

Civic Culture in Slovenia: “Museums as Spaces for Intercultural Dialogue, Learning and Discussion”

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Abstract: This paper, which is not a study, but rather an overview of collaborative practices between institutions in the field of culture and education, presents examples of good practice in this area, both in Slovenia and the wider region. The focus is on the role of museums as cultural institutions in the learning process, in the course of informal learning. Today, museums are visited by millions of people and could therefore be compared with sports events. The most numerous museum visitors are the young who purposefully visit exhibitions and participate in special activities organised by museums. In the last 50 years museums have increasingly focused on young people, especially preschool children.

New museums targeting children are emerging as well, with their own economic mindset and goals. But new museums also open as the role of tourism and its special offering become more sophisticated. Today, museums welcome individuals and groups interested in learning something new, unusual and different. School children come to build up their knowledge and broaden their horizons through museum exhibitions. A mere reflection of everyday life that museums offer can draw people to a museum. Activities specially designed for visitors are particularly attractive: workshops, lectures, roundtables, encounters with historic figures and similar. This paper looks into examples of good practices in collaboration between institutions in Slovenia, where the culture and education sectors together offer novel, different forms of learning.

Key words: museum, education, visitors

1. Introduction

At its 2018 annual session in Berlin Europa Nostra adopted an important document — the Berlin Call to Action, with a special emphasis on the role of heritage and institutions responsible for it.

“Cultural heritage must be given a much bigger importance in education activities — both formal and informal — for all ages. This will stimulate stronger public engagement for the safeguard and transmission of our cultural heritage. Special attention must be given to history education and heritage interpretation placed in a broader context of Europe’s past, present and future. This will equip Europe’s citizens and especially our children and the youth, with the necessary tools for gaining a deeper understanding of the on-going encounters and exchanges within Europe as well as between Europe and other cultures of the world. All of these activities will help build more respectful and meaningful relationships between people and the places where they live, work or

visit. This will also facilitate a better understanding, respect and inclusion of new inhabitants in Europe.” (Europa Nostra — The Berlin Call Action). This places particular importance on the cooperation between the education and the culture sectors in countries where these sectors are either separated or culture has somehow got lost.

In the wake of the financial crisis Europe has been facing increasing social inequality, diversity of populations, populism, radicalisation and terrorist threats. New technologies and digital communication transform society by changing people’s lifestyles, consumption patterns and power relations in economic value chains.

The role of culture in these changing circumstances is more important than ever. The 2017 Eurobarometer survey showed that 53% of the respondents believed that EU Member States were close in terms of shared values, while 40% thought they were distant in terms of shared values (European Parliament, 2018).

Learning can be long term and short term. A learner might not use their new knowledge or ability until a long time after the actual learning event.

Learning in museums is therefore a complicated business. It is not surprising that the difficulty of measuring learning in informal environments like cultural organisations is continually debated. Many of the learning outcomes from such environments are “soft” outcomes. These include attitudes, values, emotions and beliefs. Often these outcomes are not even seen as evidence of learning as the emphasis is on hard facts and demonstrable skills (Black, 2005; Falk, 2009; Adult museum programs, 2002).

Also in museums they don’t know the prior knowledge of their users and so would be unable to make judgments about how much users had learnt. Unlike in formal education, museums will not be able to make judgments about how much their users have learnt. Users themselves will be able to make judgments about their own learning. They will be able to articulate what they found out and if that was what they were looking for. They can say whether they were inspired or had an enjoyable time. Collecting evidence of learning outcomes in museums therefore must involve asking users how they feel about their own learning (Black, 2005; Wallace, 2006; Falk, 2009).

2. Literature Review

In this paper I drew from the following sources: Peter van Mensch and Leontine Meijer van Mensch’s work *New Trends in Museology*; the book is a result of active collaboration between the authors and the School of Museology in Celje, which was part of the programme of the Museum of Recent History Celje. The 2007 workshops “Current Trends — Future Realities” looked into contemporary challenges of museology; “Museums and Identity” workshop the same year tackled one of the key and basic issues – the role and mission of museums in society. “The Future of Memories” (2008) laid out a future-ward perspective of museum work between its theory and practice and its ethics and methodology. “The Learning and Exhibitions” workshop (2009) dealt with museum communication, participation and interpretation of museum materials in an always topical relationship between museums and their public and users.

The Council of Europe project *Shared Histories for a Europe without dividing lines* (Shared History — for Europe without dividing lines, 2015) was launched in 2010 and concluded in April 2014 with the final conference in Vienna.

The main outcome of the project is an interactive e-book aimed at teacher trainers, teachers in training, practising teachers and their pupils. The e-book contains examples of teaching materials relating to significant historical examples of interactions and convergences within Europe, along with strategies, methods and teaching techniques directed towards gaining a fuller awareness of these interactions and convergences. These materials

have been developed within the framework of an active methodology and teaching approach, multiperspectivity and a focus on the acquisition of identified key skills.

Other sources listed below supplement the broader presentation of contents pertaining to the development of cooperation between cultural and educational institutions as the authors develop and analyse good practices in the education of museum visitors and users (Black, 2005; Falk, 2009), and provide links to professional non-governmental organisations supporting the work of museums (ICOM — International Council of Museums) and (OECD).

3. Content

“Museums are experiencing an ‘educational turn’. The last quarter of the 20th century, education shifted from the periphery to the core business of museum work. In more recent years this development resulted in an emphasis on learning instead of education. This reflects an important paradigmatic change in the perception of the role of museums. The perspective changed from institution to user” (Mensch, 2011).

Arts and culture education in Slovenia, which includes learning in museums, archives and libraries, was first defined with the National Guidelines for Arts and Culture Education. The guidelines were prepared by a team of experts in education and culture appointed by the National Education Institute Slovenia in 2008 (The National Education Institute Slovenia). This strategic document, which represents the foundations of the arts and culture education, was adopted in 2009.

At the beginning of the 21st century, arts and culture education became an important global issue. The Slovenian National Programme for Culture highlighted the importance of culture education as early as in 2004. The first UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education (March 2006) produced a document entitled Road Map for Arts Education. The same year saw the adoption of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (Official Journal of the European Union). For Slovenia, culture has always been and remains the historical foundation of our national identity, which is the central element for which our country is recognised as a modern European state.

Cultural education in Slovenia is the result of joint efforts of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, which promote and foster active partnerships between cultural and educational institutions (Kovačič, 2008). Different countries have different concepts of culture, so I would like to point out that the Slovenian programme for arts and culture education incorporates:

- 1) reading culture,
- 2) film and audiovisual culture,
- 3) music,
- 4) intermedia arts (multimedia),
- 5) cultural heritage,
- 6) fine arts,
- 7) performing arts (Kulturno umetnostna vzgoja, 2011).

The Cultural Bazaar took place for the tenth consecutive year in 2018. By now already traditional, the Cultural Bazaar is a professional training event for educators and culture professionals, both those practising in the field of formal education and those working with the general public who wish to integrate culture-related content in their work, as well as for students.

The Cultural Bazaar brings together the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning — in short — those seeking information and having an interest in arts and culture education. In 2018, this one-day event opened its doors to almost 300 institutions and numerous freelancers in culture. It featured lectures, workshops and panel discussions, performances (theatre, music, dance, film and similar), guided tours of exhibitions and appearances by various artists and artist groups.

The aim of the Cultural Bazaar is to:

- 1) present quality projects and programmes offered by cultural institutions for children and young adults;
- 2) encourage cooperation and partnership between cultural institutions and pre-school institutions and schools as well as foster partnerships between cultural institutions;
- 3) raise awareness of the role of cultural and arts education in schools and society in general;
- 4) inform the public about the benefits of quality arts and cultural education for children and young people and the advantages of its integration in preschool institutions and schools;
- 5) encourage creativity and creative partnerships in culture and education.

The Bazaar is also the place and an opportunity for people to:

- 1) understand why culture and cultural heritage bring such important value to our lives,
- 2) obtain comprehensive information about Slovenian cultural creativity in one place in a single day,
- 3) meet prominent artists, creatives and guardians of our cultural heritage in person,
- 4) devise their own activity programme to complement the curriculum,
- 5) find information on all events organised by cultural institutions throughout the year.

The Cultural Bazaar is also the right place if you wish to organise a cultural event for children, pupils or students or get new ideas for cultural projects to be implemented by the school itself or in cooperation with cultural institutions. You can make contacts to organise a new extra-curricular activity, add content to a compulsory optional activity to supplement history and language lessons, and more.

It is especially important for teachers to know the contents they can recommend to parents in order to help them spend their free time with their families creatively. This year was specifically dedicated to the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

The Ministry of Culture pursues the policy focused on professional training based on good practices. How successful such collaborations can be, is evident already in the fact that Cultural Bazaar alone, for example, is visited on average by 2,500 children and young adults as well as other visitors from Slovenia (Report by the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia, 2018).

I would like to present a project that is a unique product of successful collaboration. The Cultural Heritage Week is a project led by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, which is responsible also for the immovable heritage, as well as by both ministries, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. The CHW is closely linked to the Europe-wide project European Heritage Days, which has already established a significant cooperation network. The project is theme-based. The thread of 2016 was Heritage around Us. As many as 158 educational institutions and 124 cultural institutes, 38 municipalities, 95 societies and associations, 35 kindergartens and 30 tourist organisations took part in the project and related events, and as many as 28 schools integrated heritage into their curriculum.

The year 2017 was dedicated to WATER — from myth to architecture. Museums, galleries, archives and libraries joined forces with kindergartens, schools and freelancers in a range of activities and events.

The goal of the project was to involve a quarter of Slovenian kindergartens, primary, secondary and grammar schools into the Cultural Heritage Week programme. Within a week the goals merged with the efforts to: promote, through various activities, the integration of heritage-related contents into educational processes both in formal and non-formal education with pre-school and school children and secondary school students. All target groups were to gain basic skills required to recognise, analyse, preserve and protect heritage, and facilitate dissemination of basic information on heritage/history. The fundamental principles of the CHW are:

- 1) accessibility (all events are free),
- 2) interdisciplinary integration of heritage-related contents, an open learning environment, networking between organisations from different sectors (heritage, culture, history, tourism and similar),
- 3) intergenerational integration.

The project involves a total of 173 mentors in 2017 (Report by the Ministry of Culture, 2018) who take part in the Cultural School project or in the CHW. As an example of good practice I would like to point out:

Some other good practices:

"Museum education is a specialized field devoted to developing and strengthening the education role of non-formal education spaces and institutions such as museums. Its main objective is to engage visitors in learning experiences to enhance their curiosity and interest on their objects and collections."

Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana (MGLM, Muzej v malem, 2018), the Little Museum project. The Little Museum is a cultural participation project organised by the City Museum of Ljubljana. Every year, a group of pupils from one of Ljubljana's primary schools are invited to the museum with the aim to offer them new knowledge, teach them to recognise the value of cultural heritage and forge strong, long-lasting ties with the museum as a cultural institution.

At regular meetings taking place throughout the academic year children get to know the organisation, the museum profession and different jobs in the museum, the activity and mission of the museum, both in theory and first and foremost in practice. The product of these meetings is an exhibition conceived, put up and presented to the media and the public by the students with assistance of their mentors.

In the academic year 2017/2018, the fifth consecutive Little Museum project engaged a group of nine curious museum goers (11 to 13 years old).

This year, the children look into the life and work of the great Slovenian author Ivan Cankar while learning about the work in the museum and looking behind the scenes at the making of an exhibition (MGLM – Srečanja, 2018).

Together with the Society for Film Education Slon, the children have made three animated films based on Cankar's sketches, followed by an amusing black and white short film on Cankar's life and work.

The project kicked off with meetings in the museum and went on to introduce other institutions and stories.

During the year, the children and the museum curator visited Ivan Cankar's memorial room, the National and University Library, listened to practical advice of the City Museum's associates and participated in workshops where they learned how to make an animated film. After preparing the script and animations for a short documentary, they recorded the sound and completed the film in March 2018.

Along with this ongoing programme the museum offers also regular Programmes for Schools:

- 1) for pre-school children
- 2) primary school children of all ages:
1–3 years

4–6 years

7–9 Razdred

3) high school students.

The focus is on medieval Ljubljana and its predecessor, the Roman town of Emona. A regular feature of high school programmes is Jože Plečnik and his contribution to the image of European cities of Ljubljana, Vienna and Prague (MGLM – Programi za otroke, 2018).

The National Gallery in Ljubljana is one of first national institutions to have launched systematic cooperation with primary schools. Its fine arts collections serve as the inspiration for stories about life in different periods as depicted by works of art. Programmes for children:

- 1) kindergartens
- 2) primary schools
- 3) secondary schools

Offer activities organised by triads. Upon their first visit children set off on an exploration tour with a workbook. They are accompanied by museum guides who help them find the answers they are looking for to complete the quest. The gallery also prepared special instructions for teachers and provided the contents to be discussed with the pupils before the visit to the gallery to prepare them for the activities and work process outside school.

Matura examinations are one of the milestones in education and preparing for them is very important. The National Gallery offers high school students free admission to the gallery every first Tuesday of the month. Museum staff help students understand museum collections and find the required literature that is not always easily obtained from libraries, especially those at schools (National Gallery, 2018) Another feature of the Gallery's programme are language lessons inspired by museum collections. Japanese is especially popular and the course provides a unique opportunity for 10 to 14-year olds to discuss the works of art, the stories they depict and techniques that are used in the Japanese language (National Gallery, Učenje tujih jezikov, 2018).

The last example of a museum as a learning tool listed here is the programme offered by the National Museum of Contemporary History in Ljubljana. "In the late 50s, the Museum temporarily lost its autonomy and became an organizational unit of the newly-founded Institute for the History of the Labour Movement. In 1962, the Museum of the People's Revolution was established by a special decree. Initially, the Museum's collection policy was only oriented towards the period of World War II, but they soon also began collecting materials related to the period before 1941 and after 1945.

In 1998, the Museum was nominated for the European Museum of the Year Award for its permanent exhibition of "Slovenians in the 20th Century. The Museum was renamed the National Museum of Contemporary History in 2003 as a logical result of the fact that it engages in the collection, preservation, study and exhibition of museum material related to the history of the 20th century" (MCHS – Zgodovina muzeja, 2018). The Museum's education department is in charge of cooperation between schools and the museum. Every year, museum curators/pedagogues prepare a subject-specific programme. This year, we can join them for:

- 1) the Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust; lectures with special guests - testimonies and lessons took place in January 2018
- 2) the Anne Frank project; the exhibition tours the primary schools around Slovenia. It is unique in that it is peer-guided. In 2018 the young guides will network with pupils from Amsterdam and Berlin.
- 3) The teacher's network provides a venue where teachers can learn about all new developments at the

museum and offers an opportunity for them to help shape the activity programmes. The object of the month plays the central role in these activities.

- 4) In June, the object of the month is Museum (R)evolution 1948-2018. The exhibition marking the 70th anniversary of the Museum will showcase the objects that shaped narrations of individual stages of development of the Museum of National Liberation to the Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia (MCHS – About the Museum, 2018).

Similarly to the National Gallery, the Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia also helps students preparing for their Matura examinations. Intensive overview of Slovenian history of the 20th century is a special presentation of Slovenia's integration into European and global settings. The activities employ a variety of historical sources:

- 1) map reading,
- 2) analysis of written sources, graphs, photographs, works of art, oral testimonies and objects,
- 3) learning to use the right terminology,
- 4) in-depth analysis of historical events.
- 5) A lesson with a workbook is prepared for each historical period of the 20th century, so it is recommended to save a whole day for the presentation (5 hours). The programme is devised based on the Matura examination catalogue for history.

The periods discussed include: WWI, the interwar period, WWII, the first decade after the end of WWII, democratization and independence of Slovenia.

Key goals are for the students to:

- 1) analyse and compare the status of the Slovenian nation in different periods/countries in the 20th century,
- 2) identify the historical context, place and time, of key events, phenomena and processes in Slovenian history of the 20th century,
- 3) develop their decision-making skills by analysing multi-perspective historical sources,
- 4) be able to draw their own conclusions, form opinions, express views and give interpretations,
- 5) develop their communication skills through various means of communication,
- 6) develop a positive attitude to the Slovenian national identity and statehood (MCHS – Maturanti, 2018).

It is essential to teach young people from a very early age about heritage, as part of the traditional arts and culture syllabus. This must be based on a multidisciplinary and cross-sector approach to all various aspects of heritage. It should seek to develop relevant skills and introduce young people to art appreciation. Heritage education helps develop a better understanding of our living environment and, more broadly, the world around us. With this in mind, museums train teachers and develop new activities: visits, trips, interviews; they invite heritage experts to schools, initiate cross-disciplinary educational projects which include heritage and history, thus establishing a dialogue between the education sector and the departments responsible for heritage, museums and similar (Ecker, 2018).

5. Conclusion

Learning in museums and archives is different from that in formal education establishments and users of museums are different from those in educational institutions. They are not involved in a formal learning system like those at schools. Museums and other culture institutions get visits from formal groups such as school groups

and adult groups. Many users might not even see their visit to a museum as a learning experience, although they may be learning whilst enjoying their day out. People like to learn in different ways, whether by reading, interacting with other people, or by touching and doing. The range of reasons for learning is extensive.

The outcomes of these learning experiences are equally diverse. They may include increased knowledge and understanding, development of new skills and abilities or motivation to learn more. Learning can be long term and short term. Sometimes it takes a long time after the actual learning event before a learner uses their new knowledge or ability.

Learning in museums is therefore a complicated business. It is not surprising that the difficulty of measuring learning in informal environments such as cultural organisations is continually debated. Many of the learning outcomes from such environments are "soft" outcomes. These include attitudes, values, emotions and beliefs. Often these outcomes are not even seen as evidence of learning as the emphasis is on hard facts and demonstrable skills. Another problem is that museums do not know the prior knowledge of their users and are therefore unable to make judgments about how much users have learned. Unlike in formal education, museums cannot reliably assess how much their users have learned. Users can make judgments about their own learning themselves. Only they can articulate what they have learned and whether that was what they had been looking for. They can say whether they were inspired or had an enjoyable time. Collecting evidence of learning outcomes in museums should therefore involve asking users how they feel about their own learning.

The museum sector has seen some major changes in the past seven years:

- 1) a substantial decrease in core financing, and
- 2) new incentives for partnership collaborations, which has significantly increased project-based work.

Museums have become used to reporting their economic and even environmental impact. The social impact can and should be equally important in order to ensure a wider understanding of the efforts invested by museums.

The London-based Museum Association agrees that: "Museums can increase our sense of wellbeing, help us feel proud of where we have come from, can inspire, challenge and stimulate us, and make us feel healthier. With society facing issues such as poverty, inequality, intolerance and discrimination, museums can help us understand, debate, and challenge these concerns." (Museum Association).

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