants to heritage related projects such as those in the cultural programme and structural funds, show an emphasis on cultural heritage and history in the efforts in the EU-related museum field.

EU efforts to revitalize the museums are made in several layers: digitization and access processes due to Europeana; encouraging cooperation between museums, countries, and non-museum actors that have been difficult or non-existent before; projects to develop conservation methods for cultural heritage; uses of museum actors to help modernize and strengthen marginalized regions; and education and exchange projects for European students.

### Target groups and the included

The EU is not a homogenous, single actor. On the highest level, the EU in museum-relevant cultural context, were the EU organs that create agreements at the policy-level. This level only included representatives from member-states. The programmes and selection of applicants to the programme funds were also controlled by participants from member states. The mapping of the EU approaches to museums has shown that this has not only been of concern for the member-states. The EU funds museum-related projects and networks that operate outside the Union, and even beyond the European borders. This means that the EU has had an influence on the cultural policies of countries that lack the opportunity to participate in the EU decision-making policy processes. The Union has been using the museums as exhibitors, meeting places and advocates for the credibility of a European cultural aspect. Since the museum to this day are supposed to help us

understand the world, the EU grants to museums for research make the museum-worker an EU-ambassador.

A large emphasis has been on cultural heritage. The European heritage is something that Europeans need to be taught, and history creates a foundation in a collective identity, since it explains why *we* belong together (perhaps most obvious are efforts in the House of European history to create an explanatory line of development towards an understanding of the need for current EU cooperation based on peace and freedom). Uses of history in identity construction therefore create othering at the same time. This has never been problematized in the studied material. To estimate the inclusion and inclusion processes at the EU policy and project level is therefore primarily to look at who are included as participant actors and to see possible target groups.

The most outspoken target for most of the actions has been young European citizens. Apart from the youth programme, the educational programme, and the grants to organizations and networks with educational claims such as Europeana and Euroclio, there are also many youth oriented projects funded in the cultural programmes. The European heritage label is partly created because of: "the importance of raising the awareness of young people of the shared cultural heritage and hence the necessity to promote their access to European cultural heritage" (Council of the European Union, 2008). Historian Ulf Zander has once written that history is reinterpreted in each generation, because the questions posed to the past are connected to the changes of society. New approaches can make old questions obsolete and uninteresting, and put old and forgotten heritage back on the agenda (Zander, U. 2001:19). Eurobarometer-results (polls conducted by the EU) on EU citizens' self-perceived European identity have shown that younger citizens feel more European than older, which can be explained by the fact that young people has had better opportunities to travel (both as vacation and in their education) and meet people from other countries, and have had a more euro-conscious education (Fligstein, N. 2008:139). According to Jürgen Habermas, a constitutional state needs powers and civil sacrifices that are beyond the law – and the EU needs more than a constitutional order if the Union-organs expect public engagement. To Habermas, education seems like the most effective way to accomplish this, and this seems to be an EU strategy. With education, citizens are fostered into Europeaness. This also requires that the Union meet the need of increased information about EU institutions' decision-making processes (Habermas, J. 2009:75ff). The abstract character of the EU has been pointed out as an obstacle to unification by several researchers (Schmidtke, O. 1998: 47 & Fligstein, N. 2008: 11 & 125). Several museum-related efforts during the studied time, especially towards young people, have had EU-explanatory objectives, such as those of the House of European History.

The target group of EU culture is not just EU citizens, or even Europeans. In a commission report from 1996, the European area was defined as a space within an association where a set of cultural – spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional – features are dominant (Commission of the European, 1996:3). The undefined Europe was obviously considered as having distinctive features in a global context, but there have not been any approaches to isolate and cultivate these European features within the EU borders. To the contrary, the European cultural area has been considered so important and special that the Commission, in 2004, advocated that the cultural programme should add extra resources for organizations that work in the European interest and or as ambassadors of European culture in the world (Commission of the European Communities

2004a:12 ). The museums can be used to present the EU as a global role-model, especially noticeable in the objectives from the research programme - which is in line with the ambitions of the Agenda:

Europe's cultural richness and diversity is closely linked to its role and influence in the world. The European Union is not just an economic process or a trading power; it is already perceived widely and accurately as an unprecedented and successful social and cultural project. The EU is, and must aspire to become even more, an example of a "soft power" founded on norms and values such as human dignity, solidarity, tolerance, freedom of expression, respect for diversity and intercultural dialogue; values which, provided they are upheld and promoted, can be of inspiration for the world of tomorrow. (Commission 2007: 3)

The target groups are in general also Europeans who are less privileged – the structural funds are created to strengthen marginalized areas, the youth programme enables young Europeans to travel and learn about social differences and the cultural programmes overall have been important to have good-quality museum projects in states with less public resources for culture. Habermas has stated that these kinds of actions (together with harmonization of member-state taxes and welfare politics) are crucial in order to create European identity. Economic inequalities cripple the integration and create xenophobia (Habermas, J. 2009:57-58).

Opinion polls have shown that European cooperation makes a huge difference; Europeans that travel within the Union are more likely to identify themselves as European and consider EU as a motor for positive social change to a larger extent than others (they are also the ones that really experience the benefits of the four freedoms of the inner market) (Fligstein, N. 2008:124 & Fligstein, N. 2009:134). Several museum actions have been made by the Union to increase these kinds of connections, such as mobility of museum workers and objects and transnational project collaborations (which most of the grants require). These actions involve more than just member-states, and even national-states outside Europe. It was striking that a press release about the Europeana programme pointed out that one of the main perks was that the visitor could “search and explore different collections in Europe's cultural institutions in their own language in virtual form, without having to visit multiple sites or countries” (Europeana 2010). The intense promotion of digitization and creating accessible Internet resources is a way to create more direct connections between EU citizens. The benefits of museums can be more easily accessible. The increasing efforts made in the information technological sphere can also be linked to ‘visibility’. Visibility, and the need for it, has been a constantly recurring keyword in the studied material (the larger projects are created to make European heritage more visible and the cultural programmes have been criticized for not being visible enough – and EU visibility is also an important part of the implementation of programme projects). This is related to the promotion of the EU and the common European culture.

### **The creation of a common European culture area**

The museums tell narratives of cause and effect, which are reports of time-lapses. There is a difference between historic time and narrative time – a long era can be reduced to a short moment in a narrative. According to Peter Aronsson, all uses of history have in common that they must be able to provide meaning, legitimacy, and make people able to cope with change. The understanding of the past tells us who we are, where we are going, and what to engage in.

The purpose emerges when happenings can be put in a context, which creates a relevance for the time-dimension (Aronsson, P. 2004: 26ff). By bringing together museum projects from different regions, nation-states and parts of Europe, the regional and national perspective on time and cultural expressions becomes synchronized. This synchronization is much needed, as pointed out by Richard Vinen, since the various backgrounds of the European nations has given us different views on what *European* really is. While it might be difficult but possible to find a consensus on the things that have happened, these happenings might be attributed with completely different values due to the various experiences (Vinen, R. 2007:37). This has been a critique, especially towards the planning of the House of European History. According to Klaus Eder, the construction of a common European culture is represented by a learning-process, which foremost is about forgetting. This is also a classical use of history in the construction of nationalisms. Eder claims that it is easier to forget uncomfortable subjects of the past than to let them be a part of the new identity-construction (Eder, K. 2005:215). An observation is, however, that the EU is confronting the less positive parts of European heritage in the later part of the studied period. According to Cris Shore, the efforts made in culture are those that have been shown to have a unifying effect in other contexts. Cultural aspects have even been reused and reborn European. This strategy has been called departicularization (a concept established by Ana M. Alonso to illustrate how nations stole traditional symbols and celebrations of local groups and reused them as general national expressions) (Alonso, A.M. 1988: 45ff & Shore, C. 2000: 54). Close to, if not all museum-actions connected to EU are departicularization processes, which is interesting since the older departicularizations (which the Union is gathering culture from) have been constructed to create other kinds of borders and cohesion.

The regional support for culture has been discussed by several researchers. There is a reoccurring idea that the support for regions serves the point of affecting EU citizens without having to enter a general national sphere that can counteract the European integration. The regions are functioning at a level that can be controlled more directly, unlike the member-states. The regions are also often older than the nations (and thus also the historical and cultural identity-factors), and while the regions were incorporated in nations, some of them have grown politically and organizationally strong (helped by the EU, which donates grants for their strengthening and co-operations with other regions). Many regions are represented in the EU and are conducting heavy lobbying. Some researcher claims that the Union and its organs has been using its mandate to take over nation-state functions and make the EU citizens shift their political loyalty from a well known system to a new territory and order far away, and the region-level serves as a helping hand. By adding resources to the region, the EU approaches its citizens and gives them support in places where they actually live and feel a connection to, adding a positive view on the European integration. And since the old regional identity remains, the changes are not perceived as influential (Ashworth, G.J. 1994: 21, Grundberg, J. 2002: 34-35 & Castiglione, D. 2009: 32). The support for regional actors also shows an including approach towards European minorities. Minorities are briefly mentioned in the Agenda, where the Commission claims that the EU has sharpened the focus on promoting support for human rights, including the protection and promotion of cultural rights, the rights of indigenous peoples as well as the rights of persons belonging to minorities and socially marginalized people (Commission of the European Communities 2007:7).

The respect for national diversity versus the EU striving for a common European culture and identity shows an inconsistency in the studied material. The European Union has first and foremost been defined – by the Union – as a citizenship based on common values (Official Journal of the European Communities, 2000:10). The common values were something that EU researcher Cris Shore discussed in 2000, and pointed out that the success of the EU identity was depending on the ability to create a European consciousness; a consensus on normative categories such as “a European citizen,” “a good European,” “a European problem,” “common European values,” “European culture” and even “European.” To Shore, the EU task was first of all to conceptualize these norms (Shore, C. 2000: 30). According to Peter Aronsson, the establishing of a past is identity-constructing since it teaches us values and explains why some events have been important to the development of our character (Aronsson, P. 2004: 13). And this becomes interesting considering the high number of times ‘European values’ are mentioned in the studied material with museums-relevance (the European values that are mentioned foremost are those of peace, liberty and solidarity).

Strong European nationalisms are sometimes considered problematic in the studied material (for instance, they are clumped together with dictatorship and war in the planning of the House of European history) and distress is especially noticeable in the interest of cultural heritage. In a work plan from 2010 about the cultural heritage label, the Commission stated that it can be problematic that the cultural heritage sites are mostly considered national. From an EU-perspective, the national interpretations can be challenging, since they provide border-lines and experienced essential differences between the people of the member-states, rather than giving historical authenticity to the current European cooperation. The EU labeling is going to put emphasis on the European perspective, by making it visible, credible and educational (Europeiska Kommissionen 2010:3). The national aspect is, in other words, going to be reduced to the benefit of the European. The national interference has also been depicted as stumbling blocks in the progress of museum-relevant culture efforts. In the report *Making citizenship work: fostering European culture and diversity through programs for youth, culture, audiovisual and civic participation* from 2004, the Commission discusses the success of the Culture 2000 program, adding that the member-states handicapped the European culture co-operations by prioritizing national projects and failing to inform the EU citizens about available high quality cultural actions with a European dimension to a sufficient extent (Commission of the European Communities (2004a:10-11).

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<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/8424826/House-of-European-History-cost-estimates-double-to-137-million.html> [2012-02-11]

## Author presentations

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# Eunamus – the project

European National Museums: Identity politics, the uses of the past and the European citizen

EuNaMus research project explores the creation and power of the heritage created and presented by European national museums. The focus in our project is on understanding the conditions for using the past in negotiations that recreate citizenship as well as the layers of territorial belonging beyond the actual nation-state.

This project is one of the few humanistic projects supported by the Seventh Framework Programme, run by the European Commission. It has grown out of collaboration between university partners connecting starting with a network of young and senior cultural researchers supported by the Marie Curie programme, and will for three years (2010–2013) proceed by a series of investigations beyond the stereotypical ideas of museums as either a result of outstanding heroic individuals, exponents of a materialization of pure Enlightenment ideas or outright ideological nationalistic constructs disciplining citizens into obedience.

The research is pursued through multi-disciplinary collaboration between eight leading institutions and a series of sub-projects studying institutional path dependencies, the handling of conflicts, modes of representation, cultural policy and visitors' experiences in national museums.

Understanding the cultural force of national museums will provide citizens, professionals and policy makers with reflexive tools to better communicate and create an understanding of diversity and community in developing cultural underpinning for democratic governance.

The major results will be available via Open Access, but a series of books will also come out of the efforts. The best way to keep up is to follow [www.eunamus.eu](http://www.eunamus.eu).

## **Areas of research:**

Mapping and framing institutions 1750-2010: national museums interacting with nation-making

Uses of the past: narrating the nation and negotiating conflict

The museology of Europe: the language of art, the local nation and the virtual Europe

Museum policies 1990-2010: negotiating political and professional utopia

Museum citizens: audience identities and experiences

National museums, history and a changing Europe

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This EuNaMus report studies how nations develop policy in order to deploy national museums in the redefinition of the national vision. Considering museums as utopian institutions, it focusses on the negotiations between politicians and museum professionals in Europe from 1990-2010. In-depth case studies are presented from France, Norway, Estonia, Hungary and Greece, in order to examine the broad range of change occurring throughout Europe. The report also examines the EU as a new actor in these museum negotiations. The findings indicate that museums have responded to differing circumstances using five broad policy making techniques to engage in national redefinition: re-formulation, re-narration, re-mediation, re-organisation and re-professionalization. The report suggests that national and transnational narratives coexist uneasily in national museums due in large part to three competing utopian visions articulated by Europe's various policymakers: EUtopia, Multicultural Utopia, and National Historical Utopia. How museums can balance these visions is a key issue for these institutions in the years to come.

The report is produced within the three-year research programme, EuNaMus – European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, coordinated at Tema Q at Linköping University ([www.eunamus.eu](http://www.eunamus.eu)). EuNaMus explores the creation and power of the heritage created and presented at European national museums to the world, Europe and its states, as an unsurpassable institution in contemporary society. National museums are defined and explored as processes of institutionalized negotiations where material collections and displays make claims and are recognized as articulating and representing national values and realities. Questions asked in the project are why, by whom, when, with what material, with what result and future possibilities are these museums shaped.

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