WITHIN A CIRCLE OF AFFILIATES. MUSEUM AS A RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY-CREATING INSTITUTION

Beata Nessel-Łukasik
Maria Grzegorzewska University
ORCID 0000-0002-1039-2111

Introduction

One of the roles social museums play is consolidating interpersonal bonding.[1] This has been emphasized by both authors of various museum concepts (ecomuseum[2] open museum[3] participatory museum,[4] engaged museum,[5] relational museum,[6] and others), as well as participants of museum programmes[7] and studies.[8] As a result, shaping relations between the institution's various stakeholder groups[9] has entered for good the discourse on a modern museum,[10] posing the question, among others, whether, and if so, for what reasons, the institution should be assuming further social commitment[11] However, the growing diversification of museum activities on the one hand, and the intensifying dynamics of social change on the other cause that the question of conscious and responsible relation building remains the source of numerous dilemmas. This applies to e.g., museums' cooperation with their environment stakeholders,[12] such as institutions, organizations, and people, who based on the principles of good communication, but also consultations, partnership, and dialogue[13] want to aspire to reach a shared goal,[14] and create durable relations in order to be able to effectively affect their environment[15] and boost social capital. How can, thus, the efficiency of building such relations be seen from the perspective of museum curators and representatives of this stakeholder group? Should they be established as part of Corporate Social Responsibility,

CSR,[16] or in compliance with the ISO 26000,[17] or maybe on completely different principles?

The goal of the present paper is to verify the above issues based on the analysis of the statements made by the participants of the 'Study of the Museum Public in Poland' Project[18] who in the course of qualitative research[19] not only expressed their opinion on the key groups of the public,[20] but also shared their reflections on the importance of social responsibility[21] in shaping and managing relations which are created among the above-enumerated museum stakeholder categories. What is their opinion on museum's cooperation with respective circles of those external affiliates? Do the effects of this kind of initiative really provide grounds for changes in the institution's organization culture[22] and affect the range of its social commitment?[23] What doubts are aroused by the issue of such relations being established in the museums, which do not always have tools allowing them the carefully listen to 'what are the main issues people around focus on'?

Dilemmas of the affiliates

On the grounds of the amassed materials[24] it can be said that in the participants' answer the topic of the range of museums' social responsibility[25] towards their environment stakeholders was often tackled. These, however, can hardly be associated with the implementation of a definite

museum model.[26] In effect, a deepened analysis of the discussion and interviews with museum curators, local leaders, and affiliates, allows only to identify four types of dilemmas faced by museum curators and stakeholder representatives who expect building long-term relations between a museum and respective circles of its affiliates.

The first dilemma type will speak of a deepening relation diversification. The groups interested in establishing cooperation with museums who stand out do not only encompass professional circles connected with a given institution's profile (artists, scientists, educators, culture animators, employees of other cultural and educational institutions, these including teachers, but also the individuals who co-create the museum collection). A reiterated deepened analysis of the whole material demonstrates that in this case also informal groups are equally important: those made up of social activists or volunteers. *We have relations with other associations, organisations. More and more willingly these resources of cooperation are built: Musical Centre, Chanterelle Fraternity, Association of Friends* (2017_01_Muz2). *There's such a group of so-called 'social activists'. They aren't volunteers, but people who show up for a definite purpose, to do a definite thing* (2017_07_Muz) *Who are those volunteers? A housewife, teachers, school and university students, soldiers,* (2018_11_Muz).

These increasingly varied circles of associates that can be found based on the research into participants' statements and publications related to other museums[27] and other cultural institutions[28] lead to creating gradually more heterogeneous circles often requiring a more 'tailored approach'. Therefore, as the second dilemma type related to managing the circle of individuals involved in museum's activity there emerges the lack of definite cooperation standards. As a result, institutions are faced with various challenges. On the one hand they try to apply the solutions which have been already implemented as a result of long-standing activities thanks to the involvement of the institution in practices of a given circle, while on the other, they want to satisfy the subsequent needs, those which many institutions have no tools as yet to cater to. *To me, a social activist who looks at life somewhat differently, the very cooperation is extremely important* […]. *A museum is a place where professionals work. If I need knowledge, I know who to turn to* (2018_12_Org). *We used to have coffee, cakes on any occasion at the museum. And now we don't even wish to do anything like this* […]. *Later some other actions started, and we couldn't do it here. We get together at my place* […]. *We don't want to get in anybody's way in the museum* (2019_07_Sen1). *We do have a big problem with volunteers, because it's really difficult to find them, though appearances may claim to the contrary, and every year the problem recurs. Last year, we even actually stopped looking, because we decided that it was a waste of time and energy* (2017_02_Muz).

Such situations cause that attempts at extending museum's social commitment to shaping the institution's relations with a given circle of outside affiliates in many a case is connected with the necessity for employees to work out completely new standards which will not only be in harmony with definite legal regulations,[29] but within the respective spheres of shared activity will also fully allow for a large scale of diversification of given stakeholder groups'

expectations for their activity to be supported by the museum.[30] *NGOs can use rooms. There is a timetable where they can book their time slot. Always once a month, or twice, or occasionally three times, we book this room for the Association's meeting* (2019_01_Sen). *They come to us asking very simple questions* […]. *We're such an info bank* (2018_02_Muz). *We've got vast groups of fans, friends who visit us not only during exhibitions and lectures, but who also simply pop in when passing by to have a chat* […]. *They themselves generate ideas, they put forth their initiatives. At times to such a degree that we find it difficult to meet their requirements* (2019_08_Muz1).

An information centre, meeting venue, space to implement one's own initiatives are not the only needs that museum curators encounter when interested in the development of the institution's dialogicality within the sphere of shaping cooperation with the environment stakeholders. The third such issue is lack of appropriate tools to build heterogenous relations beyond the museum's threshold. As a result, the increasing scale of the diversification of the needs of the groups which contribute to the museum's works cause that the translation of the idea of openness or participation[31] popularized over the several decades into long-term scale of certain activities does not always permit to be implemented within the institution's environment. *The staff are unable to realize how important it is for the community if an organization or institution opens up. They often prefer to do certain things themselves, although they could use our cooperation* (2019_02_Org). *Certainly, good communication with the staff, because they are easily available and open to cooperation* [...] *If we were to bump into a wall the first or the second time round, the cooperation wouldn't be as good* (2020_08_Dor2). *Relations are built on well-organized work, but also museum's efficiency, because to build relations it's like with a relationship, you need time and money* […] *It has to be arranged in such a way that if I cooperate with these people, it's real* (2017_03_Muz1). *It's not an easy process: consistency and persistence in action.* [...] *It's not formalized cooperation, but a relation of mutual giving* (2019_05_Muz1).

However, it is not only this lack of a broadly understood institution's openness, of mindfulness of the staff, of budget resources, or the lack of consistency that have a negative impact on social responsibility in the shaping of the range and format of constructing museum's cooperation with respective circles of associates from the institution's social environment. As the yet another fourth type of dilemmas, let us point here to the increase in the dynamics of changes occurring outside museums and the deepening of various sorts of crises which could be observed, e.g., during the COVID-19 pandemic. *If they close down the institution, it may turn out that some people will not have their work contract prolonged* (2020_02_Muz2). *The museum was not there. I missed it a lot, because I was cut off from all my activities* (2020_02_Dor). *Pandemic events cut us from all that was to follow. The question is how the Association will revive? Who will want to act and come? That's what worries me. I've no idea what our activity will look like* (2020_03_Org).

In effect, we can say that it is not merely the lack of complementarity of internal solutions, but also the implementing of definite standards on the management level that has

a negative impact both on the cooperation range, and durability of the already established relations in the event of challenges generated by external factors. Despite it all, however, museums continue seeking for such solutions which will make it possible for them to shape the institution's further development also by maintaining constant cooperation with their environment stakeholders, and to gradually increase their joint resources.

Museum curators' responses

The awareness that the institution's future can be shaped based on the increase in social capital of the circles that cooperate with the institution[32] causes that regardless of numerous dilemmas, museums work on implementing the idea of social responsibility for the created relations. That is why they invest time and resources in consciously building such circles around the museum which would allow to boost their impact on different dimensions of social life thanks to the application of definite solutions to environment stakeholders. *We have groups which we're on good terms with, e.g., the Armenian minority with whom our relations are excellent.* [...] *At the moment they're opening their house, and we're helping them with it. They also continue participating all the time in our different activities* (2017_04_Muz1). *We've assumed the responsibility that volunteers who come for a year aren't maybe strictly under our control, but in a way somehow we take care of them* (2019_04_Muz). *We gather these friends* [...] *cyclically inviting them to meet with us here* (2017_06_Muz1).

A museum on the one hand open to various environments, on the other, participating in the social life of those groups on a daily basis, seems the first of the solutions which may attenuate the risk of problems negatively affecting their presence in the museum. Another such way to effectively build durable relations is also dialogicality[33] which allows rooting of various groups and the consolidation of their feeling of agency and involvement in the implementation of such processes. Finally, as the last factor shaping the cooperation frames close to social responsibility, we can point to getting to know the needs, as well as a certain sensitivity to the commitment of preserving the continuity of increasing the resources of each party participating in relation building and consolidating the bonds which are created through those activities. *The museum wants to satisfy the borderline needs* (2019_05_Muz1). *The shared mission unites it. We've got similar priorities and can sense what is the most important to us* (2018_12_Gov). *The essence of being at a given place and doing something together, learning from one anther* (2020_10_Muz2). *It's a very tender relationship* (2020_01_Dor).

It goes without saying that taking all the-above factors into consideration contributes to conscious establishing of relationships and surrounding the museum with communities, as well as to boosting the institution's new resources. That is why in the opinion of many study participants when it comes to their associates, it is only the connecting of museum's definite activities with an attempt to implement principles of social responsibility and definite management solution that has a positive impact on making the museum both one of the main facilitators of the processes involving yet subsequent social groups, as well as turning it into an organization which can effectively react at moments of crises. *Not only immigrants from Arab countries, but also those from other parts of the world* [...] *who can be volunteers, and who can constitute an important element of museum life* (2017_04_Muz1). *A museum is ready to embrace a problem. It shows life without prejudices.* [...] *We begin to wonder more on what's there we've got in common, than what makes us different. We look for semblances and differences. This is museum's unquestionable strength* (2017_08_Muz2).[34]

Conclusions

In conclusion we can say that although over the last decade the CRS concept and the ISO 26000 Norm have become in Poland an important reference point for shaping organisation's culture and its operation principles, building relations between museums and museum's environment stakeholders is not always based on implementing change in managing a given institution. As a consequence, some museums who on daily basis operate within network society[35] and risk society[36] often continue without appropriate tools to consolidate the awareness of their social responsibility for such relations. Nevertheless, despite this many of them more frequently perceive the potential to implement such solutions which, as the research shows, do not only facilitate translating the assumptions of sociomuseology[37] into a given institution's praxis regardless of the museum's model or the character of its environment, but also prove to be a tool facilitating solutions to dilemmas which inevitably accompany the preservation of the museums' socio-creating function and their work to boost social capital. Therefore, it is so important to work out principles for creating long-term relations with environment stakeholders also in a museum.

Abstract: Museums as community-creating institutions are formed by various circles of stakeholders. Many of those circles result from a cooperation with a definite milieu. However, it is this extension of the circle of museum's affiliates and a gradually bigger impact of external factors on the range and form of these these actions that make museums once again face the question how to consciously and responsibly undertake subsequent social commitments? How to establish durable relations that require participation in long-term processes in this 'irresponsible world'? How to create circles of associates for this to translate into the development of the social capital of the institution and its environment? Based on the results of a subsequent deepened analysis of the material amassed in the 'Study of the Museum Public in Poland' Project in the course of a 4-years' quality study, four types of dilemmas have been presented: they are the dilemmas which the study participants tackled when talking about the museum public (discussed in a different publication), and which are faced by museum curators and their affiliates keen on an efficient cooperation

beyond the museum and on establishing durable relations. The analysis of these dilemmas will aim at demonstrating how the deepening of the awareness of social responsibility can contribute to reaching socio-creative goals of museums regardless of the operation model a given institution implements on a daily basis.

Keywords: community-creating museum, relations, social responsibility, social capital, socio museum.

Endnotes

1   K. Barańska, *Muzeum w sieci znaczeń. Zarządzanie z perspektywy nauk humanistycznych*, Kraków 2013, p. 163; R. Wiśniewski, G. Pol, R. Pląsek, A. Bąk, *Oswajając zmienność. Kultura lokalna z perspektywy domów kultury*, Warszawa 2021, pp. 127-129.

2   G.H. Riviére, 'L'écomuseé, un modèle évolutif (1971-1980)', in: A. Desvallées, *Vagues. Une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie*, vol. 1, Mâcon 1992, pp. 440-445.

3   One of the programmes on the idea of an open insitution was implemented at the Museum of Modern Art. For more see Muzeum Otwarte 2011 – Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie, artmuseum.pl [Accessed: 26.04.2022].

4   One of the latest texts on N. Simon's idea is the conversation of M. Szeląg, PhD with K. Jagodzińska. See more 'Wzmacniający potencjał partycypacji. Rozmowa z dr Katarzyną Jagodzińską' | EPALE, europa.eu [Accessed: 26 April 2022].

5   With reference to both above-mentioned models, Łukasz Gaweł discusses engaged institution as the third type. Ł. Gaweł, 'Społeczna odpowiedzialność organizacji kultury. Muzeum w otoczeniu społecznym', in: *Zarządzanie w kulturze. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. by A. Pluszyńska, A. Konior, Ł. Gaweł, Warszawa 2020, p. 85.

6   J. Byszewski, B. Nessel-Łukasik, *Muzeum relacyjne. Przed/ za progiem*, Sulejówek 2020.

7   Muzealny think-tank: Muzea i sąsiedztwo // publikacja by POLIN Museum – Issuu; O Atlasie – Atlas muzealnej partycypacji, muzeumpartycypacyjne.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].

8   Muzealny think-tank: Muzea i sąsiedztwo // publikacja by POLIN Museum – Issuu; O Atlasie – Atlas muzealnej partycypacji, muzeumpartycypacyjne.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].

9   In Robert E. Freeman's stakeholder theory various categories were enumerated, however in my papers I limit myself to one only: community/neighbours interesariuszy otoczenia. For more see B. Wit, 'Model biznesu z perspektywy interesariuszy', Quarterly Journal, 4 (19, 2016), (p. 88).

10 The example of such a debate can be seen in the meeting at the Museum of Modern Art. on 8 March 2016: Museums versus Community – Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. Meeting with Joanna Mytkowska and Claire Bishop. For more see: Muzea a wspólnota – Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie – Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie, artmuseum.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].

11 The last such meeting of museum curators and academics was the Conference: 'Modern Museum: Relations and Narratives' held by the District Museum in Toruń on 20-22 April 2022.

12 B. Wit, *op. cit.*

13 M. Grzybek, *Zarządzanie relacjami z interesariuszami jako jeden z elementów społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu*, Zarządzanie relacjami z interesariuszami jako jeden z elementów społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu – Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl [Accessed: 14 June 2022].

14 R. Wiśniewski, G. Pol, R. Pląsek, A. Bąk, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

15 P. Bartkowiak, D. Dudek, E. Wszendybył-Skulska, *Koncepcja społecznej odpowiedzialności i koncepcja zrównoważonego rozwoju w procesie funkcjonowania organizacji*, Kraków 2016, p. 43.

16 EUR-Lex – 52011DC0681 – EN – EUR-Lex, europa.eu [Accessed: 14 June 2022].

17 ISO 26000 | Polski Komitet Normalizacyjny, pkn.pl [Accessed: 14 June 2022].

18 Detailed information on the respective stages of the NIMOZ Project which focuses on varied museum public in Poland (local community / 2018, elderly citizens / 2019, working age adults / 2020, children and youth / 2021, at: Publiczność muzeów, nimoz.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].

19 Quality research was conducted as IDIs (N: 110) and FGIs (N: 33).

20   A detailed analysis of the results was collected in the publication: *Museum Public* compiled by the NIMOZ team implementing the Programme: P.T. Kwiatkowski, B. Nessel-Łukasik, J. Grzonkowska (in preparation).

21 S. Kowalska, 'Argumenty za i przeciw społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu', *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Humanitas. Zarządzanie*, 1(2014), (p. 211).

22 Ł. Gaweł, op. cit. One of the programmes on the topic was the edition of the museum think tank in 2017. For more see Muzealny think-tank: muzeum odpowiedzialne społecznie – Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].

23 For more see 'Muzealny think-tank „Muzeum odpowiedzialne społecznie"' | Muzeum POLIN, youtube.com [Accessed: 26 April 2022].

24 The quality research as part of the NIMOZ Project was implemented in 2017-2020.

25 B. Rok, *Odpowiedzialny biznes w nieodpowiedzialnym świecie. Raport Akademii Rozwoju Filantropii w Polsce oraz Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu*, Warszawa 2004, p. 46, Odpowiedzialny biznes w nieodpowiedzialnym świecie – Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].

26 Ł. Gaweł, *op. cit.*

27 A. Czerner, E. Nieroba, *Na styku historii i codzienności. Społeczność lokalna wobec miejsca pamięci*, Opole 2017, pp. 253-304.

28 R. Wiśniewski, G. Pol, R. Pląsek, A. Bąk, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-147.

29 An example of this can be seen in, e.g., the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work, Journal of Laws 2020, item 1057.

30 P. Bartkowiak, D. Dudek, E. Wszendybył-Skulska, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

31 N. Simon, *The Art of Relevance*, California 2016.

32 P.T. Kwiatkowski, B. Nessel-Łukasik, op. cit., pp. 39-58.

33 In this case dialogality means enabling/ facilitating in reaction to the need of the Other, which is connected with the sense of responsibility of the Other. For more see M. Januszkiewicz, 'Dialogiczność jako demitologizacja Ja solipsystycznego', *Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe*, 1 (19, 2015), p. 74.

34 Owing to yet another crisis this motif resounds most sonorously in the course of activities implemented with museum curators and refugees from Ukraine in minds; there had been 116 such actions by 12 April 2022. For more see Kopia Zestawienie – stan na 12 kwietnia 2022.xlsx, nimoz.pl [Accessed: 5 May 2022].

[35] M. Castells, *Społeczeństwo sieci*, trans. by M. Marody, Warszawa 2007; T.H. Eriksen, *Tyrania chwili. Szybko i wolno płynący czas w erze informacji*, transl. by G. Sokół, Warszawa 2003.

[36] U. Beck, *Społeczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze od innej nowoczesności*, transl. by S. Cieśla, Warszawa 2002.

[37] P. Assunção dos Santo, 'Introduction: To understand New Museology in the 21st Century', in: 'To understand New Museology in the 21st Century', *Socio-museology*, 3 (27, 2010): 'Museology in tribal contexts', *Icofom Study Series*, 1 (49, 2021).

Bibliography

Barańska Katarzyna, *Muzeum w sieci znaczeń. Zarządzanie z perspektywy nauk humanistycznych* (Kraków; Wydawnictwo Attyka 2013).

Bartkowiak Piotr, Dudek Dariusz, Wszendybył-Skulska Ewa, *Koncepcja społecznej odpowiedzialności i koncepcja zrównoważonego rozwoju w procesie funkcjonowania organizacji*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2016).

Beck Urlich, *Społeczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze od innej nowoczesności*, trans. by Stanisław Cieśla (Warszawa; Wydawnictwo Naukowe „Scholar", 2002).

Byszewski Janusz, Nessel-Łukasik Beata, *Muzeum relacyjne. Przed/za progiem* (Sulejówek: Muzeum Józefa Piłsudskiego w Sulejówku, Muzeum Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2020) (*Museology,* B 1).

Castells Manuel, *Społeczeństwo sieci*, trans. by Mirosława Marody (Warszawa, 2007).

Czerner Anna, Nieroba Elżbieta, *Na styku historii i codzienności. Społeczność lokalna wobec miejsca pamięci* (Opole: Centralne Muzeum Jeńców Wojennych w Łambinowicach-Opolu, 2017).

Eriksen Thomas H., *Tyrania chwili. Szybko i wolno płynący czas w erze informacji*, transl. by Grzegorz Sokół (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2003).

Freeman Robert E., *Strategic Management. A Stakeholder Approach*, (Boston: Pitman, 1984).

Friedman Andrew L., Miles Samantha, *Stakeholders. Theory and Practice*, (Oxford: University Press, 2006).

Gaweł Łukasz, 'Społeczna odpowiedzialność organizacji kultury. Muzeum w otoczeniu społecznym', in: *Zarządzanie w kulturze. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. by Anna Pluszyńska, Agnieszka Konior, Łukasz Gaweł, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2020), pp. 81-94.

Januszkiewicz Michał, 'Dialogiczność jako demitologizacja Ja solipsystycznego', *Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe*, 1(9, 2015), 284-298.

Kowalska Sylwia, 'Argumenty za i przeciw społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu', *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Humanitas. Zarządzanie,* 1 (2014), 211-221.

Kwiatkowski Piotr T., Nessel-Łukasik Beata, *Muzeum w społeczności lokalnej. Raport*, (Warszawa: Narodowy Instytut Muzealnictwa i Ochrony Zbiorów, 2018).

Riviére Georges H., 'L'écomuseé, un modèle évolutif (1971-1980)', in: André Desvallées, *Vagues. Une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie*, vol. 1, Mâcon 1992, pp. 440-445.

Rok Bolesław, *Odpowiedzialny biznes w nieodpowiedzialnym świecie. Raport Akademii Rozwoju Filantropii w Polsce oraz Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu*, Warszawa 2004.

Simon Nina, *The Art of Relevance* (California: Museum 2.0 Santa Cruz, 2016).

Soin Maciej, 'Teoria interesariuszy a neopragmatyzm', *Prakseologia*, 159 (2017), 83-106.

'To understand New Museology in the 21st Century', *Sociomuseology*, 27 (3, 2010).

Wiśniewski Rafał, Pol Grażyna, Pląsek Rafał, Bąk Agnieszka, *Oswajając zmienność. Kultura lokalna z perspektywy domów kultury* (Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2021).

Wit Bogdan, 'Model biznesu z perspektywy interesariuszy', *Quarterly Journal*, 4 (19, 2016), 87-99.

Beata Nessel-Łukasik PhD

A sociologist, art historian, graduate from the School of Social Sciences of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences; a grant holder of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage; a museum curator affiliated to the National Museum in Warsaw (1998–2010) and the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek (2011–2021). She created the Department of Local Programmes, co-authored a relational museum, Social Archives in Sulejówek, and other participatory projects; she authored papers published in *Kultura i Społeczeństwo, Kultura Współczesna, Zarządzanie Kulturą, and others.* A member of the Association of Polish Museum Curators (SMP) and of ICOM, she is a lecturer at the Department of General Sociology and Interdisciplinary Research of the Maria Grzegorzewska University; e-mail: bnessel@aps.edu.pl.

Cite this article as: Nessel-Łukasik B.; WITHIN A CIRCLE OF AFFILIATES. MUSEUM AS A RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY-CREATING INSTITUTION. Muz., 2022(63): 59-64
Table of contents 2022: https://muzealnictworocznik.com/issue/14332