Changing practices

– a qualitative study of drivers for change in
Norwegian museums and archives

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by

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One Thing's Necessary

One thing's necessary – here
in this hard world of ours
of homeless and outcast people:

Taking residence in yourself.

Walk into the darkness
And clean the soot from the lamp.
So that people on the roads
Can glimpse a light
In your inhabited eyes.

(Hans Børli, from Windharp, 1974, translated by L. Muinze (2004)

Abstract

Changing practices: a qualitative study of drivers for change in Norwegian museums and archives

Åshild Andrea Brekke

Since the mid-1990's, policy objectives and funding measures have been designed to encourage Norwegian museums and archives to embrace a more socially engaged practice. These governance initiatives, however, have often not achieved the goal of long-term effect: once funding stops, so do the projects, leaving little or no mark on institutional practice. Based on the premise that financial incentives are clearly insufficient in bringing about practice change, this thesis looks beyond the effect of project funding on institutional core attitudes, probing underlying factors which affect organisational practice in more depth.

This thesis is situated within the methodological framework of Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory and draws on qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews, document analysis and survey data. The theoretical perspectives underpinning the thesis can be broadly grouped under two headings: the museum as *idea* and as *organisation*. The first one refers to the ideological nature of museums, its philosophy, purpose, power and ethos as an institution, and the second one to the practical manifestation of these ideas: organizational structure, culture and dynamics in and around the institution.

The findings suggest that museum professionals are engaged in a complex balancing act, continually negotiating positions, priorities and relations both within and around the institution. Elements such as power and values play a part, as do professional identities, academic capital and personal engagement. This thesis argues that organisational change is ultimately contingent on individuals and the way they perceive their profession: the stronger the alignment of ideas, values and purpose between the individual and the organisation, the stronger the potential impact of the museum. To develop and sustain a socially engaged practice, museum directors need to create organizational resonance around the idea of the museum as an agent for social change, enabling it to amplify its social impact.

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List of abbreviations

MoC = Ministry of Culture (*Kulturdepartementet*)

ACN = Arts Council Norway (*Norsk kulturråd*)

DHC = Directorate of Cultural Heritage (*Riksantikvaren*)

WP = White paper (*Stortingsmelding*)

NOU = Green paper (*Norsk Offentlig Utredning*)

NMA = the Norwegian Museum Association (*Museumsforbundet*)

ICOM Norway = International Council of Museums, Norwegian national committee

NALMA = Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority (*ABM-utvikling*)

Preface: On life, abnormality and the point of museums

Dear Mr. Soli and Mr. Bockman,

I just wanted to let you both know that your project "Against Nature?" changed my life. Truly.

I am 17 years old. I am still a very much "in-the-closet" gay person . . . and yet, strange enough . . . I am a deeply religious Catholic.

For years I have struggled with my sexuality and I could never accept what I was feeling because I am the kind of person who does not like subscribing to something that is not "natural." I thought homosexuality was some hideous abnormality that I was condemned to deal with. I love God and as such, I want to respect His Creation. And as a creature of God myself, I did not want to disrespect God through my sexuality.

Although I never got to see the actual exhibit, just finding your project was a godsend. Maybe God was telling me something when He allowed me to come across your project. Who knows?
It really gave me closure in my questioning. Today, I barely even worry about my sexuality. I am able to breathe and concentrate on more important things in life now that I have found the truth.

Thank you so much for making this project possible, Mr. Soli and Mr. Bockman! My life would not be the same if it were not for your work! God bless!

Sincerely,
P. F., Canada

The above e-mail was sent by a young Canadian man to the Natural History Museum in Oslo after he had read about *Against Nature?*, a ground-breaking exhibition dedicated to gay animals[1] which opened in 2006 and ran for a year. Challenging dominant narratives and common (mis-)perceptions about homosexuality, the exhibition drew visitors from all around the world. For me as a rookie museum policy advisor at the time, this exhibition was an eye-opener: here was a museum taking on centuries of prejudice and narrow-mindedness with humour, candour and professional integrity. Not only that, the museum had clearly made a real and deeply significant impact on somebody's life. My idea of what a museum is and could be was changed forever.

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[1] http://www.nhm.uio.no/besok-oss/utstillinger/skiftende/againstnature/index-eng.html. Accessed on 12.06.2017.

New to the job at the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority[2], I was also astonished to learn that the exhibition had been partly funded by my employer, as part of a project specifically designed to encourage museums to become more actively involved in the world around them. And thus, my preconceived idea of the disengaged and unapproachable policymaker was also fundamentally changed.

Figure 1: According to the exhibition 'Against Nature?' roughly one in five penguins are 'gay'. Photo: Per E. Aas, Natural History Museum, University of Oslo, Norway.

Ten years later I am still fascinated by the sheer scope of possibilities open to museums and archives for engaging actively and bravely in all things human. My vantage point within the policymaking body has been a privileged one: over the years, I have read many innovative applications for funding and seen brilliant projects where museums and archives collaborate with prison inmates, refugee children, dementia-patients and homeless people. I have met dozens of passionate museum professionals deeply committed to making their museums matter to people.

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[2] The NALMA merged with Arts Council Norway in 2011.

And yet, when push comes to shove and these dedicated project managers leave the museum or the external funding stops, so do most of the projects, seemingly leaving no discernible impact on the long-term practice of the institution. This, then, is where the present project starts, fuelled by my desire to find out why this is. The project emerges from my experience as Senior Advisor at Arts Council Norway (ACN) and is jointly funded by the ACN and the Norwegian Research Council[3].

Largely inspired by organisational practice theory, the thesis examines dynamics within and around complex organisations such as museums in order to better understand how practice is shaped. Moreover, it questions the implicit assumptions underpinning the self-image of many museums. In short, the thesis concerns itself with two different aspects of museum and archive practice: the ideological underpinning of the museum as well as its organisational expression. One might even call it an exploration of the body and soul of museums.

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[3] In 2014, the NRC launched a new grant programme (OFFPHD) in order to enable public sector institutions and their employees to complete a Ph.D. relevant to the institution's remit.

Thesis overview

Chapter 1 provides a general review of the current context within which this project is situated, as well as a discussion of central concepts and definitions relevant to the research undertaken.

Chapter 2 broadly lays out the socio-historical backdrop for the emergence of a Norwegian cultural policy and the establishing of museums and archives during the past two centuries.

Chapter 3 discusses a range of theoretical perspectives relevant to defining the societal role of museums and archives, drawing on philosophy (Rawls, Nussbaum, Habermas, Korsgaard, Hein etc.), organisational theory (Douglas, Lynch, Paquette etc.) and museum practice (Fleming, Hooper-Greenhill, Janes, O'Neill, Sandell, Simon etc.).

Chapter 4 is an account of the methodological choices underpinning the research, drawing chiefly on Bourdieu's practice theory (Bourdieu, Wacquant, Swartz, Højberg etc.)

Chapter 5 then goes on to describe the research design based on a qualitative method with semi-structured interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, Denscombe, Wadel etc.).

Chapters 6 and 7 are structured around findings related to the two main research questions, starting with the ideological angle before moving on to explore the organisational aspects.

Chapter 8 briefly discusses whether and how governance tools such as project funding actually have been found to impact ideology and organisational practice.

Chapter 9 summarises and considers the essential findings, bringing into focus potential implications for funders and policymakers.

Chapter 1   Current state of affairs: knowledge gap and research questions

For the last two decades, policy development and project funding have been designed to encourage Norwegian museums to take on a more active societal role by embracing more socially engaged practice. The overall direction of these policies has been to stimulate museums to move from a traditionally hegemonic and partly exclusive position towards taking on a more inclusive, democratic and socially engaged role (Holmesland 2013). Moreover, the development policies have been underpinned by specifically earmarked funding measures to ensure implementation, mainly allocated by Arts Council Norway, one of the main agencies responsible for carrying out the government's cultural policies.

These governance initiatives, however, do not seem to achieve the goal of long-term effect: once funding dries up, so do the projects, leaving little or no mark on institutional practice. The annual museum reports compiled by the Arts Council Norway (ACN) at the behest of the Ministry of Culture (MoC) suggest that the institutions which actively and consistently embrace a socially engaged practice are few and far between (Holmesland 2013 and 2014). The reports reflect a seemingly very traditional and conservative interpretation of their role and purpose: to collect, preserve and educate. Hence, the initial point of departure of this research project was to find out whether and how short-term project funding affects the institutions' core attitudes and practices, in order to gain a better understanding of how ACN's development strategies and tools work.

Even so, as the work progressed, it became apparent that the relation between policy and funding measures is more complex than a simple instrumental transaction. Therefore, rather than limiting the focus solely to project funding, this research project has attempted to move beyond the issue of funding to probe in more depth the potential underlying factors which affect museum practice. Hence, this thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How do Norwegian museums and archives perceive and practise their societal role?

- Why are museums and archives which embrace a socially engaged practice, mainly on project level, seemingly struggling to bridge the gulf between project experience and sustainable institutional praxis?

1.1 Arts Council Norway and the museum sector

Arts Council Norway (ACN) is the main governmental operator for the implementation of Norwegian cultural policy. The ACN functions as an advisory body to the central government and public sector on cultural affairs and is fully financed by the Ministry of Culture[4].

Within the context of the ACN's remit and in terms of range, content and size, the so-called 'museum sector' in Norway consists of 71 museums currently receiving the lion's share of their funding from the MoC[5] (fig. 2). In addition, there are 15 museums which are 'owned' and funded by other ministries, such as the Ministry of Education (the university museums) and the Ministry of Defense (the Military Museums/*Forsvarsmuseene*).

Every year, museums receive financial support[6] in the form of grant-in-aid from the government[7]. The support is accompanied by a grant letter stating the expectations linked to the grant. Furthermore, the stated expectations may vary in accordance with political changes, the most recent change having been a switch from a labour/social-democrat government[8] to a conservative/liberal government[9].

ACN's monitoring of the museum sector is based on annual reports from the MoC-funded institutions. All museums receiving grant-in-aid from the Norwegian government are required to report back to the ACN/MoC following a specific template. The reporting format includes textual descriptions of project activities, strategies and specific focus areas as well as the annual museum statistics, which arguably favours

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[4] http://www.kulturradet.no/english

[5] State Budget 2017: https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-1-s-kud-20162017/id2514232/sec2?q=museum#KAP4. Accessed on 24.10.2016.

[6] Totalling 3 billion NOK: http://www.kulturradet.no/documents/10157/baf43910-5968-4fcd-9cae-6b4e5506efc8. Accessed on 11.01.2017.

[7] In 2016 71 of these received their funding channelled through the MoC.

[8] The Stoltenberg government 2004-2013.

[9] The Solberg government 2013-ongoing.

quantifiable indicators and a quantitative mode of reporting[10]. This seems to be concurrent with international trends, where 'performance evaluation' as a system for gauging accountability has resulted in highly quantifiable indicators for successful and (cost-) efficient museum performance such as numbers of visitors, exhibitions or publications (Scott 2002, p. 42).
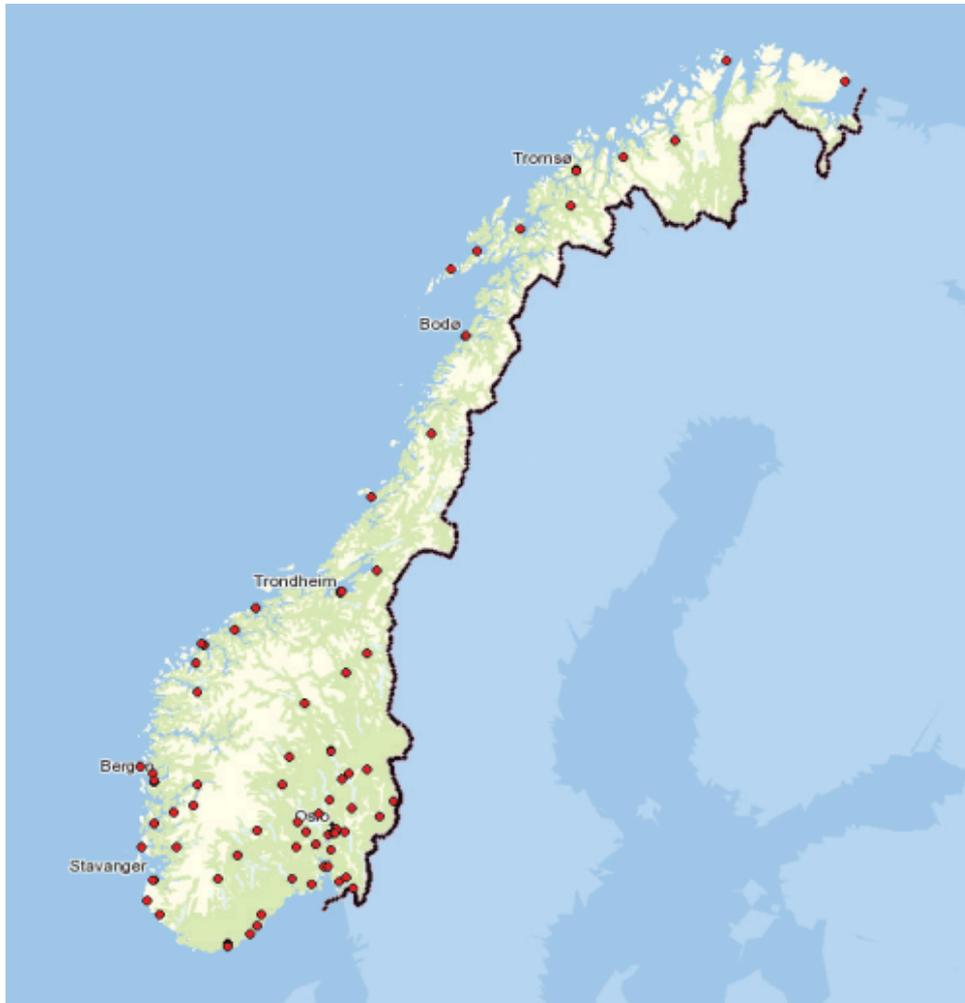
Figure 2: The national museum network: museum hubs receiving grant-in-aid from the Ministry of Culture.

The annual museum reports largely inform the ACNs analysis of the state of the sector, which in turn, and together with external evaluations commissioned on specific issues, informs the policy development in the MoC.

    Most of the museum activities extensively described in the reports pertain to traditional core museum activities such as collection (including care and preservation),

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[10] Moreover, in later years, the ACN has been asked by the Ministry of Culture (MoC) to develop numerical indicators in order to evaluate/grade the text version of the report.

documentation and education. The annual reports from 2010 - 2016 do not seem to reflect any systematic institutional praxis related to diversity and inclusion, although a few museums appear to consistently design projects that are relevant in the context of social inclusion and participation. Nonetheless, the overall impression[11] is that the majority of museums stick to activities they are familiar with (Holmesland 2014).

The basis for this assumption, however, can be called into question in several ways: just because they do not report on diversity and inclusion activities, it does not necessarily mean museums do not engage in such activities, just that they do not (for whatever reason) include this information in the report. This begs the question whether the omission is deliberate (i.e. they only report what they assume the State wants to hear), honest (they do not engage in this kind of activities) or whether their definition of their own role and mandate is limited to the traditional collection-oriented activities.

Hence, there are a number of issues which may have a bearing on the quality of the information the ACN receives, and there is currently no way of knowing what kind of factors actually affect the reporting process unless the written reports are supplemented with other kinds of empirical data[12].

One factor worth mentioning is the comprehensive structural reform ('*Museumsreformen*') which took place roughly between 2002 – 2012, during which approximately 450 independent museums[13] were consolidated into 71 administrative units to strengthen the impact and efficiency of the museum sector (fig.2). The reform encompassed only museums receiving grant-in-aid from the Ministry of Culture and was partly evaluated in 2013. Interestingly, one of the stated aims of the reform was to enable the museums to play an active role in society, engaging in and contributing to critical reflection and debate (Fossestøl et al. 2013, p. 8).

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[11] Based on the ACN's analysis of the annual reports over many years. These analyses form part of a structured synopsis which is annually submitted to the Ministry of Culture by the ACN. The synopsis is openly accessible online.

[12] Another example of such a potential factor is the web-based reporting template the ACN has developed and expects the museums to use: it places strict limits on the amount of information the institutions may provide in the different subject boxes, which in turn limits the amount, type and quality of information received by the ACN.

[13] Hence a museum such as Helgeland museum, previously 17 independent local museums, is today considered one administrative unit/consolidated regional museum, consisting of 17 local branches.

An administrative consequence of the reform is that each of the consolidated museums delivers *one* annual report to the ACN/MoC on behalf of all of the regional branches, hence reducing the amount of information and level of detail that is provided about the work of each regional branch/local museum. The distance from the museum practitioner and the person penning the report at museum headquarters has thus increased, a fact which may conceivably impact the information flow and quality. In short, the information the ACN has access to at present does not provide adequate data to form a workable theory on the dynamics of its development work.

Consequently, the present research project could provide valuable insights into and a better contextual understanding of these matters. Furthermore, although Norwegian museums and archives are situated within a specific socio-cultural and historical context, museums in the UK and the US[14] have experienced similar issues. This suggests that there are factors at play which transcend geographical frames of reference, notably related to the way museums operate as organisations combined with the way the institutions view their remit and role in society.

1.2 The development tools of the ACN

The ACN uses a range of different approaches to its development work[15], such as a combination of short term external project funding which museums and archives can apply for to try out new ideas and collaborative pilot projects where the ACN actively plays a part as facilitator and sounding board for ideas. In order to be eligible for ACN project funding, projects should be innovative, enabling renewal and development of institutions and their praxis.

Moreover, projects should contribute to active reflection around the societal role and relevance of the institutions. Lastly, the ACN expects experiences drawn from such short-term projects to be of some transfer value to other institutions. Its aim has been to enable the institutions to develop and implement new projects more flexibly when it comes to scope and speed to better reflect contemporary issues. The ACN

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[14] Cf. for example Lynch 2011a and Janes 2009.

[15] For a brief overview of the remit and activities of Arts Council Norway, cf. http://www.kulturradet.no/english. See also http://kulturradet.no/stotteordninger/utviklingsprosjekter-arkiv-og-museum. Accessed on 15.06. 2014.

perceives such funding for collaboration- and development projects to be an essential tool for achieving their development goals[16]. In 2014, due to political changes in the source of funding, the deadline for applications was moved from October to May and the funding criteria changed from one year projects to three year projects.

Another kind of project funding worth mentioning here is project funding which the MoC allocates in the advent of high-profile national occasions which sitting governments are anxious to call attention to, often designating the ACN as its coordinating body: 2008 was defined as the National Year of Diversity, generating project funding specifically earmarked diversity projects through a wide range of channels, including the Ministry of Culture.

Furthermore, in 2016, the MoC appointed the ACN as the coordinator of a three-year funding initiative by the Nordic Council of Ministers and specifically earmarked integration and inclusion projects in the cultural sector in the Nordic countries. Other occasions deemed important enough to generate extra, ear-marked national project funding include the Bicentenary of the Norwegian Constitution in 2014. Project funding, then, is a common tool for policymakers to bring about certain results or highlight specific issues of political importance.

1.3 Project funding: merry-go-rounds, straitjackets or windows of opportunity?

The long-term effect of this specific approach to museum development has not been systematically documented and evaluated. Is it, in reality, counter-productive to the criteria which demand renewal and development/reorientation of institutional praxis towards a more socially engaged model?

Regarding the opportunity ACN has to shape practice through project-funding, projects with an aim to stimulate the sector to take on a more socially engaged role have included subjects such as participatory practices and methods[17] as well as

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[16] There are several general and specific criteria underpinning ACN's short-term project funding such as innovation, renewal, transferability, diversity, participation etc.
http://kulturradet.no/stotteordninger/utviklingsprosjekter-arkiv-og-museum , my translation. Accessed on 12.02. 2015.
[17] Brekke 2010

ethically difficult and contested issues[18]. In the latter case, even though the ACN has funded projects and facilitated networks for more than a decade, there appears to be little evidence of sustained change in terms of institutional policy and practice: once the ACN-funding has ended, no more than a handful of museums have continued working on contested issues, bringing to mind the challenges of short-termism experienced in the UK[19].

A case in point is the BRUDD-project[20], launched in 2003 as part of ACN's development strategy. The aim of the project was to challenge museums to rethink their societal role and break with traditional hegemonic narratives about Norwegian history, by documenting the marginal and mediating the uncomfortable. This project ran for over a decade, involving a range of different museums and addressing topics such as human rights abuse sanctioned by state authorities. An internal evaluation of the BRUDD-project carried out in 2016 appears to suggest, however, that once ear-marked funding came to an end, so did the projects designed to meet policy signals, seemingly leaving little mark on overall institutional practice. In this case, this means that, more often than not, museums do not devise projects of a socially engaged nature unless there is specifically ear-marked funding available.

Furthermore, a recent survey carried out by ICOM Norway on the subject of museums and contested issues, such as war-time collaboration or homosexuality in the animal kingdom[21], supports the notion that there are several factors at play affecting institutional practice (Pabst 2016). As lack of institutional commitment appears to be one such significant factor, it is conceivable that the very short-term nature of project funding does little towards remedying this lack of internal embedding: as long as external project funding is available, the management does not need to make room within the institution's own annual core budgets[22].

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[18] Holmesland et al. 2006

[19] Evidence from the British context suggests that short term funding may have a counter-productive effect, generating what Lynch calls 'short-termism': the availability of external funding for projects does not provide the institution with an incentive to give priority to certain projects within its regular budgets (Lynch 2011a).

[20] 'Brudd' means 'break' in Norwegian, signifying the need for museums to break with traditional hegemonic narratives of Norwegian history.

[21] Cf. 'Preface' of this thesis for a description of this particular project.

[22] Skåtun, T. (2014) p. 18-2.6.

Figure 3: From BRUDD-exhibition 2014 "An act of treason against the nation?" Public shaming of Norwegian women who fell in love with German soldiers during the Nazi occupation of Norway 1940-1945. Photo: Finn Guldbrandsen/Hordaland fylkesarkiv.

Consequently, the ACN reorganised its funding structures from 2015 in an attempt to make project funding more predictable and sustainable: from an annual call for projects, to a three-year funding period. One of these three-year funding programmes focusses on the societal role of museums[23] and there were 18 participating museums in the first batch (2015-2017). A second round of three-year programme funding was launched in December 2017. Whether this structural change in project funding system will enable and facilitate sustainable change over time remains to be seen.

Recalling that the present project stems from the ACN's lack of empirical evidence that project funding actually encourages and sustains practice change in the longer term, it is worth noting that similar issues have been uncovered in the UK context:

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[23] http://www.kulturradet.no/documents/10157/43f52782-8e45-4e0c-ab23-bdb8cb0c8ff1. Accessed on 11.01.2017.

Despite presenting numerous examples of ground-breaking, innovative practice, the funding invested in public engagement and participation in the UK's museums and galleries has not significantly succeeded in shifting the work from the margins to the core of many of these organisations. In fact, as this study demonstrates, it has curiously done the opposite. By providing funding streams outside of core budgets, it appears to have helped to keep the work on the organisations' periphery (Lynch 2011a, p. 5, see also Nightingale & Mahal 2012)

Moreover, as Lynch found in her in-depth study of 12 UK museums receiving targeted funding, the notion of 'national initiative overload' was viewed as profoundly problematic, engendering a feeling of being pressured into a never-ending cycle of funding applications where the onus was on securing more funding through positive project reports instead of on taking the time necessary to reflect on the ongoing work.

Lynch describes how many of the staff members "talked about feeling 'stuck' (a word frequently repeated), unable to escape the merry-go-round of projects that were not having the long-term local impact desired" (2011a, p. 6). Furthermore, a great many of her informants saw this particular practice as compromising the integrity of the work (2011a, p. 6):

[T]he system of short-term project funding that supports museums and galleries actively discourages reflection, serving to perpetuate an illusion that the work is more effective than it is. The imperative to attract further funding contributes to a fear of reflection and a perceived 'insecurity' of organisations and their senior management in opening up discussion of the work (Lynch 2011a, p. 10).

These UK experiences undoubtedly constitute a useful backdrop against which the Norwegian data may be examined. Although a comprehensive comparative study of the impact of cultural policy on museums and archives in Norway and the UK lies beyond the scope of this project, it is interesting to note that research has identified challenges related to policy-driven funding, organisational autonomy, arm's length principles and a general professionalization of the heritage sector in the UK which are similar to Norway (cf. for example Tlili 2012, Gray 2009, 2010 and Mangset & Hylland

2017 for a useful overview of some of these challenges in the two countries respectively). Findings related to project funding and its effect on institutional practice will be analysed and discussed in more depth in chapter 8 of the thesis.

1.4 Definition of 'societal role' (*'samfunnsrolle'*)

Although the concept of 'societal role' may encompass a wide array of meanings and definitions, I will in what follows use it within the broad sense of 'socially engaged practice' and 'social agency'. Joy Davis suggests defining the former as 'those activities that are intentionally undertaken to actively involve communities in the work of the museum', whereas the latter can be described as a 'closely related concept that goes beyond social engagement to actively effect some form of positive change' (Davis 2008, p. 1).

Furthermore, there is no one way in which the societal role of museums is defined and put into practice: the possibilities are endless, ranging from engaging actively with visitors and communities (Simon 2010), to adopting more activist practices as a means to bring about social change (Sandell et al. 2010, Sandell 2017).

Hence, the difference between 'socially engaged' and 'social agency' can be described in terms of degree of activity: the participatory and inclusive museum in one end of the range and the activist museum in the other. This allows for a dynamic fluidity in the museum's potential interpretation and execution of its societal remit. In the context of the present project, this definition of societal role fits well with the way the term is used within current policies.

1.5 The notion of '*samfunnsrolle*' in museum and archive policy

In Norwegian museum policy[24], 'societal role' (*samfunnsrolle)* is a central concept which has been recurring indirectly or directly in white papers, green papers and grant letters since the mid-90's. The concept designates direction and overall goal for the

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[24] Incidentally, both white papers 22 and 49 refer to libraries and archives as well as museums, indicating that they have been regarded as similar institutions with similar responsibilities and challenges.

renewal[25] of museums and currently appears in a variety of contexts, seemingly open to a wide array of different interpretations within the museum sector.

Although the political signals remain relatively open and general and the concept is qualified using different terms in slightly different contexts[26], such as 'societal institutions' (*samfunnsinstitusjoner)*, 'dialogue institutions' (*dialoginstitusjoner*) and 'societal remit' (*samfunnsoppdrag*), the general direction of the policy has remained constant. The main orientation of the concept as applied by policymakers across the different documents constitutes an acknowledgement of the need for museums to recognize and take responsibility for their inherent power to shape people's perception of the world. In other words, the need for museums to move away from their traditional hegemonic position as keepers of knowledge towards a more democratic, critically reflective and socially engaged practice (Holmesland 2013).

It is worth noting, however, that there is no tradition for implementing sanctions (and never has been)[27] towards institutions not 'obeying' expectations signalled in state policies: there is a large margin for the institution to interpret the signals and define ways in which to implement them (or not). The attitude of the current Conservative-Liberal government (in contrast to that of the Labour government preceding them) is a case in point, having implemented their hands-off policy to an extent where any references to diversity or inclusion has been omitted from the annual grant letter as well as from the reporting templates. Their political rationale has been that it is up to the individual museum to define its role and mandate, as long as the grant is used in accordance with the stated project objectives and the criteria on which the grant is based. In other words, it might be argued that Norwegian museums have both the freedom and the possibility to carve out a more active democratic role if they so wish.

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[25] Activities related to societal role are often mentioned under the 'f' designating renewal (*fornying*) in the annual budget applications (see 1.5.4).

[26] It is worth noting, however, that WP 49:09 itself uses the term '*samfunnsrolle*' in a whole range of different contexts, related to a variety of topics such as collection management, intangible cultural heritage, diversity and accessibility, which in turn allows for a whole range of interpretations.

[27] Possibly with the exception of the Norwegian Nazi government during the occupation 1940-1945.

1.5.1 In white papers and green papers

Several political documents related to museums, archives and cultural heritage have been published over the years. For the purposes of this project, however, I have focussed on those documents which seem to be seminal to the current museum and archive policy. These are documents which are consistently being referred to by both museum professionals and policymakers in conversations, interviews, official reports as well as on museum websites. The subsequent sections look more closely at how the term 'societal role' is used in three such documents, one green paper and two white papers[28].

1.5.2 Official Norwegian Report 1996:7 (NOU 7:96)

The first of these documents is a green paper commissioned by the then Norwegian Labour government in 1993 and subsequently published in 1996. The green paper later became a central theoretical backdrop for the subsequent Museum Reform[29] and thus contributed to developing concepts which have shaped and informed current museum policy (Eriksen 2009, p. 220, Husabø 2012, pp. 7-8). Inspired by Neil Postman's vision of museums as 'dialogue-institutions'[30], the document states that such a vision contains elements of the very essence of museums, stressing the mutual, dialogical relationship between museums and the society they are part of:

> Engaging with society means that museums and society have mutual expectations of each other. In this there is both freedom and responsibility for the museums: freedom to be useful to society, not just in an affirmatory fashion but also through a critical and questioning attitude; responsibility for being visible co-players in the development of society, by working from the

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[28] *White papers* (*Stortingsmelding*) are drawn up when the Government wishes to present matters to the Parliament ('*Stortinget*') that do not require a decision. White papers tend to be in the form of a report to the Storting on the work carried out in a particular field and future policy. These documents, and the subsequent discussion of them in the Storting, often form the basis of a draft resolution or bill at a later stage. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/find-document/white-papers-/id1754/. *Green papers* are usually externally commissioned by the Government to inform their policies in specific areas: the Government or a ministry may constitute a committee and working groups who report on different aspects of society. A report can either be published as an Official Norwegian Report (*Norsk Offentlig Utredning/NOU*), or as a regular report. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/find-document/norwegian-official-reports/id1767/. Both accessed on 14.06.2017.
[29] Cf. section 1.1.
[30] Postman ([1990] 2005)

perspective of different minorities and social groups as well as debating potentially controversial issues. […] They are agents *on behalf of* and *for* society at the same time (NOU 7:96, 5.3, original emphasis).

It is worth noting that the concept of 'freedom' is paired with 'responsibility' in this policy document. In the conversations concerning the societal role of museums, many informants are quick to underline the importance of the "arm's length"-principle between the governing/funding bodies and the museums, hence stressing their expectation of 'freedom'. What seems never to be mentioned, however, is their responsibility for taking a visible and engaged societal role.

1.5.3   White paper 22 (1999-2000) (WP 22:99)

The second central policy document is a white paper on the societal role of museums, libraries and archives[31] which was published by the government in 1999. The word 'societal role' is mentioned only twice, but describes the role in very clear terms:

> Museums should contribute to supporting the central values upon which our society is built, both by increasing people's quest for knowledge and promoting tolerance for cultural differences (WP 22:99, 6.7).

The paper goes on to state the importance of museums taking at times a problem-oriented and critical stance addressing both historical and contemporary societal challenges such as climate change or human rights abuse suffered by minorities at the hands of the government (ibid). Furthermore, the document emphasises the need for museums to actively engage with society:

> Museums should be of service to society and its development. It is therefore necessary that [museums] do not operate in a closed system but *engage in dialogue* with society. Museums have a role to play in the democratisation of society (ibid, 6.11, my emphasis).

Although the term 'societal role' (*samfunnsrolle*) as such is only used once or twice in the documents described above, the role of museums as active agents is described in

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[31] Incidentally, it was this white paper which led to the founding of the then Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority (NALMA/*ABM-utvikling*) in 2003. Some eight years later the NALMA was merged with the Arts Council Norway.

considerable detail, particularly as related to democracy, diversity and the need for critical reflection. When asked about the current status of these two documents, the two main authors in the MoC insisted on their continued relevance and validity as policy documents, intended to provide scope and direction to the development of the museum sector even today.

1.5.4   White paper 49 (2008-2009) (WP 49:09) and 'the four f's'

Unlike the policy advisors just mentioned, when asked about their perception of the societal role of the museum, most of my informants currently working in museums will refer to a third, and later white paper, often quoting 'the four f's' as the main remit of the museums[32].

Moreover, references to this particular document seem to be prevalent in most of the source material for this project, such as funding applications, annual reports, museum web-pages as well as articles in museum journals. WP 49:09 on museums was issued by the then Norwegian Labour government in 2009, stating that "the societal role or societal remit of museums in society largely consists in developing and disseminating knowledge about human understanding of and interaction with their environment". The paper formulates it thus:

> In this [societal] role lies great professional freedom as well as challenges regarding the definition of what is deemed to be relevant and important to society. This core question demands continual analysis and reflection by the museum (WP 49:09, p. 145, my translation).

It is noteworthy that the notion of 'responsibility' no longer appears adjacent to that of 'freedom', something which suggests a subtle shift in the perceived relationship between the museum and society: more autonomy for the institution, less instruction from the governing body.

It is also in this third white paper's definition of the role of museums that the collating of 'societal role' and 'societal remit' occurs for the first time. In this particular paragraph, which recurs in the majority of strategic documents produced by the museums themselves, the two concepts are linked by the conjunctive 'or', seemingly

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[32] Cf. section 7.4 of this thesis.

aligning them as synonyms. One senior official in the MoC commented on the fallacy of such a collation: "Societal role is something you *take*, societal remit is something you are *given*", pointing out an important difference in degree of agency: taking something is more active than being given something. It is perhaps worth noting that WP 49 itself uses the term '*samfunnsrolle*'[33] in a whole range of different contexts, related to a variety of topics such as collection management, intangible cultural heritage, diversity and accessibility, which in turn allows for a wide array of interpretations.

A white paper on archives which was published in 2013 (WP 7:13) goes a lot further in using concrete language in describing the societal role and responsibility of archives, explicitly including the notion of 'values' in its description:

> Archives should be proactive, collaborative partners which *have legitimacy, strength and courage to fight for certain values* where necessary. Users [of the archive] must be broadly defined and cover different segments of society, by giving a voice to groups who are invisible or unable to participate in the public sphere (WP 7:13, p. 50, my translation and emphasis).

One may of course question the actual role such documents play and the subsequent impact they may have on the formation of institutional culture: are they policy instruments mainly used by the ministry and its underlying directorates or are they used as strategic tools internally in the institutions? How familiar are the individual museum professionals with the function of this kind of documents? These questions will be examined and discussed in further detail in chapter 6 of this thesis.

1.5.5   A note on archives

From its inception in 2003 and until it merged with the ACN in 2011, the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority[34] (NALMA) had a national development remit concerning these three kinds of institutions. In 2011 the library development remit was transferred to the National Library, although the archive development remit remained with the ACN until 2015, when it was formally transferred to the National Archives. Notwithstanding these changes in mandate, this research project takes into

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[33] Norwegian word for 'role in society'.
[34] https://web.archive.org/web/20070704161640/http://www.abm-utvikling.no/?set_language=en.
Accessed on 07.01.2017.

account the ACN's former responsibility for *both* museums and archives, as both kinds of institutions have been challenged to rethink their societal role for the past two decades.

Moreover, even though most of the literature and research into the societal role of heritage institutions concerns museums, I will in the following treat museums and archives as essentially the same kind of institutions, i.e. repositories of objects, documents and knowledge, representing all things human (Jimerson 2009, p. 137). They are both institutions imbued with a very high degree of legitimacy and have the same power to exclude and include. Hence it can be argued that they have the same moral obligation to define their role and remit as democratic agents. There is, however, currently a lack of social inclusion-theory informed by archive practice, and so I will for all intents and purposes apply the existing museum theory to archives as well.

1.6 Theoretical approach

The present project draws on several theoretical perspectives, broadly grouped under two headings: the museum as *idea* and as *organisation*. The first one refers to the ideological nature of museums, its philosophy, purpose, power and ethos as an institution, and the second one to the practical manifestation of these ideas: organizational structure, culture and dynamics in and around the institution.

1.6.1 Museum as Idea: principle and rationale of cultural rights and social agency

The first perspective concerns cultural rights and the principles of moral philosophy which underpin them (cf. Rawls 1988, 1993, Nussbaum 2004, 2006, 2013, Arendt 1998) as well as concepts such as democratic citizenship, participation and deliberative democracy (Korsgaard et al. 2014, Skjervheim 1996, Habermas 1999, Simon 2010) and the ethical responsibility of institutions (Marstine 2011, Hein 2011, Jimerson 2009). Moreover, this category of literature contains theory specifically dealing with the social and moral role and agency of museums and archives in the UK and other international contexts, discussing the responsibility and capacity of museums to become more socially engaged (cf. Marstine 2011, Gurian 2006, Weil 2002, Janes 2009).

1.6.2   Museum as Organisation: organizational culture and change

The second perspective is underpinned by organisational theory as well as literature exploring the different ways in which museums have attempted to change their organisational culture towards a more socially engaged institutional practice and the challenges encountered along the way (cf. Hein 2011, Golding 2009, Golding & Modest 2013, Sandell 2002, Sandell & Nightingale 2012, Sandell et al. 2010, Watson 2007, Janes 2013, Fleming 2012, Davis 2008, Ames 2013, Lynch 2011a &b, Lynch 2013, Duhigg 2016, Paquette 2012, Crutchfield & Grant 2012, Gardner 2009).

1.6.3   Theory of practice, power and values

The second perspective also draws on practice theory and its methodological relevance to this project (Bourdieu & Wacquant [1992] 2014, Bourdieu [1994] 2014, Bourdieu [1972] 2000, Swartz 1997, Højberg 2012). Moreover, literature related to institutional power dynamics and values/ethos has proven constructive in the analysis of the available data (Lynch 2011a & b, Lynch 2013, Lukes [1974] 2005, Gramsci 1971, Lencioni 2002 and 2012, Douglas 1987). Furthermore, I have explored literature related to relations between institutions and policymakers and funding bodies (Gibson 2008, Tlili 2008, Lynch 2011b).

1.7   Lack of research

To date, there exists no substantial research into the societal role of Norwegian museums and archives. Most of the intellectual resources informing the discourse on the democratic potential of museums is thus drawn from the US or UK museum sectors. One may therefore ask whether these international experiences are applicable in a Norwegian socio-cultural context and if so, in what ways. As Norwegian museums and archives are subject to other cultural and historic influences than their counterparts overseas, one may expect to find variations in the specific contexts they find themselves in. The ensuing chapter contains a brief overview of the historical and socio-cultural context of cultural policies in Norway from 1814-2014.

Chapter 2   Cultural policies in Norway from 1814-2014: a brief history

The 19th century saw the birth and development of the modern Norwegian nation as we know it. It is a period marked by political upheaval and transformations which directly influenced cultural policies and the role and purpose of museums and other cultural institutions. Moreover, many of the larger Norwegian museums were established and their remit defined during these years (NOU 4:13, Eriksen 2009, Dahl & Helseth 2006, Hodne 2002, Amundsen & Brenna 2003). It is thus a period which provides a useful backdrop and starting point for describing some aspects of the socio-cultural and political context in which Norwegian national culture and cultural policies were developed and shaped.

2.1   1814 and all that

2014 marked the bicentenary of the Norwegian Constitution. An independent kingdom since about 960 A.D., Norway became a province under Denmark for more than four hundred years until the end of the Napoleonic era. Norway seceded as a result of the fall of Napoleon and the peace treaty of Kiel in 1814. A separate Norwegian state was created on the basis of a constitution incorporating elements and ideas from the Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions. The Constitution of 1814 guaranteed the citizens[35] individual rights and established a political system which was among the most democratic at the time (Sørensen 1998a, Hodne 2002 p. 21, NOU 4:13, p. 27).

Since Denmark had supported the losing side in the Napoleonic wars, however, it had to cede Norway to Sweden, who integrated the former in a somewhat looser union lasting until 1905. Thus, Norway did not gain status as a completely independent state without any union partners until the union with Sweden was dissolved at the turn of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it is during this period, between 1814 and 1905, that the notion of the Norwegian national state is believed to have emerged and gained substantial traction (Hodne 2002, p. 21).

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[35] At the time, this meant for all intents and purposes, property-owning men.

In the wake of the political upheavals in the 19th century the governing powers of the fledgling nation saw the need for, and potential in, transforming a population into citizens of a national state by creating new bonds of loyalty to the nation. Creating a national culture is one effective way for new states to foster a shared identity for its population. Providing a shared cultural superstructure helps gather different social groups around a collective, shared identity (Hodne 2002, see also Smith 1991).

2.2 The birth of a nation and a national culture

Norway thus began a systematic quest for cultural expressions and artefacts that would serve as defining elements of a new national, purely Norwegian, identity. The explicit goal for this selective cultural policy, as formulated by the new Parliament from 1814 onwards, was to contribute to the construction of Norway as a culture nation similar to other nations. This goal was particularly clearly expressed in the 1800s, where it formed the basis for political consensus for a long time (Dahl & Helseth, 2006). Before delving deeper into this process of selection, however, I will in the subsequent sections attempt to briefly clarify some of the key elements in the nation building process.

2.2.1 National identity

National identity can be described as a group being connected to a territory which it perceives as historic, i.e. that the group feels connected to a "fatherland". Moreover, national identity is created through the development of collective laws, a collective economy, a collective historical memory and not least through a collective, common culture (Smith 1991, pp. 13-14). Such a perception of a common origin and socio-cultural particularity is created when a nation becomes the bearer of a culture shared by its inhabitants. Hence, national identity *is created and sustained by the national culture* on which the nation is based. The significance of culture in the creation of a nation is therefore fundamental (Smith 1991, pp. 13-14, see also Hodne 2002, p. 19, my emphasis).

2.2.2 Nation/national state

The development of the national state is a somewhat recent phenomenon in a European context and has its roots in the French and American revolutions. Social anthropologist Benedict Anderson's definition of the 'nation' as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" is a useful notion in the context of Norwegian nation building (1991, p. 6).

Another useful approach can be found in Hodne's writings on Norwegian national culture: he applies the term 'national state' to the creation of a nation whose population shares an identity created by a culture which is perceived and accepted as the expression of the country's cultural distinction. It is created by selecting and revitalising a number of cultural elements from the nation's history. The national culture thus serves two purposes: internally it secures social cohesion in the population based on shared values while externally projecting the particularity of the nation (Hodne 2002, p. 22). Hence the nation can be described in terms of being 'imagined', 'accepted' and 'shared' (Anderson 1991, Hodne 2002).

2.2.3 National culture and romantic nationalism

National culture is a powerful symbolic creator of identity, ideologically formed and specific to a certain period in history. Norway's national culture was created in the 1800s and resonated with the inhabitants in the form of a national 'sentiment' and shared views on what is 'Norwegian' (Hodne 2002, p. 11). Hodne bases his analysis on the view that "a common, public mass culture" is "one of the fundamental features of national identity" (2002, p. 22, see also Smith 1991, p. 14). He further argues that the form of nationalism which subsequently led to the creation of a national identity in Norway can be defined as 'romantic nationalism', which includes ethnic, linguistic and social nationalism. It is, Hodne maintains, the particular mixture of these three categories of nationalism forged by an ideology which makes it a category of its own (ibid. 2002).

'Romantic nationalism' has its roots in Romanticism and is characterized by 1) the nationalisation of culture and 2) the creation of a nation on the basis of a common culture (social nationalism) (Hodne 2002). The collective culture is found in a specific group, in Norway's case, the peasants (ethnic nationalism). As in the Romantic

era, the spirit of the people or its national character[36] is a concept central to romantic nationalism. The spirit of the people is expressed through the collective culture, particularly through the oral language of the people (linguistic nationalism) (Hodne 2002, p. 16).

2.2.4 Rich white men and the role of elites

The process of creating a national culture only took around 50-60 years. Initially the self-imposed work of an elite, the process quickly gained momentum: through collection, registration, research, documentation and artistic activity, a historical consciousness and cultural foundation became the shared cultural property of the Norwegian people in the space of a few decades (Hodne 2002, p. 53, see also Amundsen & Brenna 2003, pp. 11-12).

Nevertheless, the definition of 'elite' in a Norwegian context in the 1800s related to cultural policy differs somewhat from the definition in many other European countries, possibly because there was less social difference between people, particularly between the members of the political and cultural elite and the common peasant (Sørensen 1998a).

Having been under Danish rule for several centuries, there was almost no Norwegian nobility to speak of after the secession[37], and Norway was effectively finding itself back at square one, with no indigenous cultural institutions or social structures (e.g. aristocracy, clergy, labour movement etc.) able to formulate a stringent cultural policy: the king and his court were all based in Stockholm, Sweden, just like they had been in Copenhagen, Denmark for the preceding four centuries (Dahl & Helseth, 2006, p. 27). In the 1800s, Norway's educated middle class and civil servants was the closest this emerging nation came to an enlightened elite, but being few in number and geographically dispersed, it never gained complete hegemony over the development of cultural life.

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[36] Cf. Johann Gottfried von Herder's *Volksgeist*, in Hodne 2002, p. 26.
[37] The 1814 Constitution prohibited the creation of new hereditary nobility structures and in 1821, Parliament passed a law (against the wishes of the King) effectively ending hereditary privileges for the aristocracy (https://snl.no/adel#menuitem13). Accessed on 20.01.2017.

Historian Øystein Sørensen points out that in a country where the majority of the inhabitants were peasants and fishermen, the nation building elite had no choice but to mobilise and encourage broad participation in public cultural life. Central to this way of thinking was an optimistic belief in realising the untapped potential of peasants and the common people, turning them into responsible and enlightened members of society. Much of the philanthropic activity in this period was based on this particular Enlightenment ideal (NOU 4:13, p.30, see also Sørensen & Stråth 1997).

2.3   Constructing cultural policies and identity in a fledgling nation

Hence, the public cultural policy of the young Norwegian state became a national political programme: using public money in order to attempt to achieve certain goals, in this case promoting the nation's honour by having art, cultural institutions and a level of cultural quality the world would expect from a civilized and cultivated nation (NOU 4:13, p.27, see also Eriksen 2009, pp.58-59).

The cultural elements which the Parliament chose to emphasise thus became part of the broader nation building process in various ways. For example, the national "canon" of literature created an image of the country's geographic landscape, human aspects, social relations and moral dilemmas (Engelstad 2010). For the emerging Norwegian state it was imperative to show its inhabitants and the world that Norway deserved to be a nation in its own right; a unique community based on a distinct linguistic[38] and cultural heritage, rather than as an integrated part of Denmark and later Sweden (Danbolt 2009).

2.3.1   Dark constitutional undercurrents

The raw material for creating a national character was found in elements that were close at hand: nature, knowledge of history (in particular the Golden Era of pre-Danish

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[38] From 1885 onwards, Norway has two official versions of the Norwegian language: *bokmål* and *nynorsk*. The former is based on written Danish and the latter on Norwegian regional dialects. The development and current use of *nynorsk* from 1850 was part of the larger nation building movement (http://sprakradet.no/Spraka-vare/Norsk/Nynorsk/). The written versions are similar enough to be mutually completely intelligible. Accessed on 12.06.2017.

rule) and the awareness of a peasant culture. Consequently, the national character found resonance within the natural sciences from a very early point in time in the nation building process (Hodne 2002, p.32).

Moreover, the cultural elements which became the cornerstones in the construction still perceived to be Norway's national culture gained value and importance through a systematic, but selective and ideologically based documentation of peasant culture (ibid, 2002, p.41).

In short, the creation of a shared culture in the 19th century became one of the most important ideological premises for the Norwegian national state. The excessive focus on manifestations of peasant life, however, crowded out the cultures of minorities within the framework of national culture and identity (Hodne 2002, p.13). The presence of old minorities[39] was suppressed or removed from the national narrative, as another main premise of the nation-building endeavour was *uniformity*: one culture, one language and one people. Hence all groups outside the 'nation-bearing' population were regarded as outsiders or foreigners, resulting in the Norwegian state implementing a brutal assimilation policy which lasted well into the 1970s and 80s and specifically targeting the various national minorities[40] (Holmesland 2006, pp.10-13, see also Brekke 2013, Bastrup & Sivertsen 1996).

This darker aspect of democratic nationalism can be traced as far back as 1814: the original Constitution contained paragraphs banning Jews and Jesuits from the Kingdom of Norway. The first paragraph was removed in 1851[41] and the second as late as 1956. The treatment of minority groups in Norway has been described as a "dark undercurrent" in Norwegian nationalism in the 1800s (Sørensen 1994a, see also Bastrup & Sivertsen 1996).

The politics of constructing a national identity, then, is a process of selection based on the power to define what to include or exclude, what is judged to be valuable, beautiful or representative. As the following discussion will attempt to show,

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[39] These include the Jews, Kvens, Forest-Finns, Gypsies/Roma and Travellers/Romani and the Saami indigenous groups. For more information, see Brekke in Golding and Modest (2013) see also Holmesland (2006), Hodne (2002), Bastrup & Sivertsen (1996).
[40] For a comprehensive definition of 'national minority', see http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/Documents/Propositions-and-reports/Propositions-to-the-Storting/19971998/stprp-nr-80-1997-98-/9.html?id=202022 . Accessed on November 10 2014.
[41] The Nazis reintroduced this paragraph during their occupation of Norway 1940-45 (Sørensen 1998a).

museums and archives are inherently powerful instruments and participants in this process of selection (Brekke 2010, Holmesland 2006).

2.3.2 The national mantle of museums and archives

The national political currents in Norway from early 1800 towards 1905 when the country finally became fully independent from Sweden can be seen as instrumental to the establishment of several important collections and museums. Members of the educated elite had contributed to the establishment of libraries and art- and artefact collections around the country since the late 1700s (Eriksen 2009, Pedersen 2003, Hodne 2002, Amundsen & Brenna 2003). The first National Archive was established already in 1817, tasked with safeguarding "our collective, national memory"[42] (WP 7:13, section 1.3.1).

The role of these early institutions is characterised by three key elements: specialisation/classification, nation building and public education (NOU 7:96, p.16). Through collecting, preserving and exhibiting the 'collective memory' of the new nation[43] they actively contributed to the imagining of the Norwegian community/nation, to rephrase Benedict Anderson (1991).

2.3.3 Independence, industrialisation and open-air museums

From the second half of the 1800s towards 1905, the new national culture was disseminated by many different agents (government, museums, schools, artists and a whole range of different cultural professionals) and through many different channels (national school curriculum, public events etc.) (Hodne 2002, pp. 92-101). Moreover, many open-air museums were established during these decades in order to "save" traditional cultural heritage from being completely destroyed by modernisation (Pedersen 2003, p.38). Traditional village communities found themselves under growing pressure from the accelerating urbanisation and industrialisation and as they saw old traditions increasingly being scrapped, the nation-building elite stepped up

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[42] It is interesting to note that the Sámi archive was not incorporated into the National Archive until 2005, and one is left to wonder why it took so long for the Sámi collective memory to be recognized as part of the national Norwegian cultural heritage (ibid).
[43] emphasising elements such as nature, language, history, religion, peasant culture and symbols, all building blocks in the concept of national culture (Hodne, 2002, pp. 108-21).

their efforts to safeguard and preserve the cultural heritage relating to peasant life forms (Pedersen 2003, p.27).

2.3.4   1905 and the second independence

The union with Sweden officially ended in June 1905, and Norway finally became a fully independent nation, governing its own territory and population. As Hodne notes, the national sentiment created through the development of a distinct national culture, was instrumental to the political processes leading up to the separation from Sweden (2002, p. 117). In the decades that followed, the scope and impact of the dissemination of national culture widened[44]. Even though several strong subcultures (labour movement, national socialist movement, youth associations etc.) developed in the period leading up to WW2, most aligned with the national values. It was at this point that the national culture was fully consolidated (Hodne 2002, p. 136). During the period between the two world wars, the government developed cultural policies to stimulate civil society by facilitating cultural activities and cultural education (Hodne 2002, p. 139).

2.4   Cultural policies 1940-45: war, resistance and rebuilding the nation

The next significant period in the history of Norwegian national culture revolves around the second World War, during which the country was occupied by Germany.

The five years of Nazi occupation of Norway (1940-45) did much to further strengthen the role which national culture played for most people, not least as it to a large degree became the ideological basis and motivation for the resistance movement. And even though national symbols and parts of Norway's history were (mis-)used for political agitation by Norwegian Nazis[45], the national culture retained

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[44] This was partly due to the immense popularity the new radio medium (Hodne, 2002 p. 134).
[45] The Nazis were particularly partial to old Norse mythology and symbolism. These elements of the national culture were not reclaimed in the same way as the rest after the war, and are still sometimes used by right-wing extremist groups (see Sørensen 1998a, p. 43).

and strengthened its role and power as a definition of Norwegian values[46] (Hodne 2002, pp. 136–141, see also Sørensen, 1998a, pp. 42-43).

Subsequently, when the occupation ended in 1945, national culture played an important role in the reconstructing and rebuilding of the country, as well as in developing the welfare state. The Norwegian Labour government came to power and the state became a more proactive player in the field of cultural policies: the government intended to strengthen the cultural sector in general to the benefit of the population at large (Hodne 2002, pp.140-145).

The national culture seems at this point in time, however, to have become somewhat cemented in a conservative form: having peasant culture and history, together with certain elite cultural elements as its main points of reference, national culture now became something which was to be preserved. Concepts such as conservation, stewardship and dissemination became inextricably linked to the public attitude towards anything deemed to be 'national' (Hodne 2002, p.140).

2.4.1 Stronger state presence in cultural policymaking

Another interesting aspect of the cultural policies in the 1950s and 60s is the introduction of the so-called 'extended concept of culture'[47]. During these decades, the concept of 'culture' in the official policy discourse was expanded to encompass not only the whole spectrum of 'high culture'-elements, but also any form of leisure activity and any artistic expression[48]. It was, Hodne argues, the very creation of and participation in cultural activities which is the main characteristic of the 'extended concept of culture' (2002, p.14, see also Eriksen 2009, p.104, Mangset & Hylland 2017).

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[46] When a museum mounted an exhibition on folk music and Nazism a few years ago, it caused quite a controversy in the folk music community. One aim of the exhibition was to discuss issues related to occupying Nazi forces attempting to harness the power of national culture to their own ends. Moreover, the museum wanted to question mindless romanticising of national folk culture and what happens when it becomes entangled with political movements and ideologies. Certain parts of the folk music community, however, found the exhibition to be disrespectful and harmful to folk music, a reaction which only underlines the power which is still inherent in symbols of our national culture (http://valdresmusea.no/arkiv_detalj.asp?nid=545&lid=1&cid=272). Accessed on 30.01.2017.

[47] 'Det utvidete kulturbegrep'.

[48] Although a comprehensive and exhaustive discussion of the inordinately complex concept of 'culture' lies outside the scope of this thesis, it may be useful to stress "the dynamic nature of cultural exchange and the permeable borderlands between and within cultures" (Golding 2013, p. 19).

Through state intervention, the culture of the elite and the culture of the masses were to be united in an effort to create a better society for all (Hodne 2002, p.147). It was during this period that the number of museums almost doubled and started being subjected to a process of professionalization (Eriksen 2009, p.105).

These principles of democratisation, equality and decentralisation are a recurring theme in the cultural policies of the 1970s, regardless of the political orientation of the sitting government[49] and were carried on in white papers and green papers on culture policy to the Parliament well into the 1980s (Hodne 2002, pp. 147-148). Some have argued that the development of cultural policies in the post-war period can be seen as a 'sectorisation' of cultural life: cultural policy has been established as a political and administrative field separate from other public sectors through various historic phases, all the while characterized by a specific culture-political mind-set whose roots still can be traced back to the 1800s (NOU 4:13, p. 43, see also Mangset & Hylland 2017).

Figure 4 Tidemand & Gude: 'Brudeferden i Hardanger'. Iconic painting from 1848 containing central elements of the newly minted Norwegian national identity: nature, peasant culture and a wooden stave church from the golden era of pre-Danish rule.

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[49] This general direction of the cultural policies largely remained constant during both the Conservative and the Labour governments during this decade.

2.4.2　The 1990s and the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer

It is nevertheless worth noting that democratic and inclusive principles aside, white papers relating to cultural policies in the 1990s reflect a new concern for the role of the national culture, possibly as a result of Norway experiencing increased immigration, globalisation and participation in international fora (Hodne 2002, pp.148-149). Traces of this concern can be found at the core of one of the key national events in post-war Norway: the 1994 Winter Olympics. This brings the discussion closer to a contemporary perspective on cultural policies, roughly spanning the last twenty years or so.

In 1994 Norway hosted the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, a small mountain town a couple of hours' drive north of the capital Oslo. Compared to the avant-garde profile of the Winter Olympics hosted by France two years previously, the Lillehammer Games come across as a two-week long extravaganza of celebrating Norwegian national culture in its most traditional and retrospective form.

The official project report is particularly illuminating: everything from mission and vision statements to design elements and opening ceremony is laced with rhetoric and cultural symbols reminiscent of the early phase of the nation building project in the 1800s. The report is rife with statements such as;

> snow and ice have been important elements ever since people first inhabited this country. Consequently, the Olympic Winter Games will always hold a special place in Norwegians' hearts.[50]

Another revealing feature is the three themes chosen for the visual profile[51] of the Lillehammer games:

- "Norway's distinctive features and *national character"* (my emphasis)
- "The spirit of community among people"
- "The close link between *people and nature"* (my emphasis)

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[50] Polls revealing that Norwegians were so clearly underwhelmed by the idea of hosting another Winter Olympics that the Solberg-government in September 2014 refused to back another application belies this particularly smug statement.

[51] http://library.la84.org/6oic/OfficialReports/1994/E_BOOK2.PDF

Incidentally, both the 'distinctive features' and 'national character' (wood and stone being predominant building materials since "time immemorial") are closely linked to nature, as the official report explains:

> The Norwegian people's closeness to nature is a quality that was expressed in design and architecture through: environmental awareness and sensible ecological management, outdoor activities (the feeling of freedom, rucksacks and packed lunches, adventure, lure of the unknown, unspoiled natural environment), contrasts (light and darkness, heat and cold, night and day, winter, spring, summer, autumn, closed and open, foreground and background), manifestations of nature (wood, rock, snow and ice, crystals, northern lights, soil and plants» (1994 Official report book 2, p. 142).

Furthermore, the mascots[52] designed for the Lillehammer Games were named after historical persons who lived in the 13th century, thus representing certain key parts of Norwegian national history: the Golden Age preceding the four centuries of Danish rule.

2.4.3 Museums and the Olympics

In connection with the Winter Olympics and with funding from the MoC, Maihaugen, a large open-air museum in Lillehammer, developed an exhibition on Norway's history from the Ice Age until the present day. The exhibition used diorama displays showing scenes from different periods in history. Called *We won the land*[53], the exhibition was originally meant to be temporary, with a planned life span of 6-8 years and the target group was the public in general. In 2006, the exhibition still alive and unchanged, students at the Museums Studies course at Oslo University College carried out a visitor study, examining the relation between the aims of the exhibition and its impact on visitors. The exhibition had five main goals, two of which the students chose as focal points for the visitor survey (Brekke et. al. 2008):

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[52] Håkon, grandson of King Sverre, who in 1217 became king of all of Norway after a power struggle between Sverre's followers and his enemies. Kristin was the daughter of King Sverre and Håkon Håkonsson's aunt.
[53] '*Langsomt ble landet vårt eget*'

- To communicate that Norway had always been a country characterized by diversity
- To communicate the link between people and nature and the importance of environmental sustainability

The results of the project suggested that these two messages were impossible to discern from the exhibition: the only references to international contexts/diversity were related to the Danish-Norwegian union and the German occupation of Norway during WW2. Moreover, the only reference to anything remotely environmental was a diorama showing a farmer growing something the visitors thought "looked like oranges" (ibid, p. 50, my translation). The exhibition is still on display at the museum, still unchanged twenty years after the Winter Olympics[54]. In 2016, two researchers from the University of Bergen carried out a more comprehensive analysis of the exhibition, critiquing its blatant lack of reflection of historical diversity (Lien & Nielssen 2016, pp. 25-43). When asked to comment on the research by a national newspaper, the director stated the museum had no immediate intentions to change the exhibition, claiming that "people enjoy history being presented to them in a step-by-step, chronological fashion[55]". Clearly, the museum does not consider it within their remit and responsibility to challenge traditional notions of Norwegian identity.

2.4.4 The politics of defining 'Norwegianness'

Since 1996 several policy documents have been published describing the democratic role of the cultural sector[56]. Two white papers on culture and inclusion and on archives were produced under the Stoltenberg II government, a 'red-green' majority coalition consisting of the Norwegian Labour party, the Socialist Left and the Centre party[57] who were in power from 2005-2013. This government had a stated political ambition to

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[54] https://eng.maihaugen.no/Experience-Maihaugen/Exhibitions/We-won-the-land . Accessed on 29.06.2017.
[55] *Klassekampen* 30.04.2016, s. 54.
[56] NOU 7:96 and NOU 4:13) (Official Norwegian Report/Green Papers), as well as WP 22:99-00), WP 48:02-03), WP 49:09, WP 10:11-12 and WP 7:12-13 (White Papers, number: year of publication).
[57] Formerly known as the Farmers' Party until it changed its name to the Centre Party in 1959 (source: www.senterpartiet.no). Accessed on 11.11. 2014.

augment the culture budget to 1% of the national budget, and inclusion, access and participation were central concepts in the cultural policy.

In 2013, however, a new government (Solberg) was formed by a minority coalition between the Conservative party and the Progress Party[58]. Their collective political mission statement for this electoral period states that "our common cultural heritage strengthens the feeling of identity and belonging". The statement goes on to describe how knowledge about one's own culture enables people to confidently meet external influences in constructive ways[59.] I would argue that the term 'Norwegian' is implicitly qualifying the terms "our common cultural heritage", "identity" and "community" in this statement, not least because one of the two ruling parties states that "its values are that of the Norwegian constitution, Norwegian and Western traditions and culture heritage inspired by both Christian and humanistic values"[60]. This particular rhetoric on 'Norwegianness' resonates with the more conservative nation-building role of culture described in previous sections.

The former Labour/Social Democrat government also refers to the importance of defining 'Norwegianness' in the white paper on inclusion, arguing that the cultural sector, "as the keepers of culture and cultural heritage – now and for the future" – must contribute to ensuring that society examines, expands and discusses what it means to be Norwegian: "This continuation of our nation-building is created by the people who live in Norway today, and it is crucial that the process includes many different voices" (WP 10:11-12, p. 8).

Even more suggestive is the fact that the current Solberg government seems to be more concerned with preserving 'Norwegian cultural heritage' by referring to traditional national romantic symbols than with redefining and renegotiating this heritage to fit with a contemporary Norwegian society. In December 2016, the Minister of Culture wrote an opinion piece on her Facebook-page, where she

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[58] Mission statement for the Progress Party: "The Progress Party is a classical liberal party that shall work for a major reduction in taxes, duties and government intervention, and for the safeguarding of the rights of the people and their freedom, as the Constitution presupposes" (www.frp.no). Accessed on 11.11. 2014.

[59] Section 11 Kultur, https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/politisk-plattform/id743014/#kultur Accessed on 29.06.2017.

[60] http://www.frp.no/nor/The-Progress-Party/Principles. Accessed on 11.11 2014.

encouraged people to be "proud of *the Norwegian* [way]"[61] and went on to qualify this by listing a chocolate bar popular with lovers of rugged outdoor activities, two cross-country skiing champions, traditional brown goat's cheese, porridge and community volunteering ('*dugnad*'). Add the fact that the piece was accompanied by a photo of the minister in her national costume from her home-region, and the result is a relatively strong message signalling which identity markers are 'authentically Norwegian'.

Figure 5: The Norwegian Minister of Culture, Linda H. Helleland, in her regional national costume. Photo: Facebook. Accessed on 02.06.2017.

Furthermore, in January 2017, the Minister of Education made a call for creating a national canon containing what he described as "the best of Norwegian culture and art". Although his intention apparently was to stimulate a national conversation about Norwegian art and culture, he qualified his own view of what such a canon might contain thus: "I guess there are some *obvious* works of art which should be included,

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[61] Sandnes 2016, my emphasis.

such as the Bridal Party in Hardanger[62][…]"[63] and then, in an attempt to list some less obvious works, went on to enumerate three Norwegian contemporary artists, all male, white and middle-aged. Although such political initiatives often can be twisted to become more tabloid and less nuanced than intended on their journey from private brainwaves to public print, it is still suggestive that the authorities, currently in charge of the purse strings of cultural funding and the national curriculum respectively, seem to often reach backwards in history (and inwards in geography) for identity markers.

2.5 The impact of shifting political contexts on museums and archives

Several of the political documents which were produced in the 90s and 00s contain reflections on the role of museums in society as being more than just collecting and interpreting objects. Museums have the potential to "create curiosity and understanding, to stimulate reflection, ask questions as well as surprise and challenge individuals both emotionally and intellectually" (NOU 7:96, p. 3). Furthermore, White Paper 48 states that cultural policies should strive to project a dynamic and inclusive attitude (WP 48:02-03, 6.1). Also, museums are to be accessible to all and to engage actively with a whole range of audiences and groups (WP 49:09, 2.3).

Political signals concerning the societal role of museums and archives have in this period been relatively general and open although the overriding strategic policy direction has been clear: museums have to change from a position of hegemony and exclusion towards one of democracy and inclusion. The clearest expression of this can be found in several policy papers relevant to the sector[64]. None of these documents enter into detail as to how this change is to be brought about, a responsibility left to the institutions themselves (Holmesland 2013).

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[62] Cf. fig. 4
[63] Børud & Aldridge 2017, my emphasis.
[64] NOU 7:96, WP 22:99, WP 10:11-12 and WP 7:12-13.

2.5.1 Practical implications of the inclusive cultural policy

White paper no. 10 on culture, inclusion and participation states that: "A strong and dynamic cultural sector[65] manifested through diverse modes of cultural expression is central to an inclusive society" (WP 10:11-12, p. 7). Moreover, the white paper on archives issued in 2013 states that archives and museums are to play a role as institutions of dialogue, meeting places and social arenas for many different groups. The institutions will thus contribute to strengthening democracy and freedom of speech through their work. Archives are to be proactive, engaging partners who have the strength and courage to fight for certain values where necessary and give a voice to those who are rarely heard in the public debate/sphere (WP 7: 12-13, p. 45)[66].

Although expressing a respectful distance to issues like quality and content in the culture sector, the white paper on inclusion explicitly makes the connection between culture sector and other parts of society, stressing the need for culture institutions to play a more active role:

> Participating in cultural activities is a way of creating a sense of belonging within a society. In modern society, personal and social identities are strongly related to participation in cultural activities. For people who experience marginalisation due to unemployment, illness, or other reasons, participating in cultural activities can contribute to a sense of belonging: it can help give meaning to everyday life, improve self-esteem, and increase quality of life. The arts and cultural sector must therefore be open and inclusive (WP 10:11-12, p.7).

Somewhat paradoxically, the white paper goes on to state that "In Norwegian cultural policy, reducing differences or conflicts of interest is not a goal" (ibid, p. 10). One could argue that the political rhetoric has a clearly instrumental intention in this case, despite attempts to stress the opposite, which brings us to another interesting

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[65] The report is limited to the cultural sector, understood as professional arts and cultural institutions that receive public funding, independent artistic practice outside the institutions, and the voluntary sector (ibid, p.6).

[66] Archives have been instrumental in documenting and addressing historical injustices suffered by individuals or groups at the hands of the State. The comprehensive report which led to the 1999 decision to give economic compensation for Jewish property which had been seized by the Nazi government during the war would not have been possible were it not for the efforts of national, municipal and private archives. A similar report was made investigating former state-run orphanages and childcare institutions and compensation paid. (WP 7:13, kap.1).

feature of contemporary cultural politics in Norway: the discussion in the arts and culture sector following the publication of this particular white paper mostly revolved around the issues of political instrumentalism and the 'intrinsic' value of art and culture. Critics voiced their concern at what was perceived as unacceptable political meddling in the field of arts and culture[67].

Before proceeding with the discussion of contemporary cultural policy in Norway and its significance for museums and archives, it may be useful to briefly take a closer look at two concepts central to the current discourse on cultural policy: 'intrinsic value' and 'instrumental value'.

2.5.2 'Instrumental' versus 'intrinsic': a question of values

Without delving into the entire field of arguments related to the merits or shortcomings of cultural instrumentalism put forward over the last couple of decades, this section nonetheless takes a closer look at some of the issues raised in the debate. Speaking from a UK vantage point, Lisanne Gibson makes the following reflection:

> Recently the cultural policy, museum and heritage studies literatures have contained a great deal of discussion of the so-called 'instrumentalisation' of cultural institutions and programmes which is described as emerging over the last thirty or so years. This perception of culture's so-called 'instrumentalisation' seems to be widespread and is primarily perceived as a threat (2008, p. 2).

Other research has explored how the concept of 'intrinsic value' is and has been used in Norwegian cultural policy, often in opposition to 'instrumental value' (Hylland 2009, p. 13). The concept is often used about arts and culture in a self-evident manner: the intrinsic value of culture cannot and should not be discussed, as it represents final, indivisible and indisputable value. Culture is thus cloaked in a form of "untouchability" – it cannot and should not be discussed, because it is completely sufficient in itself (ibid 2009, p. 13). Contrary to 'intrinsic value', the term 'instrumental value' has a distinct negative ring to it. The negative connotation to 'instrumental value' can, Hylland notes, be gleaned from the fact that the term is almost always used (by actors

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[67] Borchgrevink 2012

in the cultural policy sector) as a critical term for something one is against. Examples of a positive use of the term in the discourse on cultural policy are rare (2009, pp. 19-20, see also Gibson 2008).

Hylland argues that the commonly used dichotomy between 'intrinsic value' and 'instrumental value' tends to cloud the issue more than it clarifies, and that the opposition between the two is contrived. Hence, he argues, 'intrinsic value' is an unsatisfactory concept for describing ideology or praxis in the field of cultural policy. Hylland points out that on the one hand, a focus solely on value-in-and-for-itself downplays the ways in which culture is dependent on external factors and overplays the self-sufficiency of culture. On the other hand, the concept of 'intrinsic value' has become a negative concept creating a false distinction between "that which exists for some other purpose" (instrumental value) and "that which exists for itself" (intrinsic value) (2009, pp. 19-20).

The extensive use of the term 'intrinsic value' in the context of cultural policy only succeeds in closing off the endless, difficult and necessary discussion about the ways in which art and culture influence people and how cultural experiences are positive in themselves. Hylland thus concludes that "the use of the concept limits the general political discourse on cultural policy" (2009, p. 13). In a similar vein, Gibson points out that the lack of alternative models for considering culture and its administration may risk leaving the field "open for a return to the kinds of elite, exclusionary policies which have characterized cultural administration in the past, and in many cases still does" (2008, p. 2).

The challenge, Gibson (2008) maintains, is one of ensuring accountability: cultural policy analysts and practitioners need "to identify the ways in which cultures can be funded, supported or created using the public purse in ways which are democratic and accountable" (p. 3). This would mean abandoning the oversimplified and constructed polarity of notions such as 'instrumental' and 'intrinsic', which are ineffectual when it comes to describing and consequently enabling "critical engagement with the specificities of a cultural institutions or programmes operation" (Gibson 2008, p. 14).

In the Norwegian context, the cultural sector has, as previously discussed, historically grown out of an instrumentalist nation-building project, which may explain

to some extent why the concept of 'instrumental' is couched in mostly negative terms in the current debate.

2.5.3 Practical implications of conservative culture policy

The weight given to the societal role and responsibility of museums and archives currently seems to be shifting back to a more conservative view, reminiscent of earlier cultural policy rhetoric: culture plays a role in defining national identity. In this respect, changes made to the Letter of Instruction sent from the MoC to the ACN under the current Conservative/Progress Party government are suggestive: all references to diversity, inclusion and participation have been omitted and instead emphasis has been put on battling inefficiency in all areas of the public sector[68], an attitude reminiscent of New Public Management-inspired policies still prevalent in the Norwegian public sector[69].

Furthermore, the new format the museums are required to use when reporting on the grant-in-aid they receive from the government lacks the points pertaining to inclusion and diversity present in the format prior to the change of government. Indeed, from 2017 onwards, all cultural institutions (including museums) funded by the MoC are required to report in a standardized template which extensively favours financial and other quantifiable data to the detriment of more qualitative descriptions of daily practice. This change in reporting template will quite conceivably further impact not only the quality of the information about museums the ACN/MoC have access to, as well as sending a strong signal to the museums where the current priorities of the main funder and policymaker lie.

A further noteworthy shift in the official language is that where museums previously were asked to report on "the purpose of the museum", the same point now has been rephrased to "the purpose of the grant-in-aid". Albeit due to legal technicalities related to the arm's length principle between the ministry and the sector, this textual change contributes to lending even more weight to financial issues, further downplaying by omission the societal role and responsibility of museums. This shift in official political rhetoric has not gone unheeded in some areas of the museum

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[68] cp. grant-in-aid-letters/'*tildelingsbrev*' 2013 and 2014.
[69] https://snl.no/New_Public_Management. Accessed on 28.04.2017.

sector: shortly after receiving the Letter of Instruction for 2014 from the MoC, one regional museum published a piece in a national newspaper questioning this so-called 'freedom reform'[70]: "The letter of instruction from the State is not a contract of servitude. Instead, it is a reminder of the value Norwegian society places on the work we do in the cultural sector[71]" (Bråten 2014, my translation).

2.6 Cultural institutions in contemporary society

As discussed in the previous sections, cultural policies (and the discourse pertaining to them) have changed over time and with different governments in charge. And in the course of these changing policies, expectations to and perceptions of the role which publicly funded museums and archives should play in contemporary society have also changed.

Since 1814 and the birth of the modern Norwegian nation, cultural policies have been, and still seem to be, based on more or less implicit definitions of what it is to be Norwegian. Concurrently with increased globalisation and immigration, these definitions have moved from being broadly consensual regardless of political positions to becoming imbued with more specific political agendas in recent years. It is possible to view these political agendas along two different axes:

- A vertical axis, selectively tracing Norwegian cultural heritage from a (mythical) Golden Age (peasant culture, pre-Danish independence, pristine nature etc.) to its contemporary recipients. This is the concept of national culture which needs to be safeguarded and protected, according to the current liberal-conservative political discourse.

- A horizontal axis, where national culture and cultural heritage represents a cultural conglomerate of contributions from relevant subcultures which needs

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[70] One of the main points the new conservative minister of culture made in her first public speech at the Art Council Norway's annual conference in November 2013 was that she would implement a freedom reform, liberating the cultural sector from the burden of government funding. http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kud/aktuelt/taler_artikler/ministerens-taler-og-artikler/2013/tale-ved-norsk-kulturrads-arskonferanse.html?id=745706 . Accessed on 14.11. 2014.
[71] http://morgenbladet.no/debatt/2014/fri_oss_fra_det_vonde . Accessed on 14.11. 2014.

to be renegotiated and redefined in a constantly ongoing and dynamic process according to the left-leaning political discourse in recent years.

Differing agendas aside, these two axes still represent means to the same end: defining 'Norwegianness'. Even though principles of democracy and the interests of "the public" are a recurring theme in the cultural policy discourse for the past two centuries, it is still a paradox that Norwegian national culture still seems to be based on a specific set of values[72] which are not perceived as relevant to everyone.

As described in this chapter, Norwegian cultural policy has since its inception in 1814 undergone a development from being instrumental to a nation building project towards being a somewhat more inclusive tool for empowerment and democracy based on a more contemporary concept of 'nation': the white paper on inclusion explicitly states that "the work on inclusion and diversity must always be grounded in human rights and democratic principles" (WP 10:12, p. 10). This view is anchored in various international treaties and conventions to which Norway is a signatory party.

Even so, Norwegian national culture is still largely based on the definition of romantic nationalism. This ideological foundation does not provide a particularly constructive point of departure in a contemporary, diverse and globalized society. In order to adjust the cultural foundation of the nation to include contemporary diversity, 'Norwegianness' should be separated from the romantic nationalism and redefined (Hodne 2002, pp. 165 – 167).

How then, is it possible for museums and archives to step out of the prevailing paradigm of selective nation building? The ensuing chapter explores in further detail some theoretical aspects which may prove useful in this regard.

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[72] Cf. the discourse around the Winter Olympics and more recently, the establishment of a canon of national art and culture (cf. section 2.4.4).

Chapter 3   Theoretical perspectives

In light of the preceding overview of the history of Norway's cultural sector and policies, it is apparent that Norwegian museums and archives are situated in a particular historical and socio-cultural context and carry with them (unconsciously or not) a specific political legacy based on romantic nationalism (cf. Hodne 2002, Sørensen 1998a, Eriksen 2009). Even so, the relation between museums and society is not limited to certain duties defined in political documents and which are fulfilled more or less successfully. Museums and archives are, and will always remain, fundamentally embedded in the culture and society which give them meaning in less normative ways (Eriksen 2009, pp. 14-15, see also Sandell 2002). The meaning ascribed to them, however, is not static and fixed: it will be constantly negotiated across generations and cultures, potentially changing over time.

3.1   Ideology and organisation: two sides of the same coin

A central tenet of this thesis is that museums and archives have the potential, and to some degree a moral obligation, to redefine their role and engage more actively in a broader discourse on democracy, culture and inclusion in a contemporary and diverse Norway. This chapter will explore in further detail some aspects of human rights, social justice and citizenship and how they may conceivably form the basis of a more active societal role for museums and archives. The discussion subsequently moves on to the potential which lies in such a role and attempt to situate it in the broader discourse on whether and how museums and archives can contribute to creating a more equitable and fair society.

As previously mentioned, this chapter pursues two different strands of thought related to museums and archives. The first strand is *ideological*, based on the idea of what a museum is and the role it plays or should play in society: it touches on notions of value (ethos) and power and the responsibility related to these. The other strand explores the *organisational* aspect of museums and archives, reflecting on organisational culture, structure and change: it concerns itself with how the idea of the museum is manifested or implemented in practice.

Although the notions of ideology and organisation of museums are closely related and partly overlapping, some themes can be placed more clearly in one category than another. While it may be argued that separating the two can seem somewhat contrived, this thesis is nonetheless loosely structured around these two main concepts in an attempt at creating clarity of argument and thought.

3.2 Cultural institutions: contemporary remit, relevance and potential

The changing nature of cultural policies and the culture sector over the past century necessitates a discussion about the power of museums and the way they wield this power in contemporary society. For decades, it was generally men from the cultural elite who decided what was to be collected and preserved, researched and disseminated to the public (Amundsen & Brenna 2003, pp. 11-12). The question of who decides what the role of a museum should be and who it works for in an ever more diverse society needs to be raised and discussed. As the formerly self-evident authority of museums has diminished and Norwegian society has become more globalised, new possibilities may open for the museums of becoming arenas for dialogue and lead to productive approaches to controversy (ibid 2003). David Fleming, director of National Museums Liverpool, makes the following reflection on the issue;

> Working towards social justice is a long-term commitment; it requires determination and bloody-mindedness. It needs to be driven by passion, by a belief that everyone deserves equal access to what we do in museums and not just because government (or anyone else) tells us that this is what we should do, but because *it's the right thing to do*' (2012, p. 82, my emphasis).

In order for Norwegian museums and archives to begin redefining their role and engage more actively in a broader discourse on the meaning of citizenship, democracy and culture in a contemporary and diverse Norway, I suggest that it is necessary to explore further the reasons *why* it might be the right thing to do. Given the current seemingly conservative view of museum practice, how might one argue the case for a change towards a more socially engaged role? The quote thus serves as a useful point of departure for the subsequent discussion of the societal role of museums and

archives in Norway: it is not only a matter of redefining what it is to be Norwegian, but perhaps more importantly what it is to be a museum in a contemporary Norway.

3.3   Museum as idea – *why* is it the right thing to do?

The subsequent paragraphs will explore and discuss some of the issues raised in the previous section in more depth. The discussion will concentrate on three main focal areas: the *relevance of and need for* institutions such as museums and archives to engage more actively in a contemporary Norway, the *relevance and applicability* of moral principles in institutions and the *practical application* of such principles in museums and archives. It will also explore the raison d'être of museums from different theoretical angles by looking at existing frameworks for social agency, such as human rights.

3.3.1   Relevance and need for social agency

Even though a comprehensive analysis of factors constituting Norwegian contemporary society lies beyond the scope of this thesis, it may be useful to explore in further detail some of the more salient characteristics pertinent to museums and archives, namely that of demographics and policies, as well as current democratic challenges Norway is struggling with.

Norway is not a very populous country by any standard. Numbers from National Statistics Norway (SSB), show that the population was 5.2 million by July 1 2017. Unemployment rates, contrary to the situation in the rest of Europe, are comparatively low, at 4.5 % of the workforce[73]. Life expectancy is currently 81.8, with the prognoses showing a rise over the next thirty years[74].

Moreover, Norway currently ranks as number one on the UN's Human Development Index[75] and has done so for a number of years. The index is based on three different elements of human development: longevity and health, knowledge and

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[73] Measured on 21.03.2017 www.ssb.no. Accessed on 14.06.2017.
[74] The World Factbook ranks Norway as number 21 in the world regarding life expectancy based on 2016 estimates (https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2102rank.html) Accessed on 01.06.2017.
[75]http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-1-human-development-index-and-its-components. Accessed 15.09.2016.

a decent standard of living[76]. Similarly, research from the Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies shows that Norway and its Nordic neighbours rank at the top of a new index measuring levels of social trust, i.e. people's general feeling of trust in others[77] and was also top-ranked in the World Happiness ranking 2017[78]. Furthermore, Norway has not experienced armed conflict on its territory since 1945 and the Nazi occupation during WW2, and can be described as a relatively stable and peaceful place to live. Nonetheless, Norwegian contemporary society faces perhaps more democratic challenges than we'd like to think.

In November 2014, a woman who applied for a job as taxi driver in the eastern part of the country was turned down on the grounds that she was of "the Traveller people[79]", a people whose temper was "not compatible with safe taxi driving", as the text message she received from the taxi company helpfully explained, smiley and all (Nordberg 2014).

Other examples of contemporary prejudice targeting minorities include frequent defacing of Sámi language road signs (Steinum 2012) or hate crimes against the LGBT-community (Mortensen 2014). Furthermore, in 2011, the municipality of Oslo[80] commissioned a research report looking into anti-Semitic, racist and discriminatory attitudes in the city's schools. The report showed that over half of schoolchildren had heard the word '*jøde*' (Jew) used in a derogatory fashion[81]. Other prevailing derogatory terms among young people seem to be '*hore*' (whore) and '*homo*'[82]. Taken together with the results from a survey the Holocaust centre in Norway did in 2012, where 12.5% of Norwegians 'can be considered significantly prejudiced against Jews'[83], these examples should give pause for thought before

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[76] For more information on how precisely it is calculated, see http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2015_technical_notes.pdf, Technical note 1.
[77] http://www.cifs.dk/scripts/artikel.asp?lng=2&id=1309. For an interesting discussion on the economic impact of trust in a society, see Svendsen, G. T. 2014.
[78] http://worldhappiness.report/ed/2017/. Accessed on 02.05.2017.
[79] Also known as *Romani* or *Tater*, one of Norway's five national minorities. For more information on the history of the Norwegian Travellers/Romani, see Brekke, 2013.
[80] It is worth noting that Oslo is the largest city in Norway and thus prone to experiencing complex urban issues regarding immigration and integration, similar to other European cities.
[81]http://www.utdanningsetaten.oslo.kommune.no/getfile.php/utdanningsetaten%20(UDE)/Internett%20(UDE)/PED/Dok/Rapport_UDA_7.6.2011.pdf. Accessed on 15.01. 2015.
[82] http://www.nrk.no/norge/-jodiske-barn-i-norge-er-redde-1.11995625. Accessed on 15.01 2015.
[83] http://www.hlsenteret.no/forskning/jodisk-historie-og-antisemittisme/holdningsundersokelse/HL_Rapport_2012_web.pdf. Accessed on 15.01. 2015.

deciding that there is no need for museums and archives to engage actively in the battle for a just and decent society. Examples of everyday prejudice and its consequences are rife, and the country still has deeply disturbing issues of discrimination and conflict which need to be dealt with. Hence it can be argued that the experiences of museums in other countries which are already grappling with these issues are indeed relevant for the Norwegian sector.

Furthermore, there is research which suggests that people do not always take part in cultural events or see themselves as having a genuine opportunity to participate even if they have formal rights and opportunities to do so: despite efforts over the past decades to reduce social differences in cultural participation, the majority of museum visitors are still white upper middle-class people (Gran 2010). Add to that the documented underrepresentation of people with immigrant background from outside the EEA[84], and the fact remains that the culture sector (staffing and board profiles, visitors, audiences etc.) does not accurately reflect the historical and current diversity of Norwegian society (cf. Vassenden & Bergsgard 2011).

Other visitor groups, such as children and young people, have been specially targeted through ear-marked funding and national programmes such as the Cultural Rucksack[85] for the past fifteen years. Such national initiatives have had a significant impact on the weight and priority given by museums and archives to designing learning activities for school children. ACN's annual museum statistics[86] show that children and young people currently make up a significantly larger share of visitor numbers in museums than was the case fifteen years ago.

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[84] WP 10:11-12, p.8.

[85] The Cultural Rucksack has been part of the Government's cultural policy for primary and lower secondary schools since 2001, and has been extended to upper secondary school. The Cultural Rucksack will offer cultural opportunities representing a wide variety of cultural expressions, such as the performing arts, visual arts, film, music, literature and cultural heritage. The Cultural Rucksack is a joint venture between the educational and cultural sectors at the national and local level. http://kulturradet.no/english/the-cultural-rucksack. Accessed 15.01.2015.

[86] ACN's annual statistics are published here: http://www.kulturradet.no/publikasjoner?p_p_id=122_INSTANCE_nX7r&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-3&p_p_col_count=1&p_r_p_564233524_categoryId=13988&tema=11058&p_r_p_564233524_resetCur=true. Accessed on 01.11.2017

In one audience survey[87] from 2010 attempting to target diversity audiences and non-users, however, one statistic showed that as many 46% of the respondents did not visit museums because it had simply "not occurred to them" (my translation): the institutions simply did not register on the radar as possible destinations for a visit. There is evidently a huge potential for museum and archives to engage more actively with many visitor groups currently not aware of them as public institutions with a lot to offer.

3.3.2 Culture and human rights: access, representation and participation

Clearly, the evidence suggests there are quite a few issues challenging the democratic values and inclusiveness of contemporary Norwegian society. There is a need for civil society organisations to engage more actively in social issues, to strengthen and foster the values and attitudes underpinning a just and fair society which allows people to lead decent lives. Some of these values and attitudes and how they may apply to museums and archives are examined in further detail in the following sections.

Even though Norwegian cultural policies (and the discourse pertaining to them) have changed over time and with different governments in charge, it can nevertheless be argued that these policies, at least until recently, carry elements of a humanistic tradition which can be traced back the Enlightenment ideals of the French and American revolutions (Hodne 2002). The connecting of cultural policy to human rights has the potential of expanding the scope of the societal role of museums and archives, embedding it more firmly in contexts less prone to political shifts.

There are several strong arguments for why the cultural sector could, and should, play a more active democratic role. Norway has in the course of the last two hundred years ratified several international human rights conventions which are highly relevant to the cultural sector. These rights include the social, economic and cultural rights embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose article 27 states the following:

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[87] *Kunnskap om – medvirkning av – formidling for mangfoldige museumsbrukere*. Kulturhistorisk museum Oslo/Norges museumsforbund/Perduco AS. Oslo 2010. http://webcat.georgian.edu/title/kunnskap-om-medvirkning-av-formidling-for-mangfoldige-museumsbrukere-rapport/oclc/785902426 Accessed on 29.06.2017.

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits[88].

Furthermore, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that;

States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity[89]

Other conventions and obligations material to the Norwegian sector are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the ILO Convention no 169 on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the rights of national minorities.

Moreover, § 110a of the Norwegian Constitution secures the rights of the indigenous Sami people to safeguard and develop their culture, language and community. In May 2014, a whole new chapter on human-rights was added to the Constitution, stating among other things that children have a right to education, an education which must "foster respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights"[90].

In 2009, the UN appointed an independent expert in the field of cultural rights for a period of three years. The mandate[91] of the expert was quite wide, ranging from identifying best practices in and possible obstacles to the promotion and protection of cultural rights to working in collaboration with states to propose and foster the adoption of concrete measures aimed at promoting cultural rights.

These rights mostly centre around the concepts of *access*, *representation* and *participation*, all of which are highly germane to cultural institutions. They also form

[88] http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html. Accessed on 14. 09. 2016.
[89] Article 31: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx. Accessed on 14.09. 2016.
[90] https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1814-05-17#KAPITTEL_5. Accessed on 18.05.2017.
[91] http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/cultural_rights/overview.htm. Accessed on 13.11. 2014.

part of what the French jurist Karel Vasak calls the second-generation human rights. Where the first-generation rights essentially have political and civil characteristics and whose purpose is to protect the individual from the state's transgressions, the second-generation rights are inherently focused on equality. The latter set of rights cover the economic, social and cultural aspects of the individual's relation to the state (Vasak 1977, p. 11).

Furthermore, the first-generation rights can be conceived as negative rights in the sense that the state is required to not interfere with individual liberties, whereas the second-generation rights require positive action by the state in order to be implemented, thus earning the label 'positive rights' (Vasak 1977, p. 29). Cultural rights thus fall into the category which need active implementing and safeguarding, a point highly apposite to the discussion on the democratic role and responsibility of museums and archives.

3.3.3   Social justice

'Social justice' is another term central to the current discourse on the democratic role of museums and archives and closely associated with human rights. It can be described as "justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society"[92].

Furthermore, social justice is perceived as a purpose of human rights education in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) which was adopted by consensus in 1993 by the World Conference on human rights in Vienna, Austria[93]. Taken together with the recent addition of a chapter on human rights and HR-education in the Norwegian Constitution, museums and archives have unquestionably a solid judicial foundation on which they may base their role as agents for social justice.

The principles of social justice, John Rawls argues, "provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriate

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[92] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/english/social-justice. Accessed 16.12.2014.
[93] The Declaration was endorsed Declaration endorsed by General Assembly Resolution, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was subsequently created (http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/BriefHistory.aspx). Accessed on 13.11. 2014.

distribution of benefits and burdens of social cooperation" ([1971]1999, p. 4). Social justice is a central concept in his theory of justice-as-fairness, or distributive justice, where what he calls 'primary goods'[94] such as income and wealth is distributed in line with certain principles based on fairness (Rawls 1988). This perception of justice is part of the social contract theory dominant in western political philosophy, where justice is the result of a mutually advantageous contract made between people (Nussbaum 2004, p. 4). Here one might argue that if museums and archives can be said to be part of what constitutes what Rawls calls the 'basic institutions of society', then they also have a responsibility to participate in the collective effort to ensure social justice for all.

One of the criticisms of Rawls' concept of social justice, however, has been that it does not necessarily take into account the individual heterogeneity of people. Individuals whose lives differ from the lives of individuals belonging to the dominant group of able-bodied, non-dependent individuals who do not require care-giving (i.e. many women, children, people with disabilities or other marginalised groups) remain relatively invisible in the framework for social justice suggested by Rawls (Nussbaum 2006, see also Holst 2010, Robeyns 2011).

A case in point, Martha Nussbaum maintains, is that individuals with physical and mental impairment "have not as yet been included, in existing societies, as citizens on a basis of equality with other citizens" (2006, pp. 1-2). In her view, solving this problem necessitates redefining who the citizen is and rethinking the framework for distribution. Nussbaum argues that human diversity needs to be acknowledged and taken into account in a framework of social justice and proposes that a focus on distributing 'capabilities' instead of wealth, income and other resources will bring diversity back in the picture[95] (2006). Holst[96] describes this capability approach thus:

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[94] Rawls defines primary goods as goods that any rational person would want, a rational person being a person with two moral powers - the capacity for a sense of justice and the capacity to adopt and pursue a conception of the good (Rawls 1993, pp. 178-179).

[95] The Rethinking Disability-project illustrates this issue very well: how people with disabilities have been systematically elided from museum exhibitions and interpretation or been represented solely on the basis of their physical condition (Dodd et al., 2013).

[96] For a more comprehensive analysis and comparison of Nussbaum and Rawls' respective theories of social justice, see Catherine Holst (2010).

> What must be compared - and distributed fairly - are capabilities, not primary
> goods; income, wealth or other resources. Two people are equally well off
> when they are equal with regard to their ability to function (Holst 2010, p. 2).

3.3.4 Social inclusion and exclusion

In the context of social justice and development, social inclusion (or exclusion) can be seen as a concept describing the way in which individuals and groups are able to participate (or not) in their society. The notion of social inclusion is closely linked to and sustained by the principle of human rights, the latter being essential to creating and supporting an inclusive society with access and participation for all in social, economic and political processes (Lombe & Sherraden 2008, pp. 201-203). From this point of view, inclusion matters not only as a right, it also has an impact on human dignity in that it provides a possibility for people to participate, as well as sustaining and enhancing the capacities of vulnerable individuals to realise their potential (ibid, p.203). The concept of inclusion, Lombe and Sherraden argue,

> is linked to an ideal of personhood that defines humans, regardless of status, as
> creative agents endowed with the capacity to influence their life circumstances
> (2008, p. 203).

In the context of museums and archives, social inclusion translates, as Mark O'Neill notes, into institutions actively seeking out and removing barriers which hinder individuals or groups from participating fully and freely in their activities. Social inclusion means, he argues, that institutions need to acknowledge the need for a variety of additional support to people who hitherto have been left out for generations, in order to "enable them to exercise their rights to participate in many of the facilities that the better off and better educated take for granted" (2002, p. 37).

Making the case for a more active societal role for cultural institutions solely based on the human rights argument is, however, not as straightforward as it may seem, as the universal nature of human rights is sometimes fundamentally questioned and debated.

3.3.5 Human rights increasingly contested?

In the anthology *Museums and Truth*, Per B. Rekdal points out that the apparent universality of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a globally valid description of justice is currently being contested.

The notion of its very universality can be called into question as some signatory countries refuse to comply and want changes (Rekdal 2014, p. xxi). A fairly recent example is the attitude of the Turkish president Erdogan, who during a women's seminar in Istanbul November 2014 stated that women cannot be treated as equal to men because it is "against nature"[97]. Suffice it to add that Turkey, as a potential member of the EU is a part of Europe, which makes Erdogan's attitude all the more worrying, as does the blatantly and consistently xenophobic and misogynistic politics of the current US government spearheaded by president Trump.

Hence, for museums and archives to base their ethical and political values on a moral basis more or less grounded in the universality of human rights may prove a challenge. In light of this, Rekdal asks whether museums (and archives, my addition) should "try to define and make explicit a moral basis?" (2014, p. xxi, see also Jimerson 2009). I would argue that they should indeed attempt to carve out their role in society based on an explicit moral basis grounded in the principles of social justice and human rights. This would, however, require a more comprehensive process of finding arguments which can contribute to strengthening a society underpinned by democratic principles.

It would entail taking these principles less for granted and explore other areas which can strengthen the case for human rights, as well as bring on board new and constructive viewpoints[98]. The central questions can thus be summed up as follows:

- What constitutes a good society and is it universal?

- How can such a society be ensured for everyone?

- How can museums and archives play a role?

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[97] http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30183711 . Accessed on 24.11.14.

[98] Philosopher Thaddeus Metz (2014) proposes some interesting perspectives on how combining ethical values of different cultural origins may prove fruitful in the discussion on a global understanding of ethics.

These issues will be discussed in what follows below, drawing on insights and arguments from disciplines ranging from sociology to moral philosophy and literature in an attempt to provide some perspectives on society which can potentially be useful in the discussion concerning the societal role of museums and archives.

3.3.6 Citizenship and social poetry

The question of what constitutes a so-called 'good society' have been and are still discussed and debated in different ways. In view of the earlier discussion on the principles of rights and social justice, the relation between justice (fairness) and good can be expressed in the words of John Rawls: "justice draws the limit, the good shows the point. Thus, the right and the good are complementary, and the priority of right does not deny this" (1988, p. 252). Nonetheless, as philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues, rational cognition is not enough to ensure a general subscription to a human rights principle: in order for individuals to engage with causes larger than themselves emotions need to be involved as well. There is a need for what she terms 'social poetry' (Nussbaum 2013), a concept examined in further detail below.

Before exploring the notion of 'social poetry', however, it may be worthwhile to consider another central term connected to the principles of social justice, social inclusion and human rights: that of 'citizenship'. The roots of the word can be traced back to the Greek-Roman idea of the city providing the context for a political community, where citizenship meant holding rights as citizens in the city state (*polis*) (Korsgaard 2012, p. 4).

In a Nordic[99] context, the term is used in two slightly different ways: '*statsborgerskap*' (state-citizenship) and '*medborgerskap*' (co-citizenship). Ove Korsgaard describes the former as the judicial link between a person and the state: (state-) citizenship thus entails a range of civil, political and social rights as well as duties, such as mandatory military service or jury duty. The latter, (co-) citizenship is primarily applied to the individual citizen's sense of belonging to the politico-judicial community he or she is a part of. In this sense, to feel like a citizen is connected to a collective concept of identity rather than an individual one: you cannot be a citizen by

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[99] Notably Sweden, Norway and Denmark, whose linguistic origins are more or less the same.

yourself, only in relation to and together with other people (ibid, p. 4). I will, in what follows, use the latter definition of 'citizen' ('*medborger*'/co-citizen), finding it a more useful concept in the discussion on the democratic role of museums and archives than the judicial definition.

Such a notion of citizen is reminiscent of the African concept of *ubuntu*[100] ("I am because we are") describing the interrelatedness of humans (Metz, 2010, p. 82). Archbishop Desmond Tutu explains the concept as central to the idea of a just and good society, informing the post-apartheid reconciliation process in South Africa in significant ways:

> We say, 'a person is a person through other people'. It is not 'I think therefore I am'. It says rather: 'I am human because I belong'. I participate, I share…. Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the summum bonum - the greatest good (1999, p. 35).

Moreover, the concept of 'citizen' as 'someone who belongs' finds resonance in poetry and literature. The powerful lines in John Donne's (1572 – 1631) Meditation 17 describes the interrelatedness of humans in a very poignant way:

> No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee[101].

For our world to be a decent world in the future, Nussbaum notes, it is necessary to acknowledge this human interdependency and interrelatedness (2004, p. 18). Humanity, she argues, is under a collective obligation to find ways of living and cooperating together so that all human beings have decent lives (2004, p. 13). That being the case, a subsequent question would be how we, collectively, can find these ways of ensuring a just and morally decent society and foster a sense of citizenship.

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[100] Nguni word for humanness (South Africa) with cognates across sub-Saharan Africa (Metz, 2010, p. 82).
[101] Scott 2004, p. 75

Korsgaard, inspired by the philosophy of Nussbaum, underlines the concept of 'social poetry' as instrumental to the development of citizenship. A theoretical/cognitive introduction into the legal rights is not enough: it is also necessary to foster an emotional support for democratic principles and values in children and young people. Indeed, it is essential that people perceive political goals supporting such values as tolerance and respect to be of such importance that they are willing to forego their own interests in order to sustain these goals. Hence the significance of social poetry: emotions created by art, culture and poetry often play a role in such a process (Korsgaard 2012, p.5, see also Nussbaum 2013 and Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura 2009, p.77). To illustrate this point, suffice it to notice the difference between John Donne's Meditation 17 and the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[102]: where the poetry of the former makes it one of the most powerful and compelling calls for action ever written, the latter text's legalese wording seems almost impenetrable. Nonetheless, both texts are based on the same principle of collective responsibility humans strive to achieve for each other.

Given their positions as civil society institutions, it is precisely at the point where citizenship and social poetry intersect that museums and archives have a potential to play a significant role.

3.3.7 The power of the better argument: dialogue democracy, civil society and public spheres

Sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas argues that a healthy and well-functioning public sphere rooted in a free, civil society is the main premise for a 'democratic citizenship': where 'democracy' is a worldly (non-religious) way of providing political authority with legitimacy, 'democratic citizenship' functions as mechanism providing social integration at the same time. A public sphere of this kind is firmly grounded in civil society (1999, p.68).

Moreover, argues Habermas, unless civil society is given an opportunity to flourish, the socio-cultural basis on which the state and the market can function within a framework of human dignity and democracy can be threatened by "culturally

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[102] For the full text, cf. http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/. Accessed on 10.03.2017.

destructive commercialism, egocentric entertainment mania and myopic politics"
(1999, p.25, my translation).

Furthermore, complex societies generally struggle with the challenge of
recreating and strengthening solidarity, when faced with what Habermas calls
'imperialistic tendencies' in the shape of commercialisation or bureaucratisation, or
both:

> In times when societies were less complex, solidarity was mostly created in
> face-to-face relations ensuring confidence and loyalty, often grounded in
> religion. [...] Even if these binding social structures have survived in modern
> society, they cannot satisfy the need for social cohesion on their own. Conflicts
> related to the dividing of resources and collisions between differing life forms
> are caused by an increasing differentiation of functions and cultural diversity
> (1999, pp.70-71, my translation).

Habermas uses the terms 'discourse democracy' or 'dialogue democracy', in his
understanding of democracy as a rational discussion and mutual deliberations
among/between free and equal citizens. Democratic processes are thus dynamic,
ongoing negotiations, and are inherently able to change (1999, p.36). In a similar vein,
Molander uses a hermeneutic approach to describe democracy when stating that "a
democratic form of life requires a democratic practice, which (in turn) requires
democratic individuals, which again presuppose a democratic form of life", in other
words: democracy needs to be understood in practical terms (2002, p.363).

This view of democracy-as-practice is similar to Habermas' description of the
public sphere as a network through which relevant subjects and opinions are
communicated and discussed, contested and reworked, and where opinions are met
with positive and negative reactions and valued accordingly. This particular definition
of the public sphere only encompasses non-profit entities, bodies and organisations
outside the state structure, anchoring the public structures of communication in real
life (1999, p.74). As museums and archives are undoubtedly part of such a notion of
the public sphere, they are also well placed as arenas where such democratic practice
is developed and sustained.

Habermas' dialogue democracy complies with common 'rules of engagement'[103]: all dialogue must be based on a mutual requirement that arguments adhere to rules of good argumentation, i.e. such as keeping to facts[104]. Hence the significance of giving priority to what he calls 'the better argument': only by allowing such a sphere where participants apply and test their knowledge and skills against those of others will the quest to find the better argument be successful (Habermas 1999, see also Dysthe et al. 2012, p.53, Molander 2002).

Habermas defines civil society as a network of voluntary entities who initiate informal public discourses on subjects of general interest (1999, p.75). A similar, but more elaborate description has been provided by Ivan Karp, who qualifies these entities to include families, professional societies, associations (voluntary, ethnic, educational) and ethnic groups:

> They are the social apparatuses responsible for providing the arenas and contexts in which people define, debate and contest their identities and produce and reproduce their living circumstances, their beliefs and values and ultimately their social order (Karp 1992a, p.5).

Again, this would seem to fit with the concept of a more active role for museums and archives: as institutions facilitating democratic dialogue[105]. Karp argues that museums, by striving to contain and exhibit "the range of human communities, capacities, and artistic achievement" need to question their own claims about identity and engage in "serious and systematic dialogue with other points of view" (1992b, p.31), a view which resonates well with Habermas' concept of a healthy public sphere (1999).

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[103] The term 'rules of engagement' stems from the military and describes the specifications of the circumstances and limitations under which forces may engage in combat. Military connotation aside, it is a useful term when thinking about Habermas' idea of how a discourse/dialogue democracy ought to function. The concept of *fair play* could also possibly be useful.

[104] Keeping to facts, or even agreeing on what they are, seems to have become increasingly difficult, as recent events in the US have shown when 'alternative facts' suddenly emerged a positively Orwellian way for the people in power to shift the rules of the discussion altogether: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_facts. Accessed 1.02.2017.

[105] The term *'dialoginstitusjon'* (dialogue institution) was first used in Norwegian cultural policy documents in the 2000's and has until the last change of government been repeatedly used in white papers and Letters of Instructions to the museums. Many museums still describe one of their goals as being a 'dialogue institution'.

3.3.8 Risking to speak truth to power

Sometimes, however, maintaining a healthy democracy requires civil society institutions to move beyond mere dialogue towards active opposition. In 2012 the Challenging History-network[106] organised a conference in London on difficult and sensitive heritages. One of the presenters, the regional museum coordinator for the NGO Cultural Heritage Without Borders, started by requesting that all recording equipment be turned off, as the presentation of her work with several museums in the Balkans could potentially put her museum partners in personal danger. The museums she collaborated with had all been expressly forbidden by the authorities to co-operate with each other, as they had been enemies during the war in the 1990's. The museums nevertheless saw it as their duty and task to contribute to continued peace-building and conflict management in the region and did so by collaborating unofficially and underground[107].

This illustrates clearly why museums and archives need to *actively* reflect on and define the moral basis for their work in order to claim the role as agents for democratic values: the state's values and policies aren't always democratic or human rights based. During the Nazi occupation of Norway, the government established *Kulturtinget*, an advisory body on cultural matters, assisting the Ministry of Culture in the streamlining of cultural activities based on reigning Nazi ideology[108]. One infamous example of this is the state-sponsored exhibition '*Kunst og ukunst*' ('Art and Un-Art'), which opened in 1942 in the National Gallery of Oslo, mirroring parallel exhibitions of '*Entartete Kunst*' ('Degenerate Art') in Nazi-Germany[109].

As discussed in previous paragraphs, the notions of human rights, social justice, social inclusion, democratic dialogue and citizenship are all closely connected and can be seen as attempts to get to grips with the bigger issue of what constitutes a good society – and for whom.

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[106] For more information, see https://challenginghistorynetwork.wordpress.com/. Accessed on 15. 09 2016.

[107] For more information, check out the organisation's website: www.chwb.org. Accessed on 15.09 2016.

[108] https://snl.no/Kulturtinget. See also https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kulturtinget. Both accessed on 15.09. 2016.

[109] https://snl.no/Entartete_Kunst. See also https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kunst_og_ukunst. Both accessed on 15.09.2016.

The subsequent paragraphs explore further how these concepts might apply to the Norwegian culture sector and the role of museums and archives, and will discuss different ways of looking at the democratic potential of museums. I will be drawing on the comprehensive writings of a wide range of intellectuals who all have practical experience from the museum sector. Although their theoretical focus is mainly on museums, I would argue that these perspectives are as useful and important to archives as public institutions in a contemporary democratic society[110].

3.3.9 The democratic role of museums and archives

Applied to the cultural sector, there are several potentially constructive arguments for why and how the principles of social justice and human rights can and should be central to the way in which museums and archives perceive their role in the society they are a part of (see for example Silverman 2010, Sandell et al. 2010, Golding 2009, Weil 2002, Sandell 2002). There is no one way, however, in which this role is defined and put into practice. Davis argues the case for envisaging socially engaged museums as placed along a line of progressively complex social objectives:

> Such a continuum begins with the notion of museums dedicated to physical and intellectual accessibility and moves on to increasingly engaged and inclusive relationships that actively involve communities, share authority, and provide creative space for meaningful learning and interaction. At the far end of the continuum is the evolving concept of museums as active agents of social change, dedicated to interventions that make a positive difference in the quality of people's lives (2008, pp. 2-3).

In other words, how a museum takes on its societal role is a matter of degree of activity: the participatory and inclusive museum in one end of the continuum (Simon 2010) and the activist museum in the other (Sandell & Dodd 2010, Sandell 2017).

There are, however, sceptical voices. Before moving on to explore different ways of defining the content of a more democratic role, it may be useful to mention a few objections which have been voiced.

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[110] See for example Theimer 2013 and Jimerson 2009.

3.3.10 Sceptics, politics and beyond

In my experience as a representative of the Norwegian state tasked with promoting the MoC's inclusion policy, museums usually state three main objections to them taking on a more active social role[111]. These protestations seem to mainly come from within the sector itself, and are usually roughly formulated thus:

"But we [the museum professionals] are not social workers!"

"Museums are not alike and should not all be doing the same thing"

"But art and culture has intrinsic value"

Similar objections can be found in the UK museum sector, where many museums are struggling to balance the many complex issues (such as balance, impartiality and ethics) arising from the demands of a more active social role (Sandell 2002, p. 3, pp.19-20).

Moreover, given that museums are inherently part of what Sandell calls "the dominant narratives and power relations", some critics also question to which degree, if at all, the institution is able to challenge these narratives and relations (ibid, p.19).

Furthermore, there is the argument positing that taking on a role of social responsibility puts the museum at risk of becoming a government instrument for "social engineering and control" (Sandell 2002, p.21). I suspect this last objection has some association to the fear of instrumentalism and its perceived negative effect on quality mentioned in the previous chapter, although in the context of the extremely challenging political situations in which some museums find themselves this fear merits some consideration. There is no neutral position, however, and there never has been: museums [and archives] are, as Elaine Gurian points out, 'products of people's work, collectively and individually' (2006, p.69, see also Sandell & Dodd 2010, p.4, Hein 2011 and Jimerson 2009). And not only are they products of people's work, they are also products of thoughts and ideas:

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[111] Part of my work consists in giving presentations on inclusion policies in different fora in the culture sector, thus giving me the opportunity to gauge general attitudes to these policies in the discussions following my presentation.

Like the world, museums are sites of ideated expression, where things are kept,
and the thoughts that inhabit things are transmitted from mind to mind and
generation to generation (Hein 2000, p. viii).

Moreover, museums and archives have a much broader responsibility for considering their impact on not only individuals, but also communities and society at large. Their scope must be wider than any given political trend: the present work of Cultural Heritage Without Borders serves to illustrate how fickle these trends may be and how easily government power can turn abusive.

Nevertheless, as Sandell points out, taking on social responsibility does not imply that the main aim of museums is battling inequality, nor that they must do this on their own (2002, p.21) or in the same ways. Rather, it means that they reflect on the impact they do and can have on society "and seek to shape that impact through practice that is based on contemporary values[112] and a commitment to social equality" (Sandell 2002, p.21). Following this train of thought, one may ask whether a socially engaged museum practice can be viewed in terms of being a moral imperative rather than a policy-driven choice made by the individual institution?

3.3.11 The moral responsibility and agency of institutions

Philosopher Hilde S. Hein suggests that ethical and moral restrictions do indeed apply to both individuals and institutions, and although people and institutions have different ways of living (or failing to live) by these ethics, they are nevertheless guided by ethical conditions that they may be more or less aware of. She argues that 'museums are uniquely empowered by the nature of what they do to bring about positive change in the world that would benefit all its inhabitants' (2011, p. 112, see also Jimerson 2009).

Furthermore, Hein points out that one of the core activities of museums, the 'what they do', is representation. Their vocation is, she says, "to develop expertise in multiple types and techniques of representation, to explore the variety of their

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[112] The concept 'contemporary values' is potentially problematic, in view of the current (or indeed contemporary) shift towards seemingly less inclusive values as expressed in the political platform of Norway's current Solberg-government (cf. the revised Letters of Instruction discussed in chapter 5). Hence the importance of keeping the conversation going on what constitutes a good society: John Donne's values are as valid in a contemporary society as they were in the 1700s.

expression and histories" (ibid, p.113). Museums are, regardless of the specifics of their individual mandates, committed to "depicting aspects of the world *as filtered through some human consciousness*" (ibid, p.113, my emphasis). 'Filtered' being the operative word, Hein argues that representation is arguably the result of a selective cognitive enterprise, and as such is also imbued with complex ethical challenges.

Hence, museums are entities which carry great moral responsibility as institutions, not because they elect to endorse specific causes or embrace an activist practice, but rather in view of what Hein calls their 'historic essence' (ibid, p. 113). In other words: their fundamental practice of representation entails great moral responsibility. Following this line of reasoning, one may then ask a further question: are institutions (in this case museums and archives) are moral agents in their own right?

Hein argues that although institutions and individual human beings are different in character, 'museums, like people, exercise agency and are no less morally responsible for what they do' (2011, pp. 114-115). Part of this responsibility emerges, she argues, from the ability of institutions to increase and expand personal effectiveness:

> Arguably, their responsibility is, therefore, proportionately greater insofar as their authority and influence exceeds that of most ordinary individuals. Certainly, their ethical impact is no less' (Hein 2011, pp. 114-115).

On the one hand, the people making up the museum staff are, Hein argues, all individually accountable for and responsible for respecting the conventional moral standards that govern all ethical interaction, such as not stealing, not lying or intentionally injuring or harming others (2011, p. 115).

On the other hand, as museum employees, their professional activity is conducted within the framework of an institution with a specific mandate: they are paid to perform more or less specific tasks based on their skills and assignments in the museum's name. Hein points out that even though the museum's agency 'derives from multiple behaviours exhibited by distinct persons', it cannot be reduced to being merely the sum of the employees' actions (2011, p.115). In other words, the whole (museum) is bigger than the sum of its (human) parts and can thus be ascribed moral

responsibility on the grounds of its nature as a unique entity (ibid, p.115). Moreover, as museums and archives wield a great deal of power, the power to select, define and legitimize, the moral responsibility of these institutions becomes undisputable. As Jimerson notes,

> Since archives [and museums] are institutions that require funding, authorization, and legitimacy, it is no wonder that they traditionally have reflected the dominant culture and privileged the voices and stories of the powerful (2009, p. 216).

Thus one may argue that this link between power and responsibility specific to museums and archives makes the logic of a socially engaged practice even more compelling. A further discussion of power and its relevance to museums will follow in chapter 6.

3.3.12 Practical implications and applications of moral responsibility

Having made the case that museums (and archives[113]) do indeed carry a moral responsibility in their own right, one may next ask what such a responsibility encompasses in an institution such as a museum? Developing her earlier argument that the very nature of the museum as a producer of representations, and as such demanding ethical reflection and consideration, Hein points out that "the ambiguity and ephemerality of the museum's content distinguish it from other institutions" (2011, p.116, my emphasis). Both these words, 'ambiguity' and 'ephemerality', serve to illustrate the non-neutral quality of representation, a concept which Hein claims to be capable of what she calls both "deliberate and unintended falsehood" (2011, p. 118).

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[113] Although archives are not primarily institutions which channel their representations through exhibitions, one might nonetheless argue that they are *repositories of representations*. Moreover, they are institutions which are perceived to be neutral and trustworthy, imbued with a high degree of public legitimacy. A case in point is the Norwegian Traitor-archive (*Landssvikarkivet*): compiled in the wake of WW2, it contains information about thousands of people who collaborated (or were thought to do so). with the Nazi government. On January 1 2015, the National Archives of Norway (NA) made the archive accessible to the general public, after 75 years of access strictly limited to researchers. The NA are very aware of the ethical challenges which such a move entails and welcomes open debate on the matter (Bolstad 2015).

Museums wield great power, Hein maintains, in that they create exhibitions which hold the potential to influence how people think and act, how they perceive the world as well as the values they hold (see also Lynch 2011b and Jimerson 2009). Hence, because the museum through exhibit design, a core form of representation, is inherently capable of using emotional and highly evocative communicative means bordering on manipulation, the museum is also morally accountable:

> Because it shapes our conception of and accommodation to reality, representation distributes power – and does so unequally. Because representation both limits and enables action, it is political. It defines possibility, opens and closes options. Under the guise of description representation is normative: sometimes the certainty it induces is simply an effect of withholding alternatives. I argue that representation restricts reality and is therefore ethically problematic.' (Hein 2011, p. 118, see also Douglas 1987).

Thus the moral accountability of museums does not just encompass their active choices and processes of selection, nor their deliberate omissions or exclusions, but also 'what they do not choose to - but nevertheless do – represent by indirect means', such as the illusion of purporting a neutral, truthful world view (Hein, 2011, p. 118).

Mary Douglas makes a similar reflection on the power of institutions to create shadowed places in which nothing can be seen and no questions asked. They make other areas show finely discriminated detail, which is closely scrutinized and ordered. History emerges in an unintended shape as a result of practices directed to immediate, practical ends. To watch these practices establish selective principles that highlight some kinds of events and obscure others is to inspect the social order operating on individual minds (Douglas 1987, pp. 69-70).

A case in point from the Norwegian context would be the painstaking and sometimes painful trust-building process which led to the opening of a permanent exhibition on the Norwegian Romani/Travellers at the Glomdal Museum in 2007: their culture was on the brink of destruction at the hands of the state, not least because their story was omitted, at first by design and subsequently by lack of knowledge in

later generations, from the official narrative of the birth and rise of the Norwegian nation (Brekke 2013).

Hence, it can be argued that the issue of moral accountability for museums is closely linked to the issue of their often unacknowledged power over people's perceptions and emotions. To quote the Swedish-Finnish poet Edith Södergran; "Someone wielding power over hearts should treat them with reverence" (2003, p.136). In short, with great power comes great responsibility. It is a responsibility which involves engaging with an 'other' (the individual visitor or non-visitor, specific communities etc.) in different ways.

The preceding sections have explored different theoretical aspects underpinning the notion of social justice and the democratic role of museums and archives within three different frameworks:

- human rights and social justice

- moral philosophy and the notion of a just and decent society

- the potential social and democratic role and agency of museums and archives

Even though most of the intellectual resources informing the discussion regarding the democratic potential of museums is drawn from the US or UK museum sectors, I would argue that the overarching moral principles underpinning the ideological notions of a socially engaged museum, as well as the organisational experiences drawn from concrete application of these principles may indeed be highly relevant to the Norwegian context.

3.4 Museum as organisation – how can idea be converted into practice?

With the previous discussion on institutional morality and the existential necessity of engagement and choice in mind, it is time to ask how institutions such museums and archives may attempt to incorporate these perspectives into their professional ethos and praxis.

In what follows, I will adopt Sandell and Nightingale's useful view of social justice pertaining to the culture sector as "the ways in which museums, galleries and

heritage organisations might acknowledge and act upon inequalities within and outside of the cultural domain" (2012, p.3). Supporting their position is the view that museums have the capacity to "shape as well as reflect social and political relations and to positively impact lived experiences of those who experience discrimination and prejudice" (ibid, p.3). Their point that museums often have contributed (actively or not, consciously or not) to exclusion, oppression and marginalisation, serves to illustrate the dual nature of museums' role in society, and hence their potential for bringing about positive change: having operated in excluding ways in the past makes museums equally capable of operating in inclusive ways in the present and the future (ibid, p.3).

The duality of the museum role also serves to again underline the fact that these institutions are in a position of non-neutrality. Politics is ubiquitous, which means "there can be no escape into the realms of pure art or thought or, for that matter, into the realm of disinterested objectivity or transcendental theory" (Said 1996, pp. 21-22).

Acknowledging that they are not in a position of neutrality opens the possibility of considering the multiple ways in which museums and archives can, in collaboration with a range of other civil society organisations, promote democratic values and social justice (Sandell 2002 and 2017, see also O'Neill 2008 and Jimerson 2009). Hence, the concern that museum and archive professionals are all of a sudden expected to become social workers, or to shoulder their social responsibility in exactly the same way, can be laid to rest.

Furthermore, the argument that art and culture has intrinsic value (and thus should not be asked to engage with anything else than itself) has in the previous chapter been shown to carry little relevance to the discussion about the democratic role of museums and archives[114]. That being the case, it is indeed possible for these institutions to position themselves in relation to their values and embrace more socially engaged practices, even engage in activism, without giving up their professional integrity and objectivity.

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[114]cf. section 2.5.2 of this thesis. See also Hylland (2009) and Gibson (2008) for in-depth perspectives on the notions of 'intrinsic' vs. 'instrumental' value in the cultural sector.

Museums have, Sandell maintains, the potential to promote social justice and make a positive difference to people's lives on at least three different levels: for the individual visitor, the community and wider society (2002, p.4, see also Davis 2007). The discussion which follows below is roughly structured around these three levels, although they are overlapping and interconnected.

3.4.1 Individual level

The first level concerns the individual visitor (or non-visitor) and the ways in which cultural institutions may engage with them.

One way for museums and archives to engage with individuals is through *participatory practices*. This is an approach which has increasingly gained support over the last decade, not least due to the advent and impact of social media in everyday life: concepts such as crowdfunding[115] and crowdsourcing[116] are participatory in nature even though they are conducted in a digital context. The citizen's role as co-producer of culture requires a shift in museum practice, from a monologic and authoritarian tradition, towards a more dialogue -based relation between the museum and its visitors (Serritzlew 2012, p.3).

Nina Simon defines cultural institutions as spaces where people can 'create, share, and connect with each other around content' (2010, p. ii). She divides participation projects into three broad categories: contributory (visitors providing limited or specific input to a project controlled by the museum), collaborative (visitors are active partners in a project designed and controlled by the museum) and co-creative (individuals and community members define and design a project of interest to them in collaboration with the museum). Simon adds a fourth category, hosted projects, to describe cases where the institution makes (parts of) resources and facilities available for projects designed and implemented by groups and individuals (Simon, 2010, p.187).

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[115] The practice of funding a project or venture by raising many small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/english/crowdfunding). Accessed on 10.12.14.
[116] The practice of obtaining information or input into a task or project by enlisting the services of a large number of people, either paid or unpaid, typically via the Internet. (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/english/crowdsourcing. Accessed on 10.12.14).

The exhibition on the Norwegian Romani/Travellers at the Glomdal Museum and ten-year-long trust-building process leading to its realisation is a poignant example of a museum giving up control, delegating power over their representation praxis and embracing full participation from a source community (cf. Brekke 2013). That said, the commitment to addressing social (and historical) injustice and ensuring participation seen in the Romani-project seems to be an isolated case[117], despite many museums experimenting with contested issues and collaborative projects with various communities and marginalised groups.

In other words, museums and archives are institutions with a potential which transcends their educational role: they are potential arenas for participation[118] and dialogue.

Another dimension of how museums and archives may engage with individuals lies in their ability to provide arenas for fostering meaning-making and social identity (Hooper-Greenhill 2006, Sandell 2002, Newman & McLean 2002, see also Silverman 1995). These institutions provide learning environments in which people construct a whole range of diverse meanings and which provide them with a sense of identity. Without going into the full range of different theories pertaining to identity, I will suggest a few perspectives which may prove fruitful in the broader discussion on how museums and archives matter to the construction of social identity.

A common contemporary understanding of the concept of identity is based on the non-essentialist view that identity is multifaceted and dynamic. Anthony P. Cohen, describes identity as "the process by which the person seeks to integrate his various statuses and roles, as well as his diverse experiences, into a coherent image of self" (1995, p.11).

From this viewpoint, identity is viewed as dynamic process which is continually created and sustained in consistent ways through what Anthony Giddens calls 'the reflective activities of the individual' (1991, p.52, see also Edensor 2002, p.94 and Cohen 1995). Hence identity is a social concept, situating us in the world and providing

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[117] Indeed, it is unclear whether the museums positive attitude and commitment to social justice issues and active community participation in the Romani-case has been extended to inform the rest of the museum's praxis, considering that the museum has undergone mergers and restructuring into a larger administrative hub of museums in the last decade.
[118] For a useful discussion of the notion of 'participation', see Arnstein 1969.

a link between us and the society in which we live (Newman & McLean 2002, p.57). Nonetheless, as Newman and McLean point out, 'identities are constructed through the marking of difference' (2002, p.58).

Newman and McLeans' argument that identity is often most clearly defined by what it is not, rather than what it is (2002, p.58, see also Woodward 2002a), seems to be particularly apposite to the discussion on social inclusion and conversely, social exclusion: acknowledging that we are all prone to exclusive practices in the very creating and sustaining of our identities seems to be an important first step towards shouldering both an individual and collective responsibility for making a more inclusive society.

In this regard, museums are well placed to play a significant role. Viv Golding points out the potential for the museum to "provide an excellent location for the articulation of identity, which can be motivating for non-traditional audiences and especially for pupils in danger of disaffection" (Golding 2009, p.139). Moreover, as institutions dealing in cultural symbols through their selective collecting, documentation and interpretation of all manner of objects, museums have "the power "to shape cultural identities at both individual and social levels; to mobilise emotions, perceptions and values; to influence the way we feel and think (Hooper-Greenhill 2000, p.13). Golding unpacks this idea further, suggesting that museums are places which can allow us to be 'powerfully affected, to expand and deepen our sense of ourselves through engagement with the culture of the other' (2014, p.12). Museums then, have indeed the capacity to touch the lives of individuals.

3.4.2 Communities

The second level on which museums and archives can engage with people is that of community. Sheila Watson proposes that what essentially defines a community is the sense of belonging felt by its members (2007a, p.3). As previously discussed, identity is a social concept and hence relational: it depends on a sense of others, as well as a sense of self (ibid, p.3 see also Woodward 2002a, pp.7-50). Hence, on the community level, museums have, the possibility to act 'as a catalyst for social regeneration and as a vehicle for empowerment with specific communities' (Sandell, 2002, p.4). A good, if rare, example of such a collaboration is the Ryfylke Museum' longstanding relationship

and cooperation with different communities in the Ryfylke region of Norway (cf. 9.2.5)
The museum has a long history of engaging actively with their local community, with a
particular focus on the inclusion of refugees, migrants, asylum-seekers and other
newcomers to the area. Due to its long-term commitment over the years, the museum
enjoys an unusually high degree of trust and respect in the community.

3.4.3 Wider society

The third level of engagement has an even wider reach than the two previous of
individuals and communities: that of the larger society and the role which museums
and archives play in it.

Not only spaces for ideas and emotions, museums also have a democratic
potential in their physical dimension: providing arenas for congregating, museums are
potentially able to foster social cohesion and civility. Lois Silverman argues that
because culture[119] is a fundamental aspect of human relationships, museums are well
placed to have a positive impact on society. She maintains that museums, because of
their nature as both physical spaces where it is possible for people to develop and
maintain relationships and as repositories of objects, stories and knowledge about all
things human, they have the potential to become "agents of well-being and social
change" (2010, p. 38).

Elaine Gurian develops this idea further, placing museums in the category of
'civic places', stressing their function as "congregant spaces" where strangers can
safely associate, which is essential to fostering and sustaining civil society. This
particular standpoint is relevant in view of the earlier discussion of Habermas' theory
on healthy public spheres where constructive dialogue can happen (Gurian 2006, p. 2,
Habermas 1999):

> If we believe that congregant behavior is a human need and also that all civic
> locations offer opportunities for people to be with and see other people, then

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[119] Silverman defines culture as ideas, images, meanings, customs, habits, skills technology, science and
behaviour of a group of people in a specific time period, thus combining different perspectives on what
culture is and does (2010, p. 38).

why not challenge institutions not previously interested in communal activity to build programs specifically to encourage more civil action (Gurian 2006, p. 92)

Moreover, Gurian views museums and archives as part of the kind of institutions which have the potential of fostering societal stability, cohesion and civility (2006, p. 89). She points out, however, that such a community-building role is a complex task requiring long-term, consistent and multidimensional commitment (2006, p. 48, 89). Indeed, research into the socioeconomic value of 'social trust' suggests that civic institutions such as libraries, and by extension, museums, have an important role to play in fostering such trust (Svendsen & Svendsen 2016).

Furthermore, Viv Golding makes a strong case for viewing the museum as a space which actively fosters critical thinking as well as reflection on human rights and responsibilities both locally and globally (2014, p. 9, see also Golding 2009, pp. 131-132). Drawing on feminist-hermeneutic theory[120], she argues that the museum experience should inspire active participation and critical reflection in the world beyond the institutions:

I envisage empowered visitors rising up against injustice as active citizens, to safeguard our human rights and change the world, for the better (Golding 2014, p. 17).

This way of thinking concurs with Sandell and Dodd's proposal of an activist role for the museum. They suggest that 'activism' can be understood as "a set of actions designed to bring about social change, often in relation to an issue which is characterized by moral, social or political contestation". Consequently, an activist practice will "entail the adoption of a particular moral standpoint in relation to issues that frequently hold the capacity to generate fiercely opposing views" (Sandell & Dodd 2010, p. 14, see also Sandell 2017). Again, there is no neutral position.

Even so, the relevance and applicability to the museum sector can easily be argued in light of the educational mandate, role and potential of museums and archives: museums in particular have a long tradition for offering education programmes to primary and secondary schools, programmes which are often closely

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[120] Cf. Golding 2009, pp. 2-8 for a more comprehensive discussion of this theory.

linked to national curricula and learning objectives in the education sector. As George Hein argues, for museums to support a democratic civic society, "they need to find ways to acknowledge, incorporate, and validate the many communities that make up our democracy" (2012, p. 182, see also Karp et al. 1992a, Dysthe et. al. 2012, Korsgaard 2012 and 2014).

Clearly, there are endless possibilities open to museums and archives regarding how they actively engage with individuals and communities in the collective effort to create and sustain a more equitable and just society. The following discussion takes a closer look at one of these possibilities, namely that of fostering democratic citizenship within a museum context. The subsequent theoretical perspectives have been developed in the Danish education sector, where democratic citizenship education has been a part of the national teacher's training curriculum from 2008[121] (Korsgaard 2014, p. 11). Moreover, as Danish museums have already started exploring their potential as sites of citizenship education (Dysthe et al. 2012), these perspectives are likely to be of relevance to my own project.

3.4.4 Democratic citizenship education in practice

As earlier mentioned, the word has a dual meaning in a Nordic context. I will be using the English term 'democratic citizenship', as this translation comes closest to the concept of '*medborgerskap*' (co-citizenship), which is arguably a more useful notion in the discussion on the democratic role of museums and archives than the judicial definition (cf. section 3.3.6).

To briefly reiterate, the concept of democratic citizenship can be understood as a combination of status and identity: the individual has civil, political and social rights[122] as members of society, but should also feel loyalty towards the community of citizens and be able to identify with its fundamental values (Korsgaard 2014, p. 11).

Furthermore, that democratic citizenship is valued differently in different societies serves to illustrate the concept as a social construction, dependent on and created through the political, cultural and social context of which the individual is a

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[121] The subject 'Democratic citizenship' was added to the subject '*kristendomskunskap/livsoplysning*' in the national curriculum in 2008 (Korsgaard 2014, p. 11).
[122] Korsgaard 2014, p. 31.

part. Democratic citizenship is hence a part of the individual's construction of identity (Stray 2011, p. 49). In this sense, it can be argued that the values underpinning the concept and its interpretation are open to constant negotiation or under constant pressure, depending on the vantage point. Consequently, democratic citizenship is a concept whose interpretation is fraught with dilemmas and which necessitates critical reflection and open discussion in order to be addressed in a constructive manner befitting a modern democracy. The following discussion explores how museums and archives, in light of their educational nature, have a role to play in addressing these issues and in what ways.

Alexander von Oettingen suggests a set of didactic principles which could prove a useful basis for democratic citizenship education (2014, p. 65, see also Korsgaard 2014, p. 11, Stray 2011, p. 49). He divides the principles in three main subject areas salient to the issue of democratic citizenship: politics, ethics and religion.

To illustrate the principles' potential relevance for the museum sector, the word 'exhibition' has in what follows been substituted for 'teaching' and the word 'visitor' has been substituted for the word 'pupil':

a) Didactic principles for exhibitions and politics

- The exhibition must not indoctrinate
- The content of it must be open to discussion and criticism
- The exhibition is aiming for the visitor's political and democratic education

b) Didactic principles for exhibitions and ethics

- The exhibition must not moralise
- It aims to enable the visitor to recognize and criticise moral evil
- It aims to enable the visitor to experiment with moral standards and challenges

c) Didactic principles for exhibitions and religion

- The exhibition must not preach
- It aims to enable the visitor to identify and criticise religious fundamentalism
- It aims to enable the visitor to view religion as public knowledge and action

These subject areas are faced with a common didactic challenge: they do not only represent knowledge and epistemological insight that can be learned, but they also aim for and demand an *active* position-taking (Oettingen 2014, p. 66, my emphasis).

Moreover, it is worth keeping in mind the ethical challenges related to the educational role of the museums: the three aspects of museum education - education, interpretation, communication - as noted by Hooper-Greenhill (1999, p. 4) are essentially subject to the same ethical considerations as the concept of representation (cf. Hein 2011, p. 113, see also Douglas 1987, Jimerson 2009 and Lynch 2013).

3.4.5 A Danish case

In 2011, the Danish Agency for Culture and Palaces (*Slots- og Kulturstyrelsen*), funded a collaborative research project[123] designed by a group of museums and culture institutions aiming to explore their potential as arenas for democratic citizenship education. One overarching research focus was concerned the ways art museums could "engage with children and young people and function as arenas for learning which promotes citizenship" (Dysthe et al. 2012, p. 9).

The research showed that as 'social spaces for activity', cultural institutions do indeed have the capacity/ability to create room for discussion and reflection on contemporary subjects and challenges pertinent to our society. The three main features of the model of dialogue-based education applied in the project were polyvocality, participation and diversity, features which also are distinctive dimensions to contemporary democracies and hence fundamentally germane to citizenship education (ibid. 2012, p. 231).

The researchers found that an emphasis on *polyvocality* was a factor which was instrumental to a successful outcome: that the museum educators and teachers made room for differing opinions among the students and used the contrasts and differences actively as resources during the education sessions (ibid. 2012, pp. 236 – 23). This

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[123] The project was called '*Museer som rum for medborgerskab'* ('Museums as arenas for citizenship', my translation). http://www.kulturstyrelsen.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/dokumenter/Museer/Fakta_om_museerne/Erfar ingsudveksling/Introtekst_medborgerskab.pdf. Accessed on 12.05.2015.

seems to fit well with Habermas' notion of providing space and opportunity for dialogue previously discussed (1999).

In view of the previous discussion of social justice, civil society and democratic citizenship and drawing on the arguments of Rawls, Nussbaum, Karp and Habermas, I would argue that museums and archives, as public institutions inextricably part of civil society, do have a moral obligation to acknowledge their part in the collective responsibility for creating and sustaining a society which allow people to live decent lives (see also Gaither1992, p. 58). Moreover, as the above discussion has suggested, they are, as institutions imbued with a great deal of public legitimacy and trust, eminently suited for providing physical space for participation, dialogue and critical thinking.

Having made the theoretical case for a more active societal role for museums and archives, the following chapter explores some methodological aspects which may prove useful in shedding light on the central research questions of the present project: How do museums and archives perceive their societal role? Why are museums struggling to bridge the gap between project praxis and institutional praxis? And last but not least, will short term projects and funding affect the institutions' core attitudes in sustainable ways?

Chapter 4   Methodological reflections

A basic tenet of the ACN's development mandate is the aim to strengthen the democratic role of museums and archives in society. As previously discussed in chapter 1, the level of specificity of how any sitting government and policymakers express their expectations in policy papers or grant letters may vary according to political orientation. Even so, despite years of targeted project funding and more or less specifically detailed policy signals, it remains difficult to identify a discernible effect on institutional practice. What follows below is a closer look at some of the main lines of inquiry attempting to uncover the reasons for this which have shaped the present project.

4.1   Working hypotheses and lines of inquiry

As mentioned earlier, the reports sent by museums to the ACN seem to reflect a very traditional and conservative interpretation of their role and purpose: to collect, preserve and educate. Moreover, ACN-funded development projects appear to remain on project-level, without having noticeable impact on long-term institutional practice. There may be several reasons for this:

4.1.1   A perceived imbalance of power: loyalty or lip-service?

There is arguably an imbalance of power between the main funder[124] and the institution, which might influence the content of the reports submitted annually. For all intents and purposes, these reports form the basis on which the state-as-funding-body evaluates results and decides on future financial support for the institution. This may contribute to a skewed representation where the institution attempts to report what it thinks the main funder wants to hear.

4.1.2   A preference for traditional role and purpose?

It may be that the institution simply does not perceive its mandate to be other than collection, documentation, preservation and education (often listed in that particular

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[124] In this case the ACN and the MoC.

order in the annual reports, possibly signalling priority). This may be due to either the management, board of directors or key staff holding conventional/traditional attitudes or simply that the internal culture cements prevailing institutional ethos and praxis.

4.1.3   A lack of confidence and competence?

A third possibility is that institutions feel they lack the competence or confidence to tackle complex (and messy) issues relating to society and democracy, ethics, marginalized communities etc. (ref. Sandell 2002, p. 19-20, Davis 2008, Pabst 2016), thus avoiding the issue of social agency altogether.

4.1.4   Short-termism blocking institutional change?

Once a year, the ACN issues a call for applications for short-term funding earmarked museums and archives. This specific funding for collaboration- and development projects is perceived by the ACN to be an important tool in order to achieve their development goals[125].

     The long-term effect of this particular approach to development, however, has not been systematically documented and evaluated. Is short-term funding in reality counter-productive in view of demands for renewal and development/reorientation of institutional praxis towards a more socially engaged model? There has been some feedback indicating that while short term project funding may enable institutions to carry out innovative projects, it can also contribute to blocking any institutional commitment in the longer term: as long as external project funding is available, the institution does not need to make room within its own annual budgets. Similar issues have been uncovered in the UK context[126].

4.1.5   A strong welfare state?

One possible structural reason affecting the perception of the societal role and impact of museums and archives in Norway was expressed by Tony Butler, then director of Museum of East Anglian Life in the UK (MEAL) at a conference on inclusion and

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[125] http://kulturradet.no/stotteordninger/utviklingsprosjekter-arkiv-og-museum, my translation. Accessed on 15. 06. 2014.
[126] cf. Lynch 2011a on the effects of short-termism.

participation organised by the NALMA/ACN in Oslo in 2010. Speaking about MEAL's development as a social enterprise, he subsequently offered some interesting reflections on Norwegian attitudes towards the social agency of museums on his blog:

> Whilst the notion of museums as a means to promote mental wellness was quite warmly received, I got the impression the audience was a little nonplussed at the idea of a museum as a social business, providing or enriching care or employment training services. […] I think this reflects a general Scandinavian belief that the state provision of services is equitable, and satisfy most people's needs. In the UK the trend has been to view the charitable sector as a viable answer to expensive one-size fits all public services, offering cheaper, innovative and more locally accountable provision, providing users with more choice. Here in Norway (and my survey is based only on a few conversations with delegates) there is greater confidence in the state that it manages its institutions effectively and for the common good'.[127]

Although his observation is based on conversations with a limited number of people, it nonetheless raises the question whether the Norwegian welfare model might potentially affect how museums and archives perceive their role and purpose – and whether it affects the public's perception of this role and mandate.

4.2 Methodological vantage point

Given the nature and varying quality of the current information the ACN has access to, a qualitative approach to this research project seemed to be the method best suited for providing valuable insights into and a better contextual understanding of these matters. Museums and archives are not only social worlds unto themselves, they are also part of a larger societal context, something which gives them the potential to provide rich sources of data about how these social worlds are experienced, interpreted, understood, constituted, produced or reproduced (Mason 1996, p. 3-4).

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[127] http://tonybutler1.wordpress.com/2010/04/07/trust-an-anglo-scandinavian-view/. Accessed on 20.01. 2015. Note Butler's reference to social trust.

This project aims to explore the relations between museums and their internal and external stakeholders. It explores possible factors influencing the way new ideas are received and either rejected, tolerated or even incorporated into institutional practice.

4.3 Research strategy

In order to better grasp potentially relevant aspects of the inner workings of the institutions, it is necessary to find conceptual tools suitable for uncovering structures which affect decisions and hence influences praxis. In this regard, the theoretical framework of practice theory has proved to be fruitful.

4.3.1 Practice theory: some key concepts

One of the main proponents of practice theory is sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. His theory attempts to describe how action is regulated, how "regular patterns of conduct occur over time without being the product either of some abstract external structure or of subjective intention" (Swartz 1997, p. 95, see also Bourdieu 1986, p. 40). In other words, Bourdieu attempts to conceptually bridge the gap between regularities of social action (observed by the social scientist) and the subjective experience of "free, purposeful, reasoning actors who carry out their actions practically, without full awareness of or conscious reflection on structures" (Swartz 1997, p. 95), by using four key concepts: 'habitus', 'field', 'capital' and 'doxa'.

4.3.2 Habitus

'Habitus' is the principle which both generates social action/practices (*principe générateur des pratiques*) and which at the same time structures these praxes (*système de classement*)): 'habitus' can be conceived as a system of deeply internalised[128] master dispositions, at the same time structuring structures (*structure structurante*) and being themselves structured structures (*structure structurée*), which

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[128] In his seminal work on practice theory, Bourdieu describes habitus as "history turned into nature, i.e. denied as such" ([1977] 2013, p. 78). In other words, habitus describes mental structures and actions that are so familiar that they seem like second nature and hence have become completely embodied and unconscious.

generate action (Bourdieu [1979] 1992, pp. 190-191, see also Swartz 1997, p. 101 and Højberg 2012, p. 57). In other words, habitus is *the sum of experiences, thought patterns and tastes acquired by the individual, independently or collectively, in the course of a lifetime, which in turn informs and is informed by the individual's actions and practices.*

A useful linguistic analogy is to view 'habitus' as a profoundly structured cultural grammar for action[129], whose structures can generate an unlimited number of possible practices by uniting the objective enabling conditions[130] and the subjective perception of the individual (Bourdieu [1977] 2013, pp. 22-30, see also Swartz 1997, p.102, Højberg 2012, p. 57). Habitus is not an innate capacity of the individual, however, but derives from "the class-specific experiences of socialization in family and peer groups" (Swartz 1997, p. 102). In short, Bourdieu argues, "the habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history" ([1977] 2013, p. 82).

The concept of habitus is thus useful in the analysis of the relations between agents in the social space, the choices they make and the ways in which they position themselves and how this contributes to creating and maintaining hierarchies of power[131]. In the case of this particular research project a closer analysis of 'institutional habitus' as well as the 'professional habitus' of its staff provided useful information about the inner workings of museums. Translated in terms of organisational life, certain mental habits are conceivably enshrined in the very culture and structure of the organisation (Anderson 2013, p. 194, see also Douglas 1987). As one museum professional put it during an interview: "our traditions are in the very walls of the museum".

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[129] Bourdieu is here drawing on de Saussure's distinction between *language* (*langage*) and *speech* (*parole*) ([1977] 2013, p. 22-30, see also de Saussure [1916] 2005, pp.37-38.
[130] Højberg uses the Danish term *mulighedsbetingelser.*
[131] It is worth noting, however, one of the most frequent criticisms of Bourdieu's concept of habitus is that it has a too strong focus on the structures: their compulsory presence, effect and intrinsic inertia regarding possible change (Højberg, 2012, p.58). Even so, Bourdieu has argued that his concept of habitus does indeed accommodate resistance and structural change, albeit in their nature very slow changes (Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992] 2014, p.183).

4.3.3 Field

Another key concept is 'field' ('*champ*'), a concept closely linked to that of 'habitus'. He argues that "to think in terms of field is to think relationally", defining field as

> A network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situations (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.) (Wacquant 1989[132], p. 39, see also Højberg, 2012, p. 54, Swartz 1997 pp. 117-129).

More inclusive than the metaphor of the market, the concept of 'field' includes rank and hierarchy as well as relations of exchange between agents, whose interaction in the same field is shaped "by their relative location in the hierarchy of positions" (Swartz 1997, p. 119).

Moreover, field analysis calls attention to subtle relations of power affecting the interaction within a field, the latter functioning as "arenas for struggle for control over valued resources and for legitimation where agents/competitors struggle to maintain or change it according to their own position" (Swartz 1997, pp. 122-123, Højberg, 2012, p. 54). In a museum context, this could potentially translate into the struggle for funding (internal-external), the struggle for recognition (having one's project prioritized) and so on, struggles that the different stakeholders (staff, management, board of directors…) engage in within their daily work. A classic struggle in the Norwegian museum and archive context is that between the conservation professionals and the museum educators, between the object-oriented and the audience-oriented approaches to museum work. It is only lately that the latter has gained more attention and influence, not least due to targeted government policies

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[132] This article is written as an interview, where Pierre Bourdieu answers questions about his theoretical viewpoints put to him by Loïc Wacquant.

and earmarked funding stressing the need for the cultural sector to engage more actively with their public[133].

Bourdieu describes the limits of the field as "[…] situated at the point where the effects of the field cease". In other words, an institution or an agent is a part of a field as long as the institution or the agent is subject to the field's influence and in turn is capable of influencing the field (Wacquant 1989 p. 39, see also Højberg 2012, p. 52). As the field is defined from a relational perspective, however, it is also highly dynamic: 'change in one position shifts the boundaries among all other positions' (Swartz 1997. p. 123). Thus, Bourdieu argues, only empirical investigation will enable a determination of the field's boundaries (Wacquant 1989, p. 39).

As an analytical tool, however, the concept of field is broader than for example 'institution', in that it not only seeks to encompass the conflictual nature of social life, but also attempts to cover 'social worlds where practices are only weakly institutionalized and boundaries are not well established[134]'(Swartz 1997, p. 120).

A field analysis involves three levels which are internally connected. The first level concerns the position of the field and its position relative to the field of power. Secondly, there is the objective structure of the relations occupied by the different agents or institutions who compete for legitimate authority or power in the particular field which is the object of the analysis. The third level relates to the habitus of the agents (their cultural deep grammar, so to speak) and its influence on the struggle for power (Wacquant 1989 p. 40). In the context of the present project, the field denotes the sample and scope of the empirical investigation: the sum of agents who have "stakes" in museum policy and practice and the way they position themselves in relation to each other.

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[133] Audience Norway (*Norsk publikumsutvikling*) was established in 2009 and is a member organisation partly funded by the Department of culture, its remit is to strengthen audience development (http://norskpublikumsutvikling.no/).
[134] According to Bourdieu, one of the key properties of fields is their degree of institutionalization (cf. Swartz 1997, p. 120, see also Bourdieu, P. 1991, and [1992] 2015.

4.3.4 Capital

A third key concept is 'capital', which can be defined as tangible and intangible values, resources or assets perceived as valuable to different social groups. Bourdieu differentiates between different types of capital (or power):

- cultural capital (mastering the use of cultivated language, knowledge of 'high' culture – as opposed to popular culture)
- social capital (family ties, friendship relations, 'school-tie'-network)
- economic capital (material assets as well as knowledge of the rules of the economic game)
- educational/science capital

All these forms of capital function as symbolic capital within the contexts which ascribe value to them. Hence, agents (those who occupy a particular field) hold different positions which are anchored in different kinds of power or capital (Højberg, 2012, p.55). The concept of 'capital' is closely linked to that of 'field', in that the former only exists in relation to the latter: capital confers to the field a power which influences the struggle for positions among the agents, and which in turn has bearing on the structure and dynamic of the field (Wacquant 1989, p. 40).

4.3.5 Doxa

In Bourdieu's practice theory, 'doxa' is described as the preconceived and tacit notions which makes the social world seem evident and natural, its '*état implicite et indiscuté*'[135] (Bourdieu [1972] 2000, p. 234, p. 411, n.142). In other words, 'doxa' describes those aspects of a culture which are seemingly so self-evident that nobody thinks to question them (Bourdieu & Wacquant [1992] 2014, p. 117), constituting the "tacit, fundamental agreement on the stakes of struggle between those advocating heterodoxy and those holding to orthodoxy[136]" (Swartz 1997, p. 125). In this case, the operative doxic assumptions underpinning current museum practice appears to be

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[135] 'Implicit and undiscussed state of being'
[136] In Bourdieu's terminology, the terms 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy' denotes the dialectic between the arguments construed to uphold a particular status quo, and those that challenge the existing order of things (Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992] 2014, p.117).

that 'museums are important' and 'museums are relevant'. The issue of relevance, however, becomes highly hypothetical given that the majority of Norwegian museums currently still have an object-centred, and not a visitor-centred approach to their museum practice, and hence next to no substantial knowledge about how their visitors qualitatively experience their visit. Nina Simon, director of Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History attempts to unpick this particular preconception, or what she calls the common delusion that what museums do is relevant to everyone: "Arguments for universal relevance are nearly impossible to win. Relevance is always relative" (Simon 2016, loc.333).

4.4 Practice theory applied to research aiming to improve or change

The present project aims to elicit or uncover implicit or tacit knowledge about the dynamics of institutional practice, with a view to improving the effectiveness of ACN's development work: if the goal is to encourage museums and archives towards a more socially engaged practice and active social engagement and the tool is short-term funding, then a critical investigation into the empirical reality of museums and archives is necessary.

Nonetheless, the premise of intended improvement is concurrent with a certain view or norm, a norm which, Højberg argues, functions not only as a filter through which one looks at the world, but also generates a certain blindness. Consequently, the researcher needs to differentiate between the object of research and her own relation to the same object.

Furthermore, a study grounded in practice theory does not in itself produce knowledge about how a particular praxis may be improved. Even so, such a study can generate insight into how a praxis is represented or appears, and hence knowledge about the dynamics affecting it. Subsequently, this new knowledge can provide more informed and potentially better qualified grounds for decision making by practitioners (2012, p. 10).

4.5 The ethics of social science research

It is worth noting, however, that there are several issues pertaining to the ethics of social science research and theorizing. On a general level, Skjervheim argues that a theory which not only examines social phenomena in their factuality, but also judges them by one or more of the standards describing truth, justice, goodness and beauty, is a critical theory. As such, it has a *legitimizing* function, providing negative or positive sanction to what is there (1996, pp. 201-202).

People not only can, but should, legitimize their actions and opinions. Moreover, refusing to legitimize oneself must also be legitimized. This also applies to social institutions: the state, the church, the school, the scientific institutions, the family (and in this case museums and archives) are what they are as a consequence of having been legitimized (Skjervheim 1996, p. 203).

It is precisely this validating function of social science theory which can have ethical implications in a wider context than a given research project, as the researcher is positioned and situated in the social world he or she investigates: by legitimizing his or her own theory, the researcher simultaneously validates a theory for the society/social world of which he or she is a part. Hence, the researcher is in a position to warrant support for or against dominant theories, or even sanctioning a position of indifference towards these dominant theories (Skjervheim, 1996, p. 203). This leaves the researcher open to what Bourdieu has termed the "intellectualist and theoreticist fallacy"[137], whereby the researcher claims "the role of neutral referee, of the judge, to distribute rights and wrongs" (Wacquant 1989, p. 34). The risk of such a fallacy undoubtedly applies to my double position as researcher and perceived representative of the funding and policymaking body: both positions entail a great deal of power.

4.5.1 The position of the reflexive researcher
A basic premise for understanding social science research is the realization that it is itself part of the social world it attempts to analyse. Consequently, even though some methods are more structured and selective than others, all research, no matter how

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[137] Bourdieu calls it the "epistemocratic claim that 'I know better than my informant'", pointing out that the verdicts and pronouncements of the academic world still holds great power socially (Wacquant 1989, p. 34).

critically investigative, entails selection and interpretation (Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, p. 23-33, see also Swartz 1997, p. 270).

Also, as the social researcher is indelibly a part of the social world he or she attempts to analyse, the focus should be on understanding the effects of this position rather than engage in fruitless attempts to eliminate the researcher's influence: the researcher needs to factor in his or her influence on the research project and engage in reflective practice (1994, p. 37, see also Højberg 2012, Wacquant 1989, p. 55).

Furthermore, social science can never be neutral, impartial or apolitical, inasmuch as its aim is to scrutinize, deconstruct and unmask the myths surrounding the exercise of power (Højberg, 2012, p. 45). In short, reflexivity is not only necessary for doing good science, it is also necessary in order to fulfil "the moral obligation to extend the chances of unfettered critical examination and communication to others" (Swartz, 1997, p. 271).

A potential dilemma for the researcher is related to his or her proximity to the object of analysis: a love for and solidarity with the practitioners will to some degree skew the research, as a nearness to the field entails a greater risk of taking categories for granted, categories which then will escape critical scrutiny and analysis (Højberg, 2012, p. 47).

How, then, is it possible for the researcher to carry out a reflective analysis of his or her own position and positioning? Højberg suggests that a reflective research practice should contain an analysis of the researcher's position (2012, p. 51, see also Bourdieu & Wacquant [1992] 2014, pp. 78-80) in

- the social universe (education, career, class, family, age, sex, ethnicity etc.)
- the field (in relation to the informants and institutions which are part of the research project)
- the academic universe (the researcher's position in relation to other research positions)

Moreover, the researcher should provide an account of the role of his or her 'self', an account containing information about

- personal beliefs relating to the topic (politics, values, standpoints)

- personal interest in the area of investigation (vested interest, history of events)
- personal experience linked to the research (incidents affecting self or others close to researchers)

This kind of reflective analysis needs to be carried out in all phases of the research as small correctives to the larger research project (Denscombe 2014, loc. 2355, Højberg 2012, p. 51).

Hence, in the case of this research project, I hereby disclose my background as a female anthropologist, with work experience from the humanitarian NGO sector before switching careers to my present position in the public sector. Furthermore, I have never worked full-time in a museum or archive, which may either be perceived as a disadvantage[138] or an advantage, depending on the vantage point.

More importantly, my role as a representative for the main funding and policy body on which the institutions depend for their long-term funding, has proven to be a factor which affects the behaviour of the informants and their interaction with me in significant ways[139]: in some cases the role may have limited the amount and type of information I have had access to, in others it may have had the opposite effect.

4.6 The strengths and limitations of practice theory

Nevertheless, one of the critical arguments against Bourdieu's theory of practice is that it moves within a sociological paradigm. Consequently, emotional forces such as happiness, mirth, trust and empathy, being fundamental life expressions and not 'emotional capital', are not easily conceptualized in Bourdieu's theoretical framework. This questions the very possibility of breaking down lived life in exclusively social categories (Højberg 2012, p. 62).

What the practice theory does provide, however, is knowledge about what a small piece of social reality looks like, and subsequently an explanation of why it looks like this or functions the way it does. Moreover, Bourdieu's theory of practice can offer

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[138] The disadvantage being that I have little knowledge of nuts and bolts of full time museum work. On the other hand, it can be argued that this lack knowledge allows me a more discerning vantage point from which to observe the object of my research.
[139] In effect, Bourdieu points out the necessity of taking into account the position of the researcher in relation to the field he or she is investigating (Wacquant 1989, p. 35).

a sharp focus on power relations, as well as uncovering subtle patterns of particular preferences and struggles for position, thus providing a greater understanding of the complex dynamics at play when people interact within a certain context/field and work to maintain or subvert power hierarchies (Højberg 2012, pp. 62-63, see also Bourdieu ([1972] 2000). Hence, the analytical framework of practice theory focussing on institutions such as museums and archives seemed to provide a fruitful angle for the present project.

Chapter 5   Research design

Taking practice theory as a general methodological framework, the current chapter will explore its application within the context of this project. The chapter unpacks the main lines of inquiry I have been following in my research into museums as organisations operating within the larger field of institutional policy and funding.

5.1   Research strategy

Attempting to probe these issues further, the research strategy takes into account three different perspectives, ranging from internal to external, across the field of museum practice and policy:

- **The individual**: What are his or her motivations for working in a museum? What sort of challenges[140] does a museum professional in charge of a project encounter internally in the organisation?

- **The institution**: Who are the main stakeholders within the (sub)-field and how do they perceive the societal role of museums? Who has the power to implement and sustain practice change within the institution? Do short-term projects have an effect on institutional policies and practice?

- **The funder and policymaker**: Do development strategies such as short-term funding actually bring about sustainable institutional change of policies and practice? How are policy documents produced, read and interpreted? What impact do these kinds of documents have on museums and archives?

5.2   Research method

At the outset I planned to use a combination of methods in order to attempt to access different kinds of information which may be of relevance to my research objectives:

- semi-structured interviews of 'field'-agents or stakeholders
- participant observation of project meetings and workshops

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[140] Hence the methodological choice of practice theory: who are the agents in this particular field and what is at stake in the struggle for power and influence? (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant [1992] 2014).

- analysis of documents and texts (white papers, policy papers, new articles etc.)
- analysis of raw data from ICOM[141] Norway survey on museums and their societal role

All of these research methods belong to the realm of qualitative methodology in that they provide data which allow the researcher to gain insight into how particular social phenomena are experienced and interpreted by different means: through what people say (interview), what they do (observation) and what is written about a specific phenomenon (document analysis) (Denscombe 2014, loc. 4379, see also Mason 1996, Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, Wadel 1991).

5.2.1 Semi-structured interview

There are several ways to use interviews as a research method, although the main focus in research interviews is on how people describe, justify or comment on their actions, opinions and beliefs. The interview allows the researcher to explore complex and often subtle phenomena in greater depth and detail, as well as potentially gain access to information held by key informants, based on their particular position or experience (Denscombe 2014, loc. 4373). Moreover, unstructured or semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with a certain flexibility as the research project progresses: interviews can be used developmentally, allowing the researcher to adjust the line of inquiry or develop new lines along the way (2014, ibid).

Nonetheless, the fact that the interview situation entails social interaction means that both interviewer/researcher and interviewee/informant contribute actively to its structuring in that it involves a set of implicit assumptions not associated with normal conversation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1994, p. 118, Denscombe 2014, loc. 4373).

Both researcher and informant are in a sense participant observers in a social event, a fact which the researcher must take into account. There are several ways in which this may influence the interview itself: the intrinsic structure of the interaction forces the interviewee to be aware of the researcher as an audience, hence potentially

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[141] International Council of Museums

modifying/adapting his or her narrative to the perception he or she has of the research project in question (Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, pp. 129, 181).

Moreover, recalling the earlier discussion on the concepts of habitus, capital, field and doxa[142], it is necessary for the researcher to take into account that people's identities or social positions may influence their actions or narratives. The social position (field position) of an informant will not only determine the kind of information he or she has access to (capital), it will also influence the kind of perspective generated from the position they hold (habitus), and hence influence their perception and understanding of the world as well as their knowledge about it (Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, p. 186, see also Wacquant 1989).

5.2.2 Participant observation

Participant observation is a research method where the researcher collects data by observing the social interaction of individuals in a particular context. There are several types of participant observation open to social researchers, ranging from non-participation and passive to complete participation, depending on the degree of involvement on the part of the researcher (Spradley 1980, pp. 59-60, see also Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, pp. 102-103).

I had initially hoped to be able to attend and observe meetings or workshops where relevant projects (inclusion/participation/social justice) would be discussed, thus potentially gaining information about the attitudes and opinions of the different agents/stakeholders regarding the institution's involvement in projects. Also, I had hoped to gain information which could be followed up in subsequent interviews.

As the project progressed, it turned out to be difficult to gain access to relevant project meetings for purposes of observation. This can to some degree be explained in terms of challenging logistics. Travelling to the three institutions demanded a certain measure of advance planning, which made it more challenging to flexibly respond to invitations to meetings which were relevant, but often planned at short notice. More often than not the institutions would forget to alert me to events of potential

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[142] Bourdieu [1979] 1992, Wacquant 1989. Cf. also sections 4.3.2 - 5 above.

relevance, possibly because I was not around on a daily basis to remind them of my interest.

Another (and perhaps more telling) reason for the lack of access to arenas for observation turned out to be related to my perceived role as a representative of one of the main governing/funding bodies. In one case, the director politely, but firmly turned down my request to be a participant observer in an exhibition workshop for the staff. Although the workshop facilitator was herself a consultant external to the museum, the director in question expressed a distinct unease at the thought of my presence at the event. The same director had no misgivings about interviewing the staff on a one-on-one basis.

5.2.3 Analysis of written material

There are a range of different kinds of written material available as data sources in the context of the present research project: policy documents, official grant letters, institutional websites, annual reports, funding applications, professional journals and statistics, as well as external survey responses[143].

One issue related to social research methods in general, and to my research project in particular, concerns the nature of official documents as a source of information. Hammersley and Atkinson argue that this kind of material needs to be viewed and analysed as social products rather than as neutral sources of data, in order to uncover the selective and interpretive process their very existence stem from: official documents are part of the social world they exist in and hence never neutral (1994, p. 138)

Although this kind of data may create methodological challenges, they may also yield valuable information. In my case, my professional experience and current status as an employee of the ACN has put me in a ring-side seat for documenting and analysing the contexts in which such documents are produced and used, and thus explore their validity as data. Indeed, it has even been necessary for me to reflect on potentially problematic issues related to my very proximity to this kind of data material (see Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, Højberg 2012, Wacquant 1989).

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[143] In 2015, ICOM Norway carried out a survey concerning the societal role of museums and I was kindly given access to the anonymised raw data.

In the case of the present project which has a focus on the development work of the ACN, we are dealing with mainly four types of official documents:

- documents produced by[144] the Ministry of Culture (MoC) and submitted to the museums and archives (white papers, green papers, policy papers, grant-in-aid-letters etc.)
- documents produced by the ACN and submitted to the museums and archives (project grant letter, policy papers, statistics)
- documents produced by the museums submitted to the MoC (annual reports and applications for grant-in-aid)
- documents produced by the museums and archives submitted to the ACN (various types of project reports and applications for project funding)

A critical analysis of such documents may yield valuable information about structural issues affecting the field, warranting a closer investigation of the following questions (Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, p. 143):

- How are these documents produced?
- How are they read (and interpreted)?
- Who writes them, who reads them, why, when, with what results?
- What is included? Or excluded?
- What is taken for granted?

Again, in the case of this particular research project my position as an employee of the ACN, and as someone regularly involved in the production of such documents, has provided me with a unique vantage point and access to first-hand information about these matters.

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[144] It is perhaps worth noting that Arts Council Norway is actively involved in the production of such departmental documents. The ACN has regular consultative meetings with the MoC and is asked to provide the relevant information based on its (the ACN's) knowledge of the sector before documents are finalized. In this sense, the Arts Council has its fingers in a great many pies, so to speak.

5.3 Challenges related to qualitative method

Interviews as research method have many advantages, in that they provide the researcher with a source of data which are rich in depth and detail, allowing the informants to prioritise and expand on their ideas, opinions and views (Denscombe 2014 loc. 4373, see also Hammersley & Atkinson 1994). Even so, there remain certain challenges associated with using interviews which the researcher needs to be aware of and take into account during the research process.

5.3.1 The interviewer effect

As previously discussed, the researcher is very much part of the social world and context he or she studies[145]. This also applies to the interview situation, which constitutes a social event influenced by both interviewer and interviewee. The perception the informants have of the researcher's personal identity (e.g. sex, age and ethnic origins) will conceivably have an effect on the type and amount of information he or she is willing to reveal and the honesty with which he or she is willing to share it (Denscombe 2014, loc. 4512).

Moreover, the social position of the interviewer will arguably have a bearing on the interview situation. In the case of this particular research project, the informants' perception of me as a representative of the main funding and policy body (ACN) on which they depend for their core funding as well as project funding may quite conceivably have affected the sort of information they were willing to divulge during the interview: there is always an element of struggle for position and power in all social interaction (Bourdieu [1979] 1992 Wacquant, 1989).

Nevertheless, this effect may work both ways: the informants may have attempted to actively or passively influence me-as-ACN in a positive way, by carefully controlling the image projected in order to strengthen their position as future recipients of funding[146].

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[145] Swartz 1997, Skjervheim 1996, Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, Wacquant 1989.
[146] Incidentally, during a preliminary meeting with potential informants in January 2015, the director of one of the case institutions seemingly had no problems with granting access to a researcher based in the ACN: "We'll use the opportunity to find out from you [in this case me, the researcher] how to write successful applications".

5.3.2 Validity and consistency

Another challenge associated with the interview method is establishing the validity and reliability of the data. As previously mentioned, there may not be congruence between what people do and what they say they do. Furthermore, as the data are produced and collected in a specific place and context, at a specific point in time and involving specific individuals, it may be difficult to achieve a degree consistency which allows the data to be validated by other researchers at a later stage (Denscombe 2014, loc. 4817). Indeed, since I embarked on this project, several key informants have changed jobs or retired. Moreover, a recent political proposal to relocate the ACN's entire museum section of 11 staff to the north of the country by 2018 will in all likelihood entail a near complete dismantling of 25 years of accumulated collective expertise in the field of museum development.

5.3.3 Ethics

An important aspect of the interview situation concerns the potential 'confessional' effect that may come into play as a consequence of the affinity developed between the researcher and the interviewee[147]. The researcher may find herself in a situation where the interviewee divulges information which is too personal or private, confidential, sensitive or which may concern internal conflicts and frustrations within the institution. In the case of the present project, there was also the asymmetric power balance, particularly in interviews with museum professionals in which case the interviewee is a recipient of funding from the interviewer representing the main funder. This would require great ethical discernment on my part during the interviews, subsequent analysis and publication of the findings.

5.3.4 Access

Regardless of which method the researcher chooses, *access* is an important factor: unless the researcher gains access to relevant informants or situations of social interaction, interviews or observation will not be available as methods for collecting data (Denscombe 2014, loc. 4379). Gaining access often requires the assistance of key

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[147] Ref. Denscombe 2014, loc. 5127 (Research ethics), on a similar issue pertaining to contexts where observation is the method of choice.

agents, or gatekeepers, who are in a position to grant or facilitate entry into a particular domain.

5.3.5 Gatekeepers

There are several potentially challenging aspects related to the role of gatekeepers. Whereas they are in a position to facilitate the researcher's introduction to the field, they will nevertheless be concerned about how the researcher will perceive and present the image of the institution. Hence, gatekeepers may potentially have a very practical interest in projecting a best possible image of themselves and their colleagues. Consequently, they may also "seek to exercise a certain degree of control, either by blocking particular lines of inquiry or by 'leading' the researcher in particular directions" (Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, p. 78).

As mentioned, I had initially planned to complement the interviews with participant observation in project meetings in three sample institutions. As already mentioned (cf. 5.2.2), this turned out to be difficult to realise. The reluctance to let me observe during meetings was perfectly understandable and may have been due to a concern over lack of control over the situation. As noted by Hammersley and Atkinson, gatekeepers tend to act in accordance with "specific expectations towards the identity and intention of the researcher":

> In this context, two similar views of the researcher have a tendency to dominate: the researcher-as-expert and the researcher-as-critic. Both perceptions may contribute to a certain nervousness on the part of the gatekeeper for the potential consequences and effects of the research (ibid, 1994, p. 86).

Nonetheless, although my ACN-identity turned out to be an obstacle to access in the case of observation, it has been an asset in other ways, in that it has opened doors and facilitated access to sources I would not otherwise have found, not least within Arts Council Norway and the Ministry of Culture.

5.3.6 Internal documents

Another point worth considering involves a few issues pertaining to the way the researcher handles sources of information which are exempt from public disclosure. In my capacity as an employee of the ACN, I have access to information and documents of a non-official nature[148] which in and of themselves may be of substantial value to the research project. The use of this kind of documents as source material, however, will demand a thorough discussion of any potential legal limitations. Moreover, the non-official nature of this kind of document will quite conceivably make any future validation of the findings more difficult, if not impossible.

Methodological challenges aside, the preceding discussion has attempted to present and argue the case for why this research project lends itself well to a practice theory perspective as well as a research strategy involving a combination of different qualitative methods. Moreover, the project fits into an interpretivist paradigm, where the researcher interprets social phenomena while at the same time taking into account that she is very much a part of the social world she is working within (Denscombe 2014, loc. 335, see also Swartz 1997, Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, p. 37, Højberg 2012, p. 45, Skjervheim 1996 pp. 200-214). How, then, does practice theory potentially apply to museums and archives? The subsequent sections examine this question more closely.

5.4 Setting the stage: museums as part of a field

Viewing the institution and its external stakeholders as a field, or network of agents positioned in relation to each other whose interaction in the same field is shaped 'by their relative location in the hierarchy of positions' allows an analysis of what Swartz calls the 'institutional aspects of individual and group action' (1997, pp. 119-120, see also Bourdieu & Wacquant [1992] 2014, Højberg 2012).

Consequently, an analysis of the museum as a field provides an opportunity to conceptualise relations of exchange between individuals, struggles for power to maintain or change status quo, different forms of symbolic capital and ultimately gain

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[148] The MoC and the ACN may, when deemed necessary, give certain documents status as '*unntatt offentlighe*t' ('exempted from public disclosure') in compliance with relevant paragraphs in the Freedom of Information Act (*Offentlegheitslova*).

a better understanding of the organisational terrain which the different museum professionals navigate in on a daily basis.

Furthermore, research from the UK shows that the dynamics of internal organisational culture has to a certain degree had an impact on in the implementation of national inclusion policies over the past decade and a half:

> Social inclusion – as organizational practice – is mediated by *the contingent dynamics of the workplace* – the resources available, conflicts, alliances, and perceived sanctions and rewards that can result from acting in one way or another in response to policy-driven programmatic organizational change (Tlili 2008, p. 124, my emphasis).

I would argue that there is also the element of the contingent dynamics between the organisation and the policymaker. In a Norwegian context, policies are generally mediated through different levels and channels, such as white and green papers, national action plans and policy papers. The ACN's role in policymaking in the cultural sector is twofold: on the one hand the ACN is asked by the Ministry of Culture (MoC) to provide input from the field, which in turn is processed and incorporated into policy documents.

On the other hand, ACN is tasked with disseminating the policy papers and is responsible for following up their implementation in the sector through collecting annual reports and statistics. Depending on the priorities of the sitting government, the reporting template and statistics will tend to reflect current policy priorities. Hence, during the former government, terms such as 'social inclusion', 'diversity' and 'participation' were part of the reporting templates and consequently part of a general discourse in the culture sector, whereas these terms were removed from the templates and the letters of instruction accompanying the annual grant-in-aid to museums from the MoC with the change of government in 2013[149].

The current government has expressed an arms-length-policy, where they are less prone to issuing very precise instructions than previous governments. The effect

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[149] Interestingly, there was a change of minister of culture in 2015: same political party, but a different attitude to policymaking: 'integration' and 'inclusion' were back in the ministry's vocabulary following the refugee crisis in the autumn of 2015.

was immediately visible in the reports collected by the ACN the subsequent year: most museums did not mention the terms at all, not even in the general description of their work. Although it would be impossible to infer that they at the same time have dropped such work from their portfolio, this is nonetheless an indication of how closely institutions read their grant letters and how minutely they adapt their subsequent funding applications to the prevailing signals from the powers that be.

Even allowing for factors such as limited space in the reporting template, most museums do not seem to give priority to describing their work on inclusion and diversity when reporting. Hence a further probe into the power dynamics between the funder and the organisation seemed to be a productive line of inquiry: will policies only be implemented as long as there is explicit instruction to do so, even though the policy in question here is based on a remit which transcends party political differences?

5.4.1   Field analysis

Conducting a field analysis involves three steps which are internally connected. Firstly, the position of the field (the museum and its external stakeholders) needs to be analysed against the field of power[150]. In the case of this specific project, this would conceivably include the MoC, the ACN as well as other external policymakers, funders or donors (county, municipality, private sector). Relevant questions may then be: what sort of earmarking/specific criteria are linked to the funding (both short-term and long-term funding)? To what degree is the museum (perceived to be) autonomous in the way it spends its funding? Is there flexibility in the interaction between the funders and the museum?

Secondly, it is necessary to uncover the objective structure of the relations between and the positions occupied by the different agents (museum staff) who compete for legitimate authority or power in the museum/archive as a sub-sector[151] of

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[150] According to Bourdieu, the field of power (*'champ de pouvoir'*) is situated on a conceptually different level than other (sub-) fields such as literary, economic, scientific or bureaucratic, thus partially overlapping and integrating them (Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992] 2014, p. 56, note 1). In this case the field of power could possibly be imagined to encompass the fields of cultural policies and funding, as both of these seem to be central to the way museums express their priorities.
[151] Wacquant 1989, p.39.

the larger field; in this case the three sample institutions chosen for this research project. Are there (perceived) biases in the way internal funding is allocated, i.e. differing budgets in different departments: conservation vs. education vs. marketing? Is there congruence between the management's perception and the rest of the staff regarding the museum's role in society?

Thirdly, it is necessary to analyse the habitus of the staff: factors ranging from educational and professional background to personal motivations, ambitions and values. These may be described as being part of the informants' educational/academic and professional habitus, and will as such conceivably impact institutional practice.

A further element is the potential influence of staff habitus on internal struggles for power (Wacquant 1989 p. 40). This may conceivably take the form of a struggle between different professional interests for control over project resources: is the archaeological dig more worthy of funds and priority than the educational programmes? Are marketing needs to bring in more paying visitors more urgent than the need to document and conserve existing collections? How does the museum decide between competing 'priorities'?

Furthermore, the struggle may also involve a conflict between agents who are in favour of changing the field to improve their position versus those who are more interested in maintaining the status quo, depending on their relative positions in the field (Wacquant 1989, pp. 39-40, Bourdieu & Wacquant [1992] 2014, pp. 55-5, Swartz 1997, pp. 122-123, Højberg 2012, p. 54). In museum terms, this could arguably translate into the classic struggle between curators/conservators and educators, where internal power relations may subtly shift as 'educators play a more facilitative and dominant role, thereby decentering the traditional dominance of curators'. (Davis 2008, pp. 10-11, see also Hooper-Greenhill 1992).

5.4.2 Limits of the museum field

Establishing the limits of a field requires a closer look at its scope: an institution or an agent is a part of a field as long as the institution or the agent is subject to the field's influence and in turn is capable of influencing the field[152]. I would argue that in the

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[152] Wacquant, 1989 p. 39, Bourdieu and Wacquant 2014 pp.55 – 57, Højberg, 2012, p. 52, see also chapter 4 of this thesis.

context of this research project, the Ministry of Culture and the Arts Council Norway are conceivably situated at the outer fringes of the field, inasmuch as both bodies exert a certain level of influence (funding, policy) on the museum as well as receiving input from museums regarding policies and funding. Moreover, the university sector or academia[153] seems to be a part of this field of power, albeit indirectly, in that it informs and shapes the individual's professional and academic habitus even before the individual starts working in the field. A full analysis of the impact of the higher education sector on the field, however, lies beyond the scope of this project.

5.4.3 Stakeholders (agents) and field relations

Recalling earlier discussions on the position of museum and archives in the Norwegian cultural and political landscape, there are several factors (and stakeholders/agents) which may influence the practice of the museum. These can be grouped into two main categories: external and internal. By 'external' I mean stakeholders in the museum work who are not officially employed in the institution itself (trustees, friend and volunteer societies, MoC, ACN, municipality, county etc.), whereby 'internal' stakeholders designate museum staff proper, including artists in residence, seasonal staff etc. Even so, I regard both external and internal stakeholders to be agents in the same field.

Consequently, a closer examination of the way the institutions and their stakeholders seemed to be worthwhile: how do they perceive the societal role of museums? Is there alignment between the views of the different agents? In what ways does this conceivably impact the practice of the institutions? The following sections provide an outline of the different stakeholders in three sample institutions (cf. section 5.5.), as well as of the positions and relations between the different agents, both external and internal.

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[153] I use the term in the general Norwegian sense ('*Akademia*'), as defined in Store Norske Leksikon (official Norwegian encyclopaedia): "Academia, a scientific and cultural community engaged in higher education and research". https://snl.no/akademia. Accessed on 02.11.2017.

5.4.4 External conditions and stakeholders

Starting at the outer edges of the field, there are several agents which conceivably affect museum practice, notably agents with funding power and influence such as local, regional and national governments as well as other donors.

5.4.5 Local and national government

As experiences from for example the UK have shown[154], two of the main external factors which may have an impact on a museum's agenda and practice are government funding and policy, both of which in this particular case are shaped in significant ways by the Ministry of Culture as well as the Arts Council. As described earlier, the ACN's main source of information about museums is the annual museum reports compiled by the ACN for the Ministry of Culture. These reports form the basis for the MoC's allocation of grant-in-aid funding. Furthermore, these reports (or more precisely, the reporting format) are part of the MoC and the ACN's channels for signalling current policies, along with grant-in-aid letters and other official documents such as white and green papers.

Moreover, the museums receive funding from counties and municipalities, as well as from various types of donors, all of which stipulate different kinds of funding criteria. Any changes in political agendas pertaining to museums may thus change every two years, depending on election results in national and regional elections respectively.

5.4.6 Trustees, boards and volunteer organisations

Another group of external stakeholders which have a bearing on the museum's practice are trustees, board members or members of volunteer organisations associated with the museum (i.e. societies of friends: '*venneforening*'). Most Norwegian museums have a board of trustees who to a greater or lesser degree are involved in the work of the museum. Some museum boards exercise a very hands-on form of governance, whereas other museums experience a less involved governing body.

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[154] Davis 2008 p. 16, see also Tlili 2008.

Museum board members and trustees are recruited in different ways, depending on their particular governance structure. After the Museum Reform, many museums changed from being integrated in the municipality or county administration to achieving legal status as independent trusts or foundations. Even so, as local and regional public funders and policymakers[155] still legally own the trust or foundation as majority shareholders, they have retained significant power over board representation. Consequently, these funders will have a say in recruitment to board positions, as most Norwegian museums receive the lion's share of their funding from national, regional and/or local government.

Even though most of the informants did not seem to be overly concerned with how these power structures operated in practice, there were some who had been subjected to what they felt was an infringement on the museum's freedom to work at arm's length from the board[156]. In short, while it is not part of the daily life of the museum as such, governance remains central to the surrounding power structures, and hence can have a very real impact on museum practice.

This resonates with experiences from the UK and the US, which show that it is essential to secure the support of these external stakeholders in order to change the overall institutional practice regardless of the degree of involvement by agents in the external part of the field. Such external endorsement is of great importance, as Fleming notes with reference to the process of developing and sustaining a socially engaged practice within National Museums Liverpool: 'The support of the governors of a museum is essential in managing for social justice; if the governors waiver, the entire process can be undermined' (2012, p. 74). Hence, the relation between the institution and its external stakeholders seemed to be worth exploring further in the context of the present research project. Figures 6 and 7 suggest a generic representation of what a "mapping" of the external and internal relations may look like in an empirical field analysis of the museum/archive and its external stakeholders.

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[155] As do national government in the case of some of the largest, national museums.
[156] Cf. section 7.1.2. of this thesis for an example of such a perceived transgression.
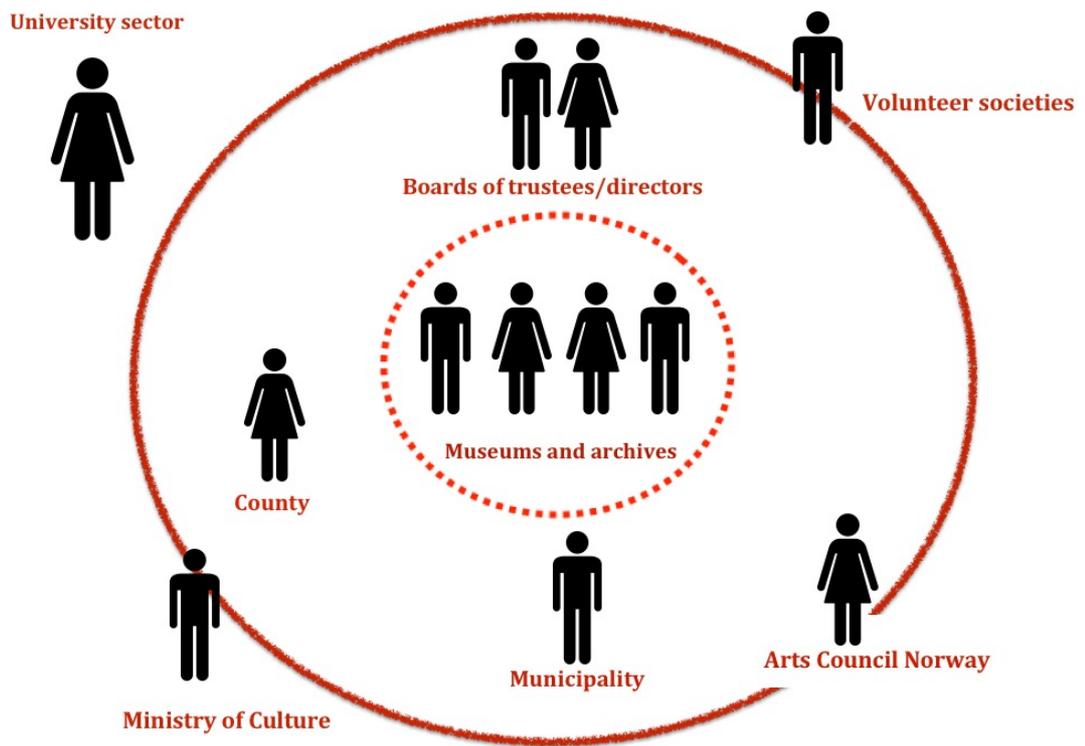
Figure 6: The museum/archive as part of a field: external stakeholder relations.
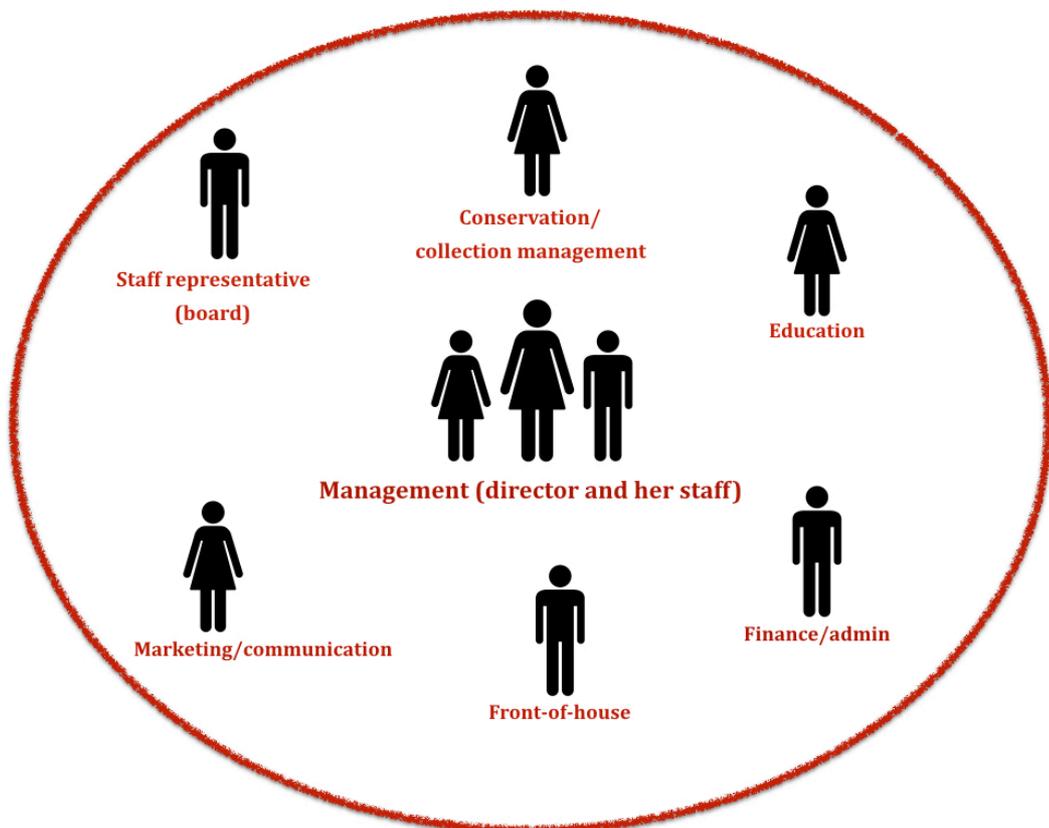
Figure 7: The organisation as sub-field: internal stakeholder relations.

5.4.7 Internal conditions and stakeholders

At this point, the discussion moves from the parts of the field where the external stakeholders are located, towards the more internal stakeholders of the field, i.e. within the museum as an organisation. Looking at the museum as a (sub-)field of interrelated positions from which different agents struggle for power, there are several organisational elements which appear to affect its practice: organisational culture and tradition as manifested through struggles for power and position, working climate, leadership, governance, management, programming, recruitment policies etc. Recalling the museum's annual reports to the ACN/MoC, the main source of information currently available, these factors seem more often than not to be entrenched in a conservative view of the societal role of museums: that the museum's main role in society is to be the keeper of the collective[157] memory.

Moreover, the significance of individual agents and their personal values, motivations and opinions is an additional element which may have bearing on how a particular museum practice is shaped (Sandell 2007, p. 48). The ensuing sections explore these organisational aspects and the relevance they had in the development of a workable research strategy in this project. Again drawing on the conceptual framework of Bourdieu's practice theory, different empirical strands which has proven worthwhile to explore more fully in the fieldwork will be discussed in what follows.

5.4.8 Individual agents

It may be useful to recall the definition of 'habitus' as being the sum of experiences, thought patterns and tastes ('*dispositions*'[158]) acquired by the individual, independently or collectively, in the course of a lifetime, which in turn informs and is informed by the individual's actions and practices (cf. section 4.3.2 of this thesis). In order to ensure a manageable and realistic research strategy, I chose to limit the extent of my focus on educational/academic habitus to upper secondary and tertiary/academic education and professional working life of the museum staff.

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[157] In the Norwegian context 'collective' can historically be replaced by 'national' (cf. chapter 2).
[158] Bourdieu [1979] 1992, pp. 190-191, see also Swartz 1997, p. 101 and Højberg 2012, p. 57.

Furthermore, this academic habitus may also possibly have an impact on any perceived[159] differences of status or position within the museum, not least regarding professional identities.

International research suggests that such factors, together with governance structures and management culture play a role on both an individual and institutional level, and can be more or less grouped in three general categories (cf. Davis 2008, p.6):

- institutional conditions for effective practice
- the skills, knowledge and attitudes that individual staff need to add to their existing skills sets
- the concerns and difficulties that they encounter in taking on more socially engaged roles.

All these aspects come into play, consciously or unconsciously, as new ideas and practices are suggested either in policy or implementation.

An additional issue which appears to influence institutional practice is the motivation and engagement of staff and their perception of the societal role of their institution in particular and museums in general. Research in the UK context shows that

> Like all policies aimed at reshaping organizational cultures, actions and outcomes, in their passage from a policy discourse to organizational action the associated concepts of social exclusion and inclusion are *mediated by the interpretations, understandings and perceptions of organizational actors* (Tlili 2008, p. 124, my emphasis).

Consequently, an examination of the personal motivation or engagement of the museum professional seemed to be a relevant angle to pursue, as museum jobs are not tremendously well paid, and yet they seem to be very much in demand: what are the features which motivate or deter the individual staff members?

A further factor potentially influencing the internal museum practice is the way in which the staff perceive their own scope for action in relation to that of colleagues

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[159] Real or otherwise, consciously or unconsciously expressed.

in other positions: regardless of mission statements and official strategies and action plans, are some areas of work perceived to receive more attention and resources than others? Is there congruence between the way the institution's management chooses to prioritise and allocate resources and the way this prioritisation is perceived on the ground level, so to speak?

Another element which may have a bearing on the internal practice is the level and relevance of specialized skills and competencies required for the museum staff to embrace a more socially engaged practice. In a Norwegian context, the common argument that 'we are not social workers'[160] not only signals a certain degree of resistance towards the idea of becoming a more socially active museum, but can also be construed to reflect a recognised lack of skills necessary to develop and sustain a socially engaged museum practice[161]. There is, according to Joy Davis, a need for museums to reflect on these issues in a comprehensive manner:

> As the conception of the museum as a socially engaged institution evolves in response to both internal and external expectations, the skills, knowledge, attitudes and work of staff, including those involved in management and governance, must also change to embrace competencies that are, at times, at odds with traditional approaches to museum work (2008, p. 2).

A further exploring of these issues could thus possibly yield empirical information applicable to a Norwegian context.

5.4.9 Institutional level

Moving from the level of the individual museum professional and his or her position in the institution, the subsequent sections look at factors which may plausibly affect institutional culture as such, namely what can be called the museum's 'habitus' or 'doxa'[162]. The status and value of objects (or documents, in the case of archives) can

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[160] Cf. section 3.3.10. of this thesis.

[161] Cf. also Pabst 2016 for an interesting discussion of ethical challenges and the need for special competencies in museums undertaking socially engaged projects.

[162] Cf. chapter 4 of this thesis. I find the term 'institutional habitus' quite useful as an analytical tool, although there are arguments against it. Atkinson notes that as 'habitus' is a relational concept, describing the dynamics between agents and informing their practice, it cannot be extended to a collective level, as an organisation does not possess the organic qualities which underpins 'habitus' (perceptions, assumptions etc.) (2011, p. 337). I would, however, in light of this particular research

arguably be described as being part of a museum's doxa. There may be arguments for and against[163] how objects are treated or communicated, but their position at the very core of museum work as its very raison-d'être seems to remain unquestioned.

Experiences from the UK, Canada and the US show that there are several elements which impact the internal culture of an institution: the formal structure and positioning of staff, as well as the composition of their different professional and educational backgrounds, the type and style of management and leadership, the nature, quality and frequency of organisational changes, as well as external signals from trustees, boards, policymakers and funders (cf. Janes 2013a, Gurian 1995, Davis 2008, Fleming 2012). As Gail Anderson points out,

> Organizational structure and culture define the internal engine that powers a museum, and have a dramatic impact on the capacity of a museum to fulfil its unique mission relative to its community and its public (Anderson 2013, p. 192).

Furthermore, Anderson also highlights the way organisational practice seems to be informed by seemingly self-evident or unconscious suppositions:

> Embedded in every organization are assumptions of how operations are organized, how staff are valued, and how work is to be accomplished. The hierarchy of positions and reporting relationships creates an infrastructure that impacts the daily operations. How a museum measures success, enacts authority, and defines leadership is implied in an organizational culture, *even if only tacitly* (Anderson 2013, p. 194, my emphasis).

Yet another organisational element which seems to be essential is that of what Fleming calls 'institutional personality'[164], in other words the internal organisational culture which the museum staff both are a part of and contribute to perpetuating. Again drawing on international experiences, the internal culture needs to be analysed reflexively and professionally in order to allow the organisation (and its partners) to

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project argue that notion of 'museum' encompasses more than just a building containing inert objects: it discusses the museum as an idea and an agent which can be ascribed moral responsibility (cf. Hein 2011).

[163] Cf. note 136 of this thesis.

[164] Fleming 2012, p. 77.

uncover, and in this case, challenge *collective habits of mind* (Fleming 2012, p. 77, see also Lynch 2013, p. 221, my emphasis).

Furthermore, research from the UK shows that the way institutions perceive and handle controversy and conflict has a bearing on the internal culture which again impacts the way the museum develops its practice. Based on experiences from the UK, the US and Canada, it is reasonable to assume that a socially engaged museum practice demands a particular motivation and ability to deal with power struggles, disagreements and conflicts which may arise internally or vis-à-vis different stakeholders or collaborative partners (cf. Hollows 2013, Hooper-Greenhill 2007, Janes 2013a, Gurian 1995 and Watson 2007). Davis notes that this may prove to be a difficult, albeit necessary, 'balancing act':

> An institutional climate that anticipates and is comfortable with the kinds of controversies and power struggles that can arise in working with diverse communities on difficult and contentious topics is also seen as crucial to socially engaged practice. (2008, pp. 8-9).

A further organisational element which will arguably impact the culture and practice of a museum, is the nature and quality of leadership and management. Again, international experience has shown the importance of embedding a corporate commitment to a particular practice, in this case a socially engaged practice, in all levels of the organisation, starting with the management level. Based on his experiences from a Canadian museum context, Janes places the responsibility and power to bring about change (or not) in an organisation first and foremost at the governance level:

> The weight of tradition and a lack of imagination are significant factors in the failure of museums to embrace contemporary issues, and both of these factors are *directly related to governance, leadership and management, or the lack thereof* (2013a, loc. 355, my emphasis).

In view of these international experiences, one may reasonably expect that a closer look at these issues in a Norwegian context could also provide valuable information.

Again based on international experiences, another potentially constructive line of inquiry which emerged was the possible influence of staff development or human

resource strategies on organisational life and culture: how was this practiced within the three different sample institutions and how did the different staff members perceive and experience these strategies? Was there time and room for developing skills and competencies among the staff? Were they encouraged to further enhance their professional skills in the context of the museum? What were the deterrents to their engagement and motivation? These were some of the questions which seemed appropriate to pursue in greater depth during the interviews.

An additional element which proved germane to the present project, is the way in which the different institutions develop and implement different programmes: is the programming underpinned by an overall strategy or are projects designed to fit specific funding criteria from different funding bodies? Experiences from the UK and the US seem to indicate that time is an essential factor in programming:

> It is only by implementing a range of programmes and over a period of time that a museum will be able to make a genuine impact. There is *little value in doing one-off events or one-off projects*. Working towards social justice takes time and effort, which is why it requires commitment, determination and belief (Fleming 2012, p. 80, my emphasis).

Probing this angle in more depth would allow me to bring on board the views of the ACN regarding the rationale behind short term funding.

All of these elements constitute different points of entry into the next part of this project: the data collection and subsequent analysis of the empirical material.

5.5 Selection of institutions and informants

In order to ensure some variety to the institutional samples (or sub-fields), I chose two museums and an archive with slightly different profiles situated in three different geographical locations in Norway. Even though they are in some respects completely unique (geography, audiences, collections), all three institutions[165] have elements in common which may potentially strengthen the case for a certain generalization

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[165] A possible exception being the archive – depending on the vantage point: at the moment it is more a project which was developed when the University library received a private collection of archival material. The library subsequently applied for and received project funding from the ACN in order to attempt to become a more permanent resource centre for the subject matter of the archival material.

inasmuch as the findings can conceivably be transferable to other similar settings (Denscombe 2014, loc.1730, 6776):

- they are all predominantly funded by the government (MoC)
- they have all received project funding from the ACN over the years
- they are roughly the same sort of institutions (type and size, policies and procedures, types and backgrounds of staff)
- they have all been involved in ACN development projects and are familiar with the concept of social inclusion and participation in a museum/archive context

All three sample institutions have participated in one of ACN's pilot project groups on social inclusion and participation, which not only had some bearing on my choice of informants but also proved to facilitate access to their institutions for the purpose of this project.

Furthermore, in order to be able to recruit a wider range of informants to include as varied a sample of viewpoints as possible, I asked my three main contact persons[166] to suggest names of colleagues holding different positions within or around the organisation, including museum professionals who were not necessarily interested in, or indeed in favour of, a socially engaged or activist museum practice. I subsequently formally contacted these people, explaining the objective of my project and asking them to participate, using the formal consent template approved by the University. As the fieldwork progressed, interviewees would suggest other people for me to talk to as well. This enabled me to elicit a cross-section of different views on the subject matter, ensuring a more balanced and representative selection of perspectives.

Moreover, at the outset of each interview, I carefully explained my role as a researcher and underlined my commitment to preserving their anonymity throughout the project. My intention was to enable them to speak more freely during the

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[166] Two of my contact persons were in sufficiently senior positions to be able to give me formal permission to approach their colleagues asking them to participate: one was a museum director and the other project director of the archive project. In the third case I contacted the museum director to also ensure formal clearance of my contacting staff for interviews.

interviews, as well as attempting to allay any fears or doubts related to my connection to the Arts Council.

5.5.1 "What do you guys do during winter?"[167]

One group which I have deliberately excluded from the empirical lines of inquiry is that of visitors (or even non-visitors). Based on information from the annual reports to the ACN over several years, it is reasonably safe to conclude that none of the MoC-funded museums relevant to this project engage actively in visitor studies or audience research and development other than providing visitor numbers necessary for statistical purposes in the funding cycle. Hence, it can be argued that visitors do not have occasion or power to shape the institutions' practice to any significant degree. Nor, as the quote in the title of this section suggests, do local communities seem to be overly interested in or informed about the general work of the museum through the year. One possible explanation for this lack of focus on visitors may be that visitor studies is not, at the time of writing, a part of any museum-related university courses.

Moreover, I have limited my research to institutions which fall within the category of cultural-/social history and heritage institutions, hence excluding art museums and galleries from the sample. The reason for this is primarily to keep the present project manageable within the time frame and resources allotted to me, but also because art museums are significantly fewer in number as well as being slightly different in nature[168] compared to cultural history museums. Hence, I would argue that even though the institutional sample in itself is small, a focus on cultural history museums provides a greater degree of representativity to any findings.

5.5.2 Sample of interviewees

I have conducted semi-structured interviews with a range of individuals holding different professional positions across this specific field, both within the three sample

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[167] When asked about the museum's relationship with its local community, one museum professional recounted how locals sometimes would wonder about museum life outside the tourist season.
[168] As an in-depth discussion of the historical and ideological differences between these two types of museums vastly exceeds the limits of this thesis, suffice it to quote one of the informants' tongue-in-cheek descriptions: "Art museums display what they think you *ought* to have on your wall, cultural history museums display what is actually on your wall".

institutions as well as in governing, funding and policymaking bodies at regional and national level.

I will for the purposes of this project call the people I have interviewed working in the institution itself for *primary* informants, as they arguably have a more informed view of the inner dynamics of the organisation. These include curators, directors, managers and general staff. Other, more peripheral stakeholders such as board members, organised volunteers, advisors on cultural affairs in municipalities, counties and other regional authorities who in some way are actively involved in the museum, I will call *secondary* informants. The third and last group of informants, such as representatives for national funding bodies and policymakers (directorates and ministries) with a less hands-on influence on the institution will be called *tertiary* informants. Several of the secondary and tertiary informants, however, had previous experience from working in museums throughout their professional careers[169], which has allowed for a broader range of perspectives on the issue at hand.

The people I contacted have all been willing to be interviewed in connection with the present project. The interviews were semi-structured, focussing on different themes (cf. appendix 2) I judged to be relevant in order to gain insight into the internal power dynamics between people and their perceptions of their individual positions as well as the position and role of the museum as such in society[170.].

The interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. They were carried out in Norwegian and translated into English in due course for the purposes of the present project. Most interviews lasted from 45 to 60 minutes, depending on the interviewee. The questions varied slightly depending on whether the interviewee was a primary informant or whether he or she belonged to the group of more peripheral stakeholders in the field (secondary and tertiary informants).

Furthermore, to ensure the anonymity of everybody involved in this project, I have given them randomly selected Norwegian first names.

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[169] I.e. some of the interviewees started their careers in museums and are currently in the ACN or the MoC and vice versa.
[170] Cf. Wacquant 1989, pp. 39-40, Bourdieu and Wacquant 2014, pp. 55-57, Swartz 1997, pp.122-123, Højberg, 2012, p. 54.

I had initially planned to present the findings in the specific context of the three sample institutions. It soon became apparent, however, that preserving the anonymity of my informants using this approach could present a serious challenge, as the Norwegian cultural sector is very small and transparent (cf. appendix 1 for a brief overview of the interviewees). I have therefore chosen to describe informants in terms of their professional positions without supplying information about geographical location. I would, however, argue that the informants provide a sufficiently representative picture of the field as to be valid.

5.5.3 Additional data sources

- 2015 survey data collected by ICOM Norway on the societal role of museums
- annual statistics and reports 2014-2017
- project reports 2014-2017
- budget applications 2014-2017
- internal reports
- articles in the public domain (newspapers, museum journal) 2015-2017
- webpages of the 71 MoC-funded museums

5.5.4 Informant profiles

Most of the informants had similar staff profiles, inasmuch as the majority of staff members have university or college education in subjects that can, with a few exceptions be categorized as belonging to the humanities and social sciences (archaeology, history, ethnology, cultural history, heritage studies, anthropology, folkoristics, object conservation). Other subjects such as marketing, finance and communication are also present, but to a lesser degree.

The participants were recruited with the help of my three contact persons, or key informants, in the different organisations, who suggested a list of colleagues placed on different levels in the organisation, both laterally (other sections) and hierarchically (management and directors). I then proceeded to formally contact these people directly, explaining the purpose and scope of the project as well as the ethical

framework. Everyone agreed to be interviewed, and interviews were carried out between February 2015 and February 2016.

Some of the interviewees have previously held other positions within the organisation and have consequently been asked to reflect on the potentially different views they may have held from other internal vantage points. The informants were in the age range from 33 to 70, consisting of 18 women and 10 men. Some of the interviewees had worked in museums most of their lives, others had gained experience across the field from museum to governance (cf. appendix 1).

5.5.5 Institutional profiles

The three sample institutions chosen for this project have both similarities and differences regarding funding, profile, location and project history.

All three sample institutions are largely financed through public funds. The two museums receive an annual grant-in-aid[171] from the Ministry of Culture, as well as annual funds from the county to which they belong. Moreover, all three have received significant amounts of project funding from the ACN over the years. The archive has currently status as a project, hosted by a university library, and hence relies mostly on project funding. The project staff are, however, actively working politically to ensure a more permanent status as a resource centre and archive, thus securing a more permanent type of funding.

The two museums are organised as semi-public institutions with a board of directors consisting of representatives from county, municipality, private enterprises, universities and other museums. They have also been part of the national Museum Reform[172], which entailed a certain organisational restructuring and, in some cases, growth.

Furthermore, the institutions generally adhere to the following kinds of governance tools ('*styringsverktøy*') which together form the formal basis of their mandate:

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[171] The Norwegian term is '*driftstilskot*'.
[172] Cf. Fossestøl et al. (2013) for an evaluation of the Norwegian Museum Reform.

- legal documents (various laws pertaining to different aspects of the organisation)
- founding agreement/charter
- grant letters from the MoC and other ministries
- grant letters from regional authorities
- regional collaboration agreements
- regional and national whitepapers

The archive is a part of a Department of Special Collections at a university library. As such, it is currently part of the larger organisation of the university. Instead of a board of directors, the archive works closely with a formally appointed reference group consisting of representatives from the university, the city archive, the county archive, the municipal library, a centre for gender research, an NGO, and a large national museum. In all three cases, there are different kinds of external stakeholders involved in the work of the institutions.

All three sample institutions have received project funding from the ACN and are familiar with the social agency profile of ACN's development work. The two museums have developed and implemented a number of innovative projects over the years, whereas the archive is a more recent applicant to the ACN: it is in itself still a project and would not exist were it not for ACN project funding[173]. The archive is at the moment working actively towards becoming a permanent resource and documentation centre in Norway.

Nevertheless, as the projects in this particular category have been designed and the applications developed by individual staff members and signed off by their respective directors, the ACN currently has little or no information about whether the project reflects a long-term socially engaged strategy of the museum or whether it remains the sole responsibility of the lone staff member.

The groundwork has now been laid for extracting and presenting the most salient and significant findings emerging from the data. For reasons of clarity, the subsequent two chapters are structured around the two main research questions,

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[173] The project funding has in this case generated a project which explicitly aims to become something more long term than a one-off project.

starting with the ideological angle before further exploring the organisational aspect. Chapter 8 then looks in more detail at the issue of whether and how governance tools such as project funding actually impacts ideology and organisational practice, before chapter 9 summarises and considers the essential findings, bringing into focus potential implications for funders and policymakers.

Chapter 6   Museums as ideology - societal role

I usually say you need to handle the smell of real life. You can't read it in a white paper. You have to go out there and get a good whiff of it, and if you don't like it or can't bear it, well, then you exist, but you don't really live…

*(*Åse, former museum director on what it takes to be a socially engaged museum*).*

Since their inception in the 1800's, professionalization, democratisation and organisational change in the public culture sector has radically altered the role of museums and archives. In particular, political documents issued during the past two decades underline their role as service providing public institutions with special obligations and remit, thus bringing their place in and relationship to society to the fore (Husabø 2012, p. 7-8). It is also worth recalling that the overall direction of these cultural policies has been to stimulate museums to move from a traditionally hegemonic and partly exclusive position towards taking on a more inclusive, democratic and socially engaged role (Holmesland 2013, cf. ch. 1).

This chapter looks at the ways in which museums and archives seem to perceive their *societal role.* The ideological foundation for this role is potentially to be found beyond the practical nuts and bolts of organisational life: the way museums and archives perceive themselves and their role in the world will arguably impact the way they organise themselves around the idea of who they are. Not only that, the way external stakeholders view the role of such institutions is also likely to affect the latter's practice. In light of the current funding structure the museums are a part of, it is reasonable to assume that there may be a specific policy discourse at work affecting the way the concept of societal role is interpreted and put into practice.

The following paragraphs examine in further detail how the different agents perceive the notions of 'societal role'[174] and 'societal remit'[175] depending on their position in the field, both on the level of official policies as well as on institutional and individual levels.

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[174] Cf. section 1.4 for a more detailed description of the term '*samfunnsrolle*'.

[175] '*samfunnsoppdrag*'

6.1 From policy to practice

As previously discussed in chapter 1, 'societal role' and 'societal remit' are two concepts central to current museum policy. The three main policy documents underpinning the idea of a more socially engaged role for museums are NOU 7:96[176], WP 22:99[177] and WP 49:09[178] (cf. also section 1.5 of this thesis for a more detailed description of the respective documents). One line of inquiry in this project has been to question the actual role such documents play and the subsequent impact they may have on the shaping of institutional culture. Do the institutions use these policy instruments as internal strategic tools to inform practice? Or are they mainly used by the ministry and its underlying directorates as a way of encouraging policy implementation? How familiar are the individual museum professionals with the function of this kind of documents?

Some informants seem to use them very effectively as lobbying tools, whereas others hardly mention them. One former museum professional recalled how he and his colleagues had used the different documents to bolster their arguments when facing opposition within the museum:

> We were in a minority after the reform, so we latched on to what we had. And when you [ACN] came and asked for applications for diversity funding, we put it on the table and said 'look, we need to make diversity projects'. But I think that some of my former colleagues didn't appreciate the ACN as much as I did: 'they're always trying to direct us. Can't we do what we like?'. One official signal after the other. But I thought they were good signals, most of them. About diversity and research, which are my areas of interest.
>
> (Ulrik, senior advisor, ACN, and former curator)

In a recent study of the factors influencing collection strategies at an open-air cultural history museum on the west coast of Norway, the researcher found that there seemed to be little or no congruence between official signals and daily practice (Husabø 2012, pp. 7-8). Husabø describes how the central concept of museums as 'dialogue

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176 Official Norwegian Report (1996:7)
177 White paper 22 (1999-2000)
178 White paper 49 (2008-2009)

institutions'[179] first emerging in NOU 7:96, seems to come across as a somewhat opaque abstraction which museum professionals struggle to put into practice. This is also apparent in feedback from interviewees in the present project when commenting on the value of strategic policy documents in their daily work:

> No, I find it too vague, really, for it to give me anything in my daily work. If you were thinking that I pore over it for inspiration in my daily work, I find it to be too general and a bit too 'open', 'generous' and 'courageous' and so on … I struggle to embed it.
>
> (Cathrine, museum curator)

In other words, the more abstract the signal, the less relevance and subsequent impact it seems to have on institutional culture and practice.

6.1.1   Signals in official documents from MoC and the ACN

Policy signals are not only channelled through various political documents such as white and green papers, they are also present in other types of official communication, such as the grant letters[180] accompanying the annual grant-in-aid funding: these letters are drafted by the MoC[181] and contain both general and specific instructions, in line with the remits of the various museums and particular focal areas of any sitting government.

The paragraph referring to the societal role or remit of museums has since 2009 been a verbatim repetition of WP 49:09's definition, including a listing of the 'four f's' considered to be central to museum work[182]. Moreover, the grant letter makes a direct reference to allocation of funds in the annual State budget in the same paragraph, hence stressing the close relationship between funding and policy signals even further[183]. Now, there seem to be indications in the available data material that

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[179] '*dialoginstitusjonar*'
[180] '*Tildelingsbrev*'
[181] Moreover, the ACN regularly provides the MoC with professional input to these grant letters before they are issued.
[182] The white paper divides the main remit of museums into four areas: '*forvaltning*' (stewardship), '*forskning*' (research), '*formidling*' (mediation/interpretation) and '*fornying*' (renewal). These areas have subsequently become known as 'the four f's'. Cf. section 1.5 for a more detailed description of the white paper.
[183] Grant letter (*tildelingsbrev*) to Norwegian museums 2016.

this juxtaposition of policy and funding issues may be generating a perceived 'stick-and-carrot' relationship between the governing /funding body and the institutions, which in turn informs the interpretation of the societal role of museums. When recently asked in the ICOM Norway survey whether museums ought to embrace a more active societal role, one museum professional expressed it thus:

> Our work is to safeguard, mediate and carry out research on our area of expertise (cultural heritage in our case). This work is mainly financed by public funding, *hence* it is our duty to be relevant and topical.
>
> (Curator, ICOM Norway-survey, my emphasis)

Furthermore, this apparently funding-related rationale for taking on a more active societal role strengthens the impression that the current discourse is mostly centred around and between institutions and their main governing/funding bodies: the institutions carry out the instructions of the MoC. Before examining this seemingly unevenly balanced power relation, another influential agent in the discursive cycle of governance, funding and museum practice, namely the ACN, merits a closer look.

It may be worth recalling that the ACN's remit includes formulating input to white papers[184], budget propositions, grant letters as well as collecting and collating the national museum statistics every year. Furthermore, the ACN is responsible for allocating project funding earmarked for museums and archives[185], which includes the power to formulate criteria for particular kinds of funding, in an attempt to further strengthen and shape museum policy, as explained by one informant:

> I sometimes wonder what the next white paper on museums would look like? And who would implement it? That would be us [the ACN]. We would have both written it and implemented it. So I think the work of disseminating the gist of White paper 49 which the ACN did was incredibly important.
>
> (Tove, senior advisor, ACN)

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[184] The museum department in the ACN (then the former NALMA) was instrumental to the development of WP 49:09.

[185] In 2015 the project funding remit for archives was transferred to the National Archives of Norway.

Moreover, this quote serves to highlight the power relations which ACN undoubtedly is part of: given that the ACN not only actively contributed to the production of WP 49:09, but also subsequently promoted it in all counties when it was first published in 2009, it is possible that this hands-on presence by a policymaker/funder has lent added weight to this particular political document.

6.1.2 The view of the policymakers

Recalling the discussion of the different ways the notion of 'societal role' appears in official documents (cf. section 1.5 of this thesis), the following sections examine in more detail how the concept seems to be perceived by the informants from different positions within the field. Exploring further how the agents in this project describe the role and function of the museum in different ways may yield useful information about their individual and collective understanding of the societal role of museums and how these perceptions affect their practice.

Starting off with the interviews conducted with three informants working on policy and funding matters in the outer perimeters of the field, namely the *Ministry of Culture*, a preliminary analysis reveals three slightly different ways of looking at the societal role of museums. These angles range from what I will call a moral position to a more academic-analytical position. In the former, the interviewee describes the role of museums thus, specifically referring to the ongoing global refugee and migrant crisis:

> It is then, in times of crises that our ethical standard will be tried and tested. And that's what I believe we need museums for. We need museums to give us practice at shouldering the uncomfortable. We need to be brave enough to tackle the unpleasantness. Take on the problematic, because there are many dilemmas. […] For me, societal role is about proving that we are able to learn from history. How can we use history to understand and relate to the contemporary? And how can we open up to other groups in society? To be socially aware is to step out of your comfort zone. Preserve, mediate, research and document[186], all of that, but [the museum] is still a kind of medium for a

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[186] Note the indirect reference to the 'four f's.'

message. And I find the message very unclear at times. It's muddy and obscure.

(Åse, senior advisor, MoC)

Note the sharp focus on the relation between the institution and the society of which it is a part. The traditional emphasis on 'the four f's' is shifted to a secondary place, and the museum's potential for social agency pushed to the fore: the institution becoming an argument with its society, as Neil Postman puts it:

What we require are museums that tell us what we once were, and what is wrong with what we are, and what new directions are possible. At the very least, we need museums that provide some vision of humanity different from the vision put forward by every advertising agency and political speech. A museum, then, must be an argument with its society. And more than that, it must be a timely argument. A good museum will always direct attention to what is difficult and even painful to contemplate (2005, p. 70).

The second of the three quotes seems to be grounded in a more academic-analytical view of museums' role in society:

To me, it is about creating understanding and knowledge about interconnections in life, and an understanding of the relationship between materiality and human beings.

(Øyvind, retired senior advisor, MoC)

Here the focus is slightly more on the role of museums as producers of knowledge and keepers of objects. This particular interviewee, however, was heavily involved in the production of NOU 7:96, and stated that he found its visions for the sector still valid and sound. He went on to say he regretted not having been involved in the making of the White paper 49: "[…] to speak plainly: 'the four f's' have just created trouble" (Øyvind).

The third informant, a high-ranking director of policy, describes the societal role of museums in terms of identity and a sense of belonging: "It provides both knowledge and a sense of security that this is a place where you have some fixed points, like beacons". Slight differences in nuance aside, all three underline the importance of museums reaching out to and connecting with their communities:

A museum which is only an ivory tower with a closed door where you have four or five researchers enjoying themselves, that is in my eyes not a museum. I am of the opinion that a museum should reach out, be a place which people perceive as an identity marker in the region. […] That museums are institutions that should reach out is quite obvious to me, but I've worked on these issues for so long that I know it has not been as self-evident as it is now.

(Thomas, senior policymaker, MoC)

Looking at these three different attitudes within the same context, it seems clear that there exist divergent interpretations of the same notion ('societal role'/'*samfunnsrolle*') even among the policymakers. These interpretations may again conceivably be informed by the individual's professional interests as well as personal values and engagement.

Moving on to the next level down in the food-chain of governance, policymaking and funding, what follows explores further how the concept of societal role is described within *Arts Council Norway*. Two of the interviewees had worked in museums up until quite recently, before being employed by the ACN. This gave their viewpoints an interesting double quality as they reflected on their current policy work in light of their earlier museum practice. One interviewee underlined the untapped potential for museums to realise a more active societal role:

You can do a lot to move mountains in museums when you are talking about working on the societal role, which is not being done and which you could remind people of. It's not only about what sort of exhibitions you make, it is also what sort of objects you collect and events you organise, as well as what sort of visitors you say no to even though they would give the most money.

(Tove, senior advisor, ACN, and former museum curator)

The second interviewee expressed frustration at the vagueness of the concept and drew attention to the possibility of ACN pushing the issue more strongly in the museum sector:

'Societal role' is the sort of notion you can fill with anything you like. And then we've tried to define something here, through the call for projects to the new

[funding] programme, which focusses on democracy and human rights. That these are important elements in the societal role. And I feel we are being heard in many ways. At the same time, I feel we are muddying our own waters a bit. I am unable to get up and define the societal role in three words, even though I am responsible for the programme. So I find it a bit difficult. We have a job to do in this respect.

(Ulrik, senior advisor, ACN)

A third, high-ranking advisor with a long track record of policy work in the museum sector described the societal role of museums in a more existential context, in terms of their relation to people and people's lives:

For me, the notion of 'societal role' amounts to getting people to reflect better, think better about their lives. Then you can use the museum as the medium it is, with its objects and its three-dimensionality … to put things in context. And get people to wonder about things.

(Yngve, senior advisor, ACN)

Again, these three quotes illustrate slightly different ways of conceptualising the societal role of museums. That being so, it is not hard to imagine these subtle differences seeping through into the policy documents, contributing to obfuscating the issue, or "muddying the waters", as one informant put it.

A further step in from the outer perimeters of the field brings us to the funding and policymakers on a local government level, namely the *county administration*[187]. One of the interviewees stated that she considered the societal role of archives to be "closely related to human rights work", and often used policy documents when arguing the case for particular projects:

Yes, I have used political documents in my work. If anybody has questioned what I've done, then I've said "look up the notion of an integral documentation

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[187] '*Fylkeskommune*'

of society in white paper 7". And there you'll also find the notions of 'strength'
and 'courage'[188], which for me has made it a very good white paper.

(Renate, director of County Archive)

Another county official in the north of the country pointed out that museums were
regarded by the regional authorities as central to local society and identity[189] and
hence were to some degree shielded from attempted budget cuts:

Trying to cut the budgets simply won't wash with people in Finnmark, as there
is a special interest in local history, particularly related to WW2, a very dramatic
and important period for people here.

(Oline, county director of cultural affairs)

In her opinion, however, the local museums could and should play a bigger role than
they currently do, not least regarding research and mediation of war history.

6.1.3   The view of the museum and archive professionals

Having looked at the views held by agents in the outer areas of the field, the next level
concerns the institutions themselves. In the annual reports submitted to Arts Council
Norway, most museums quote the WP 49:09 definition when referring to their societal
role and remit. As mentioned in previous chapters, however, the interpretation and
practical application of the concept of '*samfunnsrolle*' varies from museum to
museum, with no institutions claiming active social agency unless they have a specific
core mandate pertaining to democratic issues[190]. It would seem that the majority of
museums stick to the traditional perception of their role as safekeeping and
disseminating knowledge about cultural heritage (Holmesland 2013 and 2014).

Most of the informants refer to 'the four f's' as their main remit, hence directly
referring to the WP 49:09. One former museum professional stated that "the [NOU
7:96] was the Bible at our museum!", describing how the staff at the small activist

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[188] Cf. earlier reference to WP 7:13 in section 1.5.4.: Archives should be proactive, collaborative partners
which have legitimacy, *strength and courage to fight for certain values where necessary* (p. 50, my
translation and my emphasis).
[189] Cf. section 7.6.2. on the special significance of museums in the northern regions of Norway which
were hardest hit by the Nazi-regime's Scorched Earth tactic in 1944.
[190] i.e. the Nobel Peace Centre, the Holocaust Centre and the Eidsvoll 1814 Museum.

museum actively used the document as a basis for their practice. In neither of the three case institutions was the notion of 'societal role' or institutional values discussed collectively, although some of the informants expressed a desire for them to do so:

> We talk about it much too rarely, really. It's been a long time since we had a good and lively discussion. It used to be more often. When the flat [organisational] structure was visible. It's died a bit. But I feel it's just calm before the storm, because it HAS to come back on the agenda soon. I feel we've had lousy discussions about it internally and I think we talk past each other when it comes to our [museum's] societal role.
>
> (Bjørn, museum conservator)

Another informant stressed the universal access-aspect of the museum's role in society, not only in terms of physical access, but also in terms of economic access:

> I think we should be a museum for all and that everybody should have the possibility of visiting us and experience stuff. And in my experience there are families who do not have the money to give their kids that experience. That, for example, is what I think when you say 'societal role'. We are for everybody.
>
> (Dina, museum curator)

Responding to the question whether the staff ever referred to internal vision and mission documents when planning specific projects, one informant commented drily that she did not find their strategy documents particularly inspiring, finding it "too vague, really".

When asked about what their dream museum would look like should they have unlimited power and resources, some expressed a desire for more resources to deal with the backlog of collection management, others mentioned the need for developing more activities for young people and the local community as such. One person had a vision of making the whole museum area universally accessible. Another reflected on the potential in engaging more actively and courageously with difficult issues in the local community. This suggests that there is a whole array of different views among individuals who work in the institution regarding the role of the museum, which in turn points to the complex relationship between individual motivations and institutional

practice. Similar findings appear in a study of the factors influencing museum practice related to collection management in a museum on the Norwegian west coast (Husabø 2012).

Intriguingly, there seemed to be a slightly more conservative position on the part of the staff involved in the minority-archive project when asked about the societal role of archives. In this particular case, despite a very successful political lobbying campaign resulting in a place in the MoC's portfolio of institutions receiving annual grants, these informants seemed surprisingly reticent, given the particular minority-oriented theme of the archive, regarding taking on an active role, stressing that they were a research archive, rather than "an activist archive":

> I haven't read the white paper on archives very thoroughly, but societal role [...] is about collecting and documenting society. At the risk of sounding positivist, I still think it's important to distinguish … that there is a core in the work where you can keep a certain distance to things rather than having a particular political goal.
>
> (Markus, project manager)

In this case, the project manager[191] did not link the archive's societal role to human rights and democracy, unlike the county director of archives. Even though a more thorough exploration of this issue lies beyond the scope of this project, it is tempting to wonder whether this reticence originates from the academic habitus of the staff: both the previous and the current project managers were educated in the same subjects[192] and had their degree from the same universities as that of many museum professionals, their practice possibly informed by certain epistemological positions on what the role of museums and archives conceivably is. That interviewees repeatedly emphasised that the archive was strictly a research and documentation centre, only serves to strengthen the impression that academic values are weighted heavily in the perception of the societal role.

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[191] The archive is still formally a project hosted by a university library, but has great scope and freedom owing to their earmarked funding and the liberal attitude of the university library.
[192] Ethnology, history and cultural history.

6.1.4 ICOM Norway survey

Other sources of information about how institutions perceive their societal role have also proven useful. In 2016, ICOM Norway published the results of an online survey carried out in the museum sector, where one of the questions directly asked about the museums' definition of their societal role. The project coordinator very kindly provided access to the anonymized raw data, which has yielded an additional glimpse into how the notion of '*samfunnsrolle*' is currently perceived by museum professionals, and which will be discussed in what follows.

The survey was sent out to subscribers to various museum mailing lists[193] in the course of November and December 2015. Although the percentage of answers remained relatively low[194], I would argue that the material provides a somewhat wider range of data which complements the data already gathered through the field interviews, hence contributing to a more complete picture. Also, it constitutes a data source which is arguably less influenced by my ACN-status, as the author of the survey was ICOM Norway and not the ACN. Moreover, the online format of the survey as well as the anonymity of the respondents represents another aspect differentiating it from the qualitative interview approach used here.

The aim of the survey was to map the extent of the socially engaged work being done in the Norwegian museum sector. Its emphasis lay on ethical challenges of contested and sensitive issues, but the first part of the survey dealt with the general perception of the societal role of museums. Some of the survey questions are highly pertinent to this project, particularly those concerning the societal role of museums. The questions were preceded by a paragraph referring to relevant policy signals. Although alluded to in a general way, qualified by marker words such as "dialogue", "foster understanding" and "a diverse society", it is highly likely that the reference concerns the three seminal policy documents previously discussed in this chapter (NOU 7:96, WP 22:99, WP49:09).

The survey data notably showed broad consensus about the importance of museums taking an active societal role. Nonetheless, quite a few respondents thought

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[193] For a more detailed description of the survey, confer Pabst 2016.
[194] 40 individual staff from 22 of the 71 MoC-funded museums responded to the survey. The largest group among these were conservators and/or managers (22), the rest consisting of mediators (8), directors (6) and others (3) (Pabst 2016).

that this kind of work should not replace the core tasks of the museum, which would more often than not be described in terms of 'the four f's':

> The most important task for the museum is to research, safeguard and mediate the cultural heritage, notably the material. Create understanding and reflection and curiosity around this by putting the material in context.
>
> (Head of conservation, ICOM Norway-survey)

Again, the word 'task'[195] is noteworthy, implying that the rationale underpinning socially engaged museum work constitutes something which is given to the museum by the governing/funding body, rather than something the museum takes on independently. Hence, socially engaged work may be perceived as an extra addition to the real museum work, so to speak.

Other responses in the survey reinforce the impression that many museum professionals struggle to come to grips with operationalising policy terms they perceive as 'fluffy', such as 'societal role' and 'dialogue institution', in their daily practice. One museum manager formulates him- or herself thus:

> Our societal role is to safeguard and seek information about the thematic subject areas of the museum. I believe the primary tasks of the museum (collect and safeguard information and knowledge) are disappearing because of the increased focus on technical mediation and concrete collection care. In addition to all this, the museums are expected to be in dialogue with society, but what does this actually mean? I believe the concept of dialogue can become a cliché – a political buzzword devoid of meaning. To be a societal agent[196] must be to not forget to safeguard cultural heritage by safeguarding the knowledge about the cultural heritage and mediate this *in a serious manner*, making references to contemporary politics wherever possible
>
> (Museum manager, ICOM Norway-survey, my emphasis).

The use of the word 'serious' is notable, as it suggests that there is a certain interpretation of the museum's role at play: the museum as a credible, neutral

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[195] '*Oppgave*'
[196] '*Samfunnsaktør*'

purveyor of serious and objective knowledge. ICOM's analysis of the findings show that some 20% of the respondents describe museums as "value neutral meeting places which do not embrace specific positions or front their own views". One respondent describes museums as "neutral meeting places, unlike more politically tinted forums" (Pabst 2016, p. 19).

An additional feature emerging from the survey data is that there seems to be broad consensus that the success of socially engaged projects depended to a large extent on individuals. This serves to strengthen the impression that personal motivation, engagement and values play a significant role in the shaping of institutional practice, a subject which will be explored more fully in discussion in chapter 7 (see also Husabø 2012).

A few respondents underline the importance of reaching out to visitors and communities, stressing the need for the institution to step out of its comfort zone:

> Museums must dare to raise subjects relevant to contemporary debate and keep a dialogue with local communities on many different levels. For better or worse. Also, museums must dare to challenge their own relationship to volunteers and volunteer associations and renew themselves, not just follow the expected track.

> (Museum director, ICOM Norway-survey)

A further theme recurring in the survey, is the perceived opaqueness of the notion of 'societal role', here formulated by a head of department in response to the question whether he or she agrees that it is important that museums take an active societal role: "yes, [I] agree, but [am] uncertain about the words such as "take" and "role"? In the end it comes down to what it IS to be a museum in my opinion". Evidently active social engagement is inherently part of a museum's raison d'être, according to this informant.

As both the interviews and the survey show, the informants provide a variety of different understanding of 'societal role', most of which are consistent with the formulations in the aforementioned policy papers.

6.1.5 The projections of the institutions

Another source which throws some light on the way museums understand their role is how they present themselves to the public. Similar to the ICOM survey, this is also a source which is arguably less prone to be influenced by my presence not only as a researcher, but also as a perceived representative of the governing/funding body. Whereas a few have made public their strategy documents or annual reports, most of the 71 museums currently receiving annual grant-in-aid from the MoC present themselves on their webpages with only a short description under the label 'About us'.

First of all, there seems to be a marked difference between art galleries and cultural history museums or other collections based on historical objects. Where the former seem to confidently project a mission to educate the masses in all things art and rarely refer to 'the four f's', the latter tend to describe themselves in more traditional terms often referring to themselves as 'dialogue institutions'[197] and couching their remit in 'the four f's':

> We are a scientific institution whose goal is to collect, document and mediate knowledge about tangible and intangible cultural heritage, especially the period after the Reformation. Based on its collections, the trust shall carry out research and mediate knowledge through exhibitions, publications, educations and other forms for information. Our remit is to have an active societal role where knowledge about our cultural heritage and history is central, and where relevant and innovative mediation fosters insight and reflection. Our values are 'Courageous – Vibrant – Engaging'.
>
> (Website of large open-air museum of cultural history, my translation)

Although an in-depth analysis of the semantics at play in these self-descriptions lies outside the scope of this project, it is worth noting that there seem to be varying perceptions of what 'value' means: some employ terms such as 'courageous', 'respectful' and 'relevant', whereas others lay claim to value labels such as 'vibrant', 'visible' and 'in motion'. The latter category of professed values brings to mind the current trend of taking on board professional PR-consultants to assist in formulating

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[197] Recalling that this term originates in this context from the NOU 96:7.

institutions' strategy documents and communication strategies, often resulting in slightly vacuous and frequently alliterative slogans[198].

However, and not unexpectedly, most of the self-descriptions refer to particular policy documents, guidelines and grant letters and are more often than not structured in alignment with 'the four f's'.

6.1.6 The public sphere

A further source of information is the institutions' contributions to the public debate. The Norwegian Museum Journal[199] recently published two articles which shed some light on the issue.

The first article was a feature on the refugee crisis in the autumn of 2015, where small villages on the Russian border in the north of Norway experienced a massive influx of refugees, mostly from the Middle East, crossing the border on bicycles[200]. The article describes how a small local museum responded by initiating a documentation project as a part of their "societal task of securing and safeguarding for future generations an important chapter in the border history" (Norendal 2016, pp.21-22). The initial plan was to document all the stages from the initial point of entry from Russia to the subsequent transit points, but due to practical and ethical difficulties which arose in the very chaotic period of the influx, the museum's collection project was limited to taking photographs of the various local transit points and interviewing one staff member at the asylum seeker reception centre.

As part of this intensive, short-term project, the museum collected five of the bikes used by refugees to cross the border and later discarded. Bearing in mind all the practical challenges facing a small museum in the face of such a situation, it is still revealing that their very first reaction was to *collect objects* – bicycles – for later use in exhibitions. To collect the stories related to the bicycles, in other words interviewing the refugees whose stories are very much part of history in the making, seems not to

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[198] A case in point is the ACN's own so-called values: "visible, stimulating and cooperative" ('*synlig, stimulerende og samhandlende*'). Why 'visible' should be a core value is not immediately clear. http://www.kulturradet.no/documents/10157/23208c22-52a9-4f18-a56d-5baca8eb810b. Accessed on 11.01.2017.

[199] '*Museumsnytt*'

[200] Apparently Russian authorities forbid people crossing the border to Norway on foot, hence there emerged a sudden market for bicycles of any shape or condition.

have been the focus of the project. This can arguably be another indication of the institution deeming its main role to be that of collection, documentation, research and mediation.

The second article was a powerful call for action by a museum conservator, who stressed the need for museums to engage with issues such as global warming and environmental sustainability. The author called for a new orientation in the museums sector, claiming that it would be "irresponsible to leave these issues in the hands of a small group of professionals and politicians" (Snekkestad 2016, p. 34).

Moreover, he demands that museums become "intellectual activists" or even "moralists", pointing out the need for them to turn into counter-cultural forces in the face of inactive politicians afraid of losing votes on unpopular but effective measures (ibid, p. 34). This position again resonates well with Neil Postman's call for museums to become arguments with their society (2005, p. 70).

When proceeding to qualify what this 'activism' may conceivably consist of, however, the author of the article presents what he calls the ACN's "moss-covered[201]" understanding of the societal role of museum as a main challenge. The moss-covering refers to what he perceives as an excessive focus on diversity and minorities in the three-year project funding programme. The inference is clearly that without specific, earmarked funding from governing/funding bodies such as the ACN, the museum cannot embrace a more active societal role. It would seem that in the minds of museum professionals, the discourse on the societal role of museums is confined to the field of givers and receivers of policies and funds.

Before proceeding to a further discussion of the potential reasons for the wide variety of ways the different stakeholders perceive the role of museums, a closer look at a subject which seems to repeatedly emerge across the available data may be useful: the notion of objectivity and neutrality as central to the professional integrity of museum practice.

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[201] Norwegian metaphor for 'old-fashioned'.

6.2 The importance of objectivity and neutrality

When asked to describe the societal role of museums, the concepts of objectivity and neutrality appear to concern many museums, a concern which seems to revolve around a fear of being perceived as the opposite. Many institutions stress their role as purportedly objective keepers of knowledge:

> Our credibility as a museum depends entirely on our ability to act independently of political or corporate interests and that *our interpretations are objective,* based on knowledge and scientific, falsifiable methods (from annual funding application 2017 to the MoC, my emphasis).

Again, the concern appears to be focused on the danger of being (perceived as) subjective and non-neutral, as if objectivity and neutrality were the natural and desirable order of things. Making the case for museums as active societal agents, Richard Sandell argues that museums *must* consider and accept their own position of non-neutrality: there is no such thing as a neutral position. As part of society, they are "undeniably implicated in the dynamics of (in)equality and the power relations between different groups through their role in constructing and disseminating dominant social narratives" (Sandell 2002, p. 8, see also Sandell 2017).

In much the same vein, Randall C. Jimerson, Professor of history and Director of Archives and Records Management at Western Washington University in the US, has the following reflection on the relationship between archives, social justice and professional integrity. It is, I would argue, as germane to museums:

> Archivists can use the power of archives to promote accountability, open government, diversity, and social justice. In doing so, *it is essential to distinguish objectivity from neutrality*. Advocacy and activism can address social issues without abandoning professional standards of fairness, honesty, detachment, and transparency (Jimerson 2007, p. 252, my emphasis).

Even so, distinguishing the two concepts demands further analytical effort, as they are frequently used as interchangeable synonyms, even in the Oxford English dictionaries.

Columnist Bjørn Stærk suggests a distinction in his 2003 blogpost[202] which may conceivably form a workable premise for further discussion of the notions in relation to the societal role of museums and archives:

- Objectivity: to strive towards the truth, on the assumption that 'there exists an objective truth to strive for, independent of subjective experience'. Reaching this truth is impossible, but striving for it will get you closer.
- Neutrality: non-positioning. In this case, 'truth itself is not involved, only your relationship to other people's idea of truth. If they move their truth, you must also move yours' (Stærk 2003).

Moreover, one might also argue that a non-position is also a position, namely one which tacitly accepts the existing state of things. Claiming any sort of neutrality, then, would amount to existential cheating, as 'engagement' entails an active positioning of the subject, or agent (Skjervheim 1996, p. 86, see also Sandell 2017).

Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that there is a very real concern among museum professionals that their (perceived) objectivity and neutrality is at stake. One informant described the role of the museum as follows:

Our job is to document and preserve objects and then communicate to people *how things really are.*

(Greta, museum curator, my emphasis)

The same informant did not perceive it to be within the museum's remit to be involved in any kind of activism, expressing a slight resentment at outsiders[203], such as journalists or other culture professionals telling the museum what to do or not: "it is important that museums retain their uniqueness".

Other informants stressed the need for restoring and maintaining authenticity in their collections in order to safeguard the integrity and quality of the museum. The question which then arises is whether and to what degree the museum professional's understanding of the objectivity/neutrality of the museum impacts their perception of

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[202] http://blog.bearstrong.net/archive/weblog/000474.html. Accessed on 07.12.2015. See also http://bearstrong.net/2010/07/29/essay-archive/ .
[203] The organisers of the Norwegian Museum Association's annual museum conference in 2015 had invited a handful of journalists, academics and politicians to reflect on the role of museums in society.

the limits of the role a museum may conceivably play in society, in other words, the degree to which a museum may engage in activism or socially engaged practice. Evidence from the UK context would suggest that there is indeed a certain reluctance among museum staff to embrace a more socially engaged practice:

> Despite a growing recognition that museums have often reproduced and reinforced social inequalities through their collecting and exhibitionary practices, many museum staff are uncomfortable with the notion of relinquishing their pursuit of perceived objectivity and neutrality in favour of adopting an active, political stance on equality issues (Sandell 2002, p. 18).

It seems reasonably safe to conclude then, that (perceptions of) objectivity and neutrality constitute important elements in the paradigm currently influencing the way Norwegian museums and archives perceive their societal role. That being so, and given that there are no neutral positions and that pure objectivity can never be fully achieved, neither for individual museum professionals nor their institutions, why is there seemingly a reluctance to acknowledge the power and ethical responsibility which without doubt comes with their societal (non-neutral) position and territory? In other words, why the discomfort? Before proceeding to explore these questions in further depth, the ensuing sections will examine in more detail how different perceptions of the societal role of museums align (or not) between the different stakeholders and subsequently impact on internal practice.

6.3 Discrepant perceptions of the societal role

One of the issues that has become apparent from the material available concerns evident discrepancies in the way different stakeholders define and to some degree, practice the societal role of museums: policy makers, funding bodies and trustees of the museum do not necessarily define this role in the same way as the museum professionals, nor does there always seem to be internal agreement on what this role is or should be. This concurs with a recent study into the internal aspects of the social justice practice of Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art. In her research, Victoria Hollows found there appeared to be a 'gap in understanding' or 'lack of alignment' between

directorial responsibilities and the working practice of the staff, a gap which affected work morale negatively:

> The corporate position, adopted 'on behalf of' those practitioners responsible for the delivery of the programme of social justice work, led to more than one interviewee describing feelings of trust and betrayal, affecting motivation and performance (Hollows 2013, p. 35).

Moreover, these findings are supported by additional research into other UK museums, in a study concerned with the ways in which staff embraced social inclusion policies propagated by the government: an asymmetrical and differentiated commitment to social inclusion led to a privileging of some units over others, hence impacting negatively the organisational capacity to work collectively (Tlili 2008, p. 144, see also Husabø 2012 for a Norwegian case).

6.3.1 Underlying reasons for non-aligning perceptions

Having considered several different ways in which the agents in the field relate to the notion of the societal role of museums and archives and determined that there is a divergence in views, there emerges a few key questions which may throw light on possible underlying reasons for this disparity:

* **Mixed messages from the funders and policymakers?**

As previously discussed, given that key policy documents are informed by different individuals in different positions and produced at different points in time, one may wonder to what degree the message becomes unclear along the way?

Moreover, although there may be internal differences of opinion within the ACN on how the societal role of museums and archives should be interpreted and to what degree institutions should embrace a more socially engaged practice[204], it seems safe to say that the overall policy direction builds on the two central policy documents mentioned earlier in this chapter, NOU 7:96 and WP 22:99. Nevertheless, the sector keeps drawing on the third policy document, WP 49:09, whenever describing the

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[204] Davis 2008

rationale behind their role and remit. Recalling that the ACN actively promoted the latter and hence may have, consciously or not, bestowed particular prominence on it, the fact remains that of the three documents, WP 49:09 is the least clear one regarding the interpretation of what the societal role of museums may conceivably be.

- **Deference, lip-service or indolence?**

One may then ask whether it is precisely this lack of concrete content in the description of the role, allowing them great freedom of interpretation, which seemingly makes the document (WP 09:49) so important to the sector, or whether its appeal stems from a potentially excessive deference to signals from governing/funding bodies. In other words, given that there seems to be a somewhat selective reading of documents, why is the least committing document the one most quoted by the institutions?

6.4 A self-referential paradigm

As the preceding discussion has shown, most of the informants, including the directors, refer to such political documents and grant letters when speaking about their role and remit. Even though none of the interviewees perceived the instructions as being too detailed or as hampering their freedom of action in any way, a recurring theme, however, seemed to be lack of financial resources to fulfil what they perceived as the task given to them by the government.

Again, this is suggestive of there being a specific policy and funding paradigm at work: none of the definitions seems to refer to values or parameters *outside* of what I will call the Norwegian cultural policy discourse as formulated in white papers, green papers and grant letters, possibly nor even outside the academic discourse related to museums.

Ginsburgh and Mairesse draw attention to the challenge of attempting to define what a museum is. Owing to the fact that this kind of institution can be simultaneously construed as being anything from a church or a school to a temple or a forum, they point out that the existing strict definitions of museums provided by authorities such as ICOM potentially freeze "the essence" of museums, thus limiting

the institutions' potential, restricting their scope for action and holding back their development;

> The reason is that the characteristics suggested by these definitions are concerned with technical and functional aspects (conservation, research, communication), but not with the very reason for a museum to exist (the 'project') (1997, p. 28).

This concurs with the findings in the present project, which suggest that the funder and policymaker, in this case the MoC and the ACN, by repeatedly using the four f-categories in most of their communication with and about museums not only create, but also sustain a specific paradigm. This clearly invites the assumption that this paradigm currently dominates the way museums shape their practice and which is, for all intents and purposes, mostly based on specific functions such as *collection, preservation, study, exhibition and education* (Hein 2000, pp. 3-4).
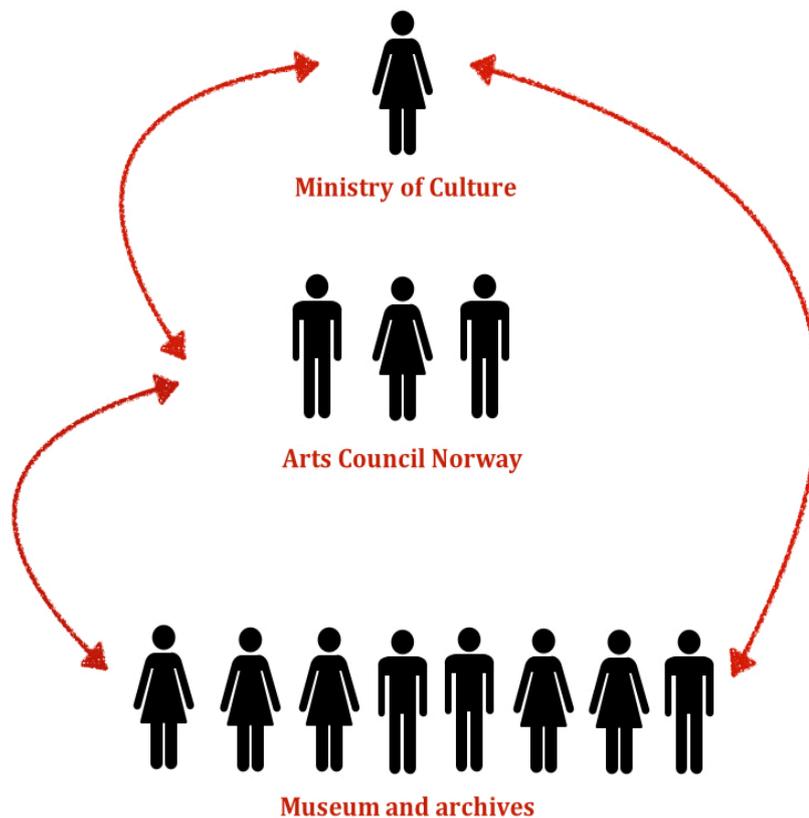
Figure 8: The current policy and funding paradigm.

Moreover, as things appear to stand, the current paradigm hampers further conversation about these issues in that it has a predominantly self-referential quality (cf. fig. 8): current museum practice is based on specific policy signals (WP 49:09 describing 'the four f's'), which in turn appear to be based on prevailing museum practice (i.e. working along the traditional categories of 'the four f's'). It would seem that until these matters become part of the conversation and reflection about what constitutes the societal role of museums or even what a museum could or should be in a contemporary society, the discourse will remain confined within the paradigm of white papers, green papers and other policy documents.

6.5 Power and ethos – two elephants in the room

As the above discussion has shown, individual and, to a certain extent, institutional, interpretations of what a museum or archive is and could be, its societal role, seem to affect and prescribe the overall practice of the institution.

One overall impression I am left with after analysing the available material, however, is that regardless of how the societal role of the institution is perceived, there is a marked reluctance to talk about power and ethos, institutional or individual. These are notions which touch the very core of not only the societal role of museum, but also what a museum in its very nature *is*, or *could* be. When talking about the role and purpose of museums, most of the informants would diligently refer to reigning policy documents. While recognising that this may partly have been a result of the informants deferring to my potentially perceived status as a representative of the main funding body, I would still argue that the very implicitness of these two fundamental notions in the current discourse is of relevance to this project: power and ethos appear to constitute the negative space in the composition, and thus essential to the understanding of the full picture. The following section will therefore probe the concept of institutional power and values/ethos in further detail, looking at potential factors which may help explain the reluctance of many museum professional to broach the subject.

6.5.1 The concept of institutional power

The field of power studies is a vast and sometimes contested domain in social and political theory, encompassing a range of different perspectives[205]. For the purposes of this project, however, I have drawn on the theoretical approach of Bernadette Lynch (2011b) to examine more closely how power dynamics may be conceptualised within the context of institutions such as museums and archives.

Recalling how individuals within institutions negotiate their internal positions in different ways based on personal and professional/academic motivations and values (Bourdieu & Wacquant [1992] 2014, Højberg 2012) and that institutions such as museums and archives are part of society, it can be argued that they are in a position of non-neutrality, and consequently, in a position of power (Sandell 2002, Hein 2011, Douglas 1987).

Moreover, the very nature of their work, selecting which objects to keep (or not) or whose stories to tell (or not) speaks of a great deal of power, albeit never explicitly. As Jimerson notes, despite their claims of neutrality, "any attempt to select, organize and convey past events represents an act of interpretation, a judging of what to include, what to omit, and how to explain the past" (2009, p. 209).

One may therefore reasonably expect them to be held morally accountable as institutions: as previously stated in chapter 3, with great power comes great responsibility (Hein, 2011, p. 118, see also Jimerson 2009, pp. 219-220).

In order to approach the concept of power in a manageable way within the context of this project, it may be useful to examine the often hidden ideological structures operating in museums. Drawing on Gramsci, Lynch frames this idea of the institutional power of museums in the terms of 'hegemony', whereby a dominant group succeeds in exerting power and influence over another group by gaining the latter's implicit consent (2011b, see also Gramsci 1971). The ideological structure of hegemony is, Lynch argues, often hidden and seldom examined in any depth;

> Antonio Gramsci (1971) stressed the significance of ideology in power
> structures, that similarly are in play when the museum succeeds in exercising

consensual power, *convincing its community participants that their interests are the same as those of the institution* (Lynch 2011b, p. 452, my emphasis).

Furthermore, I would argue that Lynch's use of 'hegemony' in the context of museums as institutions of power, lends weight to the idea that there is an 'institutional habitus'[206] at play in the social interaction and practice within museums and archives. Moreover, Lynch points to the close connection between power and values, in that ideas and values underpin all social and political interaction, becoming so routine within organisations such as museums that they are not consciously thought of, even as they continuously inform policy-making (Lynch 2011b, p. 447, see also Lukes [1974] 2005).

In this sense, museums and archives can be viewed as institutions that produce and reproduce "a hegemonic culture in which the values of the institution became the 'common-sense' values of all [...]", thus maintaining the status quo (or orthodoxy) by exercising order and control through ideology (Lynch 2011b, p. 453). Mary Douglas further highlights the subtlety of this particular hegemonic power dynamic at play in institutions:

> Any institution that is going to keep its shape needs to gain legitimacy by distinctive grounding in nature and in reason: then it affords to its members a set of analogies with which to explore the world and *with which to justify the naturalness and reasonableness of its instituted rules*, and it can keep its identifiable continuing form. Any institution then starts to control the memory of its members; it causes them to forget experience incompatible with its righteous image, and it brings to their minds events which sustain the view of nature that is complimentary to itself. It provides the categories of thought, sets the terms for self-knowledge, and fixes identities (1987, p. 112, my emphasis).

This dynamic whereby institutions furnish us with classifications, Douglas argues, comes at a price: "[...] we seem to lose some independence that we might conceivably have otherwise had" (1987, p. 91, my emphasis).

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[206] Even so, it is worth noting that the concept of 'institutional habitus' is contested in some circles. See for example Atkinson 2011 (cf. note 160).

Turning our attention to the websites of the 71 museums receiving grant-in-aid from the MoC and how they choose to present themselves to the public, it is significant that only one museum explicitly reflects[207] on its power to define cultural heritage and the responsibility which ensues, not only in their mediation and interpretation, but also in their collection strategies. The remaining museums mostly reflect on their work related to the four f's in more general terms. The museum in question makes the following statement in their overall strategic plan, also available on its website:

> [The museum] must be conscious of its power to define cultural heritage. It shapes and sustains people's cultural self-understanding and perceived sense of belonging. Hence the museum carries great responsibility in choosing stories and narratives which embrace the diversity of contemporary urban societies. [The museum] must therefore continuously reflect on who and what is being represented in the museum's collections and interpretation/mediation[208].

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that this specific museum also enlisted a philosopher to assist the organisation in the process of developing their vision and mission statements, which again serves to underline the connections between values/ideas and power. What follows examines in further detail the idea of 'value' or 'ethos' in connection with the organisational culture of museums and archives.

6.5.2   The concept of institutional value

Without delving into the entire philosophy of value theory, the discussion which follows will, in the context of the present project, be looking at 'institutional values' in terms of the *ethos and moral standards by which museums (and archives) base their work and hold themselves accountable.* There are several aspects to this issue. Firstly, there is the matter of wording and how institutions frame their values in their public

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[207] It is perhaps worth pointing out that the reference is not made on the webpage itself, but rather figures in the strategic plan to be found under the 'about the museum' heading.
[208] http://www.oslomuseum.no/images/stories/PDFer/STRATEGIPLAN%20OSLO%20MUSEUM%202012-2015.pdf. Accessed on 22.04.2016.

space. Secondly, there is the issue of embedding (or lack thereof) of these institutional values.

I have examined statements about mission, vision and values chiefly as they are presented on the museum webpages. Admittedly, although it would be possible to obtain these documents from other sources as not all museums make this information accessible on their websites, I would argue that precisely because such statements about institutional ethos are made available to the public – or not – indicates to some degree the weight the institutions lend to these matters. In other words, the institutional ethos (and its level of embedding) would conceivably be reflected both internally and externally. David Fleming underlines the significance of institutional values to organisational practice;

> Museum missions, values and visions – important elements of a museum's make up – play a critical role where change is being introduced (2012, p. 74, see also Nightingale and Mahal 2012, p. 34).

Moreover, I have explored how the institutions describe their remit in policy statements and annual reports[209]. While recognizing that the latter constitutes a particular genre of documents produced within a particular context of governance and funding, many museums appear to recycle policy statements and formulations across different channels of communication. Hence one may argue that the institutions do not seem to differentiate between recipients to any significant degree, whether they be the governing/funding bodies (MoC, ACN, boards of directors) or the general public (webpages). Lynch calls for a re-examination of the wording of internal strategy documents for potential underlying assumptions about the museum's work:

> It is important to make such policies and the processes by which they are arrived at transparent, so that others can help museums interrogate them and, ideally, collaboratively reconstruct them (2011b, p. 447).

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[209] Not all of the museums make their strategy plan or annual plans available to the public on their website. As the point of this particular exercise is to examine how the museums project themselves to the public, I have deliberately focussed my attention on the material currently accessible to anyone visiting the websites. Also, I have limited my search to the 71 museums who at present are on MoC's list of annual grant-in-aid funding.

Words matter then, not only in terms of how they inform and shape internal practice, but also in terms of institutional transparency and accountability to the public. The subsequent sections examine more closely some key concepts and terms which museums declare to be part of their core values underpinning their strategies.

6.5.3 Philosophical value: ethos and moral compasses

Among the values listed on the museums' webpages, concepts such as 'courage', 'relevance' and 'integrity' arguably form part of the category of values understood as *ethos*, the moral and ethical principles and standards which inform the professional practice of individuals and institutions[210]. Nevertheless, many museums use other words, such as 'visible[211]', 'dynamic' and 'professional' when describing their values. These are terms I would place in the realm of professionalization, business development and communication strategies, otherwise known as 'corporate values'.

6.5.4 Corporate value: communication strategy, professionalization

The last two decades have seen a rising number of businesses and organisations declaring their values publicly, often as part of communication strategies and based on the underlying assumption that values are good for business (Lencioni 2002, p. 2). These values are frequently expressed in a company's mission statement and give a basic description of the operating principles underpinning the internal conduct as well as its external relationships with customers, partners and shareholders.

Bearing in mind that Norwegian museums have been in a process of professionalization as a result of the decade-long Museum Reform, it is perhaps not surprising that many museums choose to flag value terms that align well with professional communication strategies. Nevertheless, I contend that purported values such as 'visible' or 'dynamic' are useless as moral compasses for an organization such as a museum or an archive, as they do not express any specific commitment or active positioning on the part of the institution.

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[210] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english-thesaurus/ethos. Accessed on 11.01.2018.
[211] '*Synlig*', not to be confused with the notion of 'transparent', which would fall in the category of values serving as moral compasses.

Furthermore, this kind of value-term seems to be ineffectual as an internal tool for rallying the troops, as it were, a fact already established in corporate circles. Lencioni argues that "the debasement of values is a shame, not only because the resulting cynicism poisons the cultural well but also because it wastes a great opportunity" (2002, p. 2). In other words, for institutional values to have any kind of practical impact, there ought to be a direct link between words and how they are transformed into practice. These core values need, according to Gardner, to be widely disseminated, clearly communicated and deeply embedded in the organisation, both embodied in individuals and integrated in practice;

> During training, individuals need constant exposure to these values; they need
> regularly and vividly to observe the differences between full realization,
> competent practice, mere lip service, and frank flouting of these values (2009b,
> p. 279).

6.5.5 Museums and their public

Unsurprisingly, many of the museums structure also their online presentation along the lines of 'the four f's' of WP 49:09. Eleven of the 71 museums explicitly organise their presentation in these four categories, whereas the remainder refer to them more obliquely in some form or shape. Moreover, several of the museums refer to the official definition and guidelines of the International Council for Museums (ICOM) when describing their remit. Hence, the reader (and potential museum visitor) is left in no doubt as to the formal authority ascribed to the museum.

Pursuing the perspective of the visitor a little further, we find that the information available under the 'About us' or 'About the museum' headings seems to be one-directional, without showing discernible interest in the potential visitor or the public as stakeholders in the 'collective memory' the museums claim to safeguard. Formulations such as 'we foster understanding and knowledge' or 'we enrich society with our collections' are relatively prevalent, thus further subtly, but surely, consolidating the museum's position of authority. In the words of Lynch, "[...] the museum here is firmly in the centre, displaying an almost nineteenth-century view of a

passive subject – outside the institution, in society, awaiting improvement" (2011b, pp.446-447).

Although the general tone on the websites in question is more visitor-friendly[212], the official self-descriptions[213] are nonetheless riddled with authoritative policy terms and prescribed categories, which contributes to reinforcing the uneven power balance between the institution and its public. The unidirectional aspect of the underlying self-perception of the institutions becomes all the more apparent when comparing with the UK Museum Association's vision statement, which takes explicitly into account what the museum gains from their public:

> Museums change people's lives. They enrich the lives of individuals, contribute to strong and resilient communities, and help create a fair and just society. Museums *in turn are immensely enriched by the skills and creativity of their public*[214].

This latter vision statement goes a long way in attempting to address and bring to the fore the uneven power balance between museums and their public.

6.5.6   A question of convictions and courage thereof?

For the purposes of this project, it may be fruitful to look at value-words related to the societal role of museum and archives as defined in terms of positioning the institution actively in a social justice discourse as well embracing a socially engaged institution practice. Such terms include words like 'inclusive', 'relevant', 'authentic' and 'courageous'. Although an in-depth analysis of the language used in strategy documents may yield further relevant information about the various institutions, our focus will be on the recurring notion of 'courage' as it is undoubtedly an essential quality when engaging more actively with society: it implies sticking your head above the parapet and risking failure.

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[212] They often use the pronoun 'you' when describing available activities, consequently making you feel more welcome.
[213] As earlier mentioned, these representations are to be found under the 'About…' headings or in strategic documents made available on the websites.
[214] http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1001738, my emphasis. Accessed on 29.06.2017.

6.5.7 Courage and risk

Of the 71 museum webpages, a total of 10 refer to 'courageous' ('*modig*') as one of their core values, without qualifying further how this courage is put to the test in practice. Most of the museums that list the word as a value do it in conjunction with two or three other words, to describe their institutional values:

'Courageous – Vibrant[215] – Engaging'

'Responsible – Relevant – Courageous'

'Cooperative – Visible – Courageous'

'Current – Authentic – Courageous'

'Courageous – Inclusive – Curious – Credible'

'Competent – Inclusive – Courageous'

In the annual grant applications for 2017, one of 71 museums list 'courageous' as one of their core values. Significantly, this particular institution also lists several ongoing or planned innovative and arguably courageous projects, which strengthens the impression of congruence between words and practice. Furthermore, one museum director referred to 'courageous' as being one of their core values during the interview, again a statement supported by the fact that the museum in question consistently plans and implements projects[216] which pose a very real risk of ruffling feathers in the local community.

Moving on to the survey data from ICOM Norway on societal role and museum ethics, there are two specific references to 'courage'. When asked to comment on the concepts of 'freedom of expression', 'responsibility of expression' and 'self-censorship'[217], one museum director stated that

> It is important that museums dare to take responsibility and highlight for example contested issues. […] We ought to take advantage of our freedom of expression more than we do and dare more. […] I suppose we are not brave enough and do not dare risk too much (Museum director, ICOM Norway-survey).

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[215] '*Levende*'

[216] I.e. projects on contested issues or in collaboration with marginalised groups.

[217] '*ytringsfrihet', 'ytringsansvar', 'egensensur'*.

I would argue that one potentially constructive way of thinking about values in the context of this project is to look at the risk: as no museum or archive can claim a position of neutrality or objectivity, any value an institution ascribes to itself will necessarily entail a certain degree of prioritisation and positioning, and by consequence, a certain degree of risk. Lencioni observes that formulating and sustaining strong values requires a great deal of courage,

> Indeed, an organization considering a values initiative must first come to terms with the fact that, when properly practiced, values inflict pain. They make some employees feel like outcasts. They limit an organization's strategic and operational freedom and constrain the behavior of its people. They leave executives open to heavy criticism for even minor violations. And they demand constant vigilance (2002, p. 2, my emphasis).

Hence it is not enough to provide the necessary words describing organisational ethos: it is also necessary to put it into practice. Before moving on to looking more closely at how words and actions align or not in the way museums go about their business, it may be worth considering another theme which emerged in some of the data material: that of *fear*.

6.5.8 A note on fear

As previously discussed in section 6.1.4, ICOM Norway published the results of an online survey carried out in the museum sector in 2016. The aim of the survey was to examine the ethical problems arising from museums embracing a more active societal role in the Norwegian museum sector. While its principal emphasis lay on ethical challenges met by museum staff working on contested and sensitive issues, the survey also posed some questions which are highly pertinent to this project, particularly those concerning the societal role of museums in more general. The questions were preceded by a paragraph providing contextual references to relevant policy signals. Although alluded to in a general way, qualified by marker words such as "dialogue", "foster understanding" and "a diverse society", it is highly likely that the reference concerns the three seminal policy documents previously discussed in chapter 1 (NOU 7:96, WP 22:99, WP 49:09).

Data from the survey suggests that *fear* is a factor influencing practice. The survey found that one of the main challenges associated with putting contested issues on the museum agenda, aside from lack of managerial support, commitment or skills, was 'a great fear of the reactions of others' (Pabst 2016, p. 26).

From looking at the language used in the survey material, there appears to be three main categories of fear: the fear of being perceived as non-professional, subjective and partisan, the fear of causing controversy and of how others (notably peers) might react, and the fear of being "punished" financially. One respondent stated that the main challenge appeared to be "lack of a common strategy, fear of doing challenging things, and a general attitude about being 'value neutral' and not being provocative/causing disagreement" (Pabst 2016, p. 27). Reflections such as these are similar to views emerging in some of the interviews, particularly when limits of scope of action were discussed[218].

The first category, the fear of being perceived as unprofessional, non-objective and superficial, is consistent with the importance my own interviewees ascribe to the perceived objectivity of museums. Recalling the discussion on objectivity and neutrality in section 6.2, to jeopardize the perceived objectivity of the institution appears to be for some a question of risking their professional trustworthiness. When asked about the potential scope for working on contested issues related to their particular subject matter, the project manager of the minority archive firmly stated that their aim was not to be 'activist', and to keep a measured distance from any political narratives. For me, this stance came as a bit of a surprise, given that the whole archive project is based on a documented lack of archival material related to decades of activism on behalf the rights of this minority. Moreover, the archive project is itself a product of flawless political lobbying. When asked to explain their position in more detail, however, both the former and the current project directors described a need to be accepted as a 'serious' actor in the field of archive professionals. This is again suggestive of a certain fear of being labelled 'unprofessional'. Even so, whether or to what degree such a fear is grounded in the academic ideal of providing objective science, or indeed why professionalism and activism appear to be perceived as

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[218] I.e., questions such as «in your opinion, are there limits to which subjects museums can tackle or the extent to which they can or should become socially engaged?"

incompatible, is a matter for speculation which lies beyond the scope of this particular project.

On the subject of controversial exhibition topics, when asked in the survey whether there was scope for working on contested issues within the organisation, one respondent stated that "there is a certain fear of creating offense and being too controversial. This is not just a management challenge, but is supported by a large part of the culture" (Pabst 2016 s. 22). Here the respondent makes an interesting link between management, practice and internal organisational culture, a subject which will be discussed more fully in the next chapters.

Regarding the issue of potential financial 'punishment', one head of exhibitions stated in the survey that it was necessary for the museum to be wary of expressing any opinions of its own, as it was "part of a large government-owned company" (Head of exhibitions, ICOM survey). Intrigued by this stated fear of the government, I asked one of the high-ranking, senior MoC interviewees whether the ministry had a policy or a tradition of delivering sanctions towards museum who actively engaged with public debate through exhibitions or other activities. The answer was a clear 'no': the only time the MoC would conceivably cut or withhold funding would be in cases of financial mismanagement on the part of the museum. In other words, the ministry was reluctant to throw good money after bad. Even so, the same informant explained how occasional extra earmarked funding could be dispensed to museums with projects aligning with a particular current political focus, such as during the refugee crisis of 2015[219]. Although it may be argued that extra funding is indirectly as much a tool for persuasion as funding cuts, it would seem that the MoC prefers wielding a carrot instead of a stick when it comes down to implementing policies. Fear of the national government, then, appears to be unfounded[220].

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[219] In this particular instance, the ACN was asked by the MoC to provide them with a list of high quality diversity and integration-project activities identified among the batch of that year's funding application which could be eligible for extra funding earmarked integration and refugee work.
[220] I would, however, not rule out that financial sanctions may be more of a reality on the ground, as the arm's length relations between institutions and their local funders/owners can sometimes be on the short side (cf. section 7.1.2. of this thesis)

6.6   (Non-) alignment of words and practice

When asked about the embedding of the concept of 'societal role' in the ICOM Norway-survey, few of the respondents seem to think that it had been embedded to any great degree. As one conservator and project coordinator put it: "We have a strategy for inclusion and cultural diversity, and one-off projects are being implemented, but it does not influence the organisation in any way". Another museum educator commented in the survey that

> The vision statement of the museums uses words such as 'socially engaged', 'clear', 'courageous' and 'up to date'. In the strategy plans under the heading of 'Mediation and education', it says that one must pay particular attention to subjects which reflect injustice and lack of democracy and that one must create engagement and relevance by seeking openness and debate about contemporary societal issues. Even though this has been stated, I am not sure whether or to what degree management and staff carry this with them in their busy daily work.
>
> (Museum educator, ICOM Norway-survey)

This seems to suggest that there is little or no alignment between words and practice within many organisations, an alignment which David Fleming maintains is essential for values to be embedded in organisational practice:

> Importantly, the Strategy Statement should use language that motivates staff and trustees, and effectively convinces them that our mission and values are both genuine and worthy of passionate, unconditional support (2012, p. 74, see also Nightingale and Mahal 2012).

The importance of language and wording in such documents is, as Lencioni notes, not to be underestimated, as it directly impacts the organisational culture:

> Most values statements are bland, toothless, or just plain dishonest. And far from being harmless, as some executives assume, they're often highly destructive. Empty values statements create cynical and dispirited employees, alienate customers, and undermine managerial credibility (2002, p. 1).

Intriguingly, a quick glance at the survey responses to the question regarding how strategies for implementing the societal role of museums are embedded in the organisation reveals that it is more often than not the senior management who declares the concept and strategy to be thoroughly internalised. Given the more ambiguous responses provided by lower-level staff, it should not come as a surprise if it turns out that this perception is not necessarily shared by the junior level museum practitioners, many of whom use terms such as "vaguely", "not particularly clear" and "to a very low degree" when asked about how the concept 'societal role' is expressed in strategies.

Moreover, many of these respondents, as well as my interviewees, express a desire for discussing these issues openly and frequently within the organisation: "I wish we could have a bigger and broader conversation within the organisation about how we can embrace our societal role in the best possible way" (conservator).

This impression is further strengthened by comments from some of my interviewees who felt that the pressure of designing and implementing new projects outside the daily routine, in this case collaborative projects across several regional museums, would add to the already considerable workload:

> I thought it was a really good project, but it should have been embedded more strongly among the staff. The feeling I got when I visited colleagues in the other partner museums … was that they had been given this task on top of everything else.

> (Dina, museum curator)

Research in the UK and Canada shows that where there was alignment between organisational aims, values and commitment values as well as an ongoing internal reflective practice on these issues, there was also "stronger community partnerships" (Lynch 2011b, p. 443, see also Janes 2009 and 2013a, Tlili 2008).

6.7 Contextual examples: Liverpool and Derby

Allowing for a possible discrepancy between the way the museums describe themselves and the work they do in practice[221], there is still much to be said for looking at how institutions present themselves in writing. It may therefore prove fruitful to compare the language used by many Norwegian museums in their public self-descriptions such as mission and vision statements with international museums with a known history and profile of socially engaged practice.

One example of a museum which has a long record of socially engaged practice is the National Museums Liverpool whose mission is 'To be the world's leading example of an inclusive museum service'. The museum states in no uncertain terms its values:

- We are an inclusive and democratic museum service; we aim to maximise social impact and educational benefit for all - museums change lives.
- We believe that museums are fundamentally educational in purpose.
- We believe that museums are places for ideas and dialogue that use collections to inspire people; we do not shy away from controversy.
- We believe in the power of museums to help promote good and active citizenship, and to act as agents of social change: we believe in the concept of, and campaign for, social justice.
- We believe in the importance of sustainable development and we have a role to play in the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment.
- We believe in seeking out new opportunities and innovative ways of working, so as to keep our public offer fresh, relevant and challenging.[222]

The consistent use of the rhetorical marker 'we believe' serves to strengthen the impression that these values are thoroughly embedded in the organisation: the museum is clearly and publicly positioned. Furthermore, the museum signals its

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[221] The ACN have ongoing and recurring discussion about the challenge of underreporting: although they know for a fact that certain museums are doing innovative work in fields such as diversity, this work is not reflected in the annual reports to the governing/funding bodies.
[222] http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about/corporate/strategic-plan/. Accessed on 23.06.2016.

awareness of and attitude to risk by stating that "we do not shy away from controversy", which is arguably a more distinct and proactive statement than just declaring to be 'courageous'.

Another example is Derby museums in the UK, whose stated purpose is "to inspire people of all backgrounds and interests to become part of world-class creativity, innovation and making[223]". Furthermore, the museum designs its educational programmes and projects "to make connections *between people and place, past, present and future* – inspiring new ideas and innovative ways of working" (ibid, my emphasis). The most noticeable difference to the Norwegian institutions is the way people are put at the very centre of the museum's work: the main focus is on people, not on objects. Moreover, this vision seems to be thoroughly embedded within the organisation: on the two occasions I visited to learn more about the museum's work in practice, I came across staff and volunteers brimming with enthusiasm for their work at the museum and explicitly referring to the museum's vision and ethos. As director Tony Butler explained, "when I came in [as director] we did quite a lot of work around the organisational development, so I got a coach in to work with us, to look at our vision and core values", the aim being to foster an organisational culture where a relationship of co-production with the visitors is standard (Butler 2016).

6.8 Concluding remarks

There are several key features which emerge from the preceding analysis of the way the societal role of museums is perceived in Norway. Firstly, the notion of 'societal role' ('*samfunnsrolle*') as applied in various key policy documents lends itself to a wide range of interpretations by stakeholders and agents. None of these interpretations, however, refers to values or parameters *outside* of cultural policy documents: they appear to operate within a particular self-referential paradigm, largely driven by a continuous cycle of annual funding applications, reporting and policy signals.

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[223] http://www.derbymuseums.org/about-derby-museums/. Accessed on 23.06.2016. Note the underlying participatory flavour to the word "making".

Secondly, the findings suggest that concepts such as power and values/ethos, elements which are arguably central to a museum's self-image and raison d'être, are not part of the current interpretations of the institutions' societal role. Moreover, it appears that where there is a lack of alignment between different interpretations of 'societal role' as well as between words[224] and practice across the organisation, there is also a lack of organisational embedment and thus a lack of a cohesive and operational strategy for socially engaged practice.

Lastly, the issue of fear has emerged as a factor influencing museum practice. In particular, the fear of being perceived as non-professional, subjective and partisan, the fear of causing controversy and of how others (notably peers) might react, and the fear of being "punished" financially. Real or imagined, these fears seem to constitute a deterrent to museums engaging in socially engaged work.

As the cases of Liverpool and Derby show, the perceptions of what a museum *is* or *should be* appear to be radically different from what seems to be the case in the Norwegian context, which in turn seems to be reflected in the way the organisations are developed and run. In short, there emerges a clear link between the way these institutions see themselves (ideology) and how they go about their daily business (organisation/practice). This brings us to the areas of the field where ideology and organisation intersect: the way museums and archives perceive themselves and their role in the world will conceivably impact the way they organise themselves around the idea of who they are. Not only that, the way external stakeholders view the role of such institutions are also likely to affect the latter's practice.

Following this train of thought, the ensuing chapter will move from the sphere of ideas, power and values to the world of practical implementation. The subsequent analysis and discussion will examine in further detail the way museums and archives organise themselves around the idea of who they are - and who they purportedly exist to serve.

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[224] Strategy documents, action plans etc.

Chapter 7 Museums as organisations - project to practice

Before proceeding, it may be worthwhile to recall the earlier discussion[225] of the moral responsibility of civil society institutions such as museums and archives to acknowledge their part in the collective responsibility for creating and sustaining a society which allow people to live decent lives. Drawing on theoretical perspectives ranging from human rights legislation to moral philosophy, the case was made for museums and archives, as institutions imbued with a great deal of public trust and legitimacy, to provide physical space for participation, dialogue and critical thinking (see also Gaither 1992, p. 58, Sandell 2002 and 2017).

Moreover, the discussion has shown that policy signals and funding measures over the past two decades have underscored the need for museums and archives to take on a more active societal role. Even so, the findings discussed in chapter 6 suggest that the notions of 'societal role' and 'societal remit' hold a range of different meanings for different agents in the field. By extension, and perhaps more fundamentally, there appears to be a variety of views on what – and who – a museum is purportedly for. The question which then arises is whether and how museums and archives attempt to incorporate these perspectives into their professional ethos and praxis: how is a particular idea of the societal role of the museum reflected in practice?

Looking at museums as complex organisations puts the interplay between values, power, structure and culture within and around them into sharp focus. A range of stakeholders, from funders and policymakers to individual museum staff, contribute to the shaping of organisational structure, culture and practice. This chapter explores in more detail how the informants perceive these different influences and the impact they seem to have on their professional practice and scope for action ('*handlingsrom*').

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[225] Cf. chapter 3 of this thesis.

7.1 External stakeholders

The ensuing sections take a closer look at a range of external stakeholders whose influence seems to have some bearing on the organisation's practice, before looking at the stakeholders within the organisation

With the exception of one informant, speaking from her experience as a former director, none of the primary informants perceived the board of directors or trustees to be overly focused on or unduly concerned with the daily work of the museum. Most felt that it depended on the individual members who served on the board at any one time, but that things currently seemed to flow smoothly.

Even so, one museum director had felt some measure of pressure from the chairperson of the board, *directly* in a case where the latter disagreed strongly with the contents of an exhibition and *indirectly* on another occasion, where the municipal chief executive expressed his displeasure with the museum by contacting the chairperson of the board[226].

Only one of the museums had a very active volunteer association, consisting of members of the local community who regularly met and organised different activities in and around the museum, ranging from sweeping up leaves from the grounds to organising fundraising events. The head of the association had previously been a board member, and she and the current board of the association had comprehensive knowledge of and interest in museums and museum work. The director commented on this as being a strength and resource for the museum, not least as the current board of directors of the museum itself did not include any museum professionals. Furthermore, the board of the volunteer association (VA) had a representative from the museum staff, currently the director.

7.1.1 The visitors

Based on the interviews and statistics, visitors to the two sample museums can roughly be divided into three groups: tourists (international and Norwegian), school children and local people with a specific interest in the museum (i.e. members of volunteer associations and historical societies). As a stakeholder group, however, visitors seem

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[226] Cf. 7.1.2.

to have little or no influence on the museum's work[227]. There appears to be little or no substantial qualitative knowledge about visitors (and non-visitors) and who they are, except from the quantitative data that is forwarded to the ACN for statistical purposes. Moreover, none of the museums seem to prioritise systematic visitor studies, audience development or research into learning in museums[228]. This resonates with the larger picture of the museum sector: based on the annual reports from museums spanning the last five years, fewer than a dozen museums mention having conducted visitor studies.

In general, school children seem to be the one visitor group which is consistently taken into account when programming. This may be a result of a combination of unequivocal policy signals over the past fifteen years, as well as the emergence of the Cultural Rucksack[229] as the major and sometimes sole provider of regular funding for cultural projects for children and young people. In one of the institutions, two of the museum professionals had a special competence in and focus on education, pedagogy, mediation/interpretation[230] and learning. In January 2014 they ran an in-house workshop on the Teaching for Understanding-methodology[231] in order to develop a collective understanding of the methodology as a potentially useful tool in the work with the new permanent exhibition being planned. Both institutions developed and ran systematic school programming, often in connection with the national Cultural Rucksack-programme.

Nevertheless, when asked about their relationship to the local community, one interviewee commented that people would often ask what the museum actually did during the winter. Another recalled how he would sometimes engage in the following kind of dialogue when meeting people in town: "great stuff you're doing up at the museum these days!" "Glad to hear it. So have you been there?" "No".

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[227] Cf. section 5.5.1 of this thesis.
[228] Possibly reflecting the current lack of academic focus. As far as I have been able to determine, none of the academic institutions are doing systematic research into museum visitors as such.
[229] Cf. note 85 for a description of the programme.
[230] As there is no English term accurately reflecting the Norwegian '*formidling*', I use the term 'mediation' to broadly encompass the work being done in museums to interpret, disseminate, communicate and educate the huddled masses about the museum's work.
[231] TfU is a framework for 'Designing curriculum, instruction, and assessment that nurtures deep and lasting understanding for students', according to Harvard Graduate School of Education. See more at: http://www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/teaching-for-understanding. Accessed om 01.06.2017.

Some of the staff members expressed a desire to develop activities and involve local communities to a larger degree. Others expressed frustration that they could not harness the volunteer resources more systematically, due to the museum's lack of resources to provide an adequate follow-up of such collaboration. In general, though, none of the sample institutions appeared to actively engage with their local communities to any great degree.

7.1.2   Local government

Most museums receive part of their funding from municipal and county authorities. In one instance, the museum felt quite a significant pressure from the municipal chief executive, who made what they felt were almost threatening statements about the museum's role and its limits. The source of the conflict was an opinion piece one of the senior conservators had published in the local newspaper concerning the proposed demolition of one of the oldest school buildings of its kind in the area. In the article, the conservator, arguing from a professional point of view, criticised local government for not taking the preservation of local cultural heritage seriously into consideration. When asked for a comment by the newspaper, the response from the municipal chief executive was swift and clear: the museum was not to meddle in things that did not concern it: "[The conservator] should become a politician if he wants to meddle in such things. He should be careful. As a staff member of the museum, he is also indirectly employed by the municipality, which means he should respect where the power lies"[232].

The municipal chief executive then proceeded to send an e-mail to the museum asking them to keep out of local politics, and contacted the chair of the board, who in turn summoned the director to a meeting which ended in the museum director being pressured to write an e-mail to the municipal chief executive to apologise. Despite the municipal chief executive's action and attitude having been criticised as breach of freedom of speech by both the National Press Union and the Municipal Auditor, he has

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[232] The quote was given to me by the museum director in question. As this is still a delicate matter for the people involved, I have omitted to include the link to the newspaper article to ensure that anonymity remains intact.

continued to exert pressure on the museum, attempting to further limit their freedom of expression and elbow room.

This case serves to illustrate the sometimes challenging local waters museums must navigate in their daily practice as well as throwing sharply into focus the at times not so subtle power relations the institution is a part of. In this case, the museum director was willing to take on this challenge to defend and uphold the professional and ethical integrity of his museum:

> Hence it is in our daily work – around contemporary issues and the resources allocated to our sector - that I feel the unpleasantness seeping into the corridors of the museum. Because not everyone can handle the fact that our institutions move into the arena of cultural politics and into the public sphere. But that's also why we need to continue to do so. We are not going to remain safe commentators of known and unknown cultural heritage subjects. We must be a professional, relevant and cultural political force – for our contemporary society and for our future. So maybe we need to grow a thicker skin, all of us, and have the courage to ask questions about our own time? About aspects of everyday life we don't like or don't understand. This means we cannot shield ourselves from utterances, no matter how stupid they may be, but must counter them with sharp and good arguments and a clear public dialogue. It can sometimes be deeply unpleasant, but it is worth it.
>
> (Krister, museum director)

Perhaps the most revealing insight which this incident provides, is that there exist differing, and even conflicting perceptions of the societal role of a museum, depending on the vantage point in the field. Where the museum felt it necessary and timely to publicly provide professional input to the local planning process, the municipal chief executive saw it as unwarranted meddling in politics and hence outside what he deemed to be the museum's remit.

7.1.3   National funding bodies and policymakers

When asked how they perceived their relation to the main funder and policymakers such as the Directorate for Cultural Heritage (DCH), Arts Council Norway (ACN) and the

different ministries, most of the museum professionals expressed no feeling of being 'managed' or asked to perform tasks they did not want to do. In their opinion, the guidelines and annual instructions stated in the grant letter were sufficiently vague to allow them to define their work within the government remit. Although my presence in the room as a perceived representative of one of the main funding bodies may have coloured the responses, I would nonetheless argue that the interviewees would conceivably give the same responses to a researcher with no ties to the ACN, since they consistently referred to policy documents and signals from the MoC when describing their remit and societal role. This occurred not only during the interviews but also in external strategy documents underpinning the organisations' work as well as on websites.

Having looked at some of the main external factors influencing the daily work of museums, it is time to examine internal stakeholders in further detail from the vantage point of the museum professionals.

7.2 Internal stakeholders and hierarchies

Many of the informants use the term 'profession' or 'professional' (*'fagkompetanse'*, *'fagbakgrunn', 'fag/faglig'*, cf. German *'Fach/'fachlich'*) when referring to their own specialist subjects and, conversely, when describing internal areas of potential conflicts of interest with other sections, such as marketing, communication or the front of house staff. These other areas were evidently not regarded by the informants as 'professional' in the same way as more traditional museum subjects. In one instance, an archaeologist stressed the need for professional authenticity and protection as more important than making the cultural heritage accessible to paying visitors, a subject which seemed to recurrently generate somewhat heated discussions across sections.

Furthermore, some informants commented on the divide between the staff who work outside in the museum grounds and the ones who work inside behind desks, or "behind the brass line"[233], as one informant jokingly put it.

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[233] The brass line refers to a physical architectural feature of the museum administration building: a brass floor list traditionally marked the divide between the offices and the rest of the visitor centre, and

The perceived differences in status and position, however, seem to be related to the organisational culture as such. One of the museums appeared to have a culture of training staff to multitask: if you are in charge of a project, then you need to engage in all aspects of running it, which means close collaboration with other colleagues at all stages. Other museum professionals referred to having many 'potato workers'[234] in museums in general as a problem, since it was perceived as a signal that academic achievements are not taken seriously enough. This is suggestive of the value given academic capital within the institutions and the wider field of museum practice, a subject which will be explored in further depth later on.

7.2.1   Negotiations and struggles for professional territory

Furthermore, there seem to be differing perceptions as to who exerts the strongest influence within the organisation. One museum professional commented that in cases of conflicting professional interests, such as the need for authenticity vs. the need for visibility/access regarding cultural heritage, "money always wins", indicating that marketing and communication needs will nearly always carry the argument.

Moreover, there also appears to be divergent perceptions of who has power, not only between sections with different organisational areas of responsibilities (e.g. marketing vs. conservation), but also across sections with different professional areas of responsibility (e.g. contemporary history vs. archaeology). In the latter case, one informant explained that the other section exerted more influence and held a higher status internally because they had access to independent, earmarked and relatively reliable project funding from another ministry. In her opinion, the official world heritage UNESCO remit of this particular section also contributed to its (perceived) higher status:

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at one point became a metaphor describing your position in the organisation: hence the office workers were 'behind the brass line'.

[234] As the common potato has been a versatile and affordable staple in Norwegian food culture for centuries, the popular notion of 'potato worker' (*potetarbeider*) refers to someone who are multi-skilled and able to perform a range of different tasks within a workplace. The notion can, however, also be perceived in terms of someone being a 'jack of all trades, master of none'.

It is a bit difficult, we are not as self-evident in our usefulness, I think, as the [other section] is because they have the projects they manage, they document, they mediate in different ways the [immovable heritage], it is in many ways so tangible … and then you have the World Heritage-thing, which gives it an extra status.

(Greta, museum curator)

A great many of the publicly funded museums have during the past decade or so undergone more or less comprehensive organisational restructuring as a result of the national Museum Reform[235]. Most institutions moved from a situation where they had been part of the regional administrative structure such as county or municipality, to becoming independent legal entities, such as trusts[236].

In this case, one of the institutions had recently gone through a restructuring which had changed the organisational structure from what the informants called a 'flat structure' where everyone had to a certain extent access to the director, to a more hierarchical structure consisting of sections, each with a section manager reporting to the director. Some perceived this change as a complicating factor, making it harder to make yourself heard in the decision-making process, whereas others found the new structure more efficient and egalitarian than the old one, which seemed to some to favour individual relations to a larger degree. Dina, one of the younger curators, described the old model thus: "the same people would always be seen and heard, it depended on who you knew - the 'face factor' ('*trynefaktor*')".

Most of the informants, however, commented that as the structure was relatively new, it needed some further tweaking and adjusting for it to function optimally, for example regarding the flow of information. Many informants also described the current lack of internal arenas for exchanging ideas as a constant challenge.

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[235] *Museumsreformen*, cf. section 1.1.
[236] Although the board of trustees often consists of representatives of the regional authorities.

7.3 Academic capital and professional identities

There seems to emerge a pattern across the empirical material where academic background, competence and status play a significant role in the way the informants perceive their workplace and their professional position in the museum-as-a-subfield. Consequently, I would argue that the concept of 'academic capital', in the sense 'academic education, training and skills' can work as a useful analytical tool in the subsequent analysis of the empirical material. Before proceeding, however, it may be useful to briefly recall the significance of the term 'capital' in the context of in Bourdieu's theory of practice: the tangible and intangible values, resources or assets perceived as valuable to different social groups (cultural, social, economic and educational/academic capital) which influence the struggle for positions among the agents within the field (Wacquant 1989, p. 40, see also chapter 4 of this thesis).

Moreover, since the concept of habitus[237] is closely linked to that of capital, I have for practical purposes chosen to limit the empirical focus to what I have called academic habitus, since the educational background (tertiary and higher) of the informants seem to be highly significant to their choice of profession in the museum sector[238]. Which 'professions' are for example perceived to be more influential and how do agents position themselves to achieve recognition or a higher status internally? Does academic capital constitute a more valuable 'currency' when negotiating for position[239]? Furthermore, are there differences in the perceived value of the different academic specialist subjects? Or even between academic skills and practical craftsmanship? If so, is this difference in status reflected in the distribution of resources within the organisation, either in the form of allocated project funding or professional elbow room for the individual staff member?

The subsequent sections pursue three main themes: the first and second being the significance and value of professional identity and academic habitus and capital

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[237] Cf. section 4.3.2.

[238] A comprehensive, in-depth, complete Bourdieusian immersion into the lives and practices of the informants lies beyond the realistic and practical scope of the present project. All the same, it is conceivable that an analysis of the informants' upbringing and family culture may yield interesting information about their current professional practice and identity.

[239] I deliberately use the metaphor 'currency' together with 'capital', as the former signals a certain degree of agency, hence illustrating the implicit processes whereby the different agents negotiate and struggle for position within the organisation.

within the field. The third is concerned with external factors which may influence and shape the perception of the first two: museum policy, cultural policy and education.

7.3.1 'Professional identity'

Although the term is used in a variety of ways, I have found Jonathan Paquette's definition of 'professional identity' as "most work-based subjectivities"[240] useful in the context of the present research project. In Paquette's sense, professional identity "is defined by the disciplinary mechanisms and power struggles that enable the creation of specific institutional identities" (2012a, p. 8), hence drawing attention to another aspect of the dynamics of power potentially at play within the institutions, dynamics which conceivably contribute to shaping its practice.

Moreover, he argues, professional identities are not only performed, experienced and narrated, "they also result from a complex social and political process" (ibid p. 12), a point which will be discussed later in this chapter regarding potential external factors shaping the institutional dynamics.

As previously mentioned, one specific term which seems to be recurring in the interviews is 'professional', most often referring to a combination of staff members' academic skills and their specialist remit and area of responsibility within the museum.

When referring to 'professional competence' ('*fagkompetanse*') in the context of their specific workplace, the informants would describe academic subjects typically including archaeology, anthropology, ethnology, history, art history, heritage studies and museology. The definition in the Oxford dictionaries describes 'professional' as synonym for terms like 'white-collar, executive, non-manual, salaried, non-amateur, full-time'[241], something which arguably fits well within the paradigm of academic capital. Even so, one informant pointed out that in her experience, the heritage practitioners and craftspeople she collaborated with were distinctly unimpressed by her academic credentials. According to her, their attitude was that "anyone can read a book. Not everyone can craft a traditional [object]" (Ida).

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[240] Paquette makes "no discrimination between professional identity and occupational or work-identity" (2012a, p.3).
[241] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/professional. Accessed on 07.01.2016. For a comprehensive analysis of how the distinction between professionals and amateurs came to be perceived as one of quality, see Bourdieu (2015).

In some cases, the term apparently serves to exclude other competencies within the organisation, such as marketing, finance or communication, or even to draw a line between paid, trained, full-time staff and volunteers. In the latter case, the term 'professional' ('*profesjonell*') is used in the sense of being highly skilled or competent, or 'non-amateur'.

Moreover, the term is frequently and similarly used in key political documents central to the institutions, such as White paper 49[242]. Other terms which are often used in connection with 'professional' is 'research' ('*forskning*') and knowledge production ('*kunnskapsproduksjon*'), both of which in the context of practice theory brings the notion of 'academic capital' to mind (Bourdieu 1992). It is therefore reasonable to assume that these concepts may have a certain bearing on the museum practice and the inner dynamics of the institution, as well as on the staff's perception of professional identity (Paquette 2012).

7.3.2 Academic habitus and career paths

All the informants had completed educational degrees on a university or university college level. Three of the informants had an educational background in economics, whereas the rest had specialised in subjects such as archaeology, social anthropology, history, ethnology, Nordic languages, pedagogy and art history (cf. appendix 1).

Although the majority of the informants had pursued their education in the humanities, they are quite conceivably grounded in slightly different epistemological traditions and hence have differing views on the role of the museum in society. Such a potential heterogeneity of outlooks undoubtedly provides a backdrop pertinent to the discussion on the value of academic capital within an institution. As O'Neill points out, "it seems that museums, both in their own terms and in terms of their place in society, are fragmented and not wholly coherent institutions" (2006, p. 98, see also Hein 2000, pp. x-xi).

For purposes of clarity and simplification, I will in what follows refer to staff with museum-related subjects in their educational background[243] as 'museum

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[242] In fact, the term 'fag-' and its derivatives are used more than 200 times in many different ways and contexts throughout the document (WP 49:09).
[243] Subject such as archaeology, anthropology, ethnology, history, art history, pedagogy etc.

professionals' to distinguish them from staff with other professional skills and tasks, such as marketing, communication, management or economics.

The informants seem to have pursued different career pathways towards their current employment in or related to museums. By and large, there appears to be mainly two types of career paths the museum professionals have followed. One discernible type can be described as an iterative process, typically starting with volunteering. Some of the older[244] informants seem to have ended up in their current positions as a result of such a process, starting as volunteers at the museum and working their way in and out of different kinds of jobs before securing full-time senior positions as professionals. A few went on to hold positions as senior advisors on museum matters in the MoC or the ACN. Also, these informants do not refer to the term 'profession' as often as the younger members of staff. A possible reason for this may be that they are nearing the retirement age and hence are less concerned about future career choices and the value of academic capital.

The other kind of career path referred to by the informants seems to be a more focused, steady ascent. Many of the younger informants specifically chose museum subjects with a professional career in museums in mind. One such informant referred to her career path as a 'track' ('*løype*') where "you start at the low-paid bottom and work your way up", describing the 'bottom' as tasks and responsibilities typically associated with the front-of-house activities such as selling tickets, guiding tourists or manning the museum shop. She went on to explain that she had worked hard to obtain the status as 'authorised conservator' in her current position, something she felt was necessary in order not only to secure a higher income, but also to be taken seriously as a museum professional: "I had to work hard to obtain the title of 'authorised conservator' with the corresponding salary". It is conceivable that this may reflect a certain degree of 'ranking' of prestige within the sector.

It may be worth considering, however, whether these two paths reflect a broader generational shift, with an increasing specialization of jobs and a growing pressure towards requiring formal education and academic credentials for most jobs (cf. Heen & Salomonsen 2013, p. 12).

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[244] 60+ years.

7.3.3   Increasing expectations of academic merit

Many of the younger staff with academic backgrounds in museum subjects stressed the need for more time for research in their daily work[245]. This perceived lack of time echoes findings in previous research, where museums as places of employment do not necessarily provide optimal conditions for the painstaking and uninterrupted kind of work that research requires (Heen & Salomonsen 2013, p. 12). One of the directors, however, clearly saw the need to strengthen the museum's research and development competence, such as augmenting the number of staff with Ph.D.[246], and was drawing up a strategic plan accommodating this need. This initiative was mentioned by several of the other informants, who saw it as an extremely important organisational ambition.

Moreover, the other sample museum states in its long term strategic plan that one of the goals is to increase from two to four the number of staff with 'authorised conservator'- status ('*konservator/førstekonservator NMF*'), a formal authorisation given by the Norwegian Museum Association based on OECD's guidelines for research and development[247].

Even so, it generally appears to be difficult for museums to implement in practice the ambition to carry out research during working hours: "time is spent on all sorts of other things. Those who have ambitions to do research will have to take it home", as one museum professional put it[248].

On the whole, there seems to be a prevalent attitude that higher academic education plays a significant role in the internal dynamics of the organisation. Greta, a curator with more than two decades of professional museum experience, expressed it thus: "I felt I was only taken seriously once I completed my master's degree two years ago … nobody can now claim that I don't have the necessary competence". Even

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[245] This is concurrent with findings in a report carried out by the Norwegian Association of Researchers in 2007: http://museumsforbundet.no/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2007-5_FoU-museum.pdf. Accessed on 13.02.2016.

[246] Either through recruitment or through in-service competence-building. At the time of writing, the museum has managed to obtain two public sector PhD-grants from the Research Council.

[247] http://museumsforbundet.no/?page_id=139, cf. also 7.4.1. Accessed on 11.01.2018.

[248] http://www.forskerforum.no/wip4/planar-berre-til-pynt/d.epl?id=1245246. Accessed on 11.01.2018.

allowing for the subjective nature of this point of view, it provides a glimpse of how internal culture is perceived and experienced.

Another informant, Ida, commented that she had started at the lowest level, selling tickets and being a summer tourist guide before managing to become an authorised conservator. This may quite possibly reflect the current degree of 'ranking' of prestige within the sector[249].

7.4 External factors affecting academic capital

As the preceding paragraphs have shown, the university sector ('*akademia*') appears to exert a surprisingly significant, if indirect, influence on professional identities and practice within institutions. Given this prestige ascribed to academic merit, the following paragraphs examine more closely three possible external factors which appear to further compound the perceived authority and hence value of academic capital, namely museum policy (NMA), cultural policy (MoC, ACN), and education policy (the university sector and aspects of the general discourse on the value of academic qualifications).

7.4.1 Museum policy

The first of these factors concerns the sector's own policymaker: The Norwegian Museum Association ('*Norges Museumsforbund*'). The NMA was in its present form formed in 1996 although the organisation can trace its roots back to 1918. By the end of 2016 it had a total of 240 members, of which 132 were museums, 8 were associated members[250] and 100 were individuals. The NMA is currently organised in ten professional sub-sections ('*fagseksjoner*'), including a Section for research/('*seksjon for forsknng*') which was created during the NMA's Annual Meeting in September 2014[251].

The NMA is an independent, non-governmental[252] and non-profit member organisation whose goal is to work on behalf of its members to 'strengthen and develop museums' position in society and promote their interests vis-à-vis public

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[249] cf. Davis 2008, pp. 10-11, see also Hooper-Greenhill 1992 and Paquette 2012.
[250] Mainly counties.
[251] *Museumforbundet og dets fagseksjoner:* http://museumsforbundet.no/?page_id=104
[252] The NMA does, however, receive the lion's share of its funding from the MoC/ACN.

authorities and society in general. Moreover, its remit includes facilitating contact and collaboration between museums, public authorities and organisations, both in Norway and abroad. Last, but not least, the NMA works to enable museums to improve and develop their competence. It is the latter, competence-building part of their remit which is of particular interest in this context, consisting of three main strategic elements: an accreditation system, two university training courses and a journal for academic publishing.

- **Accreditation scheme**

The first of these three strategic features is the formal accreditation 'Authorised conservator' ('*Autorisert konservator*'), given by the Norwegian Museum Association to eligible applicants[253]. The system was established in 1999 and is based on OECD's guidelines for research and development, and defines the latter as 'creative work systematically undertaken to gain knowledge – including knowledge about human beings, culture and society – and using this knowledge in new ways'. Several of the informants mention this accreditation as a valuable career asset, not only when negotiating salary, but also with future career choices in mind. One informant explained that she had obtained the accreditation because she thought "it might be useful to have later", 'useful' conceivably referring to future career choices.

Moreover, the fact that the statistics reflect a rise in numbers of accredited conservators employed in museums serves to underline the value ascribed to the system by the museum professionals.

- **Training courses and further education for museum professionals**

The second strategic element consists of a professional training course for museum research, developed by the NMA in collaboration with the University of Bergen and launched in 2015. The course was subsequently evaluated and declared a success, and work is currently being done to further develop and improve it. Furthermore, a new course on publishing in professional peer-reviewed museum journals was launched in

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[253] http://museumsforbundet.no/?page_id=139. Accessed on 11.01.2016.

2016, and the NMA actively encourages its members to complete the two courses, as well as to consider pursuing their education up to Ph.D.-level[254].

- **New peer-reviewed journal**

The third feature of the NMA's strategy to strengthen and develop competence in the museum sector is *Norsk museumstidsskrift*[255], a peer-reviewed journal for museum professionals established in 2015. The journal aims to publish peer-reviewed research from Norwegian museums, from cultural and natural history to art and art history.

Moreover, the journal will publish research from universities and university colleges on a range of subjects such as museology, art history, cultural history, archaeology, anthropology, history, conservation, as well as other topics of interest to the museum sector.

7.4.2 Cultural policy

Moving on from museum policy, the sections which follow take a closer look at cultural policy, the second external factor which may have a bearing on the value and impact of academic capital and currency in the constitution of professional practices and identities. Cultural policy as formulated by governmental bodies and agencies is a factor which arguably exerts both symbolic and economic power on the institutions. Moreover, research shows that cultural policy also exerts influence on the individual professionals within the institutions:

> Cultural policy is experienced by arts and culture professionals who use its
> discursive material, symbolism, normativity and referentials for identity
> construction. Cultural policy is experienced and used in identification processes
> (Paquette 2012a, p. 18).

In the context of this project, it is by and large the Ministry of Culture and Arts Council Norway which play a role in developing and implementing policies.

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[254] http://museumsforbundet.no/?page_id=4213. Accessed on 11.01. 2016.
[255] Norwegian Museum Journal: https://www.forskerforbundet.no/nyheter/2015/norsk-museumsfaglig-forskningstidsskrift-etablert/. Accessed on 08.01 2015.

7.4.2.1 White paper 49:09 and 'the 4 f's'

As previously mentioned, there are several ways in which the MoC and ACN exert influence over the museum sector. In 2015, there were a total of 71 museums[256] receiving annual grant-in-aid funding from the MoC. Consequently, all recipients report back to the Arts Council/Ministry of Culture on everything from visitor and staff numbers to number of objects or activities related to diversity and inclusion. These annual reports and statistics form the basis of ACN's analysis of the sector, which in turn informs the MoC's allocation of grant-in-aid funding as well as their policy development.

Furthermore, these reports, together with grant letters and other official policy documents such as white and green papers, are part of the MoC and the ACN's channels for signalling current policies. Moreover, Arts Council Norway has for a number of years issued annual calls for applications for short-term funding earmarked museums and archives[257]. As mentioned in chapter 1, one particular document which seems to play a significant role within the institutional culture, is the *St. mld. 49 (2008-2009) Framtidas museum* (WP 49:09), a white paper commissioned by the MoC to describe current status and future challenges of the museum sector. The document divides the main remit of museums into four areas: '*forvaltning'* (stewardship), '*forskning*' (research), '*formidling*' (mediation/interpretation) and '*fornying*' (renewal). These areas have subsequently become known as 'the four f's', and most informants refer to them when they describe their remit and responsibilities, not least when asked about their perception of the societal role of museums. Moreover, both sample museums which are part of the present research project formulate and structure their long-term strategy documents along the lines of 'the four f's'.

Furthermore, as both the grant-in-aid letters and the template for the annual report also structurally align with 'the four f's'[258], it is not unreasonable to conclude that the MoC-funded museums have incorporated these four concepts into their

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[256] https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/culture-sports-and-non-profit-work/Archives-libraries-and-museums/innsiktsartikler/museum-og-kulturvern/id2001923/. Accessed on 08.01.2018.
[257] cf. section 1.2. of this thesis.
[258] In 2017, the MoC reporting template changed to a generic form focusing primarily on financial data and stated goals. Consequently, the quality of the reporting also changed and 'the four f's' became less prevalent.

internal culture and practice. By contrast, and perhaps somewhat surprisingly, one senior advisor from the MoC, now retired, who had been involved in cultural policy development since the early 90's, described the concept of 'the four f's' as disastrous to the development of the museum sector:

> The categories are virtually meaningless and of little operational worth since they can be interpreted in the vaguest of ways. They made the museums lazy and disinclined to think and analyse for themselves who they are and what they want to be[259].
>
> (Øyvind, retired senior advisor, MoC)

He went on to lament what he called the "professional servility" of museums, where they "sit around and wait for instructions" from the policymakers and funding bodies.

A recurring theme in White paper 49 is what has been described as the 'professionalisation' ('*profesjonalisering*') of museums. The term seems to refer mostly to administrative and financial aspects of the institutions and not to the more traditional tasks related to the stewardship of objects. In one instance, several informants remarked that no one on the current board of directors had what they called 'museum professional competence' ('*museumsfaglig kompetanse*'), but rather what they called 'professional board expertise' ('*profesjonell styrekompetanse*'), such as law, economics and management. This lack of museum competence did not however seem to concern the staff in any significant ways, as their current experience is that the board perceives and respects them as museum professionals in charge of the core activities of the museum.

Furthermore, one informant in a senior position within the ACN points out the importance of implementing a policy for research and development: "because that's what the Ministry of Culture has asked us to do and in a way it's what makes us progress" (Ulrik).

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[259] This specific informant was actively involved in the developing of a green paper published in 1996 on the museums as dialogue institutions, a document regarded by some museum professionals as seminal in the attempt to bring about a broader discussion and reflection on the societal role and significance of museums (cf. NOU 1996: 7 *Mangfald, minne, møtestad*. Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet. Oslo, ch. 5).

Figure 9: The front page of WP 49.

Another informant, a conservator and former director with extensive experience from the museum sector, recalls how different the working conditions were before the MoC's Museum Reform was implemented (2002 – 2012). Some fifteen years earlier

she had been employed by the municipality and tasked with building a museum from the ground up. Although resources were scarce, the professional freedom and scope for action was great: with only a building and almost no objects or photographs and a total of two full time staff, the museum was completed in as little as two years. She recalled how the working philosophy was based on participation from a great many agents, including builders, electricians, exhibition designers and curators:

> We did not sit down and theorize, but we had participation on every level in the construction of the museum. And that is something I feel was very common before, if you see what I mean? If you were to get stuff done, you needed to involve lots of people. […] The whole process was a lot more hands-on all the way, to reference groups and to interviews with people … involving people in lots of little ways all the time to get their views and opinions and participation throughout the whole process. We could never have done it without them. Of course it could be disruptive sometimes, as they could have opinions that differed from what we wanted to do, but it was a truly participatory process that was never documented in writing.
>
> (Anja, museum conservator and former director)

When asked why she thought this had changed over the years, she commented somewhat drily that "it may be because we have started looking so much at ourselves that it paralyses the way we do things". She went on to explain that based on her experiences as a former director at several different museums both before and after the Museum Reform, the running of a museum became a very different thing as museums became separate legal and organisational entities as a result of the reform. Before the reform, many museums had been part of the counties or municipalities, allowing them to draw on the administrative and financial structures of their owners.

Consequently, this left them free to concentrate on the remit specific to their museum, such as collections, research and exhibitions. After the reform, she felt that her time as a director was spent much less on museum professional issues than on administration, communication and fundraising. She described her last period as director after the reform this way:

We seem to be dangling in all the strings that are attached [from ministries, directorates, counties and municipalities] and I felt inadequate because I'm don't have a background in law or economy. And at the same time feeling responsible for ensuring [museum]-professional discussions among the staff and make them cooperate. It ended up being an endless hassle.

(Anja, museum conservator and former director)

In her opinion, the structural changes brought about as a result of the museum reform has made it necessary for museum directors to be more 'professional', i.e. to have specialist competence in management.

These experiences of moving away from a hands-on, participatory approach towards a more ostensibly professionalised way of running a museum appears to be paralleled in other countries. Moreover, there also seems to be international evidence to suggest that this discourse on 'professionalization' of the museum sector is part of a larger trend where civil society[260] is the object of a general professionalization.

Research from Sweden shows that even though "popular movement organizations are still in many ways dominant in Sweden, a trend towards a professionalization of civil society is clearly visible" (Harding 2012, p. 97). Harding goes on to note that there seems to have been an "influx of models and concepts from both business and public administration" in both civil society and the arts-and-culture sector over the past decade or so (ibid 2012, p. 98).

In the same vein and from a Canadian vantage point, Susan Ashley notes how a more formalized control of museum communication seems to have emerged "under the business/managerial/professionalized model of management with the perceived need to plan and measure a museum's performance" (Ashley 2012, p. 117, see also Janes 2009). Such a corporatized model, Ashley argues, combined with a reluctance to relinquish control and unwillingness to explore the potential in participatory practice "has hindered the implementation of more dialogic processes" (2012, p. 117).

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[260] In this context I refer to Tobias Harding's useful definition of civil society as "consisting of activities and organizations that are non-governmental in the sense that they are not owned by the government (although they may or may not be subsidized by it), non-profit as organizations (which is not to say that those working for them do not include paid professionals) and not limited to the sphere of family life" (Harding 2012, p. 92).

7.4.2.2 ACN's research policy for the museum sector

In 2010, ACN[261] initiated and funded FOMA ('*Forskning i museer og arkiv*'), a pilot project aimed to develop and strengthen the range and quality of research in museums and archives, in addition to test models for cooperation with the higher education sector.

Moreover, the project aimed to contribute towards critical reflection about the societal role of museums and archives, a direct follow-up of political signals previously expressed in various green and white papers[262]. The project also attempted to respond to the need for broader and more comprehensive knowledge about the societal role of museums and archives and their values than the traditional object-oriented research[263] had accomplished. A total of 9 museums and 2 archives participated alongside 19 researchers. The FOMA-project was evaluated in 2013, and was found to have been a successful tool for implementing cultural policy objectives related to the quality of research in museums and archives.

Nevertheless, since one of the ACN's prerequisites for participation and funding in this project was close collaboration with the formal academic sector, including peer-reviewed publication in formal academic journals (Heen & Salomonsen 2013, p. 17), one may wonder whether this has not in fact contributed to further strengthening the value of academic capital within the museum sector.

7.4.2.3 ACN's national annual statistics

A point worth noting here is that since 2011, in the annual museum statistics produced by the Arts Council, museums are asked to report on the number of staff who have Ph.D.'s, as well as the number of staff with a 'authorised conservator'- status. There are still relatively few museum professionals holding a Ph.D., but as figure 10 reveals, the curve showing the number of staff with a Ph.D. has increased significantly in only five years. Recognizing that the time-span is somewhat short and that any sustainable impact will only be visible in the longer term, it is still conceivable that the national

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[261] In collaboration with the then NALMA (the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority/*ABM-utvikling*).

[262] St.meld. nr. 49 (2008–2009) *Framtidas museum*, St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000) *Kjelder til kunnskap og oppleving*, St.meld. nr. 15 (2007–2008) *Tingenes tale*, NOU 1996: 7 *Mangfald, minne, møtestad*.

[263] Ydse 2007

statistics lend additional weight to the academic aspect of museum work as a voucher for professional quality.
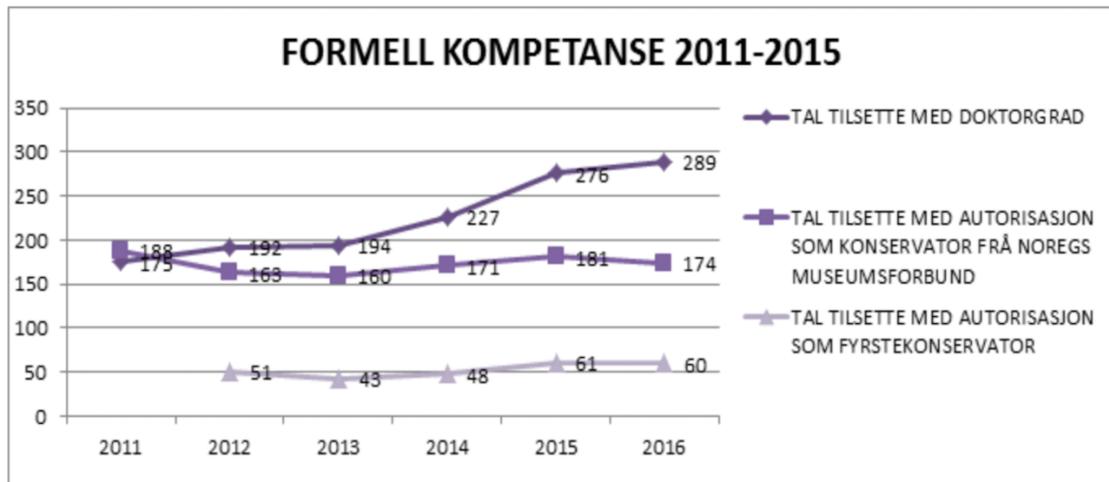
Figure 10: Curve showing formal competence in museums 2011-2015. Numbers of staff with PhD (diamonds), conservator status (square) and first conservator (triangle), respectively.

In fact, one informant pointed out that every year around the time when the statistic templates were sent out from the MoC and the ACN there would be intense discussions within the institution regarding possible interpretations of the different questions: "some years there were questions about diversity issues and another about intangible heritage or digital development". The perspectives explored in the previous sections seem to strengthen the impression that cultural policy and policymakers do have a measurable impact on the way academic capital and professional identity is negotiated and shaped within the museums. As Tobias Harding points out;

> Modern cultural policy was constructed as a support system for the
> professionals, while the amateurs were mostly left to organize their activities in
> civil society (2012, p. 91).

Taking into consideration, however, that much of the discourse around professional identity in museums seems to be revolving around formal academic credentials, a closer look at the discourse around general education policy could prove worthwhile.

7.4.3 General education policy

In Norway, there is currently no study programme specifically targeting people looking for a career in museums and archives, except for a relatively brief period between 2004-2011 when the University College of Oslo, in collaboration with the former NALMA, offered a bachelor-level course in Museum Studies. The course was designed to provide practice-oriented subjects covering a broader range of professional museum-related subjects than those currently on offer[264]. It is worth noting that one of the reasons for developing the course was to "increase the academic value of professions such as museum education and mediation", according to one former NALMA advisor who was responsible for the project.

At present, a range of independent subjects are taught at university level; subjects perceived as relevant to museums and archives, particularly to the collection-focused areas of responsibility[265]. Hence, there may be as many different 'academic/[museum]professional habituses' at play within institutions as there are academically qualified staff: people bring with them particular epistemologies into their workplace, as well as political or emotional standpoints. O'Neill observes that the sheer variety of academic expertise found among museum professionals may indeed have a bearing on the internal culture of the institutions:

> Given the methodological and epistemological variety which supports the mixture of the hard, applied and social sciences and humanities, ranging from archaeology to connoisseurship, it is not surprising that coherence is an issue (O'Neill 2006, pp. 98-99).

Nevertheless, without delving too deeply into the complex field of national education policy and politics, one specific feature of the current education policy worth highlighting is the CRIStin-system (Current Research Information System In Norway)[266]. A governmental body hosted by the University of Oslo, it provides documentation and access to high quality research data from universities, university colleges as well as

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[264] These were subjects such as mediation, exhibition development, visitor studies, societal role, critical museum practice, as well as collection care.

[265] The most common of these are (in no particular order): museology, history, art history, cultural studies, ethnology, folkloristics (*folkloristikk*), archaeology and anthropology.

[266] http://www.cristin.no/english/. Accessed on 13.01 2015.

health institutions and trusts and may indicate one specific way the education policy discourse seems to exert influence on professional identities and add further value to academic capital within the institutions.

Significantly, museums do not currently have access to uploading research data and publications to the joint national database and hence cannot draw on what we may call its legitimising function in an academic context.

Bjørn, an informant who was actively involved in union-work explained that the local branch of *Forskerforbundet* (The Norwegian Association of Researchers – NAR) was currently working politically towards securing access for museums, archives and libraries in the CRISTin database[267]. He pointed out that this would be of immense value to his work in the museum, both in a national and an international context, since it would enable him to publish his research and gain access to important professional networks. He concluded that "so I am just waiting at the moment, for the message to come from above that 'please go ahead – you are all expected to do it [research]'…". By 'above', Bjørn quite conceivably means the MoC and the ACN, again an indication of the influence of these two stakeholders.

Moreover, the NMA has since the establishment of its Section for research in 2014 actively worked through different channels to encourage changes in the current guidelines to enable museums to publish their research in the CRISTin database[268]. In light of this, it is not unreasonable to conclude that aspects of general education policy and discourse have a significant bearing on how museum professionals perceive their identities and positions within the organisation.

7.5 Professional identity vs. practice?

This brief exploration of the role and value of academic capital in relation to [museum] professional identities and practice has shown that academic credentials and expertise are perceived as valuable currency when negotiating positions within the institution.

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[267] In 2007, NAR published a status report on research in museums which indicated a general lack of time, resource and priority of research work. Furthermore, the report stated that there was a prevailing view among museum professionals that this situation had become even worse after the Museum Reform (http://museumsforbundet.no/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2007-5_FoU-museum.pdf. Accessed on 12.01 2015.

[268] http://museumsforbundet.no/?page_id=9658 . Accessed on 11.01.2017.

Moreover, there are three main external policymakers that seem to be lending weight and adding to its value: the NMA, the ACN/MoC and the university sector (academia). Furthermore, the third seems to influence the former two in that both the NMA and the ACN keep referring back to academic resources and concepts in their policies on museums and culture, respectively.

Hence, in light of the greater weight ascribed to academic standards, one is left to wonder whether, and in what ways, the concept of a socially engaged museum practice is compatible with a professional identity which seems to be increasingly aligned with academic criteria, values and merit. This brings us into the area of personal engagement and values and what role they may conceivably play in the professional practice of the various stakeholders in the field. The subsequent sections will explore these issues in further detail and how they potentially relate to institutional practice.

7.6 Engagement, values and motivations

> *I remember we went to the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg and there was a guard who was absolutely passionate about the museum. It was lovely. Quite fantastic!*
>
> (Åse, senior advisor in MoC)

Based on countless conversations with museum professionals over the years as well as the interviews conducted for this project, I am left with a distinct impression that the Norwegian museum and archive sector is full of dedicated professionals who are passionate about their work. All of the informants in this project, whether they currently work in museums or are employed by policymakers and funding bodies, have expressed a passion for and deep personal engagement related to their work in the field of museums. Such jobs are not tremendously well paid, nor can they claim to provide any significant cool-factor in mainstream society[269], and yet they seem to be very much in demand:

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[269] Having worked almost ten years for Save the Children Norway before joining the NALMA/ACN, I am very familiar with the sudden drop in professional status in social settings: where I before would bask in the halo of being a humanitarian worker (regardless of the amounts of desk-time my job in reality

> Most people do not come into museum work because of the salary, but
> because they hold passionate beliefs about communicating their subject and
> working with both collections and the public (Kavanagh 2005, p. 8).

What are the features which motivate or deter the individual staff members and how do they affect internal practice? In this regard, a theme which seems to be emerging from the data available concerns the personal engagement and values of the museum professionals and the various stakeholders in the field.

International research seems to suggest that these issues do play a role in whether and how cultural policy is implemented on different levels, in this case a policy with social inclusion as an important premise and objective:

> The cultural policy has been supported by professionals who carried and
> embodied values of the policies on the ground, in their institutions, and with
> the public – therefore providing a form of policy coordination through the
> professionals (Paquette 2012b, p. 55, see also Lynch 2013, Janes 2009 and
> Sandell 2007).

Not only do the values and engagement of the museum professionals evidently play a role in such policy implementation, but the values and engagement of individuals involved in developing and formulating policies also have an impact, whether the initiatives come from above or below. Research from France suggests that the shift towards a more socially inclusive museum policy was facilitated by sympathetic civil servants and high ranking public servants in the central administration. Their actions and those of their collaborators slowly strengthened the central authority in emerging sectors (e.g. ethnology museums and education initiatives) and reflected a growing awareness of the regional and social issues advanced by activist curators (Poulard 2012, p. 85).

Before exploring these themes in more depth, it may be worthwhile to briefly look at the notion of 'engagement'. According to philosopher Hans Skjervheim, it may be argued that engagement is not an activity that we sometimes do and other times

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entailed), I would suddenly experience the instant glazing over of people's eyes when mentioning my current employment. Working in or with museums can be a social non-starter, as some of my informants also experienced.

do not (or sometimes have or not). We cannot, Skjervheim argues, *not* choose to become engaged: the mere fact of being in the world entails engagement of some sort. In his view, engagement is a fundamental and necessary quality of human existence. On the other hand, what we can do is choose what to get engaged in or we can choose to let others[270] choose for us. The primary choice, however, is the action of making the choice yourself (Skjervheim, 1996, p. 81).

At this point, it is perhaps worth noting that in Norwegian, the term 'engage' ('*engasjere*') holds strong connotations of proactivity and is used both as a verb denoting action, meaning 'to get involved, to commit to' and as an adjective ('*engasjert*') denoting a personality or character trait: 'being an engaged (sort of) person' means a person perceived to engage easily. In a similar vein, it is possible to 'have engagement' ('*engasjement*') (for a specific cause or in general), again underlining the term's significance as an inherent quality in humans. The introductory quote referring to one informant's experience from the museum in Gothenburg serves to illustrate that engagement, or passion, is difficult to suppress: it shines through, so to speak, and is often perceived to be almost contagious in the best possible way ('*smittende engasjement*').

The ensuing sections examine more closely the role which factors such as personal ethos, motivation and engagement may play in the shaping of professional practice within institutions and their potential significance for the way the societal role of museums is perceived. Moreover, the following discussion will look at aspects which may deter or erode the motivation and engagement of museum professionals, keeping in mind the previous discussion on academic capital and its relation to professional identity.

7.6.1 The notion of personal values/ethos

Recalling the discussion of institutional values in chapter 6, there are at least three main categories of synonyms for the word 'value': price/worth, merit/usefulness and

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[270] Skjervheim lists several possible interpretations of the term 'others', for example the neutral noun 'one', tradition/precedence, common sense, other people or 'la conscience collective' (Skjervheim, 1996, p.81).

moral principles/ethos[271]. In the context of a socially engaged museum practice, it is the third meaning which is relevant for the present project: 'value' understood as *ethos*, the moral principles and standards which inform the professional practice of individual and institutions[272]. It is important to stress that in the context of socially engaged museum practice, it seems to be not so much an issue of 'right' values (or lack thereof) vs 'wrong'[273] values, as an issue of the individual's perception of the museum as a vehicle or appropriate arena for actively embracing or expressing values promoting social justice and responsibility.

Again, institutional practice seems to be shaped by, but not limited to, the way the individual museum professional perceives his or her remit. As Janes notes, '[…] the greater the congruence between individual and organizational values, the stronger the organization' (2009, p. 31). Moreover, research shows that while attention has been given to issues such as strategic development within organisations, very little attention has been given to the values which underpin the entire institutional practice.

According to Davies, museum strategies and operational practice will only be effective insofar that the ethos of the organisation is reflected in them:

> Only when synergy is achieved between values, strategies and practice can effectiveness be maximized. In a public museum, its policy should include a statement about its core values (perhaps embodied in a mission statement which can only be developed out of clear values) and will explain why they should receive support from taxpayers (2005 p. 35).

This concurs with research from France, which suggests there needs to be an alignment between the values of a professional group and the values embedded in a cultural policy such as social inclusion in order for the policy to be implemented and sustained over time:

> Cultural democracy, as a field of public action and intervention and as a cultural policy, cannot exist without the creation or support of a professional group

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[271] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english-thesaurus/value. Accessed on 18.12.2017.
[272] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english-thesaurus/ethos. Accessed on 18.12.2017.
[273] To suggest that people are against social justice on principle just because they do not see the museum as an arena in which to engage more actively with social issues would in my view be arrogant and erroneous.

who takes charge of the policy ideals – as theirs, and as an identity marker – to give some heft to the policy's principles (Paquette 2012b, p. 56).

Hence the personal motivations and values underpinning the practice of the individual museum professional do appear to be of significance to the practice of the museum (Sandell 2007, p. 48), a subject which will be explored in more depth in the following sections.

7.6.2 Personal and professional engagement and motivation

All the informants, regardless of position either within the institution or as external stakeholders, expressed a deep engagement and a high degree of job satisfaction when talking about their work. Their motivations for either choosing an educational path or a career path which led to becoming museum professionals would be expressed in terms of 'always having been interested in history', 'always having loved going to museums', 'having been inordinately interested in the past as a kid' and so on.

One informant became an archaeologist because of an early a fascination with 'Egypt and mummies and all that'. Others found themselves 'smitten' by museum work through more coincidental choices of education. Two of the informants had been through what in Norway is termed a 'class journey' ('*klassereise*'[274]), coming from rural backgrounds and being the first in their families to get a higher education. Another informant remarked that in her family and local community, insofar education was regarded as useful at all, only employment in the mercantile sector was regarded as 'proper jobs', whereas people who went to university were described as 'perpetual students', not to be taken seriously. Even so, as her job as a museum educator closely resembles that of a teacher, her family accepted and supported her choice of career.

Terms like 'interest', 'important', 'like', 'fun' and 'love' keep recurring throughout the interviews when informants talk about their favourite parts of their job. One aspect which emerges in a few of the interviews conducted in the northern region of Norway, is the importance of museums to the identity of the interviewees. These informants were in their late fifties and early sixties, and hence had grown up in

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[274] A term used in sociological theory to describe when a person, either through education, career, acquisition of wealth etc. is able to move from one social class to another (https://snl.no/klassereise). Accessed on 18.12.2017.

the years following WW2 and the subsequent Reconstruction of Finnmark ('*Gjenreisingstida*')[275]. One informant in his early sixties who held a position as chairman of a museum board, found museums to be immensely important because his parents, as most people living through those dark times, never wanted to talk about the past. He went on to describe how the Reconstruction-period was all about looking forward, never back, and how many of his generation who grew up in the area felt as if they did not have a history before the war. Hence, museums and their objects seem to hold a particular significance in the northern regions which differs from the rest of the country, in that it is the very *lack* of objects which constitutes a challenge, not the more common and often Sisyphean task of managing seemingly boundless collections.

Moreover, the issue of the forced assimilation processes of the indigenous population and national minorities[276] in Norway prior to WW2 was brought up as another poignant illustration of the importance of museums in the region:

> We were without history when I grew up. There had been the Scorching and we grew up with the attitude that everything was about the future. My parents and grandparents … they just did not talk about it. And then there was the language thing. My dad had stories, but they were in Finnish, which I later discovered was almost his native language. I had to actively engage him in sharing them with me.

> (Nils, chairman of museum board)

The informant then went on to describe how he only discovered his minority roots ('*saami*' and '*kven*'[277]) through researching place names, one of the very few sources still yielding traces of national minorities despite a targeted policy of forced assimilation over many years by the Norwegian authorities. These historical elements

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[275] In 1944, the population of the counties of Finnmark and Nord-Troms were forcibly evacuated by the Nazi occupying forces before everything was burnt to the ground, a tactic also known as the Scorched Earth tactic. Buildings and objects older than 1944 are few and far between (cf. the website of the Museum of Reconstruction: http://www.kystmuseene.no/index.php?cat=107297). Accessed on 01.11.2016.

[276] For more information on the treatment of national minorities in Norway, cf. Brekke in Golding and Modest (2013).

[277] The *Kvens* are descendants from Finnish immigrants to northern Norway and have status as a national minority.

thus appear to provide added emotional significance to the role of museums in northern Norway, especially for the generation who grew up during the post-war era.

Significantly, some of these particular informants have senior positions within the field (board members, directors and representatives for local and regional authorities), which allow them to make decisions in their official capacities, which in turn impacts the museum field. Hence, it may be argued that their personal values and motivations related to museums will to some degree underpin these decisions.

Even though museums had not been an active career choice from the outset for some of the informants, they expressed enjoyment of and commitment to their current jobs. Several cited a high degree of responsibility and professional elbow room as two factors contributing to this satisfaction. One former curator commented that museum professionals had more academic freedom in that

> [Museums] provide a working environment where you have more freedom to exercise your skills than in the traditional university system, which is more rigid. (Tove, senior advisor, ACN, and former curator)

In her specific case, this freedom seemed to become more limited once the museum got a new director whose main career had been within academia.

Tove also enjoyed being able to develop a project from idea to finished exhibition, thus applying a wide range and combination of intellectual, theoretical and practical skills:

> I love working across fields of specialization. To work with both experience, shape, colour and selection, as well as being able to dig deeper into research questions or to pursue the sources. It's been fun working on exhibitions, being able to submit articles about it, find new friends in new professional environments and then mediate it all.

Some informants seemed to have a distinct activist approach to their museum work. Ulrik described how he initially had no intention of working in the museum and archive sector, but that his first job as information officer in a tiny museum sparked his enthusiasm for museums as locations for active socially engaged practice. He recounts how, despite low wages and no pension scheme, he thought leaving work to go on vacation was a bore: "I didn't have time for that, I had a mission, didn't I? I was going

to change the world…" (Ulrik, senior advisor, ACN, and former museum curator). A few of the informants remarked, however, that these factors could also be construed as being a double-edged sword, in that the same freedom of action sometimes made it difficult to set limits and prioritise within the workload, subsequently generating a feeling of being over-stretched.

Lynch argues that to be able to change a museum's practice, it is essential to cultivate 'an ethical self-consciousness within the museum professional' that identifies and understands the motivations and values which 'inadvertently, or otherwise, permeate the work – presenting obstacles or opportunities for change' (Lynch 2013, p. 222). People gave different reasons for the motivation and enjoyment of their current work in the institutions. Ulrik explained how his motivation was fuelled on a daily basis by the activist practice and explicit social purpose of the small museum where he worked for a number of years, nonetheless underlining the precariousness of its then mainly project based funding:

> We had a lot of goodwill [from ACN/MoC] and freedom and all that, but everything was project based. [The institution] started as a project and we never knew whether we would survive from one year to the next. And we kept down salaries and pensions and all that, it was an idealistic organization.

In one way, one might say that for this particular informant, the value of social purpose in the context of wider social objectives seems to have been the main motivating factor in his daily work at the museum, ranking above more traditional curatorial professional values[278] (cf. Davies 2005, p. 39). Moreover, Ulrik explained how visitors, especially students would often ask if his museum was political or worked politically: "And I would answer 'Of course! Doesn't everyone?'. Regardless of your kind of work, you work politically". He went on to explain that in his view, "museums

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[278] At the time, this particular museum was a small, independent entity in transition from being a project to becoming a permanent organisation. Having no objects to start with, the focus was initially on intangible, contemporary issues such as diversity and migration. As the organisation grew, more traditional museum activities such as documentation and object collection became part of the work. Ultimately the museum merged with a much larger, older and more traditional museum. The informant cited the merger and the subsequent hegemonic influence of the older museum on the collective practice, as well as the increased size of the new organisation as the main reasons for what he perceived to be inimical to the smaller partner's activist values and practice: "the road to decisions becomes too long and you lose your fire…".

are tasked to contribute to society developing in the right direction". Clearly, this particular informant experienced an alignment of his personal values with that of the institution as well as that of the wider policy signals.

As previously mentioned, this issue of personal engagement, values and motivation and its impact on the implementation of cultural policy does not pertain to museum professionals only. It also pertains to the stakeholders outside the museum, positioned in other parts of the field. In France, the shift towards a more socially inclusive museum policy was facilitated by what Poulard describes as "sympathetic civil servants and high-ranking public servants in central administration":

> Their actions and those of their collaborators slowly strengthened the central authority in emerging sectors (e.g. ethnology museums and education initiatives) and reflected a growing awareness of the regional and social issues advanced by activist curators (2012, p. 85).

Several of the informants who have been or are currently in high ranking positions related to funding and policymaking within the Ministry of Culture expressed a personal engagement and interest in the museum sector. One senior advisor commented that museums had a very important role to play in society, especially in times of crisis:

> We need them to give us practice in handling the discomfort. We need to bear to stand in the discomfort, in the problematic, because there are so many dilemmas.

> (Åse, senior advisor, MoC)

Two other informants, both with extensive work experience from museums and ministry, had been responsible for developing several key policy documents which have contributed to the shape and direction of cultural policy, notably related to archives, libraries, museums and cultural heritage. When asked about their degree of autonomy from political signals, both stated that they had never experienced any limiting factors, controversy or active disagreement from colleagues or politicians while shaping the policies. Recalling the evident impact of such documents on current

museum practice[279], it seems safe to conclude that individuals in a position of rank and power do indeed exercise influence, an influence also underpinned by personal values and motivation. Again, institutional practice seems to be shaped by, but not limited to, the way the individual museum professional perceive their remit.

7.7 Factors affecting engagement and passion

One issue which seems to be closely linked to the role of value and engagement in the individual's professional practice, is that of factors which contribute to undermining the alignment of individual, institutional and policy values, causing frustration and demotivation. This is a recurring subject in the interviews with museum professionals, which will subsequently be examined in some detail.

7.7.1 Size and structure

Several informants referred to the comprehensive Museum Reform as having had significant impact on their personal motivation and professional practice in that it engendered quite extensive organisational restructuring for some. Anja, a former director with extensive experience from the museum sector, recalls how different the working conditions were prior to the reform. Before the reform, many museums had been part of the counties or municipalities, allowing them to draw on the administrative and financial structures of their owners. Consequently, this left them free to concentrate on the remit specific to their museum, such as collections, research and exhibitions. After the reform, she felt that her time as a director was spent much less on museum professional issues than on administration, communication and fundraising.

Other informants experienced that the larger organisational structure resulted in more complicated and time-consuming decision-making processes, subsequently affecting their motivation:

The line to the management becomes too long, the decision-making processes take too much time. You lose your fire. We used to fire each other up, but after

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[279] Cf. discussion in 7.4.2. on White paper 49 and 'the four f's'.

the reform we became more and more part of a structure, there were more and more meetings. Much larger hierarchies, much longer line to the management. You couldn't jump around anymore … you couldn't decide anything here and now, it had to go through certain channels.

(Ulrik, senior advisor, ACN, and former curator).

For some, having started their careers in smaller pre-reform institutions, this translated into a matter of size: having become part of a larger unit, they experienced a gradual loss of autonomy as well as a narrowing field of responsibility. One informant described this process as being increasingly expected to be part of a "one of those industrial-like production lines". Again, several informants referred to the positive quality of being a 'potato worker'[280] within the museum, i.e. being involved in many different tasks, from exhibition design to research, developing and honing your skills as a well-rounded, flexible and highly competent museum professional.

One former curator expressed frustration over the merger of his smaller institution into a larger, older and more conservative museum, the latter winning the subsequent battle for hegemony by a wide margin: "the majority gets the power and removes your opportunity to be active and visionary". In one sense, one might say that the institutional habitus of the larger of the two merging partners takes precedence over the smaller, hence shaping the subsequent institutional practice to a greater degree (Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992] 2014).

One informant recounted how she experienced an increasingly narrow room to manoeuvre in her daily work as a consequence of the introduction of new management principles in 2011. This she felt as being detrimental to her motivation in the long run:

That was when we got less freedom. […] It has to do with engagement and chemistry and values. And you find each other in ways of wanting to do something great. I think everything that happens in museums depends on …

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[280] cf. note 228 in section 7.2 on the meaning of 'potato worker'.

creating good environments, putting together people who fire each other up …
creating a good dynamic.

(Tove, senior advisor, ACN, and former curator)

The same informant subsequently left the museum in 2012 when another job
opportunity arose, stating the lessening professional leeway as part of the reason.

7.7.2   Room for activism

A few informants mentioned room for flexible action and being able to embrace a
certain degree of activism as being important in order to adopt a more socially
engaged museum practice:

I have an old activist in my belly … and I think that the reason projects fall to
the ground like bricks is that museums as institutions are like elephants in the
war. There is too little room for activism. But I do see many museums that are
engaged and that is lovely.

(Åse, senior advisor, MoC)

One informant commented that the ACN seemed to have gradually lost its active
developer role in the museum sector after the merger of the former Norwegian
Archive, Library and Museum Authority (NALMA) and the Arts Council Norway in 2011:

I used to think it was a bit backwards that it was the state that was the
trailblazer and we as museums would run behind … and I thought that it [ACN]
must be a really interesting place to work and I'd like to be part of that. But I do
not have the same impression after starting work here [ACN]. Lately we seem
to have become all about structure and next to nothing about content.

(Ulrik, senior advisor, ACN, and former curator)

This comment is notable in that it underlines the effect of personal motivation, values
and engagement within stakeholder institutions such as funding bodies and
policymakers (cf. Paquette 2012). Although a comprehensive investigation into the
ACN or the MoC as independent institutions lies outside the scope of this project, it is
nonetheless conceivable that some of the same factors affecting professional practice

within museums will have a bearing on the professional practice within funding bodies and policymakers.

7.7.3 Vision (or lack thereof)

A further element mentioned by a few informants was the importance of the institution having a clear vision. One informant referred to a well-known Norwegian poet when explaining her views on the matter:

> There is a lovely poem by Hans Børli[281], about lighting a lamp and keeping the flame alive … and that means that we must, in our daily work again and again remind ourselves and each other "why are we here?". And then have this ongoing conversation which has to include that we are both here to take care of the magic objects and we are here to document society and play a role in it. And this has to continuously be kept alive, because I find there are a lot of grey everydays … and you risk losing the valuable elements created in projects … it gets lost in the mundane every day. You can't once and for all decide something, you need to practice and then evaluate. Practice and evaluate. Practice and evaluate and think in new ways. But I miss the visionary element. I think Norwegian museums must lift up their visions.
>
> (Åse, senior advisor, MoC).

For some, the visionary element seemed to have disappeared as a result of the structural reform, a process which seemed to siphon off energy and redirect it on purely internal organisational issues. One informant described how the new director of the then newly merged institution launched what he called a "hairy and fantastic vision" of the new museum as a "process museum" which did not remain in its ivory tower, but took aim of itself to be present all over town. This, Ulrik said, completely broke with the idea of the museum as a classical building, a temple. Although he could not remember having had any very heated discussions about it at the time, he felt that many of his new colleagues were clearly not ready to follow that idea and go down that road.

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[281] For a complete version of the poem, cf. p. 2 of this thesis.

7.7.4 Professional rivalry

One informant, having spent the major part of her career working in or with museums, was of the opinion that rivalry between different academic professions was to some degree part of the reason for museums clinging to a traditional interpretation of societal role:

> There is something about the competition between professions, that is to say, between traditionally oriented conservators and more societally oriented sociologists and anthropologists and more socially engaged people. What I find lacking and wish for is the bridge between these professions so that the concern for the long lines [of history] does not impede the ability and will to keep a continuous watchful eye [on society].
>
> (Åse, senior advisor, MoC)

In light of the increased weight given to academic qualifications within the sector, it is conceivable that such internal ranking of and rivalries between individual academic statuses may to some degree reduce the ability of a museum to embrace a more socially engaged practice.

7.8 The role of directors

One theme which recurred directly and indirectly across the material is that of the role of management or leadership, in particular that of the director. This position in the organisational structure entails the formal authority to make decisions, formulate visions, draw up strategy documents, as well as the power to take action, both externally and internally. Hence, the role of the director can be described in terms of an orchestral conductor: he or she has the power and responsibility to enable the players to keep time and play in tune, producing music which is larger than the sum of its parts.

Some informants ascribed their perceived loss of freedom in their professional scope for action to the introduction of new management principles, which in turn was felt by them to be inimical to their motivation: the then new director had tightened the reins, so to speak. Other informants reflected on how organisational change, in

this case the merger of several museums, significantly complicated and extended the line of communication from the ground up to the executive powers: decision-making processes became cumbersome and time-consuming, again affecting motivation for some. Other informants found the latest restructuring to be more egalitarian and efficient, in that it seemed to remove former practices of colleagues catching the ear of the director on an individual basis. Moreover, one key finding from the ICOM survey was that management and leadership (or lack thereof) had a great deal to do with how museum professionals tackled ethical challenges.

In one case, the informant lauded the director for setting forth inspiring visions and strategies for the museum's role and practice, enabling him to successfully argue the case for his diversity-projects in budget discussions.

In the case of the two sample museums, the two directors had slightly different approaches to leadership. In one case, the director was 'professional' and left the 'museum professional' issues to the conservators and curators (cf. section 7.2. for a discussion of the term 'professional' in the context of this project).

A few of the informants commented that they felt this to be an expression of the director's trust in them, which indeed the director later confirmed. Others expressed some concern that this particular person did not have a 'museum professional' background, but seemed willing to give him/her the benefit of the doubt. In short, this director's policy was to enable a well-run workplace with necessary managerial structures in place to the ensure an efficient running of the business for both internal and external stakeholders.

In the other sample museum, the director had climbed the ranks of professional museum work and ended as a director a year or so previously. This director appeared to be relatively hands-on oriented, although not in a micro-managerial way: the policy was to foster well-rounded staff in order to strengthen the whole museum's ability to function well and engage with different subjects and communities. Interestingly, all the informants in this sample, including the head of the friend society, expressed a high level of appreciation for the director as well as for their job at the museum, leaving me with an impression that the museum operated more as a collective team with a common purpose than merely a well-run workplace. Taken together with the fact that the respective strategy documents for the two

institutions mirror this difference in approach[282], it suggests that there are divergent views on what a museum *is* emerging from the way it is run. These observations corroborate the obvious and intuitive expectation that the director's role is seminal to museum practice.

7.9 The significance of value-driven practice

Factors such as personal ethos, motivation and engagement do seem to play a significant role in the shaping of professional practice within institutions, as well as between institutions and the various stakeholders. Unlike organisational matters such as budgets, annual plans and reporting systems, however, these factors do not appear to be items of discussion within the field, either within institutions or between institutions or stakeholders[283]. It would appear that the strong focus on professionalization of management practices which underpinned the past decade's comprehensive reform has had an impact on internal organisational culture. The reform was by and large about implementing structural changes in order to enable museums to respond better to ever increasing external demands for professional quality in all aspects of their work[284]. The value systems of the institutions, their institutional ethos, were never an explicit topic for discussion in the different phases of the reform and have to my knowledge never been the subject of any broader discussion in the museum field, in the way that it has been in the UK[285].

It is precisely such a discussion, Davies notes, which is necessary to have in conjunction with structural changes:

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[282] The one document being a straight-forward corporate template for such documents, the other much more value-driven in its wording, tone and flavour.

[283] Or indeed within the stakeholder organisations such as the ACN, which states on its website that its values are "visible", "collaborative" and "stimulating". Aside from the fact that these purported values are not explained in any great detail and hence are virtually useless as a moral compass, there has never, to my knowledge, been any internal discussion about these values or their potential significance for the ACN's professional practice (http://www.kulturradet.no/organisasjonen). That being so, one may ask whether this lack of clarity about values (and other parallel challenges pertaining to organisational culture) in the ACN can be seen to influence the institutions on the receiving end of policies and funds.

[284] For more information about the Museum Reform, see Fossestøl, K., Breit, E. & Heen, H. (2013).

[285] See for example the Museum Association's vision for the impact of museums: http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-change-lives. Accessed on 20.01.2017.

Assuming the necessity of modern management practices in response to environmental factors outside the control of museums, a serious reappraisal of the profession's value system is needed. […] Ultimately the importance of dealing with these issues is that arriving at a new understanding of the value systems is important if mission statements with any meaning are to be drawn up to guide a new generation of museum workers and museum users (2005, pp. 35-39).

Although one might argue that the institutional value system is so solidly embedded in the practice as to be implicit or unconscious and thus never expressed or discussed openly, there appears all the same to be a certain reluctance towards explicitly acknowledging an institutional ethos and, consequently, institutional power and non-neutrality (cf. section 6.6. of this thesis).

In turn, this may have a bearing on whether the institution deems a socially engaged practice to be within its remit and responsibility. When asked about their personal perception of the societal role of museums and archives, most informants, including those among the regional and national funders and policymakers, refer back to letters of instructions, white and green papers and other policy documents, never to their own institution's mission or vision statements. In contrast, the informants who are actively in favour of a more socially engaged museum practice will also often refer to their personal engagement and ethos, factors which seem to underpin and shape their perception of the societal role of museums and archives.

7.10 Concluding remarks

Several features emerge from the analysis of the available material concerning the organisational aspect of museums. The evidence suggests that not only do cultural policy signals and academic status play a role in how internal practice is shaped and carried out, but so does the structure, culture and values of the organisation. Moreover, the personal ethos, motivation and engagement of the individual museum professionals have an impact on the way they carry out their work. Unsurprisingly, the role of director, with its intrinsic formal executive power, emerges as central to the inner workings of the organisation and the way practice is shaped.

Continuing along these lines and with the discussion of the notion of 'societal role' in chapter 6 in mind, I would argue that not only does personal and institutional ethos play a significant role in the shaping of practice, it also influences the way the different agents and stakeholders perceive the role of the institution itself: whether it can, and should, function as an arena for taking active social responsibility and engaging with society or whether its societal value and role is primarily limited to collection and care of objects on behalf of society.

Having discussed the notions of ideology and organisation and their effect on institutional practice, the question of short term projects and funding raised in chapter 1 will be revisited and considered in some detail in the chapter which follows.

Chapter 8   Harnessing the power of money

Returning to the question raised at the beginning of the thesis whether short term projects and funding affect the institutions' core attitudes in sustainable ways, this chapter considers relevant findings in light of the funding and reporting cycle which museums are a part of. The chapter also takes a closer look at how individual museum staff perceive and experience the effect of project funding on their daily practice.

8.1   Perspectives from the institutions

Not all the informants had direct experience with the ACN project funding. Even though some informants spoke frankly about what they perceived as unnecessarily narrowly earmarked funding, such as 'diversity'-projects or 'democracy'-projects, most expressed a very positive opinion of the funding system which they thought allowed them to try out new things. Also, those with successful applications seemed to have a good grasp of what the criteria entailed and had a firm understanding of the rules of the game:

> We sent a lot of applications [for project funding] which almost all were accepted. Full house. I remember someone saying that 'it's like a bingo game, and now it was your turn to win'. But I know very well that it is not a bingo, having worked on the other side [in the ACN].
>
> (Hanne, museum curator and former director)

Moreover, one of the institutions preferred to apply for extension of deadlines whenever receiving too much funds to handle at once, to ensure that the project competence mainly remained within the organisation. The director of this museum had a policy of giving people lots of trust, professional freedom and opportunity for development, referring to 'the potato worker' as an invaluable resource and asset to the museum.

Even so, some pointed out that regular administrative budgets were so tight that short term funding was the only way to get other work done, as well as it being frustrating that projects were mostly handled by external hired help which disappeared after the project was finished. Some informants appreciated the reporting

format and found it a good exercise in disciplining your texts, whereas others pointed out the constraining nature of the ten-thousand-character limit in the electronic reporting template.

Commenting on the impact of the Museum Reform, one former director and senior conservator noted that even though the government-led reform produced an overall increase in budgets, the museum quickly became dependent on project funding:

> Without project funding we would have been unable to do anything else than continuing daily work. There wouldn't have been any innovation … we wouldn't have gotten anywhere or produced any new thoughts. Because we've been very proactive when it comes to applying for project funding, we've been able to keep the ship afloat.
>
> (Anja, museum conservator)

The interviewee then goes on to clarify that even though she thinks funding for projects such as temporary exhibitions should have been secured within the museum's operational budget, this would in turn have generated new financial challenges:

> It would have restricted our activity for a while, so that we would have to engage somebody else to do our daily chores. Which we can't afford without external funding.
>
> (Anja, museum conservator)

This quote serves to highlight what seems to be perceived as a conundrum by museum professionals: striking the right balance between project management and daily non-project-related work. There seems to be differing practices regarding how projects are managed, based on different rationales: in some cases, external consultants are hired to deliver projects, in others the museum prioritises using its in-house project competence. One conservator working in a museum which often used external consultants, commented that she thought it was;

> a drawback with project money, I find, that people come and go, don't they? Or they come and then disappear after a while with the competence they have

built and possibly a part of what should remain in the museum. There is no room for hiring people on a permanent basis.

(Greta, museum curator)

This was underlined by former director of another museum, who had deliberately prioritised building on and developing in-house project expertise, sometimes obliging them to ask for a delay in reporting deadlines to avoid looking for external temporary manpower. She believed that this was a fundamental premise for project work:

That we don't just hire someone. Because then we only end up with extra administrative work without bettering ourselves, without developing our own skills and competence.

(Hanne, museum curator)

Another informant took a more pragmatic approach to balancing project work with other, ongoing chores:

I think it has created a dynamic, and it gives us opportunities for development. We have a lot of project funding. [...] At first there was an attitude that this was negative in that it kept us from hiring permanent staff and so on, but it is clear that as an organisation we have to think 'ok, there's a world out there of project funding' and then take that into account when hiring permanent staff who are good at project work.

(Nils, chairman of museum board)

Nevertheless, project funding seems to play a more complex role than just as a financial tool. Several informants pointed out that such funding was essential in securing other funding, both in-house and externally. One interviewee explained how project funding "has worked as leverage and an argument for taking our work in certain directions" (head of department). Another informant described such a directional change thus:

This kind of 'stimulation' funding [from the ACN] is really important to be able to realise projects. There aren't all that many other places to apply. Besides, [ear-marked] project funding begets other kinds funding, as it did during the

National Diversity Year in 2008. Our then director was crystal clear that that [diversity] was where the money was at the time. And not only the money, but the will and the vision as well. She was crystal clear about us going in that particular direction.

(Ulrik, senior advisor, ACN, and former curator)

It also emerged from the interviews that the value of the grants lay not so much in the size of it as in its symbolic significance:

The BRUDD and Hot Spot[286]-projects were important factors in organising projects in a manageable way. And I'm not thinking that it was primarily the actual sum of the grant which is important, but the fact that we got the grant in the first place. […] [Project funding] is a really important tool for development. As I mentioned earlier, I think the signal effect of having been granted [project] funding is very important to museums. Whether it is 60 000 NOK or 80 000 NOK is of less importance.

(Tove, senior advisor, ACN, and former curator)

Moreover, there seems to be an additional aspect to the merits of project funding, which also has nothing to do with monetary worth:

The project funding has meant everything to us, for us to develop and move on. I felt the ACN was extremely important to us, not only because of the money, as I said, the National Library matched your grant, and taken together, the two grants allowed us to hire a project coordinator. So that was in a way the first thing that turned the archive into something else than just me. In that sense, [the funding] was really important. But then it was also very important for us to have what we felt was *the moral support and backing of the ACN*. This support enabled us to edge our way into the archival sector despite being seen as a hybrid which didn't fit into any current categories.

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[286] Hot Spot refers to another of ACN's (then NALMA/*ABM-utvikling*) development funding projects which ran for some years, whereby museums, archives and libraries were encouraged to make small, relevant and contemporary exhibitions which were simple and flexible enough to comment on current issues. http://www.kulturradet.no/documents/10157/c4843e0b-d47c-4edf-a4d4-b18aaaf0eccb. Accessed on 04.11.2016.

In this case, the archive project had been recognised as worthy of financial support from a national funder, engendering a legitimisation of the project itself, which subsequently strengthened its position within the professional field.

Nevertheless, not all informants perceived grant funding as purely positive. One museum professional pointed out that the as funding criteria seemed to become ever more targeted, the scope for action felt concurrently more restricted:

> I do see that these are political decisions. But I feel it's almost become a straitjacket. It's the only way we're ever rewarded for doing anything outside the daily box, our core activities. It forces us to bend and manipulate stuff to make it fit into the project criteria.
>
> (Greta, museum curator)

Some of the museum professionals interviewed also admitted to what they felt was an added workload generated by the constant need for project funding:

> Project funding has undoubtedly been very important for us. But I know there are many who think that too many projects lead to museums not being able to follow up on non-project-related work because you always have to grab opportunities and spend working hours on projects instead of on collection management, for example. Because it is undeniable that you spend a lot of time writing applications.
>
> (Hanne, museum curator and former director)

Having probed the prevailing attitudes towards project funding on the institutional level, the section which follows examines the views of the funding and policymaking bodies.

8.2 Perspectives from the policymakers and funders

In Norway, publicly funded museums normally receive some measure of core funding from local and regional authorities as well as the ACN and the MoC. The exact ratio may vary, depending on the size and priorities of the local government in question.

Although many museums previously owned and run by municipalities became legally independent trusts as a result of the Museum Reform, their boards of trustees are still largely made up of representatives of local and regional councils, and many still receive parts of their core funding from local and regional authorities. One county director of cultural affairs commented on the subject of project funding in the following way:

> Many museums are dependent on other kinds of external funding to do activities and we don't have development [project] funding. The museums have expressed that they want this kind of funding from us, but I must be honest and say that 'in that case, the core funding will have to be cut and you will have to decide for yourselves'. In our opinion, there is room within the ordinary core budget for development work and the museums are at liberty to prioritise this as part of their development projects.
>
> (Oline, county director of cultural affairs)

Moving on to the department of museum development in the ACN, one senior advisor was of the opinion that;

> there is still very much a need for development funding to improve a range of things out there. But in an ideal world we [the ACN] ought to be superfluous when it comes down to development work. This should be our goal, making ourselves redundant. Just take care of reporting and statistics.
>
> (Yngve, senior advisor, ACN)

Another senior advisor expressed frustration at what she saw as a lack of resources enabling the ACN to follow up projects more closely after grants had been given with a view to strengthening sustainability. By contrast, this 'short-armed', hands-on attitude to the ACNs development remit was cited as a source of concern by a high-ranking official within the Ministry of Culture:

> I think [project funding] has generated many interesting projects. You mentioned the BRUDD-project … there have been several of those … focussing on contested issues, which I believe have created new ideas and new approaches to many things in museums. What worried us [the MoC] a bit for a

while was that … we were slightly concerned that … I thought that at one point in time there were some projects that were too ACN-driven … so that the museums became sort of more passive participants in the project and we considered the role of a public body should be more geared towards enabling some professional agent in the sector to take responsibility for things happening. To avoid the ACN directly managing it. […] We felt it important that the initiative come from museums themselves without weakening their incentives to try out new things.

(Thomas, senior policymaker, MoC)

It is worth noting, then, that in 2014 the funding earmarked for development work in museums and archives was moved from the state budget to the Norwegian Lottery Fund (*Norsk Tipping*[287]), which effectively meant the ACN could no longer actively use funds to facilitate collaborative projects. As a result of losing one of its two funding tools, the ACN's role as an active development agent was significantly reduced. Instead, the initiative was handed over to the museum sector. Furthermore, the ACN made changes to its remaining funding tool: reorganising the previous annual calls for individual projects into three-year programmes, in an attempt to encourage sustainability in the longer term. The long-term effect of this restructuring of funding channels and -cycles remains to be seen, and will be evaluated in 2018.

8.3 Project format: a means to an end or an end in itself?

It emerged from the interviews that some museum professionals seem to be deeply sceptical of the project format as such. As Erik put it, "I find in a way that the projects have taken over and pushed out what I regard as essential museum work: collection, preservation and education". He went on to explain how the current director had implemented a system of minutely logging every fifteen minutes of work spent on project work:

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[287] *Norsk Tipping* is a government-owned limited company under the direction of the Ministry of Culture, "assigned by the government to offer games that create excitement and entertainment within responsible limits, with the profits going to good causes". https://www.norsk-tipping.no/selskapet/engelsk. Accessed on 26.10.2016.

And that's just projects. All the rest is lumped together under 'other'… and that is something which I take exception to. That anything to do with numbers against objects, monitoring storeroom climate which I do every month related to humidity and temperature, and humidity in the exhibition where we measure and write reports … is just in the category 'other'. […] It seems to be of little or no interest. Nobody cares how much or if we should ... it's all project. And if it is not project it is 'other'. That which I think is still the core, despite everything … we are still obliged to receive objects, deal with inquiries, monitor preservation conditions, catalogue things. […] I do of course think that projects are necessary and important and stimulating for the work of the museum … and is central, but I do think it is a bit wrong when everything is just about projects. It sort of devalues the humdrum daily chores and routine work: "no, I can't answer this inquiry because I'm finishing this project and am behind on the number of hours allotted to this project". […] It's almost as if it's become a goal in itself, to be able to say that what I have actually done is less important than that I have worked the 25 hours allocated to this project.

(Erik, senior museum conservator)

The director's reasoning behind this system was, however, based on sound managerial principles and had two main objectives: firstly, accurately mapping time resources spent on individual projects in order to improve applications for funding[288], and secondly, assisting staff in managing their time in order to reduce overwork and stress.

Even so, although the staff seemed to accept this reasoning and had become used to recording every quarter of an hour spent on projects, the prevailing attitude seemed to be a slightly ironic distancing in their views on the subject: "I'll probably have to file this interview under 'Other' in the Excel-template…", as one informant cheerfully announced when talking about the time recording system. One is thus left wondering whether the problem is not as much the system of time recording itself, as

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[288] The director's reasoning was that knowing how much time people actually spend on project work makes it possible to calculate overhead figures more accurately and realistically in the budgets submitted to funders.

the evident lack of communication of its practical merits and ensuing lack of understanding and ownership among the staff.

Some informants took a more pragmatic view of the value of project work, as this conservator noted:

> It's clearly better that people do this [projects] within the limits of the institution's core budget, isn't it? That makes it much more stable and easier to keep knowledge and competence within the organisation than having it disappear with the project staff. For that might also be a problem, the transferability … that it's always the extra staff working on projects whereas the permanent staff work on the routine, non-project chores.
>
> (Greta, museum curator)

As the above discussion shows, there are different perceptions of the effectiveness and usefulness of project funding and format among the different stakeholders in the field. Despite its usefulness in driving innovation, project funding can also contribute to blocking any institutional commitment in the longer term: as long as external project funding is available, the institution does not need to make room within its own annual budgets. As things stand, projects seem to largely remain on a one-off level: of the forty applications to the ACN's new three-year project funding call for the societal role-programme[289] in 2015, 18 projects received grants. Even so, only two of the remaining 22 projects made their way into in the annual grant applications for the subsequent year, something which may suggest that these kinds of socially engaged projects are not made a priority within the core budget of the institutions.

On the whole, the informants who currently operated in the practice field, or had done so previously, described project funding as an important enabler in their daily work. It allowed them to experiment with new ways of making museums more relevant to society. The question remains, however, whether this particular kind of funding actually contributes to or hinders sustainable practice change in the long term, as was to a certain extent experienced in the UK context (Lynch 2011a, p. 5, see also Lynch 2011b).

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[289] "*Samfunnsrolleprogrammet*": http://www.kulturradet.no/museum/museumsprogrammene/vis-program/-/fakta-museumsprogram-samfunnsrolle. Accessed on 24.10.2016.

8.4 Project funding: a driver for or a barrier against change?

With regard to the effect of (project-) funding as a driver for change, international research suggests that organisations which lack congruence between strategy and practice as well as having a risk-averse internal culture, become vulnerable to the impact of other, external factors, such as political climate and funding (Lynch 2011b, Duhigg 2016). Research within the museum sector has revealed that there are forces at play which may drive organisations away from this type of engagement:

> For example, it became clear that in terms of public engagement practice, the system of short-term project funding that traditionally funds this type of work in museums actively discourages reflection, serving only to perpetuate an illusion that the work is more effective than it is. It also perpetuates a situation where little or nothing is learned from previous experience. The funding environment thus contributes to a fear of reflection and the perceived 'insecurity' of senior management in opening up the discussion of the work. This is evidently because of the overriding pressure to represent the work to governing bodies and funding agencies in a purely positive light. [...] Pressure to get things done also marginalises debate (Lynch 2011b, p. 444, see also Janes 2009, p. 69).

In this respect, risk seems to emerge as a central concept: where there is risk-taking, there is also a greater potential for innovation and development (Janes 2013a, loc. 355, Lynch 2011b, p. 445, see also Duhigg 2016) The fact that museums in the current funding climate in the UK are primarily rewarded for their successes and not their failures, does not encourage them to take risks or openly reflect on the challenges of their work (Lynch 2011b, p. 445).

This brings us to the relationship between organisational practice and institutional ethos. In her study of a dozen UK museums and their experiences with participatory work, Lynch found that, in the long term, overreliance on project funding conceals and circumvents the lack, or even non-existence, of sufficiently sustainable strategic plans or visions required to implement and embed a participatory practice. As one of her informants, a staff member, put it: "If it's not believed at the top as a core value, it will not work" (2011a, p. 17).

The experiences from the UK cited above serve to further illustrate the point that to ensure a socially engaged museum practice beyond project level, it is necessary for institutions to (re)consider the consonance of their values, strategies, internal culture and structure. In the same vein, it is worth (re)considering the role and tools of funding bodies. As Lynch (2011a, p. 22) notes, by supporting organisational change and development instead of projects, funding bodies can enable institutions to

- Renegotiate or reaffirm their relationship with, and role within, civil society

- Understand their locality – the place in which they are located

- Broker creative, strategic partnerships and alliances in their local area

Even so, since most informants seem to regard the symbolic and strategic value of receiving project funding from a national funder as important as the economic value of the grants, and in some cases more so, I would argue that it is not necessarily a question of either-or, but rather of developing and coordinating funding tools which complement and mutually strengthen long term development and sustainability.

Organisational development and innovation entails a certain amount of risk-taking, which is made possible by ancillary funding channels such as project funding. Speaking from a Canadian context, Janes (2013c) makes the following observation:

> The real difficulty at this point in time is that most, if not all, museums have virtually no discretionary money with which to experiment with new approaches to sustainability (loc.7438).

Hence project funding can play an important role in facilitating innovation, albeit only if risk-taking (and potential failure) is perceived by institutions to be acceptable.

8.5 Concluding remarks

The preceding discussion has suggested that project funding has a two-fold function, in addition to its capacity-building potential[290]: on the one hand, it enables museums to

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[290] This capacity-building will, however, require the institution to use internal staff to develop and run projects: parachuting in external project managers who leave the institution once the project ends will not contribute towards a strengthening capacity-building.

secure additional funding, and on the other it provides internal and external legitimacy (moral support). Moreover, such funding provides an opportunity for individual museum professionals to realise projects which they are personally motivated to undertake.

Nonetheless, project funding in and of itself is seemingly not a sufficient incentive to ensure a sustained, value-driven practice beyond individual initiatives: such practice needs to be embedded in the organisation as part of its core values and strategies (Lynch 2011a, Nightingale & Mahal 2012, Fleming 2012).

The question remains whether (and to what degree) government-driven development strategies such as short-term project funding actually brings about a change in institutional practice. Research from the UK suggests that the government policy of making social inclusion a part of the museum agenda through earmarked funding ironically led to the opposite: a cementing of already existing practice, with the extra funding serving as a kind of non-essential icing on the cake. The use of additional funding specifically earmarked socially engaged projects did not change the fundamental practice of the museums in the longer term. According to Lynch, such funding "simply served instead to maintain a situation in which public engagement remained peripheral, with the *core of the museum and its budget allocation remaining virtually unchanged* (2014, pp. 5-6, my emphasis, see also Lynch 2011a for the original research).

Although the Norwegian government policies on social inclusion in the culture sector has never been anywhere near as explicit as in the UK, a few museums have communicated similar experiences[291]. Hence, there appears to be comparable experiences related to organisational change and project funding in both the UK and the Norway, which in turn raises the question whether lessons learned in the UK could potentially be applicable in the Norwegian frame of reference of museum policy and funding. This brings the discussion full circle back to where *museums as organisations* and *museums as ideology* intersect, raising the question of what practical implications my findings may possibly have for future museum policy development. The final chapter will bring these into focus.

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[291] Skåtun, Torhild (2014), master thesis. Available in Norwegian at https://www.tekniskmuseum.no/images/Museum-i-fengsel---kulturrdet2.pdf. Accessed on 09.05.2017.

Chapter 9 Bridging the gap between ideology and organisation: some conclusions

Before considering some important conclusions which may be drawn from the previous analysis of the data material, it may be useful to briefly recall the research questions which underpin the present project, namely to understand:

- Why museums struggle to bridge gap between project experience and institutional practice change
- How they perceive their societal role

As the preceding discussion has shown, the questions are interlinked, albeit in slightly different ways. Furthermore, this project has identified two main strands of thinking about museum practice:

1) Organisational: The reality of organisational culture, structure and practice based on institutional and professional values (ethos), motives and engagement
2) Ideological: The idea of what a museum is or could be, underpinning and informing organisational and professional culture, values and practice

9.1 Key findings

Also, it may be worthwhile to reiterate some key features emerging from the foregoing analysis and discussion. The first of these concerns the way the societal role of museums is perceived in Norway:

- **A self-referential paradigm**: The notion of 'societal role' ('*samfunnsrolle*') as applied in various key policy documents lends itself to a wide range of interpretations by stakeholders and agents. None of these interpretations, however, refers to values or parameters *outside* of cultural policy documents: they appear to operate within a particular self-referential paradigm, largely

driven by a continuous cycle of annual funding applications, reporting and policy signals.

- **Power and ethos**: concepts such as power and values/ethos, elements which are arguably central to a museum's self-image and raison d'être, are not part of current interpretations of the institutions' societal role. Moreover, it appears that where there is a lack of alignment between different interpretations of 'societal role' as well as between words[292] and practice across the organisation, there is also a lack of organisational embedment and thus a lack of a cohesive and operational strategy for socially engaged practice.

- **Fear**: the issue of fear has emerged as a factor influencing museum practice. In particular, the fear of being perceived as non-professional, subjective and partisan, the fear of causing controversy and of how others (notably peers) might react, and the fear of being "punished" financially. Real or imagined, these fears seem to constitute a deterrent to museums engaging in socially engaged work.

Secondly, there are several features emerging from the available material which concern the organisational aspect of museums. The following elements all have a bearing on how internal practice is shaped and carried out:

- cultural policy signals and academic status
- organisational structure, culture and values/ethos
- the personal ethos, motivation and engagement of the individual museum

Furthermore, not only does personal and institutional ethos play a significant role in the shaping of practice, it also influences the way the different agents and stakeholders perceive the role of the institution itself: whether it can, and should, function as an arena for taking active social responsibility and engaging with society or whether its societal value and role is primarily limited to collection and care of objects on behalf of society.

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[292] Strategy documents, action plans etc.

Finally, regarding the issue of project funding and its impact on practice, the evidence suggests that it has a two-fold function, in addition to its capacity-building potential:

- it enables museums to secure additional funding

- it provides internal and external legitimacy (moral support)

- it provides an opportunity for individual museum professionals to realise projects which they are personally motivated to undertake.

Nonetheless, project funding in and of itself is seemingly not a sufficient incentive to ensure a sustained, value-driven practice beyond individual initiatives: such practice needs to be embedded in the organisation as part of its core values and strategies (Lynch 2011a, Nightingale & Mahal 2012, Fleming 2012).

Overall, I would argue that the findings suggest that how a museum goes about its business largely comes down to these two things: the *idea* the museum has of itself, i.e. what it is and, more importantly, what it could be, and *the way it organises itself* around this idea. These two elements, the *idea* and the *organisation* need to be aligned for the museum to develop and sustain a socially engaged practice. For this to happen, the director needs to believe in the idea of the museum as an active social agent and then create organisational resonance around it. This will in turn enable the museum to amplify its social impact. The operative word is 'sustain': even though it can be argued that museum professionals currently use a certain mis-alignment to further their cause, i.e. by using policy documents which are highly relevant, but no longer valid in a strict, formal sense[293], as a rationale for socially engaged projects, the sustainability of such a practice remains questionable unless it is actively sanctioned from the top and embedded in the whole organisation. In the opposite case, socially engaged practice and activism will remain on a project-to-project basis, contingent on the continued efforts of individual museum professionals.

At this point it is also worth recalling the initial conundrum this thesis concerns itself with: the evident lack of effect of project funding on long term institutional practice. Where the questions of ideology and organisation are related to the nature

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[293] Documents such as WP10 on inclusion in museums or WP07 on archives. As white papers, strictly speaking, are the sitting government's position paper as formulated to Parliament, they consequently risk losing status as governments change.

of museums and archives as institutions, the corollary issue of project funding has a more instrumental quality: it is a means to a policy end. There is evidence to suggest that while project funding can be of significant symbolic value to an institution, such funding is not sufficient in itself to bring about long-term change in practice. This is arguably an issue of interest to future funders and policymakers.

Drawing on the findings discussed in previous chapters, this chapter thus explores in greater detail how the ideological and the organisational intersect, and how one might conceivably bring about the necessary change to achieve a sustained and value-driven socially engaged museum practice.

9.1.1   The value of practice theory for the study of museums

Before proceeding with the discussion, however, it is worth recalling that the present project has largely drawn on the conceptual framework of Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory[294]. The concepts of 'habitus', 'capital', 'field' and 'doxa' have proven useful in uncovering structures which affect decisions and hence influence praxis within and around organisations such as museums. The foregoing analysis of the museum as a field has attempted to conceptualise relations of exchange between individuals, struggles for power to maintain or change status quo and different forms of symbolic capital, ultimately gaining a better understanding of the organisational terrain which the different museum professionals navigate in on a daily basis. In the case of this particular research project, moreover, a closer analysis of 'institutional habitus' as well as the 'professional habitus' of its staff provided valuable information about the inner workings of museums.

9.2   Ideology: aligning values, purpose, mission and vision

From an ideological point of view, a sustainable socially engaged museum practice is based on and shaped by a specific view of the museum's role in society as actively fostering and supporting democratic values in different ways. Recalling the discussion of ethical accountability and moral responsibilities of museums and archives as institutions of power in chapter 3, the particular ideological underpinning of the

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[294] Cf. ch. 4 of this thesis.

museum and the ethos to which it holds itself accountable is highly contingent on the director's personal and professional motivations and ethos as well as his or her idea of the nature and purpose of the museum.

As the discussion of the Norwegian context has shown, there is a range of different views on the nature of a museum and its role in society. Many of these views are highly influenced not only by current funding and policy discourse, but also by the personal and professional viewpoint of museum professionals. The data show that, more often than not, these views are implicit across the field and rarely, if ever, discussed among internal and external stakeholders. Consequently, there is a potential friction within the organisation, often between theorizing academics versus hands-on practitioners:

> The diverse languages these people employ – now abstract, now concrete – convey distinct ontological as well as ideological perceptions of what museums are, what they do, and more importantly, what are the meanings of the things over which they preside (Hein 2000, p. x, see also Ginsburg & Mairesse 1997).

Subtly competing ideas of what a museum is or should be will thus have an impact on organisational life, not least in terms of wanting and creating change – or not: it is a matter of changing or maintaining the status quo, a choice between heterodoxy and orthodoxy (Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992] 2014, p. 117, see also note 136, p. 89 of this thesis).

This thesis argues that for a museum to come to grips with its own ideological raison d'être, it is necessary to look beyond the current paradigm of policy papers and funding initiatives: history has demonstrated that politicians come and go, funding stops and starts and policies change every so often with every election. A museum which has a clear idea of its purpose and vision is arguably better equipped to handle the changing and often fickle nature of politics and funding. A clear vision and sense of purpose is not enough, however, the idea needs to be fully and sustainably incorporated in the organisation.

9.3 Organisation: embedding values and creating change

The next challenge then, is how to put the idea of the socially engaged museum into practice? To all intents and purposes, this is where *idea* and *organisation* converge, in that these two elements need to be aligned for the museum to develop and sustain a socially engaged practice. In other words, there needs to be an alignment of values, purpose and practical engagement from director to staff which is reflected and embedded in the organisational structure and culture, the latter fostering a common understanding and ownership of the idea of the museum as a socially engaged institution (see also Gardner 2009a, p. 8).

9.3.1 Management

A recurring theme across the interviews concerns the role of management or the board in actively embedding a certain practice in the institution. Both this thesis and other research suggests that unless the director is actively promoting a socially engaged practice across the organisation, it is highly likely that such projects will remain on a one-off level, contingent on the personal engagement of individual museum professionals and the availability of ear-marked project funding. Fleming describes it thus:

> The need to define (or redefine) the museum's social role lies *at the heart of the management challenge* in creating museums that seek to achieve wide relevance and public value. What we have to embed is a corporate commitment to a particular set of roles; roles that are different from those that museums played for most of the twentieth century. This demands the *engagement of all parts of the organisation*, most urgently and critically at leadership and governance levels, where the new commitment can be achieved fairly rapidly, even if it takes longer to persuade everyone else to sign up (2012, p. 73, my emphasis).

Although it may take longer to convince everyone else to embrace a different role than the traditional[295] museum role, it is nonetheless essential that the management level takes on the challenge of (re)defining the museum's societal role and subsequently identify relevant measures necessary to bring about such a role change in the rest of the organisation (cf. Fleming 2012, p. 73, see also Janes 2013a). Hence, administrative management tools such as vision- and mission-statements, values, strategy documents and action plans play a crucial role in the process of change and consequently need to be "genuine and worthy of passionate, unconditional support" (Fleming 2012, p. 74, see also Nightingale and Mahal 2012, Lencioni 2002 and 2012).

In the international examples of Derby and Liverpool previously mentioned in chapter 6, both directors strongly believe in their visions and have taken steps to make sure the rest of the organisation is on board. Fleming makes the following observation;

> I have visited a number of different countries around the world and have found a worrying constant: many younger museum people clearly want to modernise, but they do not carry the authority to do so, and they believe they are being held back by their Directors. […] My own view is that strong, determined leadership at the outset of a process of major change in museums is likely to be needed (2012, p. 73).

He goes on to describe how it is not only necessary to "articulate the organisation's role and purpose very clearly; generally through the device of the Strategic Plan which, in turn, will carry the museum's mission and statement of values", it is also necessary for leadership to lead "by example and behaviour" (2012, p. 73). Again, words matter, but they are not enough.

Recalling the ICOM-survey responses to the question about how the notion of 'societal role' is embedded within Norwegian museums, there seems to be a general tendency towards a perceived non-alignment between words and action. Words such as 'vague' and 'marginal' are used to describe the formulations about the institution's societal role in strategic plans. Also, several of the respondents go on to describe how they perceive the link between strategy and practice to be relatively weak, not least

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[295] 'Traditional' refers here to the role Norwegian museums have played for the best part of the 20th century, as keepers of objects (cf. ch 2).

due to occasional turnover of management. Again, creating a collective organisational culture requires senior management to actively embrace and put visions and values into practice.

9.3.2 Recruitment

The findings discussed in earlier chapters suggest that individuals and their motivations play a significant role in shaping organisational culture and practice. As the earlier discussion has shown, academic interests and personal motivations and engagement all contribute to forming professional practice in significant ways.

Add to that the relative positions of the individual professionals within the organisation and their negotiations related to power and influence, and it can reasonably be inferred that people, not statements, are at the heart of organisational culture and change. Hence one may ask to what degree the individual's professional habitus (academic capital, personal motivations and values) influences institutional habitus (organisational culture, values, norms and traditions)? Is there a threshold related to size, whereby the larger the organisation, and consequently the stronger the institutional habitus, the smaller the impact of the individual's professional habitus and possibility of changing the organisational status quo? There seems to be some indication that this may indeed be the case, as several informants mentioned size as a factor influencing their activist practice within the museum. Tony Butler, director of Derby museum, was clear in his view that being a relatively small and local institution made it easier to create innovation and implement change, enabling the museum to punch above its weight in terms of community engagement:

> There's only about 65 full time staff, so it's a good manageable scale. The turnover is about 1.7 million, so not massive. But it means that it is a good enough scale to do stuff without being too big for it to become a big bureaucracy that stops things getting done (Butler 2016).

Even so, a considerably larger organisation such as the National Museums Liverpool appears to have succeeded in consistently developing and maintaining a social justice practice, which would suggest that size in itself is not necessarily essential to bringing

about organisational change. A comprehensive analysis of this issue, however, lies beyond the reach of this particular project.

A number of informants mentioned recruitment as a key factor to changing organisational practice. One senior advisor was a long-time advocate for creating a more diverse workforce in the cultural sector through active measures:

> But only if they have the right competence. I don't mean that they should be recruited in solely on the basis of their ethnicity or cultural background. They must have competence, that's essential, but I believe we need more people who are willing to put this into the very arterial system of the organisation. If not, it will remain only projects.
>
> (Åse, senior advisor, MoC)

Another informant recalls how he began his museum career as a volunteer, and was subsequently "discovered" by the then director who had a policy of trusting staff with a lot of responsibility and freedom to shape their work:

> From day one on the job, she took me along to all sorts of meetings with local councils, mayors, regional cultural directors … She placed me in one of those cultural committees in the region, where local authorities and the museum meet around once a month. […] She told me to ask a lot of questions: "if there is anything you don't understand you must ask 'why is it like this?'". So I became one of those querying people who questioned a lot of stuff ... but who was allowed to shape the educational profile of the museum.
>
> (Krister, museum director)

Krister described how this open and generous style of leadership led to him becoming a well-rounded museum professional. Moreover, it emerged from the interviews with other staff that he seems to be committed to sustain this kind of leadership and organisational culture from his current position as director of the same museum.

Many of the informants who mentioned recruitment as a significant factor for bringing about change were, or had been, involved in policymaking at some point in their career. This is to be expected, as their vantage point is one outside the

institutions, taking into account a larger part of the field. Relating the issue to the Museum Reform, one senior policymaker commented that

> It has to do with the kinds of people being recruited … that the professional and scientific aspects have been very important and they should be … but then you have now a lot of administrative leaders … who might not have the kudos to hold strong opinions about museum professional issues. [...] But I think it's a matter of time. Five years is not such a long time to build [an organisational] culture.

> (Yngve, senior advisor, ACN)

Another senior advisor pointed out that not only is it necessary to look at recruitment so as to enable change, but also to look at the educational aspect: what kind of education do museum professionals currently hold and in which disciplines, what kind of people choose such an education with a view to building a career in museums and archives and are there gaps which could potentially be filled?

> […] if a work organization wants to cultivate civic and social responsibility, it must begin by *recruiting individuals with a genuine interest in those served* […], making clear how the organization's efforts express this interest; and it must foster the workers' genuine interest in the workplace community they have joined. In the best of cases, it would also […] cultivate a broader responsibility for other members of the global community. (2009, p. 307, my emphasis)

Research from the US suggests that the personal ethos of individuals is indeed central to cultivating a socially engaged practice. Based on a longitudinal study of ethical work behaviour in colleges, Jeanne Nakamura found that

Nevertheless, academic education and recruitment are only two factors which play a role in the internal life of an organization. Recalling the need for alignment between words and action, experiences from the UK and Canada show that organizational structure and culture also play a significant part in shaping practice.

9.3.3 Organisational structure

How museums and archives, like any other institutions, are organised and do their work has an impact on their effectiveness, relevance and competence in the context of a socially engaged practice. Drawing on his extensive experience as a museum director in Canada, Janes points out that "unabated hierarchy spells organizational brittleness and a preoccupation with internal agendas" ([1995] 2013a, loc. 355). Moreover, the organisational structure needs to reflect the priorities of the institution's work. There needs to be, Fleming argues, an organisational mind-set which puts the public's needs and expectations at the heart of the museum's purpose:

> The way that museums are structured is a powerful indicator of this mind-set. Structures which indicate that functions such as education, marketing and exhibitions are less important than mainstream collections management functions are likely to be found only in museums that do not take the achievement of social justice too seriously (2012, p. 79).

In the same vein, Butler explains how the financial crisis of the last few years provided the external disruption necessary to "rip the existing structure of the organisation to bits" and allow for a complete restructuring based around the core values of the organisation: "the ethos and values of the organisation is that we do everything with the public. Embedding co-production and learning is absolutely central to the ethos of the organisation". Moving from a traditional structure of collection, learning and exhibition teams, the museum now has teams for co-production, communities & audiences and resources, as well as a Curator of Making, tasked with coordinating the co-productive aspects of the work. Although some staff-members initially resisted the change and some even "chose not to get on the bus", as he put it, Butler points out that one of his contributions towards embedding the change in organisational culture to a more human centred practice has been to make executive decisions about priorities and strategies, based on his own personal values:

> My hobbyhorse is wellbeing and the environment. And that's the change. So I suppose that's the thing I added. I felt that the previous focus was all well and good, but it didn't focus enough on what constitutes a good life and a good

society. So my sort of flavour to the organisation is that. […] None of this is being driven by government. It's driven by us.

(Butler 2016).

Again, both personal motivation and ethos as well as structure and size emerge as factors driving change (or not). So far, Derby museum seems to have succeeded in aligning their ethos and their practice of human centred museum work, conceivably because their relatively modest size has allowed the necessary structural changes as well as enabled them to stay flexible and effective. Time will show whether this organisational model is sustainable.

9.3.4 Organisational culture

As discussed in previous chapters, an aspect of organisational dynamics closely related to structure is that of institutional culture, or institutional habitus, in Bourdieusian terms. Research suggests that an organisational culture which fosters trust and enables open, reflective practice creates commitment across the organisation, which in turn strengthens the effectiveness and resilience of the organisation. A long-term study of the culture in business companies in the US revealed that culture mattered as much as strategy, and that the way businesses treated their workers was critical to their success:

> Hands down, a commitment culture outperformed every other type of management style in almost every meaningful way. […] Employees in commitment firms wasted less time on internal rivalries because everyone was committed to the company, rather than to personal agendas. […] A sense of trust emerged among workers, managers, and customers that enticed everyone to work harder and stick together through the setbacks that are inevitable in any industry (Duhigg 2016, loc. 1958).

Furthermore, experiences from the UK shows that museums which succeeded in creating a culture of trust where it is safe to fail not only cultivated committed employees across the institution, but also saw a strengthening of partnerships with communities (Lynch 2011b, p. 443).

Now establishing the importance of culture to an organisation is one thing, coming up with constructive ways in which to change it is quite another. As Fleming notes on the subject of organisational change in the National Museums of Liverpool:

> One of the hardest things to change in a complex organisation is its culture. What I found when I came to NML was a culture of rivalry and finger pointing, compliance and deference, with a bureaucratic overlay which made decision-making and prioritisation difficult (2012, p. 78).

Exploring some of the underlying factors at play may prove useful in understanding the complexity of organisational culture. Lynch, drawing on research into the dynamics of power, points out that there may be "a subtle and coercive power at work that obscures the view, creating and recreating the hegemony of the museum/gallery as institution, so that those involved feel powerless to really analyse or challenge it" (2011b, p. 444, see also Douglas 1987, p. 91).

Moreover, as this power often is imperceptible to the organization and its members, the challenge to collectively call into question institutional habits of mind becomes even greater. One former curator recounted how the front of house staff at the museum where she worked for a number of years often expressed a great deal of frustration about not being taken seriously:

> They were treated as if they were responsible for dusting the exhibitions in order for us to save money on cleaning staff, at the same time as they were expected to be highly educated and be in charge of guided tours and education programmes. So you did get people who found the challenge too great…and who stopped dusting in protest. […] I think the front of house is really important, because that's where you meet people. […] All the clever stuff we thought we came up with in our section should, I think, have been discussed with more people, not least the educators and guides.
>
> (Tove, senior advisor, ACN, and former curator)

In Liverpool, the management took on the (sometimes painful) challenge of analysing thoroughly all aspects of the institution, from the board of trustees down to the front of house staff. Having defined an active social justice agenda as the main goal for the

museum, they subsequently proceeded to attempt to align the culture with the values, goals and strategies. What had to be created, current director David Fleming explains, was "an organisational culture, or personality, that actively nourishes the social justice agenda" (2012, pp. 77-78). According to Fleming, this required taking concrete organisational measures:

> We knew that we had to raise energy levels, become more extrovert and approachable, demonstrate our capabilities more clearly, show that we cared about what we did. […] We have developed other behaviours that have enabled the pursuit of social justice: we have encouraged respect for all disciplines and functions within NML: there are no elites. We have encouraged supportive management styles (ibid, pp. 77-78).

Judging by the consistent high profile the NML holds in many areas related to social justice, it would seem that the museum has succeeded in creating a sustainable organizational practice enabling the museum to engage actively with their communities and play an active societal role. Indeed, in 2013 the NML was invited to Downing Street for the launch of the Dementia Friends as part of the Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia, based on their work over many years with patients and carers developing the award-winning House of Memories-project where the museum contributes actively to enriching the lives of those afflicted by the disease (Rogers 2013).

9.3.5 Case: The Ryfylke museum

I'd noticed that the museum did active diversity and inclusion work, and that was one of the main reasons I wanted to work here. I remember seeing their work with the International Café described on their website, and me thinking 'wow, what kind of museum in a small village does that sort of thing?'. It was brilliant.

Curator, Ryfylkemuseet

A noteworthy, if rare, example of a Norwegian museum with a long and sustained history of socially engaged practice is the Ryfylke Museum, a regional cultural history museum situated on the southwest coast of Norway in a rural area covering

approximately 30 000 inhabitants. The museum has a long history of engaging actively with their local community, with a particular focus on active inclusion of refugees, migrants, asylum-seekers and other newcomers. In the case of the Ryfylke Museum, there is, and has been for a number of years, a clear congruence between ideology and organisation: both the previous and current directors believe in the museum as an actively engaged member of the local community and have organised their museum practice accordingly. The museum has clearly invested time and energy in (re)defining their purpose, as former director Roy Høibo explains:

> If we are able to see museums as participants in a process where collections, knowledge and capabilities should serve to develop tolerance and cultural competence, museums can become important contributors to a dynamic development of a rural community with a broader horizon and greater resources for a positive future (2016, p. 84).

Moreover, the Ryfylke Museum appears to have aligned its purpose with the needs of the local community, actively responding to the tolling bell, as it were. When describing why the museum is actively and consistently engaged in the inclusion of refugees and immigrants arriving in the village, Høibo explains that in their attempt to define the societal role of the museum, "we have thought that *this is a challenge which concerns us*, and that the role we have developed through almost 20 years can be a foundation on which to build" (Høibo 2016, p. 85, my emphasis).

As the case of the Ryfylke Museum shows, being a socially engaged museum is not only a matter of personal and institutional ethos playing significant role in the shaping of practice, it also concerns the way the different agents and stakeholders perceive the role of the institution itself: whether it can, and should, function as an arena for taking active social responsibility and engaging with society or whether its societal value and role is primarily limited to collection and care of objects on behalf of society.

9.4 A multipronged approach to creating change?

The previous chapters have discussed the interplay between ideas, values, power, structure and culture within such complex entities as organisations. Before drawing together the different analytical strands explored throughout this thesis, it is worth reiterating that even though museums have been the main theoretical and empirical centre of attention, the findings and conclusions are arguably as relevant and applicable in the context of archives. Imbued with a very high degree of legitimacy and trustworthiness, museums and archives have the same power of selection, definition and validation: the power to exclude and include. Hence, it can be argued that they have the same moral obligation to define their role and remit as democratic agents. (cf. 1.5.5.)

This thesis suggests that how museum practice is shaped is contingent on several different individual and organisational factors and the relationship between them. Significantly, there needs to be alignment between the organisation and its ideological underpinning. This alignment needs to extend beyond the organisation, not only from the director to her staff within the museum, but also towards the funders and policymakers, and by extension, the university and research sector.

Consequently, any funding initiative designed to create change needs to take into account that there are indeed different factors affecting practice. Developing the idea and by extension the organisation, requires funding which targets several of these factors both in the short and the long term. The subsequent sections outline some possible directions for future funding.

9.5 Change is bigger than the sum of its parts

As the foregoing analysis has shown, there are contrasting views among the various stakeholders in the field regarding the effect of project funding: some feel the funding enables innovation, whereas others perceive such funding to be a constraining factor hampering long-term work. The funding seems to have not only financial merits in the eyes of its recipients, but also holds significant symbolic value, described in terms of 'moral support'. Whether such funding in reality inhibits change, instead of driving it remains unclear, although the evidence seems to suggest that project funding in and

of itself is not a sufficient incentive to ensure a sustained, value-driven practice. As this thesis has shown, the practice needs to be embedded in the organisation as part of its core value and activity if the museum is to be successful in bridging the gap between project experience and practice: being excessively reliant on short-term project funding seems to be counter-productive to creating lasting institutional transformation.

How then, in practical terms, can funding enable and sustain such a change of practice within a museum? Research from the UK suggests that funders should consider funding *organisational change* in the longer term in addition to the function of providing moral support through project funds.

9.5.1 Lessons from the Our Museum project

Between 2011-2015 the Paul Hamlyn Foundation attempted funding such organisational change through the *Our Museum*-programme, whose aim was to bring about organisational change, not only within museums but also across the museum sector more widely[296].

Focussing particularly on strengthening community participation and engagement with museums, the resulting report identified three main findings, both of which are related to organisational culture and structure:

- Small changes add up: there are a range of areas both within and outside the organisation where changes need to be made
- Participation is a collective responsibility: From the top to the bottom, inside and out, trustees, directors, staff, volunteers, community partners, and funders all have a role in developing a participatory organisation (Bienkowski 2016, p.7)
- Change takes time and patience: embedding any kind of large-scale organisational change in practice demands at least five years "and at least that long before we know if it really is succeeding" (ibid 2016, p. 18)

The latter fact arguably highlights the quandary which both institutions and funders find themselves in, in that most project funding is in its very nature short-term. In the

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[296] http://ourmuseum.org.uk/about/. Accessed on 29.10.2016.

case of the ACN, its project funds were allocated on an annual basis until 2015, when the new three-year programme format was launched. The effect of this change remains to be seen.

The *Our Museum*-report also identified common barriers to embedding a socially engaged practice, such as lack of active commitment from trustees and senior management, conflicting strategic agendas, lack of internal ownership across professional disciplines, lack of imagination (or courage) to attempt to reach new groups, staff resistance or lack of skills, as well as *fear* (Bienkowski 2016, pp. 8-9, my emphasis). The latter is worth taking a closer look at, as it resonates with my own findings in a Norwegian context.

9.5.2   Tackling the fear

One particular issue raised in the *Our Museum*-report is the negative impact that fear can have on organisational life:

> Fear can lead to paralysis and avoidance and be a barrier to change. We have encountered fear related to financial survival, fear of participation as a perceived threat to professional expertise and status, and fear of an uncertain future that change might bring (Bienkowski 2016, pp. 8-9).

Data from the ICOM Norway survey concerning the ethical challenges arising from museums embracing a more active societal role in the Norwegian museum sector published in 2016, suggests that fear is a factor influencing practice. The survey found that one of the main challenges associated with putting contested issues on the museum agenda, aside from lack of managerial support, commitment or skills, was 'a great fear of the reactions of others' (Pabst 2016, p. 26).

From looking at the language used in the survey material, there appears to be three main categories of fear: the fear of being perceived as non-professional, subjective and partisan, the fear of causing controversy and of how others (notably peers) might react, and the fear of being "punished" financially. Some respondents suggested that these issues were part of the organisational culture and as such a management challenge. As discussed in section 6.5.8, one respondent even stated in the survey that it was necessary for the museum to be wary of expressing any opinions

of its own, as it was "part of a large government-owned company", making a clear link between the museum's scope of action and its main funder/owner.

Clearly, this apparent reluctance on the part of museums of running any kind of risk, has a bearing on their professional practice, creating and sustaining a risk-averse internal culture which in turn has a potentially negative impact on their capacity for innovation or indeed resilience to external factors, such as political climate and funding[297] (Lynch 2011b, Duhigg 2016).

These are arguably points worth considering for funding/governing bodies, such as the ACN and the MoC in future revisions of the way they promote development and innovation in the museum and archive sector.

9.5.3 Cultivate a reflective practice

Based on research from the UK, Lynch suggests that one crucial key to changing practice is to foster an ethical self-awareness within the individuals working in museums through what she describes as a *"reflexive practice that focuses on the relations between people* rather than the relations between people and a resource given out by the institution"* (2013, loc. 5612, my emphasis, see also Verducci 2009, p.62).

The case of Glasgow museum, through its participation in the *Our Museum*-project, illustrates how funding can contribute towards cultivating reflective practice. One element which turned out to be crucial to the success of the project was prioritising the development of what was called 'staff buy-in' in order to ensure that the responsibility for community engagement would be shared across the organisation through the Staff Ambassadors programme:

> Very different from traditional training, [the Staff Ambassadors programme] offers opportunities for staff to learn what real, meaningful community engagement looks and feels like. […] *It has changed the way staff across this large and complex organisation understand the purpose of their work* and increased their confidence, skills and knowledge of working in a more

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[297] Indeed, a small study carried among Norwegian directors of cultural institutions in 2016 suggests that there exists such a culture of fear: http://forskning.no/2016/11/offentlige-penger-forer-til-tause-kulturledere/produsert-og-finansiert-av/handelshoyskolen. Accessed on 26.05.2017.

collaborative way with each other and with community partners. Significantly, *it has created staff champions* for participatory work right across the museum (Bienkowski 2016, p. 25, my emphasis).

Hence, by systematically investing in building and enhancing staff competence and engagement over longer periods of time, the project succeeded in changing organisational culture in significant ways, countering and overcoming internal resistance and harnessing the power of a shared vision and goal. Indeed, as other organisational research also shows, fostering (and sustaining) internal and external ambassadors championing the work of the organisation constitutes a powerful resource indeed (cf. Crutchfield & Grant 2012).

9.5.4   Develop competencies and skills

According to Davis, there is currently[298] a distinct lack of research into and literature about the skills and competencies necessary for a museum to develop and sustain a more socially engaged practice. The main focus of the literature rests on the relation between the museum and its different communities, not on the internal relations particular to the specific museum (2008). Furthermore, Davis points out the need to explore more systematically different kinds of structural and development support which could potentially be useful to people involved in socially engaged practice;

> A realistic analysis of the resources – time, funding, collegial support[299] – that new approaches to practice require would also be of value in setting realistic expectations of staff and projects (2008, p. 15).

Moreover, Davis suggests considering how skills and knowledge of professionals in other sectors may be relevant to museum practice, notably concerning community development, social justice or health support (ibid, p. 15). Consequently, a targeted funding of staff development and human resource strategies could possibly constitute a viable option for funders.

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[298] This may conceivably have changed since Davis' review in 2008, but a thorough library search has not yielded any relevant additional material in my case.
[299] I would add 'training' to this list.

9.5.5 Support additional research

Another factor which may be of interest to funders and policymakers to explore further, is the need for additional research into the nuts and bolts of organisational change as it relates to museums and archives and their role in a contemporary Norway. Although there exists a vast body of research onto organisational change as such, little has been done to increase our understanding of how museums as organisations and sites of ideated expression affect and interact with the world around them. And though this project has examined these issues to some extent, much remains to be researched further.

9.6 The noble art of change

In general, this research project has been all about change and how to do it. Resting on the premise that museums have the paradoxical potential to be *both drivers for and barriers to* social change in the world they are a part of, this thesis has looked at how and why change occurs (or not) within and around the microcosm of the organisation itself. Furthermore, it has looked at whether and how development tools such as targeted project funding actually succeeds in bringing about intended change in practice.

Continually negotiating positions, priorities and relations to colleagues, funders, governing bodies and visitors, museum professionals are engaged in a complex balancing act in their professional lives. Elements such as power and values play a part, as do professional identities, academic capital and personal engagement. Ultimately, however, change and its latent potential, seems to be down to individuals and the way they see themselves in relation to their work: the stronger the alignment between ideas, values and purpose from the individual to the workplace, from the director to the staff, the stronger the social impact of the museum. In the GoodWork-project, Verducci found that the best and most ethically responsible workers saw themselves deeply connected to others and their chosen professions:

> For most of the exemplars, this vision motivated them to be socially responsible in their work. They saw their professional lives integrated with their personal lives, and this, we might conclude, is what motivated them to care (2009, p. 62)

Creating change, then, demands a concerted effort from all parties involved. It is not enough to merely increase and redirect public funding: engaged and passionate museum directors need to create organizational resonance around the idea of the museum as an agent for social change. Only thus will museums be able to amplify their social impact and become powerful sources for good. In view of current troubling political tendencies and developments threatening to erode democratic values and basic human rights, there is no time to lose.

Postscript: a small step for museums…

On Monday December 4 2017, Arts Council Norway launched its second cycle of three-year development programmes for the museum sector, one of which was called 'Societal role, power and responsibility' (*'Samfunnsrolle, makt og ansvar'*)[300]. The profile of this particular programme is specifically designed to encourage museums to explore and develop their societal role to an even greater degree, with a special emphasis on critical reflection and participatory methodology. Time will tell whether this shift from one-year to three-year project funding will impact longer term institutional practice in any significant ways. Even so, given the findings in this project, I remain hopeful that even though it may seem to be a small step, it is nonetheless an incremental step in the right direction.

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[300] http://www.kulturradet.no/museum/museumsprogrammene. Accessed on 11.12.2017.

Appendix 1: Interviewees

Primary informants – museum and archive professionals:

Informant 1: ANJA

Female, 59 years, museum conservator, former museum director.
Educational and professional background: archaeology, biology, administration, museum sector.

Informant 2: BJØRN

Male, 36 years, head of museum section.
Educational and professional background: archaeology, journalism, museum sector.

Informant 3: CATHRINE

Female, 48 years, museum curator, head of museum section.
Educational and professional background: anthropology, finance &admin, private sector, museum sector.

Informant 4: DINA

Female, 33 years, museum curator.
Educational and professional background: archaeology, pedagogy, music, museum education, museum sector.

Informant 5: ERIK

Male, 65 years, senior conservator, former museum director.
Educational and professional background: archaeology, museum sector.

Informant 6: FANNY

Female, 59 years, museum director.
Educational and professional background: finance and business, private sector.

Informant 7: GRETA

Female, 53 years, museum curator.
Educational and professional background: social anthropology, museum sector.

Informant 8: HANNE

Female, 44 years, conservator, former museum director.
Educational and professional background: ethnology, history, public sector, museum and archive sectors.

Informant 9: IDA

Female, 40 years, conservator, head of museum section.
Educational and professional background: history of art and textiles, museum sector

Informant 10: JON

Male, 63 years, conservator, former museum director.
Educational and professional background: history, heritage sector.

Informant 11: KRISTER

Male, 39 years, conservator, museum director.
Educational and professional background: ethnology, music, museum sector.

Informant 12: LENE

Female, 53 years, head of section.
Educational and professional background: Nordic languages, information technology. Private and public sectors.

Informant 13: MARKUS

Male, 38 years, project director.
Educational and professional background: history, university sector.

Secondary informants – regional stakeholders:

Informant 14: NILS

Male, 64 years. Chairman of museum board.
Educational and professional background: finance and admin, public sector.

Informant 15: OLINE

Female, 50 years, County Director of Cultural Affairs.
Educational and professional background: political science, public sector.

Informant 16: PIA

Female, 61 years, head of volunteer society.
Educational and professional background: Nordic languages, culture sector.

Informant 17: RENATE

Female, 52 years, head of steering group for project
Educational and professional background: history, archivist, public sector.

Informant 18: SILJE

Female, 49 years, original project director.
Educational and professional background: ethnology, university sector.

Tertiary informants – national stakeholders

Informant 19: TOVE

Female, 41 years, senior advisor, ACN, former museum curator.
Educational and professional background: history, museum sector, public sector.

Informant 20: ULRIK

Male, 50 years, senior advisor, ACN, former museum director and curator.

Educational and professional background: sociology, music, museum sector, public

sector.

Informant 21: VERA

Female, 64 years, senior advisor, ACN.

Educational and professional background: philology, public sector.

Informant 22: YNGVE

Male, 59 years, senior advisor, ACN.

Educational and professional background: history, Nordic languages, museum sector.

Informant 23: THOMAS

Male, 62 years, senior policymaker, MoC

Educational and professional background: social and political science, public sector.

Informant 24: ØYVIND

Male 70 years, retired senior advisor, MoC, former museum director.

Educational and professional background: folkloristics, museum sector.

Informant 25: ÅSE

Female, 64 years, senior advisor, MoC, former museum director.

Educational and professional background: philology, education sector, museum sector.

Other interviews:

Tony Butler, director of Derby Museums and Galleries, UK

Roy Høibo and Anette Opheim, conservators at Ryfylke Museum, Norway

Appendix 2: Interview guide (English translation)

Background information

- Name
- Age
- Origin (native to the region or moved in later)
- Professional background (education, previous career etc.)

Motivation/engagement

- Why did you choose this education?
- Why did you choose this job/area of work?
- How long have you worked at your present place of employment?
- Is it similar to previous jobs you've had?
- Where in the organisation is your job positioned?
- Do you enjoy the work?
- What motivates you?
- Do you feel there is room in the organisation for your engagement?
- Do you feel able to influence your work …?
- … or the work of the museum in general?

Professional scope for action

- Who are the stakeholders in the museum? (Director, management, trustees, staff, volunteer associations?)
- Who exerts the biggest influence? Why?
- Who has the least influence? Why?
- What sort of forum does the museum have for the staff to exchange ideas?
- How does the process from idea to exhibition work?

- If you have an idea for a project, who would you need to convince and how would you go about making your idea reality? (preparatory work, getting management support etc.)
- Is it hard to get your ideas through the system? Why/Why not?

Societal role (as put to museum and archive professionals)

- How do you define the role of museums in society?
- What sort of relation does your museum have to its local community?
- Is the societal role of your museum a point for internal discussions in the museum?
- Is this role reflected in internal strategies and action plans? If yes, in what ways?
- Do you feel that there is internal agreement on how to define and implement the societal role of museums?
- Do you feel there is congruence between the ACN definition and the museum's definition of the role of museums in society?
- Do you feel there is congruence between the museum's definition of its societal role and that of other external stakeholders? (trustees, donors, community etc.)

Societal role (as put to governing/funding bodies)

- How do you define the role of museums in society?
- In general, do you find there is alignment between the definitions of the museums and external stakeholders regarding the societal role of museums?
- What is your impression of the way museums take on their societal role? Have you seen changes in this work over the years?

- In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge for the museums regarding taking on a more active societal role and embrace a more socially engaged practice?
- What do you think it would take for museum to embrace a more socially engaged practice and take on a more active societal role?

External project funding

- What is your experience with ACN project funding?
- What is your experience with the reporting structures related to ACN project funding?
- What sort of impact does this kind of funding have internally? Positive? Negative?
- In your opinion, what sort of support could (possibly from the ACN) could conceivably be helpful in facilitating the implementation of your project ideas?
- In your opinion, what needs to be done in order for the museum to change its praxis towards a more active societal role?

ICOM Norway's survey questions on societal role

The questions themselves were worded in the following way (Pabst 2016, my translation):

- What do you think the role as an active societal agent ('*aktiv samfunnsaktør*') entails?
- Do you agree that it is important for museums to take this role? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, which task is the most important for museums to do within this field?
- How is work with the societal role ('samfunnsrolle') embedded within the organisation?
- Who has (or ought to have) the overall responsibility for how this role is filled? (director, board, the individual staff member)

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