

Museum Think-Tank: Museums and Their Neighbourhoods

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POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów

2020

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POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Museums and Their Neighbourhoods

Museum Think-Tank

In 2020, the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek invited museum professionals from all over Poland, as well as those interested in local community activities to participate in another edition of Museum Think-Tank dedicated, on this occasion, to the Museums and Their Neighbourhoods theme.

What is the *Museum Think-Tank*? It is an initiative led by the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews since 2014. Its main goal is further integration of the Polish museum community and creation of an informal platform for the exchange of inspiration, practical knowledge, experiences, and reflections related to the dilemmas we face on a daily basis. Our purpose is to discover the “nascent” threads, those recurring in discussions, yet still undefined, situated somewhere at the intersections of various museum activities. What characterises each edition of the Museum Think-Tank is the processuality – the detailed agenda of subsequent meetings is formed in the process, in response to threads and discussions that emerge from meetings and the interdisciplinary approach – for more integrated reflection we not only invite museum employees but also practitioners from sectors with which museums cooperate and with which the individual editions overlap (think-tanks are attended by activists, artists, designers, researchers). The topics discussed so far as part of the Museum Think-Tank cycle include: “Participatory Museums” (2014), “Audience Research and Development” (2015), “Museums Against Exclusion” (2016-2017), “Socially Responsible Museums” (2017), “Contemporary Art and Its Role in Museums” (2018-2019), and “Children in Museums” (2019).

Why have we decided to dedicate this year’s edition to the Museums and Their Neighbourhoods theme? Because this topic is not that obvious. It is multi-threaded, not only does it require openness, cooperation and attention towards the museum’s environment and its actors, but also towards one’s own institution. It is worth considering what role or

potential role our museums may play in relation to the neighbourhood – the current residents, the history and the future, as well as the surrounding ecosystem.

During subsequent think-tank meetings dedicated to this topic several dozen participants contemplated how to define “local community” when considering varied local conditions and locations, what cooperation models we could adopt, and how we might build up relationships within neighbourhoods. However, what do we know about local communities and how do we use this knowledge? Is our museum programming created with the needs and cooperation of local communities taken into account? Where are neighbourhood-related activities situated within the structure and priorities of museums? Should we have special units that constantly cooperate with our neighbours? How to create a better common space for meetings and collaboration? How does communication and promotion of neighbourhood activity differ from standard channels? Do museums engage in local challenges, speak out on important local matters, establish partnerships and collaborations with local organisations and, if so, how? How can models of neighbourly cooperation – i.e. local cooperation – address global challenges, such as joint responses to environmental challenges?

The “Museums and Their Neighbourhoods” edition was developed through the cooperation of two museums for which the neighbourhood theme represents an important part of their activity. The POLIN Museum – whose location within the area of Muranów grows out of the history of a neighbourhood that no longer exists, but which exerts significant impact on today’s housing estate (the multi-level history of the estate, its past, present and future is the subject of the “Here is Muranów” exhibition¹ which is currently on display at the POLIN Museum) – and the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek, which, although not officially opened yet, is already one of the most interesting examples of long-term cooperation with the neighbourhood as an equal partner in Polish museology.

It was also a very special edition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social quarantine restrictions coinciding with think-tank discussions. Our neighbourhood-related meetings –

¹ “Here is Muranów”, exhibition at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, June 2020 – March 2021, curator of the exhibition: Kamila Radecka-Mikulicz, the originator of the exhibition and co-author of the concept: prof. Jacek Leociak, co-author of the exhibition concept: Beata Chomętowska.

implying spatial closeness and close relationships – firstly took place entirely virtually and then in a hybrid formula, where only some participants were physically present. Although the discussion revolved around the neighbourhood, not once did we manage to meet with the whole group up close, face to face, and in one place. This paradox, which accompanied our discussions and forced us to seek (and appreciate) other forms of presence and relationships, became emblematic of the social situation taking place all around us – reformulating existing ways of working and shaping new types of coexistence and bonding. This was accompanied by a common experience – even if forced by pandemic restrictions – of “being immersed in localness”, being more “here” and “now”. Therefore, at the back of our minds, we all wondered how this experience may influence our understanding of neighbourliness, how it might reformulate our thinking about our immediate surroundings and our neighbourly relationships – in individual everyday practices and the programming of cultural institutions, particularly museums.

This publication is the voice of the participants of the “Museums and Their Neighbourhoods” think-tank, an attempt to look closer at this issue from different points of view, both cross-sectionally and through case studies.

We shall begin by considering what existing research in Polish museology tells us about the neighbourhood. Despite museums’ insistence on being interested in their immediate vicinity, at the end of the day, local cooperation often does not take a form which the parties involved would find satisfactory, and rarely entails deeper multifaceted relationships. Hence the question – how do others do it, namely: other cultural institutions, for whom, perhaps, local activities form a natural part of their DNA. The Warsaw’s Wola Cultural Centre serves as an example. We shall subsequently look closer at what model of working with the neighbourhood is adopted by the aforementioned Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek, the first in Poland to establish a Local Programmes Department dedicated to working with the neighbourhood, and how the Museum develops neighbourhood participation and a “better common space”. The Podgórze Museum and the Museum of King Jan III’s Palace at Wilanów – referring to the most specific activities for museums, such as creating exhibitions, collections and archives – based on the example of their social initiatives, show how to incorporate the voices of neighbours into museum narratives and establish the most appropriate channels of communication. We shall also take a closer look

at how selected museums decide to play an active role in the neighbourhood in areas and situations beyond their jurisdiction, as well as how they can strengthen the shared responsibility for shaping the local ecosystem within both the institution and the residents. The museum's involvement in social processes requires great attention and sensitivity to the local environment and its evolving reality. Subsequent texts, therefore, raise an issue of conscious planning and conducting of local activities, in relation to the specificity of the neighbourhood, conditions and profile of the institution, as well as the processual nature of gaining "knowledge in action". The publication concludes with an attempt to diagnose how the ongoing pandemic may affect the neighbourhood in the long run – what future awaits us and what changes in neighbourly relations may be more durable. The Code of Good Practices constituting the Appendix to the publication is a record of the collective voice of the participants of the think-tank, presented in the form of a "self-reflective guide". We hope that it will prove useful both for museum professionals who are already developing or deepening activities with their neighbourhood, as well as for those who plan to initiate such cooperation.

However, before I give the floor to the other participants of the Museum Think-Tank, please allow me to show you around my museum – the POLIN Museum – and its attempts at dialogue with the neighbourhood of Muranów.

Here is Muranów

If it were a guided tour, in a nutshell it would sound like this: before the war, the area of Muranów, back then called the Northern District, was inhabited mainly by the Jewish community. Later on, the area became part of the ghetto and was razed to the ground by the Nazis. Then, it became a modernist estate-monument, the author of which, Bohdan Lachert, consciously used the rubble of the ruined city as the building material of a new life. The post-war Muranów was designed as a social housing estate, with the idea of local community embedded in its urban fabric, which, to this day, strongly defines the character of this place.

If we allow ourselves a slightly more detailed archival archaeology of the surroundings of the POLIN Museum, it will lead us to two overlapping maps – contemporary and pre-war, which reveal how Muranów has changed and how untranslatable its past is to the present day. Simultaneously, when getting to know the history of the estate and going deeper into

the Muranów matter, we notice how tightly history and the present are intertwined; a housing estate built of rubble and on rubble, fragments of the past that became the building material for modern life. Excavations, finds, fragments of history that emerge from under the ground, spreading crowns of trees, whose roots are intertwined with the remains of the ghetto.

After the war, despite the housing crisis, some of the new residents of Muranów were reluctant to settle down in this area, perceiving everyday life in the post-ghetto site as too burdensome. The stories about problems with sleep or about dead people walking around the estate are still recounted in stories told by Muranów residents. Nonetheless, not all older residents agree on this and recall an ordinary, happy, fear- and trauma-free childhood spent in the local courtyards. For other Muranów settlers, the prospect of living in new, well-lit and – when compared to the remainder of the post-war infrastructure of Warsaw – comfortable apartments after the hardships of the war turned out to be extremely attractive. Although it was supposed to be a strictly workers' housing estate, the place was also eagerly inhabited by the families of the privileged, officials, and the military, and not without reason.

These various experiences and different perceptions of Muranów are still present in narratives about the character of the place today. There is one more aspect, recovered in today's activities concerning the estate's history, that is important. Muranów, designed after the war to be a housing estate-monument in line with the spirit of modernist architecture was also, from the very beginning, a social housing estate with community inscribed in its urban tissue. During the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) not only was this idea strengthened by social work on the construction site, but also by the demographics of the estate, back then inhabited by numerous families with young children, and by an extensive network of local services and craft workshops. The period of transformation, however, brought about a collapse – some places went bankrupt, some were closed down, and social life was stopped in its tracks to some extent. The human fabric also changed – increasingly the estate was inhabited by the elderly, for whom peace was valued above all else. Muranów was temporarily labelled as Warsaw's "dormitory".

Over the last decades, the estate has been “reawakening” and has entered another stage of transformation. Factors such as urban planning, vast green spaces, numerous parks and squares, and access to light and air are once again appreciated. Spacious courtyards, separated by mounds, gates or steps, are being rediscovered as a friendly living area. The atmosphere of a small town, where people can meet up and deal with everyday matters in their immediate vicinity is widely praised, as is easy access to the amenities of the city centre.

These days, Muranów is one of the most sought-after locations in Warsaw; more and more young people are moving here, increasingly residents are purposefully choosing this location. There is also growing interest in the post-war founding concept of the estate, as well as in discovering the difficult yet interesting history of Muranów. For a dozen or so years, initiatives dealing with the history and present day Muranów have been developing; Stacja Muranów, aimed at energising the social and cultural life of the estate, operates here; the “One Muranów” Foundation, striving to re-establish the historical identity of Muranów, now administratively divided between Wola and Śródmieście boroughs; the “Recipe for Muranów” Partnership, engaging active residents, organisations and institutions, as well as local businesses in joint action for the benefit of the estate. Residents of Muranów are increasingly willing to get involved in matters concerning the local community, they develop initiatives aimed at organising and returning common spaces to the residents (e.g. SOS for Courtyards in Muranów), join in protests against decisions that may negatively affect the life of the estate (e.g. defence of the Krasiński Garden). On top of that, they jointly discuss the issues related to the estate on Internet forums (Forum Muranów). Intergenerational meeting places are being established (“Kawiarnia Międzypokoleniowa”, CAM “Nowolipie” Centre for Intergenerational Activity), and initiatives for the benefit of the excluded and minority groups are being developed (“Mali Bracia Ubogich” Association, Ukrainian House), café-clubs and restaurants incorporate educational and cultural activities into their programmes, including those related to local heritage (e.g. Cafe “PoWoli”, “Jaś i Małgosia” café-club). People from outside the estate have been attracted by supra-local institutions and organisations operating in this area, such as Kino Muranów cinema or Państwomiao café-club which was actively developing at Andersa Street for several years. Large institutions change the nature of this place as well, for instance, the POLIN Museum which,

ever since it was opened, has been attracting crowds of guests from other districts of Warsaw, as well as tourists from all over Poland and abroad.

When we look at the transformations of the estate, we wonder how it will look in the future, whether in a few years or in the next decades. What challenges is this place facing, what are the opportunities and threats?

It is often pointed out that it was both the lack of authentic pre-war buildings and the residential character of the estate that have led to the situation where Muranów does not share the fate of many other post-Jewish districts. When one compares Muranów to, for example, Kazimierz in Kraków, where wide quarters of the original fabric of the pre-war Jewish presence have survived, one becomes aware of a number of threats related to the potential transformation of local heritage into a tourist product and the accompanying phenomena of gentrification or commercialisation. After years of transformations in this area (post-war district of social tenement houses, the subsequent takeover of the district by artists and social activists, Spielberg's film production revealing this place to the general public, renovation of buildings and the development of mass tourism), the residents of Kazimierz were pushed out by tourists, and the apartments were turned into hotels and restaurants, most often stylised in the Jewish style. For several decades now, Kazimierz has been losing the character of an authentic, vivid part of the city, becoming instead an increasingly artificial product, created to satisfy the needs of tourists.

It seems that the Muranów area shall not be a victim of such changes. Its Jewish history, de facto without any material traces, the defined character of a housing estate, the local activity of residents – all of this, as one may assume, ensures its vivacity and prevents it from being turned into an open-air museum. However, it is worth being aware of certain threats that may become challenges in the near future. The revival and “discovery” of Muranów entailed increased commercial entrepreneurship and developers' interest in this area, whose plans often threaten the architecture and greenery of the estate. Increasing tourist traffic gives rise to the expansion of the temporary rental housing market, which results in displacement of permanent residents and the disruption of neighbourly relations. The pandemic will certainly change the balance of forces in local businesses, calling into question the survival of small service providers or estate-based restaurants and cafes contributing to the character of this place.

First encounters

Even before the opening of its premises in 2013, the POLIN Museum raised the topic of local history and tried to introduce itself as an institution to new neighbours. Nevertheless, the beginnings were not easy; the construction site deprived the residents of a significant part of the green square, previously used for recreation and meetings; instead, the construction site, separated by a high fence, became a view that the neighbours situated in the closest proximity could “admire” daily. Therefore, most of the activities prior to the opening of the museum had been geared towards discovering the history of the place, in order to bring closer the thematic relationship of the POLIN Museum with this area and the idea of the emerging institution. The most important activity back then was a temporary “information point”, Ohel – a blue tent, alluding in its shape to the curvilinear walls of the museum building under construction, around which exhibitions, discussions and concerts were organised in 2006-2009, purposed for restoring the memory of the Polish-Jewish history of the place. It was also accompanied by projects aimed at gathering personal stories of residents, related to everyday life in Muranów, such as the collection of private photos and archives under the slogan “My Place in Muranów” in 2012, the end of which was crowned with an open-air exhibition in the Muranów square.

When we opened the museum building in 2013, our neighbours from Muranów were among the first ones who – while being curious about what was hidden within our modern exterior – to visit us during the Open Days. Given we had neither the core exhibition nor the temporary exhibition yet (the permanent exhibition was opened one and a half years later), we offered our guests participation in a variety of ways including discussions, lectures, and meetings. One element of the programme was a simple installation in the museum’s main hall. On a piece of notepaper subsequently attached to a stick, the guests could write their wish for the museum or the needs related to it – what the museum would become, what function it should hold. The sticks were then placed against the curvilinear wall, creating a dense forest of grassroots wishes for this place, symbolically supporting the architectural structure of the museum.

This modest installation, which turned into a space for extremely touching first encounters, carried a strong message: we want to build this very place, this very museum together with our audience, including the immediate surroundings – the Muranów residents with whom

we co-share the estate. Therefore, it was the neighbours whom we invited as the first to visit the heart of the museum in 2014 – the newly opened permanent exhibition, which had been under construction for many years. It was this community to whom special projects were addressed and who had been offered a role in co-creation.

My story

The first diagnoses, which combined external research and internal observations, indicated that numerous Muranów residents did not regard the POLIN Museum as a place where they belonged – it was perceived as a place dedicated to the subject of the Holocaust and intended to host tourists, especially those from abroad. Therefore, over subsequent years we slowly developed our bonds with the neighbourhood, looked for common ground for dialogue, and stepped outside the museum building in our effort to encourage the neighbours to enter. In 2014, we invited Muranów residents to participate in theatre workshops run by Wojtek Ziemilski, the aim of which was to uncover and illuminate the residents' subjective point of view on their housing estate, their attitude to its past, its heritage, but also the future potential. We met with residents in a joint process revolving around the following questions: what is Muranów for me? How is it changing? What stories and places make up my personal map of Muranów? How does the memory of pre-war Muranów (or the lack of it) affect my experience of living in this district? Based on the personal narratives of Muranów residents, the "Muranów 2014" spectacle was created, in which the stories' authors also acted as performers.

This direction – making the POLIN Museum stage available to work with individual memories and stories related to the estate – was repeated several times, in different forms and while focusing on different topics. This was served, among others, by the project "Muranów: Polyphonies" (2015, 2016), run by artists Patrycja Dołowy and Maria Porzyc, who met each other to share experiences and stories of various generations of Muranów residents and regular visitors to the estate. The first edition was focused on how residents perceived the emergence of the museum within the Muranów area and how it changed their personal experience. The second edition was dedicated to individual stories related to Zamenhofa Street, both pre-war and present. On the basis of storytelling and listening workshops, discovering small stories and archival materials related to them, Muranów

residents created a performative lecture delivered by many voices, accompanied by visualisations and live music, and attended by families and relatives, but also a wider audience.

A museum without walls

Another stream of neighbourly activities have been the initiatives undertaken by the POLIN Museum going beyond the premises of the museum, in our area. These activities include, among others, neighbourhood picnics organised on a regular basis in the green square next to the museum or the Leśmian's Meadow – a special green space created next to the institution's building, with a summer programme of cultural and sports events addressed to our closest neighbours, as well as residents across Warsaw. An important moment for the development of field activities was the establishment of the local partnership "Recipe for Muranów" in 2017, which the museum has been part of from the very beginning. There is actually an interesting story related to the set-up of the partnership. Following a number of discovery meetings with Muranów-based organisations, building administrators and active residents, the museum had originally planned to build a community helping it design activities in close cooperation with its neighbours. The launch of this initiative, accompanied by a programme of events co-organised by Muranów-based organisations, institutions and neighbours took place in March 2017, as the inauguration of the neighbourhood initiative "Recipe for Muranów". Coincidentally, simultaneous talks inspired by the "One Muranów" Foundation regarding establishment of a local partnership were also underway. When we compared our plans, it turned out that we had common goals, so we decided to join forces and create one initiative – the local partnership "Recipe for Muranów", which has been rapidly developing ever since. This initiative has carried out numerous joint activities bringing together, in this informal structure, Muranów-based organisations, local businesses, institutions, and restaurants, as well as residents wishing to get involved in the affairs of their estate.

Together with the partnership, the museum organised, among other things, a competition aimed at supporting neighbourhood initiatives Our Muranów, which resulted in the fulfilment of five initiatives, proposed and curated by Muranów residents. Every year, the

partnership also co-organises the estate-based celebration of the *Muranów Festival*, the neighbourly Muranów Christmas party, the “Courtyard Painters” campaign fighting against offensive graffiti, or more recently a series of outdoor murals “Children of Muranów”. Together with organisations in the partnership, the museum also runs the “Wandering University of Muranów”, which is a cycle of open lectures and city walks. The idea behind these meetings combines discovering new threads in Muranów’s history and present while getting to know the estate and its meeting places. The University wanders the streets of Muranów and pays visits to local institutions, organisations and cafés. Shortly, as part of the new edition of the “Wandering University of Muranów”, the residents of the estate will become local guides, while the classic Muranów sightseeing routes described in official publications, will be supplemented by individual paths of discovering the estate, proposed by our neighbours.

Artivism

Some of the projects carried out by the POLIN Museum within Muranów are of an artistic nature, some of them – with an activist, intervention dimension. An example of this may be, for instance, the sound walk “The Muranów Lily”, realised in cooperation with the Canadian artist Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay, who shows the area around the museum by means of narration and sound, where history and fiction intertwine in a suggestive way as they create a new Muranów legend.² Together with the CENTRALA project group and the Turkish artist, Aslı Çavuşoğlu, we carried out The Cut project – an archaeological excavation at 2B Karmelicka Street, during which we looked deep into the Muranów earth, temporarily exposing the fragmentary traces of the past which are ordinarily hidden under layers of soil. This ephemeral – yet extremely material – intervention in the tissue of Muranów became a pretext for initiating a social dialogue with the estate’s residents about the forces that destroy and shape our city.³ Neither did we steer away from other difficult topics.

² See more: Dariusz Brzostek, “A Lily is a Lily, is a Lily, is a Lily...? Voice(es) of the Body”, in: *Presence/Absence/Traces. Contemporary Artists on Jewish Warsaw*, eds. Ewa Chomicka, Agnieszka Pindera, Warsaw 2016, pp. 127-133.

³ See more: Jerzy Elżanowski, “Domesticating Violence: Notes from a Socio-Spatial Incursion into Warsaw’s Anthropogenic Stratum”, in: *Presence/Absence/Traces...*, op. cit., pp. 171-181.

Together with Hubert Czerepok, we put up “The Fence of Hatred”, a temporary installation on one of the squares of Muranów, composed of hate speech inscriptions forged in steel, taken from the walls of Polish cities. In Czerepok’s work, the materialisation of hateful slogans drew attention to the reality of the problem, where we just walk past them in the street without noticing them.⁴ It was difficult to ignore “The Fence of Hatred” – many people perceived the installation positively, as they believed that it raised a serious problem that should be talked about, yet many people criticised the installation, often outraged by the multiplication of offensive slogans. For some time, the installation was covered with a sheet bearing the inscription “Down with this chutzpah” by an unknown author, and then someone else – also an unknown author – took the sheet off. Some people interacted directly with the installation, trying to destroy it by bending the steel bars. Inasmuch as we managed to achieve the goal of stimulating a lively social discussion about the spread of hate speech in the public space and about how to effectively combat it, looking at this case from a broader perspective of activities with the neighbourhood, it revealed a lot of pitfalls that we have been more alert to since then. As it turned out, many neighbours living in the vicinity of the square where the installation was set up did not know anything whatsoever about our campaign (the information delivered to the mailboxes did not bring the desired result); many had no chance to find out (the information about the project situated next to the installation was subject to constant devastation); and very few took advantage of the invitation to a workshop delivered by the artist, which served as an introduction to his artistic practice and his way of working with the problem of hate speech. Visible resistance expressed by the residents of Muranów, which was aroused by this artistic statement, was quite a lesson for us to look for more open and public exhibition spaces for provocative, intervention projects, relating to universal challenges, or – if for some reason we consider a local location as the most reasonable one, to devote sufficient time and effort to preparatory talks and consultations with the neighbourhood.

Muranów exposures

The realisation of the *Here is Muranów* exhibition at the POLIN Museum in 2020 made it possible to highlight the mutual ties between the museum and its neighbourhood even

⁴ See more: Waldemar Kuligowski, “Habitual Hatred. Inscriptions on Walls and the Crisis of Society”, in: *Presence/Absence/Traces ...*, op. cit., pp. 141-149.

more intensively. It also opened up new opportunities for establishing cooperation with residents of the estate. However, 2020 was not the easiest; not only has the pandemic crisis influenced the postponement of the opening of the exhibition, but has also forced multiple revisions of the earlier action plans with the residents of Muranów. Some activities that we managed to implement took on some additional meanings due to the specific context of the pandemic. This is what happened, for example, with the “Mantra for Muranów” project, which we prepared during the social quarantine period with the POLIN community choir under the leadership of the composer Wojtek Blecharz. “Mantra for Muranów” is a kind of sound meditation, a musical walk, fragments of which were specifically designed for particular spaces of the unique POLIN museum building. The composition – in preparation of which several dozen people were involved – was created in this difficult time of uncertainty and social isolation, when we could not meet in the museum to see and hear each other in person. When the hygiene restrictions eased in late spring and meetings subject to restrictions became possible again, we began to gradually introduce the composition to the museum building – back then still closed to the public, quiet, and in a deep pandemic sleep. The premiere of “Mantra for Muranów”, which took place live to a limited audience in June 2020, carried additional meaning. It became sound-induced solace that not only enveloped Muranów and its difficult history, but also the performers, and listeners – with a fresh, strong and, for some, overwhelming experience of remoteness and isolation. The libretto of the work was partly based on good thoughts for Muranów (travel, greenery, air, closeness, smile, touch, harmony, lightness, solace, tenderness, oxygenation, blue sky, durability), created by participants of the project and translated into notes by the composer. Given that the premiere of the work had taken place before the postponed opening of the “Here is Muranów” exhibition, the ephemeral composition, resounding around various parts of the POLIN Museum, became a kind of transition between the pandemic closure and re-opening of our building, an introduction to the re-creation of the communal space and to the launch of broader conversations and debates about Muranów’s history following the opening of the exhibition.

The “Here is Muranów” exhibition also opened up a space for introducing the voices of Muranów residents into the space of the institution in the most classic museum form of expression, i.e. exhibiting artefacts. Therefore, we invited Muranów residents to co-create a

social installation accompanying the exhibition, which consists of family memorabilia, documents, photographs, objects, and any other material artefacts which the residents deem meaningful in their personal intertwinings with the history of the estate. Each and every artefact is connected with a personal commentary - individual memories related to the distant and more recent past or even present of the estate. The installation, located in the main hall of the museum, gazes through a huge window at Muranów. It is to gradually expand as the exhibition continues, thus harvesting new stories and voices of the estate.

The thread of working with personal collections associated with the “Here is Muranów” exhibition, was realised by us also in a different way, you might say, an alternative way. As part of one of the projects, we invited participants to depart from the traditional understanding of the “archive” as a collection of material artefacts, in favour of searching for our individual and ancestral experiences and sensory encounters that are recorded somewhere within our bodies. In the process led by choreographers Weronika Pelczyńska and Magdalena Fejdasz, residents of Muranów as well as people from “outside” interested in the history of the estate, tried to first find an individual story kept within the body, and then create a common story about how we experience space and place. The search for “embodied history” again overlapped with the re-closure of cultural institutions. Therefore, we decided to transfer the choreographic work onto a virtual platform, with the idea that since the period of social isolation forces us to be close to our own bodies and sensations – this type of practice, at this very time, may prove to be particularly valuable to the participants. The stage of concluding the “Muranów: Body Archive” project, i.e. creating an experimental video from individual corporeal stories staged in the space of the closed Here is Muranów exhibition had a special significance: the temporarily dormant exhibition was revived, individual gestures of performers allowed exhibition components to resound differently, while bodily stories introduced dynamics into the existing form of the exhibition, opening the space up for new meanings.

Both our own observations and external research carried out by the students of sociology at the University of Warsaw before the launch of the Here is Muranów exhibition show that as an institution we managed to gain greater trust from the neighbourhood, build up a greater level of identification with the mission of our museum, and increase positive perception of the presence of the POLIN Museum in the housing estate, as well as encourage more

residents of Muranów to cooperate with us. However, all these are long-term processes which require patience, successive drawing of conclusions, mindfulness, and openness to the voices of others. We still have a lot to do in terms of discovering and expanding the potential of good neighbourliness.

The “Here is Muranów” exhibition – by far the strongest such accent when it comes to the POLIN Museum’s taking up of local topics – is still ongoing and new activities associated with it are still ahead of us. After its closure, we will try to further develop cooperation with the neighbourhood of Muranów, as before: discovering the history of the place together, diagnosing its present and writing scenarios for tomorrow. We will also try to draw conclusions based on previous activities, involve residents in cooperation, and openly respond to the challenges of the present. One might say this is nothing new, and yet each time is somehow different and fresh.

Ewa Chomicka

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Beata Nessel-Łukasik

The Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów

View from the Window

A sunny, autumn afternoon in Rome. A short walk to the Museo dell'Ara Pacis, i.e. the Altar of Peace at Lungotevere in Augusta, to the place where the first modern building in the historical centre of the Eternal City was built to protect and make the monument accessible to the public.⁵ Today, it is one of the museums where, thanks to the architectural solutions applied - huge windows - the past merges with the present in a sensual, visual experience and stimulates reflection on the relationship between such spaces and their surroundings.

However, working with what we see through the window, i.e. the neighbourhood, is not a new direction for museums. The idea of an eco-museum or a model of an institution involving participants, including neighbours, in various types of activities - these are formulas that have been developed by museum professionals for several decades now.⁶ This

⁵ The Museo dell'Ara Pacis was designed by an American architect Richard Meier. It was opened on 23 September 2005.

⁶ More about eco-museums: Georges Henry Rivi re, "The ecomuseum – an evolutive definition," in: *Museum*, Vol. 37, no 4, pp. 182-183; *Museums and Identities. Planning an Extended Museum* (the "Muzeologia" series, Vol. 20), ed. Dorota Folga-Januszewska, Martina Lehmannov , Jasna Gaburov , Elke Kellner, Pawe  Jaskanis, Warsaw 2019, the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilan w. More about the idea of a participatory museum: Nina Simon, "The Participatory Museum", 2010, <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/>. More about the social role of museums, e.g. in: "Laboratorium muzeum. Spo eczno  ", ed. Anna Bana , Aleksandra Janus, Warsaw 2015, the Museum of Warsaw; El bieta Nieroba, "Pomi dzy dobrem wsp lnym a elitarno ci . Wsp łczesny model muzeum", Opole 2016, Uniwersytet Opolski.

is why, on the wave of both infrastructural⁷ and programme⁸ developments, there are more and more places on the map where such practices can be encountered. Nevertheless, these are rarely changes that are permanently reflected in the programme of a given museum or even less so in its structure.⁹

In many cases, museums, as institutions which collect and make available various types of collections, tend to be associated with a centripetal movement (visiting exhibitions, guided tours and other meetings in museum or virtual spaces), rather than with activities carried out around the institution or creating relations and rooting it in its surroundings. Hence the question: “What kind of neighbours are today’s museums?” is still open and relevant. This generates, among other things, the need for research and initiation of various activities outside the museum.

As far as audience research is concerned, a relatively recent attempt to fine-tune the scope of issues resulting from raising such a question was the research carried out by the National

⁷ Since 2004, a great variety of investments have been made in Poland, which have led to the fact that in many places architecture has begun to exert a significant influence on the museum experience and thus create a space for discussion about the institution’s relationship with its surroundings. An example of such an educational museum complex can be the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów, opened in 2020. Changes of a similar nature that took place in the landscape of museums were also undertaken due to the modernisation of institutions located in historic buildings, e.g. the Princes Czartoryski Museum in Krakow (opened in December 2019) or because of the presentation of completely new arrangements of permanent exhibitions, as exemplified by the reconstruction of the Gallery of Medieval Art in the National Museum in Warsaw (opened in December 2013).

⁸ On Polish forums, discussions concerning the directions of changes in the social roles of the museum translate into concrete programme changes both in metropolitan institutions (the “I am Kraków” programme implemented by the Kraków Museum, the “Personal Museum” programme implemented by volunteers at the National Museum in Warsaw, and the “#naszemuzeum” project of the Silesian Museum in Katowice [Sybilla 2018]: management]), as well as other places (the programme “Sopocianie” of the Museum of Sopot [Sybilla 2013: education], the programme “I’m standing in front of some bizarre trumpet” of the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów [Sybilla 2018: education, a honorary mention], “Wdzydzanie” a publication of the Teodora and Izydor Gulowski Kashubian Ethnographic Park Museum in Wdzydze Kiszewskie).

⁹ An example of changes in the museum structure resulting from taking up the neighbourhood theme is the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów, where in 2020 the Local Programmes Department was created and the Kraków Museum which, following the implementation of the I am Kraków project, created a one-person post to monitor the relations of individual departments of the museum with its surroundings.

Institute for Museums and Public Collections (NIMÓZ). As the 2017 research demonstrated, one of the least recognisable groups of visitors were precisely the people from the closest vicinity of a given institution,¹⁰ whose needs were the least known to the museum staff.¹¹ Quantitative [N: 161] and qualitative research [N: 50] of this audience carried out a year later developed this issue and broadened the spectrum of the subject.¹²

Firstly, the results of an Internet survey [N: 146] conducted as part of the second edition of the study showed that the local range of influence of a given institution is as important as the regional and national range [67.12 percent] or even the most important [38.36 percent]. Therefore, in many of the institutions involved in these studies, employees cooperate both with the City Hall [87.63 percent] and other institutions or organisations [97.95 percent]. However, this does not mean that this is an area of deep and multi-faceted relations. As shown by the results of the open questions included in the 2018 online survey, in most cases it boils down to the issue of promotion and popularisation of the programme of a given institution [75.34 percent], raising funds for its activities [68.49 percent] or assistance in the organisation of events [60.96 percent], and only in one third of cases it translates into joint design and implementation of activities [32.19 percent], although they are usually the best platform for building local partnership networks and deepening the institution's roots in the social fabric.

Secondly, both the results of the quantitative research and the qualitative research published in the 2018 report have highlighted the fact that, despite the many benefits of cooperating with local authorities, institutions, organisations and neighbours, there are still

¹⁰ In an online survey carried out in 2017 in the case of the question: "How do you define the audience of your museum?", only 3 percent of the respondents chose answer no 5: "Persons who walk past the museum" [N: 63]. See: Piotr T. Kwiatkowski, Beata Nessel-Łukasik, *Publiczność muzeów w Polsce. Badania pilotażowe. Raport* [The audience of museums in Poland. Pilot studies. Report], the National Institute for Museums and Public Collections, <https://nimoz.pl/dzialalnosc/projekty/publicznosc-muzeow/publicznosc-muzeow-w-polsce-badania-pilotazowe-raport-2017.html> (accessed: 29.10.2020).

¹¹ Ibid., p. 22 and 41.

¹² Piotr T. Kwiatkowski, Beata Nessel-Łukasik, *Muzeum w społeczności lokalnej. Raport*. [Museums in their local communities. Report], Warsaw 2018, <https://nimoz.pl/dzialalnosc/projekty/publicznosc-muzeow/publicznosc-muzeow-w-polsce-muzeum-w-spolecznosci-lokalnej-raport-2018.html> (accessed: 29.10.2020).

many barriers to the development of such museum activities. This negative influence on the scope and form of social impact of institutions in the local ecosystem results from other entities being unaware of the museum's goals or programme and the model of cooperation with the environment being poorly defined. Therefore, as a solution to these problems, the respondents indicated above all the need to improve mutual communication, e.g. through regular meetings with various types of stakeholders¹³ and the need for the parties to set common goals, together with a clear division of competences among the stakeholders.

Today, the aforementioned report prepared by sociologists for the National Institute for Museums and Public Collections may serve as a starting point for designing such changes in the activities of museums. However, this does not mean that it includes all options and solutions. The variety of programmes and internal structures of institutions and the diversity of the eco-systems in which they operate on a daily basis, as well as the multiplicity of surrounding communities still makes it impossible to develop a single model for building relationships between a given museum and its surroundings.¹⁴ Therefore, despite the fact that museum staff have been deepening their knowledge of new directions in developing the social competences of their institutions, each case of expanding the local range of influence of a museum must be considered separately. Only once research in the actual environment of a given institution and an analysis of the experiences of its staff are carried out, can such a framework for "affirming a sense of community, nurturing old bonds and creating new social relationships"¹⁵ cohesive with the programme of this very institution and its specific location in the landscape be properly outlined.

The local community, i.e. residents, vernissage goers, regulars, enthusiasts, hardcore visitors, volunteers and others on the one hand, and the multitude of types of museums, the specificity of the bodies governing them and the different nature of the collections and the programme on the other hand, make the process of relationship-building different and specific to a given place, and presents museum professionals with different challenges and

¹³ Such meetings are organised e.g. by the Józef Mehoffer Turek Municipal Museum or the Castle Museum in Malbork.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 54–57. As part of the summary of the research, the authors of the report identified seven types of good practices.

¹⁵ Sławomir Czarnecki et al., *Poszerzenie pola kultury. Diagnoza potencjału sektora kultury w Gdańsku*, Gdańsk 2012, p. 42.

barriers to overcome. Sometimes the effectiveness of these actions depends on funds or human resources,¹⁶ and sometimes it depends on infrastructure or transport solutions.¹⁷ Therefore, such activities should always be accompanied by a research process which will facilitate the selection of appropriate methods and tools for building social capital and developing the idea of a museum with extended competencies.

The programme of the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek is a good example confirming the validity of the assumptions and effectiveness of such a model of operation. Today, there is no longer any doubt that the idea of a relational museum,¹⁸ which has been developed by this institution for several years now, would not have brought such tangible results if it had not been preceded by the work of various research teams and verified in light of research results as the museum settled in and built its relationship with the local community.¹⁹ It was the participation of sociologists, anthropologists and ethnographers in these activities that facilitated partnership network building and multidirectional, synchronised activities, which resulted in both an extension of the social impact of the museum and a change in its structure.²⁰

Whether other museums should also move towards the idea of a relational museum depends, however, on their identity, strategy and development directions. The model that was developed in Sulejówek is an important point of reference today in the area of activities in the local ecosystem, which is not necessarily suitable for every other museum and environment. Therefore, the first step that should be taken by institutions which care

¹⁶ Piotr T. Kwiatkowski, Beata Nessel-Łukasik, *Museums in their local...*, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁷ The basic barriers of this type include: lack of a museum in the immediate vicinity [46 percent] or access to it [23 percent]. More in: Marek Nowacki, "Bariery zwiedzania atrakcji turystycznych na przykładzie muzeów i instytucji paramuzealnych," in: *Turyzm* 2015, no 1, p. 38.

¹⁸ Janusz Byszewski, Beata Nessel-Łukasik, "Muzeum relacyjne. Przed progiem / za progiem," in: *Muzeologia. Nowe miejsca*, vol. 1, Sulejówek 2020.

¹⁹ The museum team in this process was first accompanied by sociologists from the Society of Creative Initiatives "ę" (2013), and then by lecturers and students from the Maria Grzegorzewska University (2014-2015), researchers implementing the Explore Culture programme of the Mazovian Culture Institute (2016) and Kolektyw Badawczy research group (2018-2020).

²⁰ In 2020, the first Local Programmes Department in Poland was established at the Józef Piłsudski Museum. Its goal is to continue the process of cooperation with the local community and expand the scope of the institution's influence in its local ecosystem.

about building relationships with the local community and taking root in their social fabric, regardless of the circumstances, is to take a closer look at what can be seen through the windows of the museum. What is next door? What does this mean and what could this change? Why? Careful observation of the surroundings, stepping outside and listening to what is going on around the museum is always a good starting point both for the research process²¹ and for a series of activities aimed at building the institution's relationship with its surroundings.²²

Beata Nessel-Łukasik PhD

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²¹ More about research methods and tools in: Piotr T. Kwiatkowski, Beata Nessel-Łukasik, "ABC Badania publiczności w muzeum", Warsaw 2018.

²² Examples of such activity include "The Plurality of Realities" project at the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów (2nd prize at the Warsaw Exchange of Educational Projects 2019) or "Local Museum Ideas" run by the Royal Łazienki Museum.

Artur Trojanek

Wola Cultural Centre

An Open Cultural Institution - What Does That Mean? Examples from the Wola Cultural Centre

Community centres are institutions that carry out social and cultural activities by providing the residents of a given area, district, municipality or region with a cultural programme, education and entertainment in the broadest sense. The overriding aim is also to build social relationships, which should be based on openness to the needs of the residents and common trust. A community centre is usually the first cultural institution that young people encounter in their lives, when taking part in a workshop or performance with their school. Sometimes, they will perceive other cultural institutions through the prism of the impression this place had made on them.

It can be said that cooperation with the local community and the constant building of mutual relationships are part of every community centre's mission. Can the experiences of community centres and various models of working with their neighbours become a reference point for museums looking for ways to cooperate with their immediate surroundings? Certainly not all experiences or possibilities of these two types of facilities are common, but there are also many areas in which we can learn from each other to develop our programmes more consciously.

In the text, I will use the example of the Wola Cultural Centre (WCK) in Warsaw, for which community building and relationships between the recipients and the institution are the main aspects of socio-cultural projects. We can distinguish roughly four types of such activities:

1. Projects implemented by the residents themselves and hosted by a cultural institution with the support of an event planner. A model example, which was realised by the Wola Cultural Centre, was "Martinique Through the Eyes of a Researcher". The exhibition presented various photographs of the French overseas

department, whose history and culture lie within the professional interests of one of the district's inhabitants. The photos presented did not focus on their artistic value, but served an educational function by showing the culture and traditions of the island. The exhibition was accompanied by authentic souvenirs and the author's history and research-based texts. The exhibition even attracted the attention of a Martinique citizen permanently residing in Warsaw.

This event has proven that exceptional specialists and knowledgeable individuals happy to share their experiences with others, may live in the immediate vicinity of the institution. They may also happen to be the specialists we are looking for when organising current events.

2. Projects implemented jointly by a cultural institution and residents, where the leader of the activity may be either the institution or the resident. Such an example is the Social University of the History of Wola, which is a series of Varsavianist meetings with particular emphasis on the history of the Wola district, organised by the Association of the Wawelberg Settlement Residents and Friends. The organisers of the meetings invite social scientists, renowned historians, specialists, and often give interesting lectures themselves. As part of the cycle, for example, the project "Lutherans Yesterday and Today" was carried out together with the Evangelical-Augsburg Holy Trinity Parish. An exhibition devoted to Evangelical families associated with Wola was brought from the History Meeting House, several lectures on Evangelical entrepreneurs and famous families were held and two concerts of choirs affiliated with the parish were organised. Another noteworthy project organised cyclically by this Association is the Hipolit and Ludwika Festival, i.e. the "Wawelberg Settlement Festival", where one of the WCK seats is located ("Otwarta Kolonia" Local Activity Centre). Because of the mutual cooperation, partnership discussions and openness to ideas, two large exhibitions were realised during the Festival in 2019 and 2020: "Kora's Madonnas", an exhibition of the figures of the Virgin Mary, painted by the legendary Maanam singer, and the exhibition "Szymborska's Views", presenting the poet's personal souvenirs, on loan from the Wisława Szymborska Foundation. Each exhibition attracted around a thousand visitors, from Warsaw and beyond. It is worth emphasising that the entire Festival is an initiative of the residents themselves.

3. Projects implemented by an institution, but based on the knowledge and sources provided by the residents. An example of such an activity is a participatory exhibition entitled “The Museum of Glass Houses”, operating at the Social Centre on Obozowa Street. Field research walks and employee duty hours made it possible to collect commemorative photos and documents and record stories of the residents about the Koło estate. As a result, an exhibition devoted to three housing estates - TOR, WSM Koło II and BGK - was created in 2018. To respond to the need to continue the project, and thanks to the involvement of several guardians of local history, another exhibition was opened in 2020. It was entitled: “In Search of the Social Housing Estate Idea”, which continued the previous exhibition, but approached the Koło estate from a slightly different perspective. Thanks to the information obtained from the residents, it was possible to gather knowledge not available in any publications or archives.
4. Projects implemented by an institution, but aimed at integrating the community, building relationships with the residents and encouraging involvement in its functioning. In the seat of WCK at Działdowska Street, there is a neighbourhood café, which apart from serving as a “waiting room” is primarily a place dedicated to the residents. You can help yourself to free coffee or tea brought by others or you can bring some yourself. There are board games that you can play with your friends. There are also creative workshops and cookie baking events organised by neighbours. Peer lessons are also very popular i.e. help with learning provided by volunteers and retired teachers who have been meeting in the community centre for years. It is also possible to organise a birthday party with the help of event planners and other residents (there have already been several such events). The café is connected to the community garden, which has a separate entrance from the street.

Cooperation with the local community is also an opportunity to start neighbourhood volunteering initiatives. The closest neighbours should be the first users of an institution, because by being part of a housing estate, the institution builds the identity of a given town or village together with residential buildings and the entire infrastructure. When people feel good in a given place, they will come with others and promote it among their family and friends. There are several models for volunteering:

- educational, i.e. the volunteer conducts classes, workshops, shares his or her knowledge by giving lectures, writing an article for social media,
- event planning, i.e. support for the institution when carrying out activities at outdoor events,
- organisation, i.e. assistance with the organisation of events,
- active, i.e. playing one's own concert, organising a screening of one's own films, presenting one's own work at an exhibition,
- exploratory, i.e. the resident, with the help of an event planner, looks for a suitable path of cooperation.

NGOs formed by the community are also partners. Associations and foundations may be looking for partnerships of a different nature, e.g. they may need space to organise their own cultural projects or those financed by grants. Often, when submitting grant applications in partnerships, organisations declare non-financial contributions, such as venue, equipment or technical and promotional support of cultural institutions. These resources can be found in institutions, but first their approval needs to be obtained. Institutions also have their audience who may become the recipients of the planned event, thus guaranteeing visitor numbers for the applicant organisation. Of course, it is possible that a given activity would fail to engage participants, as even the best concept may not respond to the needs of a given local community and turn out to be a failure. Often, event specialists from an institution provide substantive support to external project organisers.

The mission of an open institution is to support residents (including those associated in informal groups, NGOs, local partnerships) in undertaking and implementing their own projects. This is also done by encouraging residents to organise their own cultural events, share their knowledge and skills by conducting workshops, playing concerts, giving lectures or displaying their photographs or paintings at exhibitions. Single people who seek contact with other people can come to the cultural centre and meet their neighbours and friends or read a book or do crosswords in silence in dedicated spaces. Among those frequently looking for friendly venues are bridge players, who, incidentally, tend to be very interesting individuals. It should also be borne in mind that openness must be reciprocal, i.e. an activity

carried out by an active resident must be free and accessible to others, and not just for private groups.

In Warsaw, there is a network of more than one hundred local activity centres (MALs), which include cultural institutions, NGOs, housing cooperatives and private cafeterias. These places can become hosts for the activities referred to above. Local activity centres may function within:

- a) a space entirely dedicated to neighbourly activities, in the form of a separate room in an institution or a separate branch,
- b) a space that becomes the local activity centre at particular times of day and week,
- c) the whole space of an institution, which is entirely open to neighbourly activities.

Residents must be allowed to influence the space that is dedicated to their activities. The appearance of the space, the arrangement of furniture, the colour of the walls are all factors that can have a significant impact on building relationships and encouraging people to visit the institution. Let them leave their own mug, encourage them to bring coffee to the neighbourly kitchen, tell them that they can bring cake to the event, do not make the messages too formal. Let us encourage people to organise their own events, workshops, birthday parties open to everyone. Thanks to the creation of a sense of trust and good relations, there will be more and more initiatives from the residents. This year's example can be the action of sewing masks, for which the residents managed to obtain funds from the Neighbourhood Society. Let us try and trust others, and they will trust us and become good partners.

Artur Trojanek

Cultural expert, museologist, cultural manager, graduate of the Institute of Art History and the Institute of Classical Philology and Cultural Studies at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. He works in the Events and Cultural Projects Department of the Wola Cultural Centre in Warsaw, where he mainly coordinates the "Otwarta Kolonia" Local Activity Place, organizes the exhibitions of local artists and non-governmental organizations, and implements social and cultural projects, such as "Light-sensitive modernism", "Mobile music scene", "Days of Belarusian and Ukrainian culture", as well as "Musical kid". A

member of the curatorial team of the exhibition entitled “In Search of the Social Housing Estate Idea”. He also cooperates with NGOs on artistic, multicultural and exhibition projects.

Olga Ślifirska

The Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów

Better Common Space – Practices of Cooperation and Sharing

Where does a museum begin and where does it end? Is a museum nothing more than its collection? Or is it just a set of different objects of intellectual, cultural or historical value? Is it a set of paintings, photographs, clippings, sculptures or other items that bear witness to something or tell the story of an artefact?

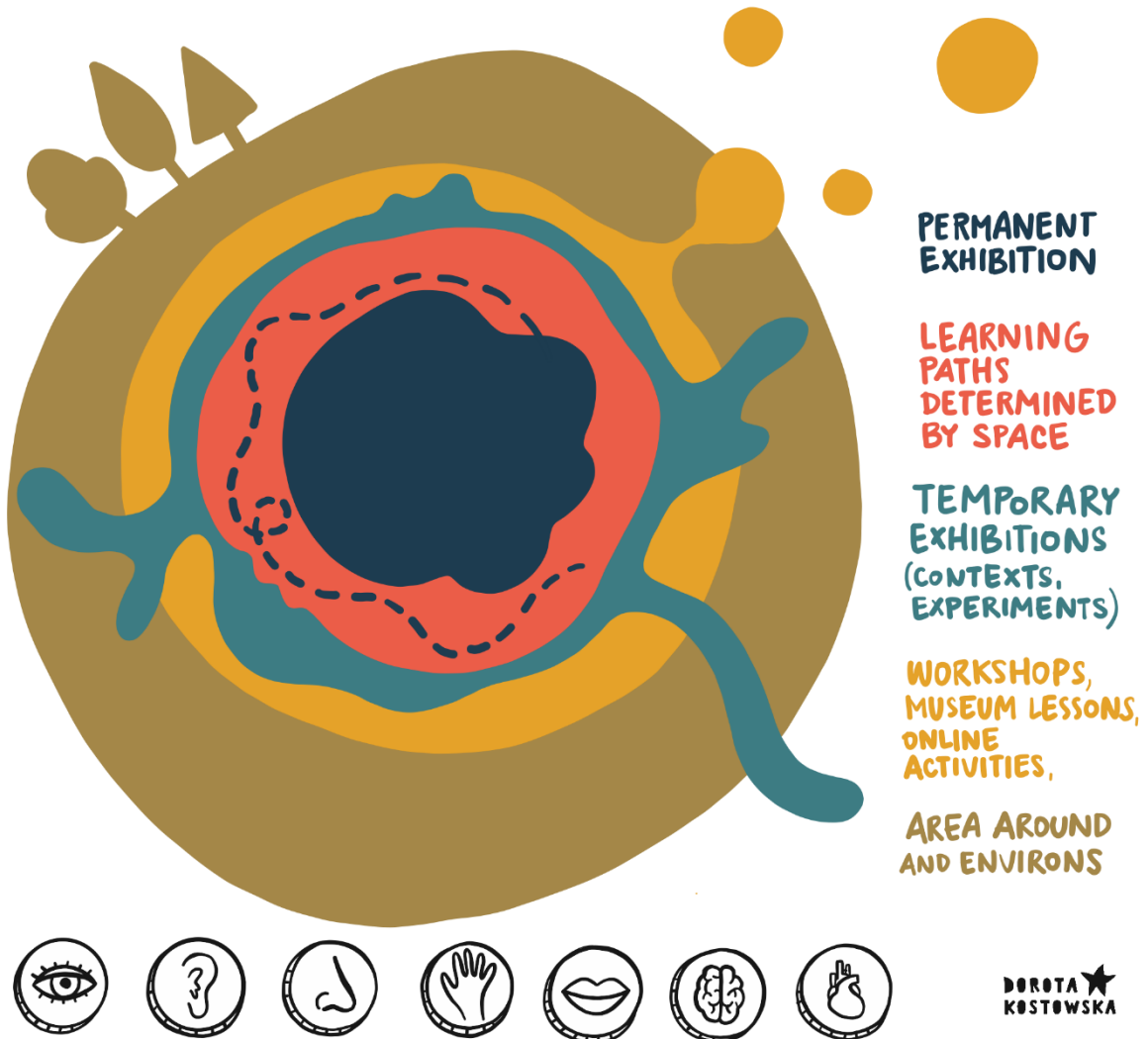
We, museum professionals, know that this is not the case. Increasingly, people and institutions in the vicinity of museums also agree. We know that a museum is also about people and the interaction between them as well as the relationship with the surroundings.

In an earlier text in this publication, Beata Nessel-Łukasik writes that “the idea of an eco-museum or a model of an institution involving participants, including neighbours, in various types of activities - these are formulas that have been developed by museum professionals over several decades now.”²³ Many of these activities have been undertaken successfully and have a great relationship-building and bond-forming value.

However, it is worth preparing for such activities properly – taking a look at the museum’s surroundings and the complex interactions. You can start by building a model of space and interaction of a museum created for the “Museum Think Tank: Museums and Their Neighbourhoods”. The model was developed by Dorota Kostowska – a sociologist, trainer, graphic facilitator, who has several years of experience in innovative teaching of adults, and Olga Ślifirska – a social skills trainer, employee of the Local Programmes Department of the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów.

²³ Beata Nessel-Łukasik, “View from the Window”, in this publication, p. 61.

MODEL OF SPACE AND INTERACTION OF A (HYPOTHETICAL) MUSEUM



When drawing such a model, it is necessary to consider the thickness of its individual layers. Does the permanent exhibition play the leading role? Or is it the space in an infrastructural sense that is the strength of a museum, designed to invite, encourage and suggest paths to explore the collection? Do those responsible for the museum's programme place emphasis on designing unique, experimental temporary exhibitions? Or maybe the museum focuses on workshops, museum lessons and various educational and cultural actions? And finally, is the space around the museum, its surroundings, the main axis of the institution's activities? Where, in which place and in which area do the largest part of the museum's activities concentrate?

The thickness of each layer and the number of “nodes” can be very different. Therefore, each model will be different. It is worth drawing and considering carefully. Consider which layer is the thickest, which is very thin and which is not even present, and consider what that means. Is this deliberate and related to the implementation of the institution’s strategy? Is an area “thicker” because, for example, it is led by a person who is particularly interested in developing it and who is strongly committed to his or her work?

With a ready-made model of museum space and interaction, you can move on to reflect on the issue of common space. What creates the common space in a museum? Which activities of the museum? Which actions of the recipients? Which activities of other institutions and organisations? Who, which subjects and which people contribute to this area?

Having analysed the layout of museum space and interaction and having defined the area of the common space, it is worth considering whether the model developed suits us. Are we satisfied with the thickness of the individual layers and the number of nodes? Are we satisfied with the programme we offer? Does it have the desired effect on both the museum and its surroundings? Do we have a model of cooperation with the environment?

This type of work was done by the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów. As a result of this analysis, it was decided that in the near future the museum would focus on the development of the common space. The Local Programmes Department has been created to design activities that will serve the well-thought-out and sensible development of neighbourly relations. Because it is the neighbourhood and the neighbours that turn out to be the group that wants to share the common space with the museum.

Since 2013, the museum has been constantly carrying out projects with its neighbours.

Thanks to many years of working on the ground, not only have we got to know our neighbours better but we have also managed to build a community of people interested in supporting their local cultural institution and in constant cooperation for the benefit of the town and its inhabitants.

Currently, we are building on their knowledge of Sulejów and its surroundings to jointly develop walking routes within the “PoSul” project.²⁴ It is a series of walks around Sulejów

²⁴ Cf. <https://muzeumpilsudski.pl/posul-cykl-spacerow-po-sulejowku/> (accessed: 24.11.2020).

prepared by the museum in cooperation with a local interest group Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze Krajobraz and a group of volunteers. Their routes are off the beaten track and lead to various unusual places. During walks led by volunteers we can discover an alley of historic oaks – a beautiful and little-known natural monument. We can also learn about the secrets of the military estate built in the 1950s – visit the garrison casino or the tank testing pool. In other words, we get to know Sulejówek from perspectives other than the narrative about the political achievements of Józef Piłsudski. We can also take maps from the museum, prepared for independent walks, and set off to explore Sulejówek alone.

We are also trying to share the museum space by allocating the ground floor of Villa Bzów (an old, revitalised building, located next to the main museum building) to activities proposed and carried out by our neighbours. In July 2020, for example, a local activist and museum volunteer took advantage of this space to invite residents to a meeting on the protection of the natural heritage of Sulejówek, a very green town indeed. Many valuable trees growing here remember the times of Marshal Piłsudski and are “witnesses of history”. 46 of them have the status of natural monuments. There is a historical garden on the grounds of the museum, where in the 1920s there was a pine forest called “Puszcza Milusińska” and mulberry and fruit orchards. The meeting was attended by a group of residents who broadened their knowledge of nature in Sulejówek.

Sharing the museum space and carrying out various educational, cultural and nature projects together with the inhabitants of Sulejówek, our neighbours, we try to practice cooperation and sharing. We get to know each other. With each completed joint project, our neighbourly relations are getting closer and closer. We are building increasingly lasting bonds. We are becoming partners. We are improving our common space.

Olga Ślifirska

Psychologist specialising in cross-cultural psychology, soft skills trainer, facilitator, expert in volunteer community building and management, promoting volunteering for 15 years, coordinator of volunteers at the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek, co-creator of the Local Programmes Department at the Museum. She gained her experience as a trainer and moderator having worked mainly on projects carried out by NGOs and public institutions

such as Information Society Development Foundation, Polish-American Freedom Foundation, Warsaw University, Ministry for Sport and Tourism, National Stadium, Childbirth with Dignity Foundation, National Centre for Culture, PKP Cargo. Observer and participant of many human interactions.

Melania Tutak

The Podgórze Museum, branch of the Krakow Museum

To Become a Curator of One's Own Story – Social Archives in Cooperation with the Museum

Social archives, social collections, save the traces of everyday life, the stories of ordinary people – they fill a gap in the activities of state archives, they are places of caring for the “wronged reality”²⁵ for which there is no room in the archives or other state institutions collecting memories. Social archives were created because of a relationship arising from the need for narrative and identity creation.²⁶ They have become a scientifically researched issue, a cultural phenomenon born in the 20th century, an era of “many coexisting memories”²⁷ characterised by a multiplicity of ways of looking at the past, unique ways of experiencing the time and place where an individual has lived. The era of micro-history, which postulates “turning to ordinary people, giving voice to ordinary ‘non-historical’ people, looking at the world from the perspective of an individual person located in a given time and place, reflecting the subjectivity of historical experience”.²⁸ Social collections –

²⁵ Waldemar Chorążyczewski, “Archiwa społeczne jako fenomen kulturowy” [“Social Archives as a Cultural Phenomenon”], available at https://www.archiwa.gov.pl/images/docs/Archiwa_organizacji_pozarzadowych.pdf, p.21 (accessed: 30.11.2020).

²⁶ Jacek Wasilewski, “Opowieść wstępna od redakcji”, in: “Narracje w życiu. O grupie i o jednostce”, Media początku XXI wieku series, vol. 29), ed. Jacek Wasilewski, Warsaw 2016, pp. 11-12.

²⁷ Waldemar Chorążyczewski, “Archiwa...” op. cit. , p. 18.

²⁸ See more broadly: E. Domańska, “Mikrohistorie. Spotkania w międzyświatach”, Poznań 2005.

“ego-documents”²⁹ – are created mainly through the activities of the third sector - NGOs, but they are also the work of individuals, political parties or even businesses. The entities gathering collections are usually not their owners. They act as keepers creating and making the collections available. Such collections are created through active research³⁰ – creators of archives are looking for owners of some kind of source material on a subject of interest to a given archive,³¹ or by announcing collection initiatives in the local (or wider) community. The majority of institutions collecting social archives do not operate formally – sometimes they are run by a private individual or an NGO, but what sets social archives apart from private archives is their cooperation with the community, if only to obtain the artefacts and make the resource widely available.³²

Collections of social archives are invaluable and, at the same time, through their form – informal, often unprofessional and chaotic, collected with passion but not the right tools – they can become endangered. The risk factors include insufficient knowledge about archiving, inventory or even storing the archive. The dispersion of the archived items, related to the place where they are stored, may also contribute to the threats.

Unfortunately, artefacts are often kept by organisation members in their private homes. The dispersion of materials also occurs when an organisation does not have a permanent office and the archives may change location.³³

For state institutions – archives, museums, social archives are both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to support the existence of social archives, to provide substantive assistance and protection at a time when the existence of these social initiatives is at risk.³⁴ The potential that social archives, in turn, bring to the museum is the opening up

²⁹ Ibid. p. 20.

³⁰ Magdalena Wiśniewska, “Funkcje archiwów społecznych”, in: *Archiwa społeczne jako fenomen kulturowy*, available at https://www.archiwa.gov.pl/images/docs/Archiwa_organizacji_pozarzadowych.pdf, p. 63.

³¹ Tomasz Czarnota, *Komu są potrzebne społeczne archiwa?* [“Who Needs Social Archives?”], *Archiwista Polski*, 2011, no. 4 (64), p. 15.

³² The entities managing social archives are described in the publication “Archiwistyka społeczna. Diagnoza i wyzwania” [“Social Archiving. Diagnosis and Challenges”], p. 16, cf.: <https://archiwa.org/sites/default/files/files/archiwistyka-spoleczna-diagnoza-i-wyzwania.pdf> (accessed: 19.11.2020).

³³ Ibid, p. 18.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 21-22.

of endless fields of new cooperation in social partnership; they can also be an alternative channel of communication with the community, an inspiration for work with memory.

We talked about such opportunities and alternatives during this year's think-tank in a module devoted to social archives, narratives and collections. Among the museums which can see an opportunity in cooperating with such archives and which are already carrying out such projects are the host of the think-tank – the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews ("Here is Muranów" exhibition), the co-host, i.e. the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek, which has been carrying out projects related to social archives since 2016, and the Podgórze Museum, a branch of the Krakow Museum, which is carrying out its own project, curated by me, entitled "Memory Depository - Become a Curator of Your Own Story".

The "Depository" is a long-term laboratory project, based on elements of social archiving, the narrative related to the micro-worlds of personal emotions and identity, combining them with the museum's communication tool, which is the exhibition. This is how we narrate it on the display case:

"The 'Memory Depository' is our common place where we host, for a longer or shorter period of time, items related to your personal Podgórze story. The showcased memorabilia and related stories are a priceless notebook of events, a sketch of the landscape of memory. We firmly believe that, with your kind contribution, the 'Depository' will always be full of stories. This way, the all too transitory moments we encounter every day will stay with us for longer."

The project is deeply participatory in nature, giving the "contributor" – the community curator – the freedom to form a story, select the material presented and lent, from which the micro-exhibition is made. At the source of the idea are experiences related to the Podgórze collection gathered over a decade by the Podgórze History House, a branch of the "Podgórze" Cultural Centre that existed between 2002-2015 and which I ran for that whole period, and whose subject of interest was the heritage of Podgórze – a former town, now part of the right-bank of Krakow. The collection of Podgórze artefacts was created from donations of people connected with the History House, supported by the PODGORZE.PL Association, which had a strong cultural influence on the right bank districts of Krakow.

During that decade, thanks to the cooperation of a public institution and an NGO, two collections were created: a collection of memorabilia – photographs, objects, documents and oral history recordings, which gave rise to the main exhibition of the Podgórze Museum in 2018, and at the same time a social archive collected by members of the PODGORZE.PL Association. The museum collection was created in a hybrid form, combining the experience and tools of the institution with the methodology that characterises a social archive built by a local association. During this process, many stories and artefacts were not included in the museum collection, or even in the social collection, for various reasons. Some owners simply did not want to part with the family memorabilia, could not reach the collection points in time, could not decide whether they wanted to take part or did not know how to do so. Some wanted to give a personal story with an object, but only on a temporary basis, returnable on demand of the owner, which was and still is an uncomfortable situation for the museum. The answer to the temporary nature of the “gift” combined with the need for personal stories was precisely the idea of the Memory Depository. It is a physical structure – a type of huge wooden cabinet – a “vault” set up in the museum hall, a place accessible even without visiting the exhibition. The cabinet is directly connected to seating, enabling personal contact with the contents. Thus, the donor is connected with the recipient.

The “Depository” is a place created with memories, artefacts and things important for visitors and the museum. It is a forum of memories created jointly by the museum and the donor. It is an opportunity to share one’s personal story, one’s narrative. At the same time, it is an attempt to inspire donors to assume the role of a family or social archivist, a commentator of some selected reality. The “Depository” does not have a rigid ideological framework and materials can be contributed by Podgórze families, people connected with Podgórze, as well as people from other parts of Krakow who have a relevant story to tell. These may be private individuals, but also institutions, associations, informal groups. We do not verify the stories presented in our depository, nor do we verify the origin of the artefacts, and we leave the appearance and selection of objects or documents to the “contributor” of the story. The museum, like the viewer, is its “recipient”. The museum is placed in the role of a technical assistant, an art advisor and a stage where somebody can showcase their story if only for a limited time.

We did not know whether the idea of the “Depository” would be a success. This project is surprisingly difficult, as it requires a lot of commitment and sometimes courage from the “donor”. The archive material has to be selected, labelled, a text has to be written to accompany the artefacts, and finally, the collection has to be brought to the museum, appropriate documents have to be signed, and objects have to be arranged for display. Each unveiling of the Depository was different: quiet, bustling, involving many people, touching, viewed in solitude. Each is an emotional experience for both parties. Each “Depository” unveiling is announced on the Museum’s fan page and on the official website of the Krakow Museum. We write a few separate posts about each of the unveilings, reminding everyone of their existence, on an equal footing with other exhibitions. Throughout the whole creative process, the museum assists the donor, supporting and offering advice at critical moments and simplifying the procedural side of the project as much as possible.

From the very beginning of the project, we have been guided by social archive principles: active search, personal contacts, personal requests, not missing any opportunity or proposal. Hence, the “Depository” has hosted more than 15 stories since 2018, and more than a dozen are waiting in turn. In the long term, we would like to collate all these stories into a publication, so that their ephemerality can be captured in a permanent form that can be passed on to future generations. The “Memory Depository” has a chance to become a trademark of the Krakow Museum. There is a plan that a similar structure should be available in every branch, where such a need is identified, whenever possible.

This formula of dialogue between the museum and the “visitor-donor” has worked well from the very beginning of the museum’s existence and has enjoyed unflagging popularity among visitors. However, we still have not decided how we develop, care for or control the contents of the “Depository”, beyond the publication. It happens that some of the artefacts are placed in the museum collection after the donors have experienced the depository scheme. However, most artefacts go back to the drawers, albums and the vast abysses of virtual magazines. The Museum scans, photographs, collects and archives this donated collection into virtual folders called “The Depository”, at least in this way taking care of this extremely important part of our heritage.

Melania Tutak

Theatre specialist, museum professional, officer at the Podgórze Museum, branch of the Historical Museum of Krakow. A graduate of Polish philology at the Jagiellonian University and postgraduate museum studies at the University of Warsaw. For 13 years she ran the Podgórze History House, creating the first participatory district museum in Krakow, the collection of which contributed to the establishment of the Podgórze Museum, a new branch of the Krakow Museum, brought into being by the Mayor of Krakow in 2018. She is an urban activist, co-founder and 15-year member of the Board of the PODGORZE.PL Association, an NGO actively and creatively operating in the former town of Podgórze, today the 13th district of Krakow. A co-author of numerous cultural and social projects activating and bringing together the local community around the heritage of the right-bank of Krakow.

Marlena Pierepioka

The Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów

Once Upon a Time in Wilanów: How to Convince Your Neighbours to Tell Their Story. Facebook Groups as a New Form of Communication with the Neighbours

According to the research on intuitive associations conducted in 2018 by Kantar Millward Brown, the Museum of King Jan III's Palace in Wilanów is distinguished, on a non-intuitive (more rational) level, by the attribute of "prestige", while on the level of strong intuitive associations - by "wealth".³⁵ Both associations rooted in the consciousness of the general public can be very useful in sponsorship cooperation, but in the case of neighbourly relations they can lead to the creation of distance or foster a sense of intimidation.

However, following the credo of Stanisław Kostka Potocki "Cunctis patet ingressus" (Latin:

³⁵ Martyna Sowińska-Pasek vel Paszkowska, "Gdzie jest nasza publiczność? Jak, co i kogo badać? Doświadczenia Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie", "Zarządzanie w Kulturze" (2019), Vol. 20, coll. 3, pp. 355-358 and I. Kołodziejczyk, G. Kowalczyk (eds.), "Intuitive Associations (IA): Badanie skojarzeń intuicyjnych: Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie", Warsaw, 2018 (unpublished).

“Free entrance for everyone”), the institution wants to create an egalitarian place, open to the public, and abrim with narratives of interest to audiences with a variety of backgrounds. The museum is a very important point of reference for the local community - both the “old” Wilanów residents (families settling before the war and residents who came in the 1960s-90s) and the “new settlers” - residents of the recently established Wilanów and Zawady estates, who have come from all over Poland and many countries of the world. The museum takes care not only of architectural monuments, historical parks, gardens and art collections on more than 92 ha, but also unique natural resources, including the Morysin nature reserve. At the same time, it is necessary to meet the challenge of incorporating intangible heritage - emotions, stories and memories of specific people connected with the place - into the collections.³⁶ And it is around this layer that the project of the social archive “Once Upon a Time in Wilanów” is focused.

The project was launched in November 2019, when, together with a group of volunteers from Wilanów, we decided to create a social archive of the museum. During regular meetings, volunteers learned about the complex history of the royal residence and its surroundings.

They were trained to conduct and record interviews with their neighbours, thus forming an oral history archive. Apart from the recordings, the archive aims to collect scans of photographs from family albums, films, postcards and souvenirs related to the district. Since the majority of the volunteers involved in the project grew up in Wilanów, and therefore knew the people we wanted to reach, we jointly shaped the project, and also planned the promotional campaign together. We created a list of places and institutions where we put up posters and distributed leaflets encouraging people to get involved in the archive and meet with the volunteers. The direct promotional action was accompanied by radio broadcasts, posts in social media and announcements on the museum website, and yet our appeal to the residents of Wilanów to share their memories did not bring the expected results. In addition, the pandemic, which started when the first meetings with the residents

³⁶ Of course, the museum has been trying to document the memories of the residents at least since the 1960s, by archiving postcards, photographs, documents and interviews, and the residents’ memories were published, for example, in the volumes of the museum’s publishing series “Ad villam novam”.

were being planned, forced a change in the formula of the project. And so the Wilanów Museum engaged in a new form of virtual communication – a Facebook group³⁷ bearing the name of the project, to which all the volunteers involved so far, as well as employees, friends and supporters of the museum were invited.

The space of the group was filled surprisingly quickly with materials that the volunteers were looking for in the project. Members of the community share their memories related to the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów and the historical landscape of the district, recreating the "visual layer" of Wilanów from many years ago, forgotten by the general public. They recall stories they have heard and family stories, share photos from their youth, but also from recent walks. The focus of the historical narrative of the Wilanów museum, one of the oldest art museums in Poland, is mainly, but not exclusively, on the figures of King Jan III and Stanisław Kostka Potocki. In contrast, the group touches upon issues closer to the everyday experience of the community, and the layers of the residents' memory are superimposed on the narrative of the museum. This was the case with the buildings that belong to the museum and were built in the middle of the 19th century, called the Lanci House and the Pelda Woodstore (Drwalnia Peldy). While, from the perspective of the museum, they are primarily an example of the architectural achievements of Francis Maria Lanci, they performed different functions in the memory of the residents. "All friend and family meetings took place there, after the Corpus Christi procession, after the indulgence. They had the best cakes and coffee. And a glass of cognac or wine. You could always get some cigarettes at the cloakroom, even when you could not buy them anywhere else..." - writes Maria. Krzysztof reminisces: "In this building, in the 1960s, there was a shop with things that were useful to households of the time, such as chains, ropes, nails, paraffin for lamps, etc. I bought my first real bamboo fishing rod there."³⁸ On the other hand, the neo-Gothic mausoleum of the Potocki family, located in the palace foreground, visible in the photographs posted on the group, appears above all as a background for family occasions regardless of the time the photos were taken. Other stories shared within the group mention children playing in the meadows, swimming in the lake and going downhill in a

³⁷ Facebook group "Pewnego razu w Wilanowie" ["Once upon a time in Wilanów"], <https://www.facebook.com/groups/pewnegorazuwwilanowie/> (accessed: 20.11.2020).

³⁸ Comments posted on the group "Once Upon a Time in Wilanów", *ibid.*

trolley used for carrying milk bottles, grazing cows and pigeon lofts, which are no longer there today. The vernacular names of water reservoirs, areas of the district or its infrastructure, already forgotten by some residents, also emerge from the neighbourly narratives. We find out, for example, that the Wilanów triangulation point was called a firefighter or a bogey, and not without reason, because the area was said to be haunted.

This form of community-engaging communication also has a high educational potential. In addition to sharing their experience of Wilanów with their neighbours, members of the community create information posts devoted to specific issues from the most recent history of the district. We can read about the no longer existent Wilanów railway, the historical layout of the cemetery and the influence of the Olender settlement on the surroundings. Members of the community correct the errors in the descriptions of archival photographs, recognise people and objects, and translate German notes or official propaganda texts from found postcards. The Facebook group is a place where everyone can be an educator and recipient of content, a virtual storyteller and listener, and where topics and themes, unlike other standard communication channels, can be proposed by all participants in the community, not only representatives of institutions, making the group participatory by nature.

At the same time, the group's space is part of a wider project of the social archive "Once Upon a Time in Wilanów" and the archival photos or postcards appearing on Facebook are scanned and archived, with the consent of the authors or their heirs, and the accompanying topics are carefully noted for future discussions. These activities will certainly contribute to expanding the museum's knowledge about its surroundings, how they were perceived and the historical atmosphere that is difficult to grasp from other sources. The materials collected in this way could form the basis for a new narrative layer of future museum activities. On the way to achieving one of the intended goals of the project (i.e. acquiring archival materials and the stories behind them), we have also gained something equally important - a large community supporting the project. This would not have been possible if communication had been based solely on one-to-one interviews. In the group space everyone can communicate with each other, and dialogue is often replaced by a polyphonic, engaging discussion.

Why was the original communication with the residents concerning the project not as effective as communication within the group, which has gathered nearly 450 people over the last six months? Apart from the possible reasons mentioned above, perhaps the needs of researchers, historians or museum staff, for whom a social archive would certainly be of inestimable value, do not necessarily coincide with the needs of the community. Perhaps the slogan “Help us build the social archive of the Museum of King Jan III’s Palace at Wilanów” calling the Wilanów residents, through leaflets and posters, to take collective action intimidated them, just like the image of the museum mentioned at the beginning. Meanwhile, in a period of forced isolation, the group is a kind of virtual refuge, where the language of memories and sentiments can be used to establish a relationship with the immediate environment. This theme was also literally mentioned in one of the group’s comments: while it may currently be difficult to use public transport to visit Wilanów, looking at Wilanów in photos shared by others can be a certain consolation.

Despite the fact that the group was initially dedicated to our neighbours, the residents of Wilanów, it turns out it now brings together people from diverse backgrounds, also in terms of place of residence. The community includes former and current residents of the district, volunteers and museum staff, and even people who visited Wilanów years ago, and yet still hold the memories close to them. It is the relationship with Wilanów that is the bond of the community, and the group is the way to nurture it. I am convinced that a community integrated on the Internet will, in the future, result in many relationships and meetings in the real world. Building an archive together is an excellent pretext for this, while every photo brought to the museum is a souvenir of the relationship.

Marlena Pierepioka

Cultural expert, curator of “Once Upon a Time in Wilanów”, a social archive project at the Museum of King Jan III’s Palace at Wilanów, managing editor of the Museology series. She has carried out projects associated with social activities, volunteering, as well as communication and promotion.

Why Do We Need Local Alliances?

In our institutions and organisations we do a lot and preferably on a large scale. We are accounted for according to the following indicators: recipients, views, tickets. Along the way, it is easy for us to forget about the immediate surroundings and there are increasing problems with building lasting relationships with those who are only a few steps away from us.

According to the study “The condition of non-governmental organisations in Poland 2018”³⁹ carried out by the Klon/Jawor Association, only 4 percent of social organisations operate exclusively for their immediate neighbourhoods. Of course, thousands of organisations in their reporting tables indicate several “target groups” (with the “local community” being the second most popular stakeholder declared by NGOs), but this 4-percent result may indicate a problem with small, local and close organisations. Organisations which declare that they also work for the residents of their nearest areas (62 percent of those surveyed) later report difficulties with trying to engage them in their activities. The other side of this puzzle does not look good either - a focus group study carried out by a large research company clearly showed that residents tended to recognise large organisations with big media presence, rather than those which are closest to them and whose activists/ employees they coincidentally meet in the local grocery shop.

Moving on to our example - the Pole Dialogu Foundation - we are not a museum, but like a museum we are a learning organisation and ask ourselves difficult questions. As a foundation, we work with our neighbours, we build communities, and we are involved in participation. However, when we took a closer look at this, it turned out that we ourselves were not very neighbourly. When thinking about the development of our organisation, we looked at large organisations, businesses, foreign entities - as if locality did not mean development.

³⁹ See: <https://api.ngo.pl/media/get/108904> (accessed: 28.11.2020).

We have been living in Muranów for over 5 years, at the wonderful Tekla Bądarzewska Square. We see many neighbours around us - residents, local companies, other social organisations, art galleries. We say "good morning" and "hello" to everyone, but there has never been an opportunity to do something together, even though this is what we teach in other places on the map of Warsaw, for example by supporting the capital's schools in opening up to the local community.

The place itself and our emotional response towards it were the first triggers to the development of our sense of local consciousness. We felt connected to Muranów. The issue of neighbourliness interested us from a professional point of view, and there was a growing desire within us to take real action that would embed us in the community and which could make us feel that we are giving something back. During this time, we came across a poster on our way to work inviting us to the Muranów Festival and this is how we found the "Przepis na Muranów" Partnership ("Recipe for Muranów"). It was a good move – we soon found ourselves in one of the most efficient local partnerships in Warsaw.

According to warszawalokalnie.waw.pl, a website which lists local partnerships in the capital, "a local partnership is a group of organisations, institutions, companies, residents who work together to develop a given place and community. Each partner brings different experience, knowledge and perspective - according to the principle: together we can do more! Usually such a local coalition functions as an informal initiative and is not registered anywhere. The partnership is based on the principle of dialogue and mutual respect, it has a flexible structure and many possibilities, and it defines the directions for action according to local needs." In the case of the "Recipe for Muranów" Partnership, the direction was to act for the benefit of the community of Warsaw's Muranów district, to support local heritage and to encourage the residents of the blocks of flats to use the common, neighbourly open spaces. "Partnership is an extension of the belief in cooperation, with which, as a society, we still have a big problem in general."⁴⁰

These are the words of Marek Ślusarz, one of the initiators of the "Recipe for Muranów" Partnership. At present, members of the partnership include the "One Muranów" Foundation, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Śródmieście Cultural Centre,

⁴⁰ <https://publicystyka.ngo.pl/muranow-przepis-na-wspolprace> (accessed: 28.11.2020).

Muranów Estate Council, individual residents and many more. Every now and then, more partners join the common cause. Partnerships are united by the strength of their diversity - in the case of the "Recipe for Muranów" Partnership, this has an additional dimension: its activities connect two parts of Muranów situated in two different boroughs: Śródmieście and Wola. This diversity is also reflected in the type of activities undertaken; everyone in the partnership will find something for themselves – be it painting murals, or organising the annual festival of the estate. The Pole Dialogu Foundation, in accordance with our mission, is involved in grassroots public consultations focusing on one of the green areas in Muranów.

From the perspective of participation practitioners, we have several principles of partnership that are worth keeping in mind (of course, this is a subjective list; many other guidelines can be found in publications on building partnerships):

Involvement of different actors - diversity is the strength of informal groups, it is not worth limiting membership of the partnership to specific criteria of registration. Based on the example of the "Recipe for Muranów" Partnership, social organisations, companies and public institutions participate in the work, as far as they are able and willing to do, also including representatives of the district office.

Democratic principles and sympathetic reporting - partnerships should be managed by their members, even if they choose to work with a chairperson. However, it is worth experimenting with community-led management, for example the teal organisation model. Reporting is important for transparency, but it should not become an unnecessary bureaucratic burden –its aim is to ensure that all members are aware of what goes on in the meetings.

Simplicity - partnerships do not like formality to overshadow content, we are here for action, not for rules, criteria and bureaucracy. Simplicity ensures flexibility in working with residents.

Involvement in a common interest - people are attracted to partnerships by a common goal, it can be for the benefit of the estate, the street, but it can also have a charitable or political dimension (in the sense of urban policies).

Partnerships often act as “enhancers” and “complementors” of local reality - they act where the office, companies or individual residents do not. The accumulated energy of the various partners triggers a desire in the community for a deeper diagnosis, for the development of new ideas, for joint initiatives.

Involvement in the work of a local alliance is also a commitment, although the flexibility of this form of action means that not all activities need to be equally involved. We, as the Foundation, asked ourselves some key questions before deciding to join the partnership:

Is the purpose of the partnership in line with our mission?

Why do we need locality? Are we only doing this for performance indicators, or do we feel as a team that we can add value to the strength of the alliance?

Do we need networking or locality? For us, these are two separate concepts - when we join a partnership, we do not want to merely hand out more business cards. We want to act together and feel co-responsible for the estate.

What do we want to bring to the partnership and the neighbourhood from us, and what do we need from the neighbourhood?

Mateusz Wojcieszak

President of the Pole Dialogu Foundation, which for many years has been involving residents in enhancing the attractiveness of public space and in co-deciding about the city. He was involved, among others, in the process of revitalizing Michałowski Park and the surroundings of Michel's Mill. He is strongly involved in the Warsaw participatory budget - as a member of the Civic Budget Council at the President of the Capital City of Warsaw. He coordinated educational activities on participatory budgeting in schools in the Targówek and Włochy districts, as part of the Education about participatory budgeting in schools programme. He is also associated with the Center for Citizenship Education (CEO), where he coordinated civic education programmes.

Katarzyna Jagodzińska, Zuzanna Schnepf-Kołacz

Responsibility of Museums for Their Surroundings

Katarzyna Jagodzińska

Jagiellonian University

A Bird's Eye View of Polish Museums

Museums are increasingly boldly going beyond their walls to speak out on important and sometimes difficult issues. These are often issues that are not directly related to the collection and the programme, but are important for the museum premises, its neighbourhood, the residents or because of shared values. What is more, their words are followed by action. Should a museum get involved? This question is always raised, not only by those from the museum's environs, surprised by the fact that the museum deals with issues unrelated to its collections, but also by the museums themselves – their managers and employees. And this question must be asked, because getting involved can have negative consequences. Drawing the attention of museums towards what is outside their walls has its roots in the new museology, i.e. in the 1960s and 1970s. Generally speaking, the new museology is based on the reversal of existing hierarchies: the audience and communities are at the centre of the museums' activities (as opposed to the previous focus on collections), and knowledge is also absorbed from the surroundings (whereas previously the museum was the transmitter of knowledge). Hugues de Varine, one of the key figures in the discussion, stated that "The new type of museum could be described as essentially a cultural process, identified with a local community (population), on a specific territory, using the common heritage as a resource for development, as opposed to the more classical museum, an institution characterized by a collection, in a building, for a public of visitors."⁴¹

⁴¹ Hugues de Varine, "Ecomuseum or community museum? 25 years of applied research in museology and development", "Nordisk Museologi" No. 2 (1996), pp. 24-25.

Museum activism, which has gained popularity over the last few years, springs from this way of thinking. Robert R. Janes and Richard Sandell wrote directly in the book under this very title, that “there is a need for a new breed of museum workers and museums, grounded in the consciousness of the world around them, along with the need to work in a less museum-centred way.”⁴² It was in this spirit that a proposal for a new definition of a museum was formulated and discussed at the meeting of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in Kyoto. Although it was not adopted as a definition, it remained as the expression of a new philosophy, with which many museum professionals around the world identify.

For the first time the ICOM encouraged museums to act in a codified manner in its resolution of 2016 entitled “The Responsibility of Museums Towards Landscape”. It states that “museums have a particular responsibility towards the landscape that surrounds them, urban or rural” and therefore the ICOM General Assembly recommends that “museums [should] extend their mission from a legal and operational point of view and manage buildings and sites of cultural landscape as ‘extended museums’, offering enhanced protection and accessibility to such heritage in close relationship with communities.”⁴³

Although the resolution is only a guideline and is not followed by any legislative solutions at a national level, it is an important signal of a change in thinking about the role of museums – within communities, cities and discussions at various levels. Some museums have indeed taken action for the benefit of their surroundings, referring to this document in the process.

The Silesian Museum in Katowice is an example of a bold, decisive attitude towards the actions taken by a developer in the area adjacent to the museum complex. In 2015, the Museum started operating in its new premises at the closed “Katowice” coal mine. The spectacular architecture, which combined historical buildings of the mine and minimalist glass blocks, immediately became a symbol of the city and the region. The architects from the Austrian studio Riegler Riewe Architekten suggested developing the exhibition halls

⁴² Robert S. Janes and Richard Sandell, “Posterity has arrived: The necessary emergence of museum activism” [in:] R.S. Janes and R. Sandell (edit.), “Museum Activism”, London & New York: Routledge, 2019, p. 17.

⁴³ Resolutions Adopted by ICOM’s 31st General Assembly, Milan, 2016, https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOMs-Resolutions_2016_Eng.pdf (accessed: 23.11.2020).

underground to provide space for post-industrial buildings. In 2018, the developer, who purchased a plot of land at the back of the complex, presented plans to erect 12- and 18-storey blocks of flats forming an undesirable background on the main viewing axes leading from the city centre. The museum felt that it was an agent of change in the district and took steps to develop a consensus reconciling the interests of all the parties: the city authorities, the developer, the architects, the marshal, the neighbours, the city's residents and the Cultural Zone of which the museum is part. The topic was the importance of the cultural landscape of this symbolic place – a mine, which for decades had been a source of wealth and identity of Silesia. Meetings, discussions, debates, expert opinions and exchange of correspondence did not bring the desired result – the lack of understanding for the Director's arguments resulted in the construction project being at an advanced stage today.

At a similar time (2017–2019), the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw initiated a partnership with institutions and entities gathered around Plac Defilad (Parade Square), where the construction of the museum's headquarters is currently underway. The vision of an experimental model of co-management of space has been half-successful, because it has not been possible to create a permanent mechanism of cooperation with city hall. A similar challenge of engaging a group of stakeholders around a square in the city in order to work out the best way for its development is posed by the Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Krakow. The first steps were already taken (2019), but this task is going to take some time. In 2018, the Podgórze Museum in Krakow, in cooperation with the associations operating in the district, undertook to lobby for the creation of a park right next to the museum, which would connect this busy part of the district, devoid of recreational places, with other cultural institutions (Cultural Axis) and the Old Town.

There are more such initiatives (see below for a broader description of tenement houses on Waliców Street in Warsaw, the protection and adaptation of which is sought by the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw), although not an overwhelming number. Not all of them bring the desired effect. However, even a failure is a necessary lesson and does not mean that it is not worth taking action. It is quite the opposite – there is a need to speak out more often, showing that museums are important actors in the public space. Although, unfortunately, given the model of public funding, activities contrary to the

interests of the governing bodies may jeopardise the position of directors and the welfare of the institutions.

Zuzanna Schnepf-Kołacz

The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

POLIN Museum and Waliców Street

The tenement house at number 14 looks as if the war ended yesterday. Its front destroyed during the Warsaw Uprising is a testament to its dramatic history. The ruined buildings at 10, 12 and 14 Waliców Street are the few remaining ghetto outposts that still exist today and, together with the fragment of its wall opposite, were silent witnesses to the extermination of several hundred thousand Jews.

The POLIN Museum has been involved in saving tenement houses for over three years. The beginnings of these activities are connected with the creation of the Waliców Project – a seminar at the Milan University of Technology, where architecture students have developed concepts for the revitalisation of these tenements. The creators and executors of this programme, Guido Morpurgo and Annalisa de Curtis, have asked the Museum to support their project in Warsaw. The cooperation between Milan and Warsaw continues to this day.

Since then, the Museum has produced an open-air exhibition, an online publication, three discussions and presentations of Milan students' projects, including the ARCHIPRIX 2019 international competition award-winning work. Meetings were held in the District Office and with the central city authorities. Each of these activities contributed to the long-term process of publicising the topic of Waliców in the public discourse (the interest of the media was helpful here), initiating a dialogue with the City authorities which own the houses, and consolidating various groups around the problem.

In addition to the collaboration with Professors Morpurgo and de Curtis, we were supported by scientists, Varsavianists, architects, journalists and activists. Among our allies were the local associations "Kamień i co" and "Wola Mieszkańców", which caused the tenement houses to be entered into the register of monuments. We invited the Mazovian Province

Monument Conservator and City authorities to participate in the events. We wanted the Museum to be a platform for dialogue between different groups, enabling them to get to know each other and talk.

It was important to develop, on the basis of debates and workshops, a concept for the future of Waliców (its vision and functions changed with subsequent discussions and participation of various circles – from a memorial site to a living urban centre). The publication *Waliców: DNA of Warsaw – Heritage of Europe* prepared in 2019 by the Museum, included expert opinions on the revitalisation of tenement houses and their neighbourhood, e.g. with regard to the needs of the local community. The publication was passed on to the Warsaw authorities as a social contribution to the cause. The Municipal Bureau for Economic Development (BRG) initiated talks, while emphasising the importance of the social aspect of creating a project for Waliców.

For the first time the City (BRG), together with the POLIN Museum and the Warsaw Branch of SARP, organised the debate *Plans for Waliców*. The memory of a place in a modern city. The discussion was held online in November 2020 and concerned the prospects for Waliców in the context of the Public-Private Partnership proposed by the City. The next step is for BRG to establish a working team for this Waliców project, which would include representatives of various key groups and those involved so far, with an emphasis on the participation of social partners.

The most important challenge for the Museum in this work will be to preserve the key ideas developed during public debates and to involve residents and local organisations in the discussion. Only three years ago, building no. 14 was in danger of being demolished. Today, an intersectoral team coordinated by the City is being formed. This gives hope that, thanks to the commitment and cooperation of various circles, it is possible to save the houses on Waliców Street.

Katarzyna Jagodzińska PhD

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journalism and public communication at the Jagiellonian University. She specializes in issues related to museum studies and cultural heritage. She is currently implementing a research project entitled Participation and post-museum and is preparing the “Atlas of Museum Participation” as part of the scholarship of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage (2020). She is a holder of the scholarship of the Minister of Science and Higher Education for outstanding young scientists for the years 2020-2023. She is an author of four books about museums, including one published in London: “Museums and Centers of Contemporary Art in Central Europe” (Routledge, 2020). She is a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

Zuzanna Schnepf-Kończ

Graduate of the Faculty of Journalism and Political Sciences, specialization in History and Culture of Jews at the Institute of History, Warsaw University and the School for Social Sciences at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences; a scholarship holder at the University of Bologna and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington; coordinator of the Holocaust Gallery at the Core Exhibition of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews; vice-consul at the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Milan; she currently works in the Education Department of the POLIN Museum, where she manages the “Programmes for Varsovians” component, part of the “Jewish Cultural Heritage” project; author of articles concerning the history of Jews during the Holocaust; co-author of the following exhibitions: “Solidarność nei documenti della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrielli” (Milan, 2014); “From Poland with Love” (Warsaw, 2017); “Window over Waliców” (Warsaw, 2018).

Joanna Tabaka

Audience on Sight, the Green Cultural Institution

Being a Good Neighbour: The Local Ecosystem and the Climate Crisis

It was a warm summer day, and it all happened in a small, stuffy room. After an hour into a meeting, I started to get distracted and looked out of the window longingly. “Oh, not again!”, I thought, but tried to focus on the lecture. The Swedes say that “there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”. Let me paraphrase that: “the weather is beautiful, yet we’re sitting inside a building.”

In 2014, I worked in the promotion department at the Centre for Contemporary Art on the Green Jazdów project. This was another edition of the summer festival, but in hindsight, the level of its innovation still amazes me. A cultural institution that left its walls to carry out its programme. And not just a single performance, but two months’ worth of events. There were hammocks and stalls with fresh vegetables, fruit and homemade preserves. Stalls! In front of the temple of contemporary art! How was that possible? Surely, real art has to be indoors, enclosed in a pristine white room and cannot be associated with something as mundane as selling carrots straight from the farmer. And yet, leaving the building was a great success. People queued for their turn on a hammock. The audience loved the outdoor lectures and concerts, breakfasts and sports activities. Suddenly, the area in front of Ujazdowski Castle started to bustle with life. Paradoxically, at that time significantly fewer people entered the Centre for Contemporary Art to see the exhibitions. People preferred to be outside.

Why am I writing about this now? The COVID-19 pandemic has made me realise once again what potential there is for institutions which have a piece of land around them. During the summer holidays, when the restrictions were eased, outdoor events sometimes turned out to be the only option. So are we going to start looking at the greenery around us in a different way and see the potential it holds? Apart from ensuring a safer environment during events, will there be a lasting intention to focus on the ecological potential of our nearest surroundings?

This is my piece of lawn

The green area around institutions is a huge treasure. It is an ideal place to help raise environmental awareness among residents and the immediate neighbourhood. Depending on the possibilities, we could establish a vegetable or herb garden or sow a flower meadow. The crops may serve as refreshments at meetings, which will help us avoid purchasing unhealthy snacks packed in plastic. Serving freshly-brewed herbal tea from leaves picked by those drinking it will be a rarity and a lesson in the beneficial effects of infusions. Herbs packed in glass jars can also become an unusual and useful souvenir limiting the purchase of cheap and poor quality gifts. The flower meadow is not only an acknowledgement of the role of pollinating insects and biodiversity, but also serves to counteract the effects of drought and limit overheating of the area. Residents will surely enjoy workshops on preparing natural bouquets or creating pictures from pressed, dried flowers.

At the back of the courtyard, a composter can be built together with the residents to serve the employees and neighbours. It will fully recycle the organic waste produced, bringing us closer to the *zero waste* idea. Ready-made compost can be used to fertilise subsequent generations of plants in our garden.

Our garden and meadow would not be complete without birdhouses and insect hotels that we can prepare as part of our DIY activities. It is important to supply both the birdhouses and insect houses with bird baths. Animals, like humans, also need access to fresh water. We can combine the pleasant with the useful and if we lack professional containers for collecting rainwater - we can put out bowls or dishes. The water collected can be used for watering the garden and flowers at no extra costs, thus benefiting the animal visitors.

If we have trees in the green area around the institution, it is essential that we label them, thus offering an educational path to learn about plant species. And in the autumn, let us not use leaf blowers, but gently rake the leaves into piles. The leaves will fertilise the soil and act as a shelter for animals. Freshly fallen leaves will serve as a natural material for art workshops.

Cleaning the world not only on special occasions

Every year in primary school we took part in the Clean Up the World campaign. After all, we were in a class with an ecological profile, but in this case, leaving the school walls was an attraction in itself. At least as a child, this is how I perceived it, this is how my classmates perceived it.

Recently, however, I have begun to wonder why this is only done on a special occasion. When I go for walks, I see a lot of rubbish in parks and forests. A local cultural institution could regularly organise such actions and involve local authorities in the idea. In addition to publicising the action or encouraging employees to volunteer, it could provide rubbish bags and gloves.

Such action could not only be an unusual type of recreation activity in the service of nature, but also a way to improve one's fitness. It is enough to bend down a few times to feel the body work. However, if we want to go further, we can take the example of the Swedes, masters of caring about nature. They patented a new type of sport, plogging - jogging with added bending and stretching to pick up rubbish. If you have joggers in your area, offer them this new formula or organise a new jogging group at the institution.

Collecting rubbish together can also help to integrate different groups, such as volunteers. Such an action was carried out by the Bielany Cultural Centre, or more precisely the Estrada Branch, located near the Kampinos Forest.

Initiating cyclical cleaning campaigns in the area allows the local community to appreciate the common green areas, thus creating a sense of responsibility for our surroundings. And perhaps the ecological sensitivity will also catch on among casual strollers observing such actions.

The second life of things

"Only the oil industry pollutes more than fashion. Every second, a garbage truck full of clothes ends up in landfill."⁴⁴ Producing one cotton T-shirt uses approx. 2,700 litres of water.⁴⁵ How can a cultural institution counteract the effects of cheap and fast fashion? For

⁴⁴ <https://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/Instytut/7,175750,24398133,co-sekunde-na-wysypisko-trafia-smieciarka-pelna-ubran-jak-kupowac.html> (accessed: 25.11.2020).

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

example, by organising exchanges and garage sales. This is a proven way to give things a second life, but also to limit the purchase of new ones. Places such as the Bemowo Cultural Centre or Dorożkarnia Cultural Centre praise this idea, attracting large crowds during such events. Themed events for book lovers or families work very well. An all-day event can be enriched with thematic lectures or workshops, e.g. on remaking old clothes or sewing vegetable bags from old net curtains. It is also an opportunity for residents to stretch their home budgets. But we are mainly reducing the number of things that end up in dumping sites.

Any attempt at retrofitting a kitchen in an institution should start by asking the public and neighbours whether they have what we need. Plates, pots, mugs and even a toaster - such things were brought by local residents to the Local Activity Centre "3 rooms with a kitchen".

Culture in the kitchen

According to the Polish Economic Institute, Poles waste 247 kg of food per person per year (compared to 173 kg on average per capita in the European Union), which gives us fifth place in the EU.⁴⁶ We buy too much and we do not know how to store food properly.

Planning and preparing meals is not common knowledge. We usually take our eating habits from our parents or partners. We rarely have the opportunity to come across new tastes and inspirations. This is where the cultural institution comes in. Workshops on plant cuisine, proper food storage, or pickling and preserving can be a great way to build intergenerational bonds and exchange experiences. Preparing a meal together is perhaps the most perfect integration method, which sometimes does not even require knowledge of the same language. This is shown by the *Cook 'n' Learn* project, which connects the local community - including seniors - with people from other countries by cooking together.⁴⁷ Learning to cook and exchanging recipes stimulates creativity and imagination. Meetings at the common table make it easier to come up with new dishes, make unusual tastes more familiar, and allow implementation of healthy eating habits. The use of traditional recipes prepared on the basis of local specialties strengthens the sense of belonging to the place, brings up

⁴⁶ <https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/marnowanie-zywnosci-w-polsce/1fkhng5> (accessed: 25.11.2020).

⁴⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/cooknlearn/> (accessed: 25.11.2020).

family stories, evoking those warmest memories encapsulated in the taste of grandmother's cake.

A walk around the area

In the less immediate environs of institutions are companies, service-providers and shops. How well do you know them? Do you have a relationship with an owner? Sometimes companies whose services we need to use may be found in the immediate vicinity. In this way, not only do we strengthen local ties, but also reduce the number of kilometres of transporting goods. This way we can also discover a local craftsman who will create a new gadget or enrich our knowledge about the history of the institution we work for. The institution could become a place where local businesses are strengthened and valued. This strengthens the local identity, because Mrs. Henia sells apples from nearby orchards, Mr. Henio is great at repairing shoes, and Mrs. Basia can donate some old flowerpots and carry out workshops on gardening. The Praga Museum in Warsaw is a good example of using the potential of local craftsmen, from visits to their studios to the organisation of traditional crafts courses.⁴⁸

The institution as part of the local ecosystem

The topic of maximising the potential of the immediate surroundings in the service of the environment seems inexhaustible. Sometimes going beyond the institution can serve and inspire new, necessary local action. Because a cultural institution is not a UFO that has just landed. It should be like a mature tree, blended into the landscape, giving shade and shelter, keeping a close eye on passers-by and feeding them with life-giving oxygen.

Joanna Tabaka

Specializes in breaking down the barriers to culture by educating employees of cultural institutions and representatives of local governments. She conducted over 100 workshops and meetings in the field of cultural promotion, audience development and pro-environmental activities for cultural institutions across Poland. As an expert, she was invited to participate in national conferences and publications. She received the scholarship of the

⁴⁸ <https://muzeumwarszawy.pl/events/categories/prarzemka/> (accessed: 25.11.2020).

Minister for Culture and National Heritage twice. She runs two blogs on Facebook: “Widok na Widownię” (“Audience on Sight”) (from 2015) and “Zielona Instytucja Kultury” (the “Green Cultural Institution”) (from 2020). She is an author of the publication entitled “Kultura naturze, z Syrenką w tle” (“Culture’s Tribute to Nature, with the Mermaid in the background”), about good pro-environmental practices in cultural institutions.

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Marta Otrębska

Emigration Museum in Gdynia

Social Process and Evaluation. Conscious Planning of Neighbourhood Activities

The main task of cultural institutions is to carry out cultural activities comprising the creation, dissemination and protection of culture. In addition to their statutory activities, these institutions are also increasingly taking action to support the development of the local community and to solve various social problems.

This opens up new opportunities for institutions to act and influence society, but it also involves dealing with other challenges in organising work and shaping the cultural and social agenda. Starting such activities requires extraordinary sensitivity to the needs of the local environment, the willingness to constantly verify one’s assumptions and pay attention to changing conditions. Therefore, this also requires a change in the approach to activity planning. It becomes necessary to diagnose needs, gauge the local environment and verify the position of the institution in it.

The conscious planning of activities becomes crucial to the success of such projects.

Conscious, i.e taking into account the changing reality and the various factors that affect the functioning of the institution. Paying attention to internal conditions – objectives, aspirations, resources, while also taking into account external factors related to the social environment in which the institution operates. Conscious planning is not only about noticing

and defining these factors, but also about actively including them in the plans of the institution and being ready to be flexible and reacting to changing conditions.

Some of the social problems are predictable – we have statistics, social studies, forecasts that can help us prepare an adequate action plan. We can reach for trend maps,⁴⁹ studies by economists or social researchers who will show us the potential directions of community development, including the dilemmas we will face. However, some of them, like the global pandemic, will surprise us, so we should be prepared to change our strategies and plans in response to any current situation.

However, this does not mean that we are completely unprepared to face new challenges. An action plan, including crisis management, as well as the mission and vision of the institution, can help us in conscious planning. They are, in a way, the identity of institutions and are important especially in crisis situations, when we are tempted to carry out ad hoc, often chaotic actions.

If an institution does not have an overall mission and vision, these can be created within a department – that would be a good start! This will allow for a common vision and direction, and will also help members identify with the team and its values. It is worth considering what we would like our activities and the local community to look like, what values are important to us and which of them we would like to communicate to our recipients. It is also a good time to reflect on our internal vision – what is our vision of the ideal team, what is important for us in our daily work, what issues we feel we want to take care of. This step is especially important now – when many teams work remotely and their members face various personal dilemmas due to the pandemic, it becomes particularly important to ensure that they are comfortable at work.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ An example of these are the trend books published by Natalia Hatałska at www.hatalska.com (accessed: 20.11.2020).

⁵⁰ It may be good practice to organise regular workshops to strengthen the team and its work organisation. It is worth breaking away from everyday duties and spending one day, once every few months, entirely on bonding, summarizing and planning activities of the team. Such workshops can also take place online; if possible, they should be preferably led by an external person.

Take care of yourself

Caring for our wellbeing is an issue that is always important, but its importance increases even more when we work with the local community. In our daily work we encounter many problems of different social groups and we assume a responsibility for the care of these people. We often forget about caring for ourselves in the process.

Before we begin, it is worth making a quick assessment– of the institution, the team and the people who are part of it. We should think about the resources, competencies and interests of the team members, the values we consider important. One well-known tool helping with that assessment is the so-called SWOT analysis.

It makes it possible to diagnose the situation inside the institution, but it also forces us to think about the location of the institution in the local environment, it forces us to look at ourselves in a broader context.

Such an assessment is very helpful in setting priorities. There are many needs that can be addressed by social projects, but each institution and each team has limited human, financial and time-related resources. If we want the project to succeed, we need to take a real look not only at the needs of the community, but also at the needs of the team implementing the action. It is said that a first responder should take care of their own safety first. It is no different in the case of social activities – employees of institutions may not be saving lives, but they should still take care of themselves first.

Taking care of oneself also means being conscious of one's own limitations – institutions do not have to be competent in everything and do not have to respond to all the problems of the local community. It is worth remembering that we are not acting alone – there are other institutions and organisations that may be more competent in a given area. If we diagnose a problem that is beyond the capabilities of our team, let us leave it to others or join in helping them.

Let us also be prepared to recognise that what we had assumed may not work. Even the best planned project, based on the needs of the local community, may not be received in the way we expect. Working for the community is subject to various factors which we cannot always predict. Let us try to do it in relation with the environmental analysis, but let us allow ourselves to be mistaken.

...to take care of the community

After carrying out the assessment, it is worth taking a closer look at the diagnosis of the local community. This is a particularly important moment, as it may be decisive for the success of the project. People who design social activities often skip this stage because they think they know the community and understand what problems it faces. This way of thinking is deceptive – the community is not homogeneous and changes all the time, so even the most attentive observers should not infer its needs from their perceptions.

It is important that the actions taken are timely – they should reflect the needs diagnosed here and now, and not be based on observations from years before or good practices from other cities. Of course, it is worth drawing inspiration from the solutions and ideas of other institutions, but one has to bear in mind that they are undertaken in completely different communities, with different needs and local conditions which can be very different from those with which our institution works.

Before we find out the needs of the community, we should consider what we want to find out and how to use this knowledge. Does our institution want to know about the needs of a particular group, or area of activity? Defining the goal will definitely improve the design of the research. Another issue to consider is resources – whether we want to carry out the diagnosis on our own, based on the competencies and experience of the team, or whether we have the budget to commission an external person or company.

The knowledge gathered during the analysis can be used at many stages in the process of designing the activities, not only in the construction of the programme.⁵¹ Needs analysis makes it possible for us to get to know the local community, establish relations with it and gain trust. It is a good time to start the process of involving residents in the activities of the institution. It allows us to identify meeting places (such as a clinic, a shop, a church) that we can use during the promotion, as well as establish contact with local activists. It also allows us to prepare for potential problems and review our beliefs about what is important.

⁵¹ We can implement the construction of the programme using data from needs analysis by means of various methods, e.g. the currently fashionable design thinking method, about which Agnieszka Kaim writes in her publication “Design thinking w kulturze” (“Design Thinking in Culture”), see www.agnieszkakaim.eu (accessed: 20.11.2020).

It is worth starting the diagnosis by analysing publicly available statistics and research reports. These can include data from the Central Statistical Office, local government, or NGOs. In this way, we will know what data is lacking, what information needs to be improved upon, and what purpose the research can serve.

The next stage is to plan the appropriate research and start research activities. What should we bear in mind? There are many methods of diagnosis – different tools serve different means and are adapted to different recipients. Let us not choose the method hastily, because “everyone does” surveys or interviews. Let us use the available literature,⁵² look for interesting research solutions – let us take time to adjust the tool to our needs, as we will benefit from it later on. When constructing tools and talking to respondents, let us avoid specialized language or complicated metaphors. Let us try to “step into the shoes” of the person being studied, to learn their language and their way of expressing themselves, and we will get much more valuable information. A well-conducted needs analysis will make it possible to design activities that will respond to the needs of the recipients, encourage participation and fill in a certain gap in the cultural activities available in a given city.

...and see what came out of it!

Once the activities have started, it is worth carrying out another type of study – monitoring and evaluation. In simple terms, evaluation is a kind of information-gathering process. It may concern different aspects of the activity, depending on the objective and on how we want to use the knowledge. As with needs analysis, it is worth considering this as early as possible in order to plan the data collection process effectively.

We can collect information on participants’ satisfaction with the project – this is an issue that should be researched on an ongoing basis in order to be able to adapt the programme to participants’ expectations and modify it as necessary.

⁵² There are many more or less specialised publications on needs analysis. To start with, we can consult the texts of Shipyard – Centre for Social Innovation and Research available online (“From Diagnosis to Strategy”; https://stocznia.org.pl/app/uploads/2016/01/od_diagnozy_do_strategii.pdf) or Educational Packages of the Non-formal Academy of Project Quality (PAJP) (“Needs Analysis”; <http://czytelnia.frse.org.pl/analiza-potrzeb/>) (accessed: 20.11.2020).

It is also a study of the impact of the project on the participants, its efficacy and quality. We can check to what extent the objectives have been achieved, what the results of the project are – both the anticipated ones and those that emerged unexpectedly. In the case of this type of evaluation, it is worth taking measurements before and after the project – this will allow for data comparison. It is also worth examining the impact and influence of the project on the institution and the people implementing it – to check what worked, what was difficult, which issues turned out to be weaknesses, and what made the implementers most satisfied. Let us see how cooperation within the project team and with their partners worked, and let us consider what improvements can be made in the future.

As with the diagnosis, we should start the evaluation process by defining its purpose and considering how we want to and can use the knowledge gained.⁵³ If for some reason we cannot modify the programme during its implementation, let us refrain from asking the participants what could be improved – it will only cause frustration due to unfulfilled expectations. Let us take into account our financial and scheduling capabilities – if we do not have the time, let us choose to carry out just one type of evaluation, and if we do not have the money, let us consider how to carry it out at the lowest possible cost.

Let us match the methods to the objective and participants. Let us try to look at the subject creatively – we come across surveys on a daily basis, so let us try to diversify this evaluation – choose a workshop form or an interview, or maybe a survey, but in an interesting, non-standard form, e.g. a tear-off form or an interactive game.

After the study has been carried out, it is worth gathering all the conclusions in the form of a report, which will be good reference material for designing future activities. This is particularly valuable when there are changes in the team – we thus ensure continuity of information and exchange of knowledge.

⁵³ Both the previously mentioned publications concerning needs analysis and those dedicated to the evaluation itself - e.g. “Miniporadnik o ewaluacji” (https://stocznia.org.pl/app/uploads/2020/10/Jak-dobrze-ewaluować-projekty_ver-02.pdf), “Ewaluacja – jak to się robi” by “Stocznia” or the PAJP Educational Package “Ewaluacja w pracy metodą projektu” (https://erasmusplus.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/pajp_iv_ewaluacja_w_pracy.pdf) (accessed: 20.11.2020).

Marta Otrębska

Graduate of sociology at the University of Gdańsk, education specialist at the Emigration Museum in Gdynia, guardian of the Youth City Council of Gdynia. On a daily basis, she coordinates activities dedicated to people with migration experience, people with disabilities and young people, and co-creates educational programmes addressed to various groups. Previously, she was engaged in international co-operation and development of local activity at the Center for Youth Co-operation and Mobility. She coordinated international exchange projects, European voluntary service initiatives and study visits for people from Eastern Europe. She also conducted training in group work, leadership competencies and social project management, and supported youth groups in turning their ideas for activities into reality.

Ewa Chomicka talks to Anna Szary (The Museum of Warsaw) and Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska (The Royal Łazienki Museum)

The Neighbourhood in Structures

Ewa Chomicka: What are your observations or experiences regarding the placement of the neighbourhood theme in cultural institutions? Who is dealing with this subject, is it an inter-departmental area or is it assigned to some specific units?

Anna Szary: I have worked in various cultural institutions: smaller ones, larger ones, more peripheral and more central. In total, there were quite a few of them, and none of them had a separate unit dedicated to this topic or an assigned person who would be responsible for working with the local community. There was no such person, neither among the curators nor the staff. But in each of these institutions, such initiatives have been taken, usually from the bottom up, by education staff. This was mainly due to the interests of individuals who

wanted to carry out this type of activity. However, practically none of these institutions had such a structure.

Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska: I think that locality is inscribed in the way of working of some cultural institutions or community centres. Especially in smaller towns, where institutions operate mainly locally, the neighbourhood is, in a sense, inscribed in their nature. And, in fact, this needs to be defined more precisely perhaps only in large institutions that have this identity confused; on the one hand, they are for everyone, but on the other hand, they operate in a specific place, in relation to specific people. This is what I experienced personally, observing how we, the employees of the Royal Łazienki Museum, at one point became mature enough to define neighbourliness in some way, to make it more present in our narrative.

Ewa Chomicka: Tell us please how this topic works in your museums.

Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska: In the Royal Łazienki Museum the topic became more strongly formulated in 2018, when we launched the *Local Museum Ideas* project. This was due to the need to look at what is near. Before that, Łazienki emphasised their broader European and Polish dimension. At some point, we felt the need to check what and who is behind the Łazienki Gate. It turned out that there were amazing resources: great neighbours with whom we could do things, lots of small cultural institutions, libraries, local seniors' clubs and so on. For some time now, the idea of neighbourliness has been present in our museum; we think about our neighbourhood, we pay attention to it, and when we design something, it is with the following in mind: let us take advantage of the school or seniors' club which are next door, let us invite them to take part. These are not some big, spectacular initiatives, but they are constantly being developed. When designing such actions as e.g. *Volunteer Gardeners*, to which we invited people wishing to volunteer in the Łazienki gardens, we thought that nearby residents might also be interested. And this proved to be true. And although there is no "neighbourhood section" in the Education Department that I represent, this vector is still present in our projects.

Anna Szary: In the Museum of Warsaw we are somewhere along this journey, which is also about raising awareness among our employees that such projects are needed and significant. This is probably due to the fact that our situation is more complex, because the

Museum of Warsaw assumes all Warsaw inhabitants to be its closest neighbours, so this is quite a vast and diverse area. Many of our communication slogans, such as “The Things of Warsaw”, which means that we tell the story of people shaping the history of the capital through “Warsaw things”, in a sense refer to the idea of neighbourliness. It seems to me, however, that in general terms, this subject is rather poorly emphasised in our substantive activities, and that most often we think about the neighbourhood in a broad sense.

Personally, I would like to get involved with the subject of the closest neighbourhood, of the immediate surroundings, because the term “various residents of Warsaw” as a target group can sometimes be too vague for me. As in the case of the Łazienki Museum, it is our Education Department that is trying to deal with this subject. We know what kind of schools, foundations and other organisations are around us, but there have not yet been many projects which I could describe as taking common action with the immediate neighbourhood. We are now in the process and as a museum we are looking at how to redefine it. Likewise, we intend to tackle the subject mentioned by Agata, namely volunteering. Until now, each department has organised volunteers for itself, there has been no overall volunteer development policy. Now we are trying to create one and I think this also involves neighbourhood activities, because volunteers and neighbours can become our “envoys” in the city. We, in turn, can become an institution that also offers them something, for example, space, tools, resources, funding, etc.

Ewa Chomicka: During the think-tank, we talked a lot about the fact that neighbourly activities require long-term attention, vigilance and relationship building. What kind of structural model in museums could make this easier? Is it the “assignment” of this topic to a particular department or person or maybe spreading it across different units in the museum so that as many employees as possible identify with this area?

Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska: This is a matter of ambition and scale, defining the extent to which we want to do this. The fact that in our case such initiatives are carried out mainly by the Education Department is also the result of personal interests of the employees. It would probably be possible to separate this area, but such a state of affairs also has its advantages. I have the impression that thanks to this, the activities of the Museum are consistent, that our proposals to our neighbours are connected with our general educational programme, which is enriched by local themes. I suppose that even if such a separate department

dedicated to the local area had been created in our museum, the person running it would have worked closely with the Education Department, not only for substantive reasons, but also because building long-term relationships is close to our way of thinking, regardless of whether we are talking about our neighbours or other recipients. From my perspective, it would probably be ideal for the Education Department to have a person who had this area clearly and broadly defined in terms of his or her responsibilities.

Anna Szary: As far as institutions with expanded structures are concerned, I have indeed noticed a pattern that, if someone is expecting an open-access neighbourly activity, they usually go to the Education Department, because educational activities are not only geared towards transmitting a message but also receiving it. Curatorial activities, for example, usually constitute a message in the form of an exhibition. I would like to see neighbourly activities entering the structures of institutions at every level and for everyone to consider what content could be directed to their neighbours and what method should be applied to communicate it. I am aware that this is a very idealistic approach, but if we had this kind of thinking in different departments, not just in education, it would be easier for us to satisfy different audiences. I wonder what it would be like if, for example, curators wanted to do this, and if they were ready for someone to give them direct feedback, entering into dialogue with the content of the exhibition... Speaking of long-term consideration, I would see this as a common strategy for an institution, but I agree with Agata - someone who is collectively responsible for this area would be useful.

Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska: When I coordinated volunteering in the museum, and that is also an area requiring a great deal of attention and relationship-building, I realised that for this type of activity you need a person who, on the one hand, knows the museum and its resources well and, on the other hand, knows the people or community to which you are directing your activities. Such a person should be able to juggle with this knowledge, combine different fields wisely, so that both sides can be satisfied. This definitely helps the development of a given area.

Anna Szary: Having previously worked at the Centre for Contemporary Art, I was involved in many things, including volunteering. But unfortunately I could not commit to it completely, as it was just one of my duties. However, I know that volunteering means long-term engagement which requires personal commitment to building relationships. I also know

from experience that “bolting” it onto other duties is not the best idea. I agree with the view that it is best for someone to take care of cooperation with the local community and to instil this idea further, with the support of other workers.

Ewa Chomicka: To what extent is the topic of neighbourhood present in the discussions of your museum as a whole, and to what extent is it a topic that is rather dealt with in subgroups, sub-teams, less resonant on the overall museum forum? How does the positioning/ non-positioning of the neighbourliness theme in the structures affect the visibility of this theme in your museums?

Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska: In our museum, this is changing. In the Education Department, it was a subject that grew from the bottom up, from the heart, so to speak. At one point, however, various grant resources also appeared, which made other departments realise that it was worth taking a closer look at this local community and participation as such. The neighbours themselves have also started to demand more and more from the museum. For example, we have a thriving community from the Sielce area, which does not hesitate to voice its needs and ideas to the Museum. It turns out that right outside the gate there is a group of people who feel that the Łazienki Park is also their place and would like to be a conversation partner. It cannot yet be said that, in the case of the Łazienki Museum, this experience has developed into a well thought-out long-term all-museum neighbourly strategy, but it is a start.

Anna Szary: It is a fact that various projects and grants stimulate this kind of thinking. We, too, have been applying for grants for local activities, and we will probably continue to do so, but so far this has not been directly visible in our strategy. However, we are working to make this more visible in our discussions and to be mindful of neighbourly activities while working in project groups, and to make this a habit. Just as making collection accessible has already become an obligation, a habit, one can try to create a habit of reflection inside the team as to whether something interesting can be offered to neighbours during some action or exhibition. It is not always possible and not always necessary, but to ask oneself such a question at subsequent initiatives would be something.

Ewa Chomicka: And when you address projects to your neighbours, are they addressed specifically to that group and communicated in that way, or do you address them to the wider audience which includes the neighbours?

Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska: In Łazienki we do both. Last year, for example, we held an event about the November Uprising, and because we have streets nearby named after this “occasion”, with the consent of the neighbourhood building managers, we put up posters in the common parts, for example, on 29 Listopada Street. We invited our neighbours and one of our volunteers, who is also a neighbour, made a presentation on the subject and the event turned out to be very successful. I wanted this particular action to be addressed directly to the neighbours, because it was connected with the history of the place. We had a clear message: we invite everyone, especially the neighbours of Łazienki Park - and we made an extra effort to invite the closest residents by means of posters. But we also have a lot of cooperation that comes from direct communication; for example, we have a kindergarten in the neighbourhood, so we just meet and think about what we can do together.

Anna Szary: It is similar in our case, these messages are of a different type. However, I have the impression that neighbourly activities are still not emphasised enough in the main channels of communication. This tends to be done in a more bottom-up way, for example, in cooperation with institutions which are around us. However, what is being sent out widely is a kind of summary message, summarising, for example, that something has happened, has taken place. It seems to me that it is better to create a message aimed directly at our neighbours, so as to spare them the necessity of finding these activities in a large group of information or a large media campaign.

Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska: This is an interesting subject, because it concerns the definition of neighbourliness and the self-definition of “being a neighbour”. It is in this respect that the think-tank has been inspiring for me, that we need to take the time - and perhaps we will manage to do so next year - to undertake some neighbourhood research. When we initiated the project *Local Museum Ideas* and sent the message that this was a project for our neighbours, people from the other side of the Vistula River came to us, saying they were Varsovians and from their perspective Łazienki Park was in the neighbourhood. This micro-situation has shown us that if we write on the website: “we invite everyone, especially our neighbours”, we do not really know who will respond and who will consider themselves to

be neighbours. Sticking a poster on the staircase wall of a block of flats next to Łazienki Park is something different - we direct this message very precisely. And the question is open: who is a neighbour, where does this neighbourliness end, who responds to such invitations and how can these definitions be checked in different ways.

Anna Szary: Yes, it is an interesting thread, because I live in Sielce, closer to Chełmska Street than Gagarina, and I also consider myself a neighbour of Łazienki Park (laughter). This element of identification, whether someone considers themselves to be a neighbour of a place or an institution, is really important, because a person can live close by, and they may not care much about what is happening on the other side of the fence. It seems to me that in the Old Town, for example, where the Museum of Warsaw is located, we feel some indifference on the part of the neighbours, because they have so many places of culture, institutions and monuments around them that yet another place may not be so attractive.

Ewa Chomicka: If one of your neighbours wanted to carry out an activity in your museum, came up with an idea, who would they be referred to with their initiative, what does this path look like?

Anna Szary: In our museum, I am sure, such a person would be referred to the Education Department. The situation would be the same in all the previous institutions where I had worked. When the keywords "people from outside", "audience", "recipients" appear, such people are always sent to us.

Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska: In our museum such a path does not seem to be developed. But in the end, they usually end up in our department. If, for example, a neighbour wanted to put up a bench, then this would probably be sent for consultation with the technical department for garden and maintenance. But it would probably pass through our department anyway - and that is ok. Personally, I insist that the Education Department should be vigilant about neighbourliness, because of its sensitivity to building relationships. While dealing with "technical" matters, various other things can happen.

Ewa Chomicka: Finally, I would like to ask you about your dream model of cooperation between the museum and the neighbourhood. Let us imagine that we can design this model from the beginning in the structure of the museum, the ideal type. What would you suggest?

Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska: If we could start with the ideal type, I would begin with a diagnostic study of the specifics of our neighbourhood. Based on the results and the situation, I would develop a structure for the activity under consideration. Because neighbourhoods are different: more active, less active, some neighbourhoods come forward on their own and take the initiative, they only need an impulse for cooperation, and other neighbourhoods need more support. The nature of the space in which we work, and how difficult it is, is also very important. If this is a historically difficult neighbourhood, it probably requires more thought and perhaps a separate person to deal with it. If it is a more historically neutral neighbourhood, then perhaps this is not necessary. This requires good analysis. It is important that institutions understand that this immediate environment can be inspiring and helpful in the process of designing events. Reaching out to local resources can encourage new ideas. I think that this is also partly the reason why we have turned there, in search of new ideas and new topics for action. And it turned out that they are very close, that there are lots of amazing stories around. It is therefore important for the museum to reflect on its immediate surroundings and to see the culturally creative potential in them.

Anna Szary: I also believe that the immediate surroundings are a fountain of inspiration for new threads and finding new energy. Defining the needs of neighbours and listening to them can be extremely enriching for the institutions, so that they can react to current events and not get stuck in their usual way of operating. This also allows the institution to make its mark, if only through valuable feedback, which is usually bottom-up, informal in nature. As far as the ideal structure is concerned, for me, it would be a dream scenario for this topic to infiltrate the DNA of an institution, to include the neighbourhood in its charter, which would go hand in hand with convincing the whole team to take this direction. And whether it should be a separate department or a dedicated person for this area, I cannot say. But certainly this should be a person or persons who would be mainly responsible for this area of engagement, it should not be done "by the way". As has been said many times here, this area requires a great deal of vigilance and attention, and it cannot be developed satisfactorily on an on-and-off basis.

Agata Pietrzyk-Sławińska

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Anna Szary

Art historian, educator, curator of exhibitions, author of texts on art, leader of participatory projects, specialist in starting over and implementing changes. She gained experience in various cultural institutions, since March 2020 she has been working in the Museum Education Department of the Museum of Warsaw. She is interested in the perception of contemporary art by children, cooperation with people with disabilities, all initiatives combining movement and visual art, and of course neighbourhood projects.

Ewelina Bartosik

Wola Cultural Centre

New Neighbourly Relations? Lessons from the Pandemic

Several facts cannot be denied. We are dealing with a crisis or perhaps even a disaster. It is difficult to say when we will return to normality and what that will look like. The epidemic has completely reorganised or at least had a significant impact on the lives of each and every one of us. And this is where we are today. It is almost impossible to adequately describe the reality, let alone form a clear assessment of what is happening.

The epidemic has become our everyday life. At the moment of writing (November 2020), the crisis is slowly starting to become commonplace. This is no longer the perspective of the

spring lockdown, when we all stared at the empty streets in horror and most passers-by wearing masks resembled involuntary extras in a post-apocalyptic series. The disaster felt more “real”. It was more obvious that we had to organise ourselves to combat its effect, especially where it affected those most in need.

Based on psychological studies of the effects of natural disasters on communities, we know that the beginning of a disaster is a time of great help and support for those who suffered the most. However, “some time after an earthquake or hurricane has passed, those affected feel that their social networks are weaker than before the disaster.”⁵⁴

Is this really the case with the pandemic? After all, this “new social reality” of solidarity and emerging neighbourhood aid initiatives is very recent. We were still immersed in it before the summer holidays. Was all this potential for connection, heightened mindfulness and empathy in our communities a kind of carnival that simply swept through Poland?

I think it does not make sense to talk about changes in neighbourhoods accompanying the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the sustainability of changes. We are looking at the micro scale “in the heat of the moment”. However, we do not need to fully understand the nature of changes in order to make a few hypotheses as to what elements of this “carnival of help” can stay with us for longer. Neighbourhoods are not statistical monoliths. These are large and small groups and individual relationships. What happened in one part of the city will not necessarily happen in another housing estate. The inability to fit within a coherent model is one thing. Another is the decision of residents, whether, observing the experience of other communities, they would want to emulate it or return to their status quo.

Looking for definitions - various forms of neighbourly mobilisation

Online neighbourly help

Individual help and communities looking after themselves is a phenomenon accompanying the pandemic not only in Poland. This mostly consisted of organising PPE (distribution and production of visors and masks) for residents and hospital staff, organising meals and shopping for seniors and other people in forced isolation, as well as supporting online

⁵⁴ Krzysztof Kaniasty, “Social support, interpersonal, and community dynamics following disasters caused by natural hazards,” in: “Current Opinion in Psychology”, Vol. 32, April 2020, pp. 105-109.

fundraising for various aid campaigns and initiatives. To a large extent, self-help mobilisation would not have been possible without social media. For many years now, neighbourhoods have been building online communities (it is surprising, but this has been going on for over 10 years now!). Communication in local groups serves current needs for information, integration and discussions, but it also involves residents in various initiatives. It was natural that there was a very quick reaction in the setting up of a huge network of local self-help groups (mainly the Visible Hand initiative with more than 200 groups established throughout Poland⁵⁵). Their task was, and still is, to coordinate support and engage more volunteers. So will the post-pandemic neighbourhood have even more online presence? It is difficult to answer this question explicitly. The number of interactions on the Internet, after many months of lockdown, seems to be reaching a critical level. Local leaders who shared their observations during a survey of self-help activities in Warsaw's Wola district (April-May 2020)⁵⁶ pointed out that the virtual life of the community as the only option, rather than an alternative, has been completely insufficient. There are still many seniors and low-income families who remain excluded. The digital life of the community still ends where barriers, including economic ones, begin.

Mindfulness

The pandemic has opened our eyes. It has revealed the presence in our communities of needs that have so far been invisible. We have noticed seniors locked up in their homes on a daily basis due to the lack of lifts, people with disabilities, who need particular support at this time of crisis. Neighbourly self-help was based on a simple principle: I see a need - I organise help. This has created new relationships within communities and some residents were able to become a part of the community again thanks to the help. Will this change continue? What makes this easier is the fact that the model of support and the way in which institutions caring for people in need have finally become visible. Gaps have emerged, but also anomalies and absurdities, which are now difficult to get past. It also turned out that on

⁵⁵ "Każda pomoc" portal, report "An epidemic of subsidiarity. Grass-root aid initiatives in response to COVID-19", see: <http://kazdapomoc.pl/raport.html> (accessed: 27.11.2020).

⁵⁶ Adam Kadenaci, Ewelina Bartosik, "Support for people in a difficult situation due to the COVID-19 epidemic, implemented by aid initiatives in Wola - research report", Wolskie Centrum Kultury, Warsaw, June, 2020, see: https://wck-wola.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/raport_DK_dzialania-pomocowe.pdf (accessed: 27.11.2020).

the one hand there are social services, but on the other, there is the reaction of the community to the needs of the weakest or the excluded. This shift of responsibility can become something more permanent.

The balcony

During the pandemic, mindfulness is also associated with the use of space. We suddenly started to spend a lot of time in the immediate vicinity of our flats. We went onto the balcony, the patio. We got to know all the walking routes around the estate. The pandemic has grounded us, and once again settled us in our homes. We started to look around and see who we actually live with - who are the people living below us, above us, behind the wall? We finally had the opportunity to find out. Children and young people also benefited from this accumulation of interactions, particularly in closed housing estates, for which the communal space has become the only escape from distance learning as well as a play area due to the closure of educational establishments. Friends from the neighbourhood suddenly appeared in children's lives, sometimes for the first time.

The real network

Social activity in Poland is perceived as being linked to leaders. I am not aware of studies which clearly confirm this thesis, but we have a cultural habit which reinforces the stereotype that change is based on the influence of a particular person, and less often a group. It is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic will reevaluate this way of thinking and encourage a more collective style of management. The need for self-organisation has revealed that the accumulation of different potentials of individuals and groups that have never met before is possible (and effective). For many residents, supporting others was the first volunteering experience in their lives. The newly established self-help networks have developed not only a careful and ongoing response to the needs of the community, but a model of operation based precisely on the combination of experience and competence. The micro-activities of individual residents, who became involved in the help even on a one-time basis, either by passing on information about the person in need or by offering their services, turned out to be a very important element in organising aid. The new model can be called the "democratisation of leadership" or simply a community that is fully aware of its resources and knows how to manage them.

Relationships

At the beginning, providing aid during the pandemic was mostly about ensuring safety and access to food. However, it soon became apparent that regular interactions led to relationships which allowed both sides to satisfy their emotional needs. Seniors could finally talk to someone, and their younger neighbours, who often live alone, could cope more easily with isolation and loneliness. This rediscovered closeness and mutually beneficial meetings revealed a deeper dimension of the neighbourhood community. It is quite possible that the pandemic will cause relationships based on direct local contacts to be appreciated again. This will be influenced, by the reconstruction of trust in people outside the family, at least in part, as trust is generally very low in Poland. During the analysis of the interviews conducted as part of the WCK research,⁵⁷ a very interesting issue concerning “bridging social capital” emerged. This is a term used by Robert Putnam, a political scientist, who thus described relationships built on the basis of selfless contacts and interactions with people with whom we are not bound by blood ties, relationships or belonging to group defined by profession or class. During the aid activities, close relations were established between excluded groups (seniors, people with disabilities, former prisoners) and members of the middle class, between seniors and teenagers, etc. These are “connections between worlds which, beyond the reality of the pandemic, could rarely have happened - connecting people from different backgrounds around one goal.”⁵⁸

Partnerships

The time of the pandemic has been a time of partnership. Many aid campaigns were possible due to the cooperation of local organisations. Local partnerships proved to naturally complement the activities of local government: they have knowledge from within the community, specialist and diverse competencies, as well as invaluable organisational potential. This is also a clear message to residents that such co-operations are crucial to their communities. Local partnerships have revealed and consolidated another very important change: the self-sufficiency of communities and their potential to become

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

independent. This is evidenced by management, varied skill sets and, thanks to the huge increase in public fundraising during the pandemic, also financial self-sufficiency.

What will remain of the pandemic?

All these phenomena, resulting from the experience of various types of transformations in the functioning of the community, have revealed wider social problems, such as prevalence of loneliness, lack of adequate social support, anonymity, and insufficient participation of residents in decision-making concerning their immediate surroundings. On the other hand, they have allowed us to see the value of relationships within the neighbourhood and the potential of the community. After all, the pandemic also turned out to be a time of profound experience of localness. Not only in its spatial dimension, when several decades after the innovations of modernist architects and housing estates of the 1960s, it turned out again that being able to use services vital for one's wellbeing within a short walking distance has an incredible impact on the quality of life. Natural green spaces, which gave relief to the senses and body overwhelmed by isolation and cramped space, is also one of the revelations of the pandemic. This discovery, combined with a revision of the habit of consumption and accumulation of goods, gives hope to the rise of communities that are aware of the consequences of climate change and of their role in saving a world that is about to change completely. The crisis of the pandemic may result in a future that "will be smaller, slower and more human."⁵⁹

Ewelina Bartosik

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⁵⁹ See Michał Bachowski's interview with Zuzanna Skalska, "Noizz", 11.04.2020, <https://noizz.pl/opinie/zuzanna-skalska-swiat-po-koronawirusie-bedzie-jak-polska-lat-90/rybmzvr> (accessed 30.11.2020)

associated with the Praga-Południe district, she cooperated with the Office of Culture of the City of Warsaw as a revitalization specialist. Currently she is associated with the Wola Cultural Centre in Warsaw, where she carries out social and educational projects around the identity of the Wola district and local architecture.

Code of Good Practices

The Code of Good Practices was developed on the basis of work carried out by participants of the 2020 Museum Think-Tank.

Neighbourhood: knowledge mapping

- Look out the window, step out of the institution.
- Answer the questions: what can you see, what can you hear?
- Ask yourself: how do you define neighbourhood? Who do you consider to be the museum's neighbour?
- Ask your team members: how do they define neighbourhood? Who are the museum's neighbours to them?
- Diagnose self-definitions – who sees themselves as a neighbour of your museum? What factors influence this?
- Open yourself up to exploring and researching your neighbourhood. Talk to your neighbours to find out about their needs – they are experts on the places where they live.
- Familiarise yourself with the previous research on your environment, if available.
- Diagnose: what type of neighbourhood surrounds you? Is it homogeneous or is it made up of different neighbourhoods? What is its history? Who were the residents of this area in the past? How has this changed in recent years?
- When creating your own research tools, make sure that they can be re-used and collect comparable data.
- Be open to revising the initial definitions and regularly verify them.
- Compare your definitions with the institution's programme and see if this affects their wording.

- Draw from the experience and support of other team members and other institutions.

Model: planning

- Consider: how do you want to use the knowledge you have gained? What is the purpose of your action? What would you like to give to the museum through the proposed action, what would you like to give to the neighbourhood?
- Consider short and long-term perspectives. Define the objectives for your activities and the long-term process that they could help trigger / develop / strengthen.
- Define what role local heritage plays in your museum and in your idea and what role it plays in the local community.
- Look around, notice the resources you have at your fingertips: NGOs, green spaces, service points, higher education institutions, student groups etc.
- Discuss your idea with the museum team. Check what resources the institution has at its disposal.
- Ask what your neighbours and local partners think of your idea. Be open to what they may say and what you may have to change.
- Make sure there is space to involve (residents, partners, museum team) in the process at each stage.
- Make sure you build a sense of empowerment so that no one feels left out or excluded.
- Find out if there are any barriers (architectural, image-based) that may discourage your neighbours from visiting your museum or joining in.
- Find a common, open and easily accessible place where you can meet. A sense of safety is important.
- Accept that building relationships is a process.
- Draw on the resources of temporary neighbourhoods, spontaneous meetings.
- Plan consciously: take care of yourself so that you can take care of the community. Establish the status of neighbourhood activities within the museum and the possible scale of their development.
- Prepare monitoring and evaluation tools adapted to the nature of your activity.

Common space for action

- Begin with small steps and try to get to know the residents better.
- Open up to your neighbours' ideas about the museum's programme and invite them to contribute to its creation.
- Support grassroots activities carried out by residents. Make room for them in the museum.
- Include the voice of neighbours in the museum narrative, discover and strengthen local micro-histories, include local themes in the main programme of museum exhibitions, support the creation of social collections.
- Make the space and resources of the museum available to the neighbours; do not hesitate to use the space and resources of the neighbourhood: local NGOs, local businesses, institutions, the surrounding park, a nearby square.
- Enter into local partnerships and alliances.
- Ensure meetings are held regularly and provide an opportunity for defining goals and directions for action together. Encourage museum staff to participate in the activities in the neighbourhood. Point out the benefits. Together look for solutions to difficult issues.
- Invite residents as experts to take part in discussions concerning the museum environment.
- Create the opportunity for mutual support among the museum team, partners and participants. Share the responsibility for what you do.
- Consider in what other areas of the museum's activities the neighbourhood potential can be used. Share this diagnosis within the institution.
- Do not make empty promises. Speak openly about your limitations.
- Look for paths to break the impossible. Experiment.

Communication channels

- Be the first one to hold out your hand.
- Create an easy path for your neighbours to get in touch with the institution.
- Use inclusive language.
- Communicate the information outside the museum building.
- Establish a direct contact, send a direct invitation to cooperate.

- Take notice of where and when your neighbours tend to be, where and how neighbourhood groups work (in person, online).
- Take an interest in the local press, invite local ambassadors to cooperate.
- Hang a poster in the local shop, library, café, barbershop and on notice boards.
- Include your team and your neighbours in the process. Develop fixed rhythms of communication together.
- Consider whether your standard methods of promotion are adequate, re-model them accordingly.
- Create new, common platforms for communication.
- Use the network of relationships.
- If, for some reason, you cannot support a resident initiative, ensure open communication. Explain the reasons in order not to discourage residents from coming up with similar initiatives in the future.

Common ecosystem

- Recognise the potential of your immediate surroundings, use green spaces for outdoor activities.
- Discover the richness and specificity of local nature and biodiversity of the environment, create dedicated programme activities.
- Strengthen awareness of the impact of the museum, the residents and local entities on the natural world, build joint responsibility for the immediate surroundings.
- Map out programmes supporting neighbourliness and ecology. Support local residents in their grassroots environmental initiatives.
- Use your influence to shape the attitudes of others.
- Create a community garden, a meadow or some other “green place” with your neighbours, cultivate it together and benefit from its crops.
- Include the creation of simple solutions supporting other species: bird feeders, insect hotels, bird baths in your neighbourhood activities.
- During joint initiatives, pay attention to waste segregation, availability of composters.
- Support the second life of things. Offer unnecessary equipment or materials to local organisations, join the neighbourly exchanges of goods, local garage sales.

- Produce activities in a sustainable way. Re-use and recycle materials from previous initiatives.
- Use local suppliers, support local craftspeople, buy locally.

Good neighbourliness: the connections

- Think about the impact your museum has on the everyday life of your nearest neighbours. Perhaps it generates increased tourist traffic which significantly changes the character of the place? Maybe inefficient parking infrastructure makes life of residents miserable? Maybe the proximity of the museum pleases the nearby service providers, restaurants and shops? Find out what aspects of the museum are perceived positively in the neighbourhood and which are viewed negatively. How can you benefit from this knowledge?
- Consider what role the museum plays or can play for the local community in case of difficult issues that go beyond its jurisdiction and have a negative impact on the immediate surroundings. What position should the museum take? A silent witness? A forum for dialogue? A mediator? An active party to the dispute?
- Consider what role a museum plays or can play in the local landscape, given the close proximity to other entities with similar profiles - institutions, organisations. How can you strengthen cooperation with these actors and not compete for local audiences?

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POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek

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Muzeum
Józefa Piłsudskiego
w Sulejówku