Does Stakeholder Management Contribute to a Museum's Sustainable Development?

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Abstract. Museums are increasingly more connected to the concerns of the present-day society. In order to be actively involved in the development of the society and well-being of their communities, museums are more connected than ever, are active partners for their stakeholders. Having this new framework in mind, the present paper investigates the complex relationships between stakeholders and museums, as well as the role stakeholders could have to achieve the museum's sustainable development. The present paper investigates how Romanian museums are using the stakeholder management approach to ensure their sustainable development. The interviews reveal why the funding bodies are considered by far the most important stakeholders. Other museums are generally ranked among the most important partners, along with local cultural organizations and educational ones. Sustainable development and increased impact on the museum's community are constant concerns, but the main stakeholders and partners are rather narrowly considered.

Keywords: stakeholder management; museums; museum sustainability; networking.

Introduction

The associations that come to one's mind when thinking of museums are related to their collections: heritage, arts/history/science, conservation, exhibition, or even heritage research. All these are probably not so appealing to a wide audience, despite that culture/ heritage/science has generally a positive connotation. Also, people tend to associate museums with the past, a glorious and creative past. These are positive images, but also with some distant, somewhat impersonal connotation for the general public. This perceptual universe might be connected to the generally low interest in museums, seen as positive contributors to the preservation of heritage, of culture, but not so connected to the present world and the concerns of the contemporary society and their neighboring communities.

Falk and Dierking (2016) show that museum visits are associated with the attitudes of using free-time, which is connected to personal background and education history, opportunities to visit, but also various perceptions surrounding museums and museum visits. They are correlated with the perception of the capacity of museums to satisfy personal needs. Therefore, generally, museum-going decisions are evaluated in a complex personal manner, not from a social & cultural perspective. The wider audience is not interested in heritage *per se*, but in how relevant is the heritage for them.

Nevertheless, museums are not only about knowing and preserving heritage. They are in the same degree about people – from the past and the present. Museums are not only connected with past societies and personalities; they are increasingly more connected with the present society. This shift is related to new roles that the museum management assumes. Museums face increasingly more complex environments, both internally and externally. Coping with these has determined changes in the managerial practices of

museums, and more openness towards the public and stakeholders, they are not only cultural organizations but also socially-responsible ones (Janes & Sandell, 2007).

Museums are relevant for various communities, not only in a passive way, reflecting and promoting their heritage and history, but also in an active form. Contemporary museums are dynamic participatory organizations (Simon, 2010). This approach means that museums strategically involve their communities and visitors in developing their offer. The visitor experience has shifted towards the center of the museum's concerns (Falk & Dierking, 2016; Kadoyama, 2018). A museum's educational and cultural mission is reached by ensuring a positive and inspiring museum experience (Zbuchea, 2014). Increasingly more museums consider their audience not only having in mind its experience while in a museum, but also its interests, background, and characteristics. All these are relevant points of reference for designing the offer. Even more, representatives of the public are sometimes directly involved when designing a museum's offer.

This approach is connected with the new role that museums have within contemporary society. Museums have become actors involved in the social evolution; their discourse can actively influence the social perceptions and practices of their communities (Black, 2012; Coleman, 2015; Emery, 2001; Long, 2013; Nikonanou & Venieri, 2017; Sandell, 2003). Some museums are actively involved in controversial social and political debates relevant to their communities (Janes & Sandell, 2019).

In this relatively new framework, museums find themselves more connected than ever, having a wide variety of stakeholders to consider. The present paper investigates how are Romanian museums cooperating with their stakeholders to ensure their sustainability.

The importance of the museum's stakeholders

The best-known definition of stakeholders was given by Freeman (1984, p.46), who coined the stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives". Considering this framework, stakeholders are tightly connected to an organization. They are partners of various sorts, being in a direct relationship. Nevertheless, in the past decades, the concept widened, including many types of stakeholders, such communities or nonprofit organizations, with no (obvious) direct link with the organization. Therefore, the definition changed. Later, Freeman (2004, p.58) considered stakeholders as "those groups who are vital to the survival and success of the corporation", stating also that "stakeholders may bring an action against the directors for failure to perform the required duty of care" (Freeman, 2004, p.64). Berman and Johnson-Cramer (2019, p.1362) observe that the concept of stakeholder is widely applied to "describe constituencies to which organizations and even societies must be accountable".

The above perspectives show the complexity of the stakeholder theories, which have several facets: descriptive, instrumental and normative (Berman & Johnson-Cramer, 2019; Fontaine, Haarman, & Schmid, 2006; Valentinov, Roth, & Will, 2019). They would widely correspond to theoretical, practical and ethical concerns. Understanding and considering all these dimensions are relevant for effective management for all organizations, including museums.

Since stakeholders could have a significant influence on an organization, they are of particular interest, both for academic research and for practitioners who increasingly more consider them when designing strategies. Freeman, Wicks, and Parmar (2004, p.366) underline the primacy of creating value for stakeholders when designing management and marketing strategies. Academics draw the attention that if stakeholders are not considered by organizational strategies, the reaction of the stakeholders would affect the sustainability of that organization, by withdrawing their support (Valentinov et al., 2019, p.843).

Considering stakeholders when designing and implementing managerial and marketing strategies is not an easy task. Stakeholders are extremely diverse. A museum should consider not only their visitors and employees but also other types of stakeholders, such as researchers & academia, local communities, volunteers, teacher and heritage & science educators, all sorts of partners, etc. We specify that the typology and structure of the stakeholders vary for each museum and a consistent and detailed mapping is necessary for designing an effective strategy.

The stakeholder map should not only identify a museum's stakeholders but also group them into categories, considering the importance they have for that museum. This map would be considered when designing not only the stakeholder management strategy but also for other aspects of a museum's activity. For instance, the content and approach of the exhibitions or educational programs are not only a matter of scientific knowledge, but also of social interaction, learning style, and even social/political involvement. In this way exhibitions and the museum's activity become relevant for its stakeholders, as well as for various communities and society.

To achieve this aim, museums could adopt several approaches. The easiest and less complex is asking for advice from relevant stakeholders. This could be later integrated by the museum team into its activity and the product they offer to the public (exhibition, scientific event, educational program, book, etc.). Museums could adopt a more interactive approach. They could involve stakeholders in decision-making and even co-creation. Development models based on open innovation could also be considered as an effective approach (Errichiello & Micera, 2018; García-Muiña, Fuentes-Moraleda, Vacas-Guerrero, & Rienda-Gómez, 2019).

Involving stakeholders is neither easy nor risk-free for a museum (Holdgaard & Klastrup, 2014; Thyne & Hede, 2016). Therefore, the existence of procedures, as well as control of the activities are necessary. Stakeholders could be considered not only when designing the offer of a museum (Barnes & McPherson, 2019; Ciolfi et al., 2016; Mygind, Hällman, & Bentsen, 2015), but also having in mind the experience ensured for visitors of the museums (Antón, Camarero, & Garrido, 2018; Jung & Tom Dieck, 2017; Thyne & Hede, 2016).

Museums following the above approach have been labeled as "collaborative", "dialogic", "participatory" (Fuks et al., 2012; Simon, 2010; Smørdal, Stuedahl, & Sem, 2014). In principle, involving stakeholders in developing the museum's offer seems simple to do. There are many aspects to consider. One important aspect is the authenticity (Thyne & Hede, 2016). Another critical aspect would be the public value ensured – especially when some of the stakeholders are more influential and have different interests than other stakeholders. Kershaw, Bridson, and Parris (2018) draw the attention, for instance, that museums tend to be more attentive to the needs and inputs of 'upstream audiences' (government and funding bodies) compared to the 'downstream audiences' (visitors).

Another difficulty is related to the representativeness of the stakeholders involved. There are many questions to consider: how many stakeholders, whom to invite for dialogue, what are the procedures of involvement and communication. All these have to ensure fairness towards stakeholders, so as all the voices to be considered.

The stakeholder management should take into account a series of principles, but the most important aspect is disclosure (Szwajkowski, 2000), meaning being open, transparent and accountable, having in mind not only the organizational mission but also the interests of the stakeholders. These are not easy tasks, only agile organizations being able to follow these lines.

Stakeholder engagement is part of stakeholder management. An effective stakeholder engagement could be considered in a framework ensuring the participation of stakeholders in all decisions that could affect them, as well as taking decisions considering

their opinions and desires. If their contribution is not taken into account, not only that the relationships with those stakeholders will suffer, but the outcome itself would not be optimal, not offering enough value for stakeholders, reflecting more the perspective of the museum's representatives. In the case of museums, stakeholders' involvement in designing the offer could ensure wider participation and a better experience for all the visitors of the museum, as well as enhanced educational and cultural outcomes. Thus, the sustainability of the museum's activity is ensured.

Museums and sustainability. The mediating role of stakeholders

Sustainability is an increasingly popular concept, being widely used both by academia and professionals. It even became a buzz-word (Ben-Eli, 2018). Despite the attention, researchers observe a relative imprecision both in defining the concept (Moore, Mascarenhas, Bain, & Straus, 2017) and in measuring organizational sustainability (Ben-Eli, 2018). Moore et al. (2017) identified through literature review five components of sustainability definition: *(1) after a defined period of time, (2) the program, …. and/or implementation strategies continue to be delivered and/or (3) individual behavior change (…) is maintained; (4) the program and individual behavior change may evolve or adapt while (5) continuing to produce benefits for individuals/systems.* Therefore, adaptation towards future benefits for organizations, individuals and systems is at the core of sustainability.

Isabela Luiza Pop (2017) developed several studies dedicated to sustainability in museums, highlighting that even if the interest in the topic is growing, most of the studies concentrate on one of the facets of museum sustainability. She also stresses that in the case of museums, besides the classical bottom line – social, ecologic and economic dimensions – cultural sustainability should also be considered. Generally, culture is an aspect increasingly more connected to sustainability, but in the case of museums and other cultural organizations, it is at the core of sustainability and the other three dimensions contribute to cultural sustainability (Errichiello & Micera, 2018, p.4). Cooperation with stakeholders, including in projects based on open innovation, leads to the achievement of cultural sustainability of the museum (Errichiello & Micera, 2018, pp.5-6), while also observing more consistently the social and economic dimensions due to multiplying effects. Another benefit for museums would be the activation of tangible and intangible resources of stakeholders for the joint project, another engine for enhancing the museum's sustainable development.

Museums connected to and involving stakeholders are open-system museums. They have access to more types of funding, are better networked and can build more consistent support among stakeholders. They are more sustainable organizations, with better performances and could better face crises (Mann, 2017).

As in the case of other organizations, performance is an indicator of sustainability. Marketing/market orientation is a way to increase not only the economic outcomes but also the cultural and educational ones (Zbuchea, 2014). It also contributes to innovation (Blasco López, Recuero Virto, & San-Martín, 2019). There is a significant connection between performance, market orientation, and innovation. To activate this triad, stakeholder management strategies could also be considered for sustainable development both of a museum and its communities.

Pop (2017) identifies nine attributes of sustainable museums: preserve the heritage in optimum conditions; high degree of heritage enhancement; active; attractive; products and services in accordance with the needs of the community; high own incomes; a large number of visitors; economically efficient; it contributes to the protection of the natural environment. She also presents a set of indices to measure sustainable development, but all of them are inner oriented (Pop & Borza, 2016a). Cooperation is one of the strategies proposed for the sustainable development of museums (Pop, 2017).

Museums could improve their sustainability in several ways. One is through quality development (Pop & Borza, 2016b). Quality in museums leads to enhanced and even surprising experiences, leading to audience development, higher visitor satisfaction, and loyalty. By considering the museum's stakeholders and involving them in different activities as well as to co-create the offer, a museum could obtain a relevant increase in quality.

Adequate marketing strategies might also contribute to sustainable development (Pop & Borza, 2016a, p.12; Sobocińska, 2019). Museums should consider the development of sustainable marketing strategies, meaning to equally have in mind the protection and strengthening of natural and human capital, as well as relationship marketing (Sobocińska, 2019). This would generate increased loyalty, cultural participation, and cultural effectiveness. Part of the relationship-building strategy refers to keeping very close communication with the most committed and important stakeholders, as well as with the visitors.

Increasing visitors' value is at the core of successful marketing strategies, leading to reputation and loyalty. A study on a sample of European museums confirms that quality, prestige, and innovation positively and significantly influence museum sustainability (Recuero Virto, Blasco López, & San-Martín, 2017). Involving stakeholders in a museum's life would enhance all these three aspects. In this framework, museum managers should consider not only external stakeholders but also the internal ones – their employees. Increased involvement in decision-making processes, would lead not only to increased attachment and loyalty of employees to the museum but also would enhance the innovation and efficiency.

All of the above show how involving stakeholders could contribute to the sustainability of museums by enhancing the cultural, social and economic dimensions. Effective stakeholder management strategies would lead to audience development, another aspect of sustainable museums. Audience development of museums is a complex process since the public is very diverse and parts of it feel quite distant and/or uninterested in a museum's offer. For instance, socially excluded groups do not feel close to a museum and only an inclusive approach could develop a relationship with them (Barnes & McPherson, 2019). In some other instances, developing marginal audiences could also lead to positive impact specific for those segments and contribute to the sustainable development of those communities, as in the case of the elderly (Bonner, 2019). Audience development should also have an online dimension. Creativity is a way to ensure sustainable involvement (Literat, 2017). Overall, enhancing positive experiences generates more sustainable results for a museum.

Another benefit of effective stakeholder management is the establishment of functional networks around a museum. These networks, are beneficial not only for that museum, but also for the other members and society at large, contributing to the sustainable development of communities, society, and region (see for instance the following research investigating some of these aspects: Borin, 2015; Ferilli, Sacco, Tavano Blessi, & Forbici, 2017; Janes & Sandell, 2019; Lazzeretti & Capone, 2015). For museums, a wide range of networking outcomes associated with the sustainable development of the museum could be considered, such as value creation, knowledge transfer, solving specific problems, resources and activity development (Bira & Zbuchea, 2019; Luonila & Johansson, 2016).

Research design

Objectives

Drawing on the literature mentioned above, museums are currently integrating more and more practices inspired by organizations that are relying on a wide range of income sources, much like any other entity that is aiming to achieve an increasing degree of

sustainable development. This approach increases a museum's opportunities but also multiplies challenges that should be considered.

The current research aims at pointing out if and how museums are using the stakeholder management approach, to attain long-term outcomes and consolidate trusted and reliable partnerships, thus contributing to the sustainable development of museums. Therefore, our first objective is to identify, discuss and analyze those museum activities that may have an impact on the way museums are thinking about their audience development, about their annual activity calendar, or about their most popular events. (in other words, we tried to find if a pattern in building stakeholder relations might be recognized). The second objective revolves around how museums are cultivating and widening their circle of collaborators: exploring new partnerships is a way of enhancing innovation and, cultivating proven, successful relations could be a source for future stability.

Exploratory research, based on interviews with museum professionals all over the country was conducted in October & November 2019 and also in January 2020. Interviews, with a length between 18 and 45 minutes were recorded using a phone or a professional recorder.

Participants (n = 12) were persons employed as upper-middle and top managers within a large range (local, national) of various public museums (having the main profile based on ethnography, history, art, memorial houses, and other specialized museums) across Romania. The respondents' professional experience as managers within museums ranged from 1 to 15 years. At this point, it is important to mention that, based on our knowledge of the field, mobility from other sectors of activity (e.g. NGO, teaching, research) towards museums is minimal: most people having a management position within museums are, usually, "products" of the museum sector; there is, however a degree of inter-museum mobility.

Thematic analysis

Within the current research, we follow two main structural themes, identified before data collection, from a previous set of interviews aimed at investigating the process of knowledge transfer within museums (Bira & Zbuchea, 2019). Those two main themes revolved around: (1) defining a stakeholder – which corresponds with our first research objective – and (2) designing a coherent way of consolidating stakeholders' relations. Processing the data generated also a set of emerging themes, such as understanding financial aspects of museum activity, undervaluing or overvaluing long-term collaboration with schools and universities, reaching out for new partnerships (sponsor, volunteer, collaboration), and the role of professional networks.
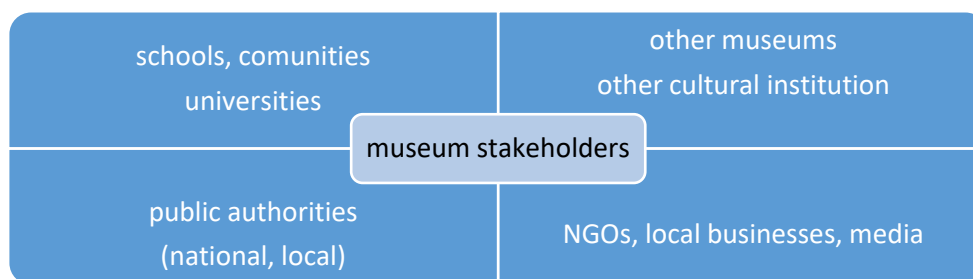

Figure 1. Museums stakeholders (as mentioned by respondents)

Findings

Who are the Romanian museums' stakeholders?

Funding takes precedence ....

From a financial point of view, there is not a single cultural institution that is not pointing out, in various ways, to the underfunding of the cultural sector by the local or national administration. Respondents are usually speaking about "finding solutions in order to attend to national conferences" (ID), or "we try to finance projects via non-reimbursable funding" (BT), or about keeping the cost to a minimum: "when we were to an exhibition in. [name of a European country] and our budget was barely covering the participation costs for two persons, and therefore one of us acted like a person with multiple qualifications" (BS)[1].

All museums covered by the current research are public owned museums, and therefore they are funded either by central authorities (e.g. the Ministry of Culture) or by local authorities (e. g. county councils or town councils). In terms of human resources and financial resources museums depend upon the administration and the funding they provide. European and national grants are also available, but museums must have a solid institutional capacity to apply for the first category (which, at this point, they generally don't). National grants are more accessible, but at the same time, the competition is high, especially when one must consider that the public sector and private cultural sector alike are rivaling for the same grants. An important source of additional financial resources is, therefore, local sponsorship and all sorts of partnerships that may cover part of expenditures for various events organized within museums. Viable, long-term relations with local and/or national authorities as well as with other public institutions (that may contribute to some expenditure) are mandatory for smoothly running the museum activities.

In this context, this direct reference to the county council as being the main stakeholder contains, in a nutshell, the approach taken by museum management towards this primary category of stakeholders: "(if I was to choose) from all the other stakeholder categories, the most important is the county council, the funding body. Because this is where the money comes from; based on our results, future funding is coming from here (LM)".

Another way of describing the same situation is the example below, where a respondent explains the relationship between the museum management and the public authorities, and its impact on prospective collaborations: "the cultural manager of a museum has a 5-year long mandate, and his performance is, every year, evaluated by the public authority funding that specific museum (we are talking either about the ministry of culture, the county council or the mayor). (...) This means that this manager, will be, always, in all his partnerships and collaborations, under this umbrella, this pressure, not to do something that might annoy the local power – and this has nothing to do with the government being of this or that color (...)" (BT).

It follows that the funding authority is placed high in the stakeholder hierarchy, and, equally high in this hierarchy are all the other partners that are a sort of constant financial support.

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[1] The term employed in Romanian was actually a reference to a common trope from the communist era, when a person was supposed to have a lot of different skills, and to know a lot of different things in order to overcome the shortcomings generated by the chronically under-funded and under-staffed (cultural) institutions.

<u>… and sponsorship follows, but with tiny steps</u>

When mentioning (implicitly or explicitly) the lack of proper funding, respondents are referring also to various sponsorships or partnerships allowing them to pursue the organization of some events or activities that depend on supplementary funding.
However, local sponsors are only seen as a punctual, "to go solution" and are never referred to as a long-term partner by our respondents. In addition to this, obtaining sponsorship is seen as something like a onetime activity, aimed at solving an urgent and yet punctual problem (buying some new pieces of displays within an exhibition, organizing an event or a conference):

- "it is very difficult to plead, to actually persuade someone because there are huge investments in large events and festivals (…) it is extremely difficult to be persuasive, you have to know the person who has the power to decide if you don't personally know him or her, all those solicitations are going nowhere". (BS),
- "it would have been nice to organize a meeting or a conference of some sort, but sponsorship is hard to get these days" (RB).
- "at least for now, we are thinking about sponsorship, because we, as a museum, we are not allowed to make expenses that fall under the category of "protocol" (= catering for an event) and there is a stringent need in this area, and this would a be a first step, it would quickly be done and simple, both for us and for them" (LM).

The adverse effects of competing against other cultural institutions or NGOs for resources are felt also when talking about sponsorships, as it alters the museum capacity to cultivate long term relations, using the usual PR tools: "If we go towards an economic agent with an outstretched hand, in the guise of friendship or just to say hello, they are under the impression that we must be requesting resources; there are a lot of non-profit agents that are asking for money to economic agents, and, therefore, when we just want to say hello, they are under the impression that we need something" (LM). However, this is a singular case, but it worth to investigate upon, as the dynamic of relations between not-for-profit and for-profit agents, especially in these times when more and more agents belonging to the sector of "creative economy" are emerging.

The importance of peers

An important category of stakeholders that are frequently mentioned by respondents is formed by other cultural institutions mainly other museums, but also local facilities for restoration and conservation, cultural centers within a close range, and traditional partners for museums, such as local libraries or training providers.

When examining relations with other museums, a rich variety of actions is described. Among such actions, we find: *doing secondary research of best practices, doing competition analysis, taking a good look at what other museums are doing across the country, visiting all sorts of museums, signaling a common problem.* Other verbs used to describe the collaboration with fellow museums are: *to complete one another; to put together our efforts; to think together; to share; to the borough; to adapt; to inspire; to find solutions; to inquire; to discuss; to promote; to protest.* And of course *to exchange* (the most frequent term used throughout all interviews).

Projects of all kinds, conferences (both scientific conferences on specific domains e.g. archaeology, art history, and conferences aimed at exchanges good practices about museums activities), workshops, and especially organizing exhibitions are the core activities mentioned by respondents when asked to comment on the way they are building relations. This distribution relays on the very nature of a museum and its most visible core activity: that is to "exhibit". We won't dwell here upon the definition of a museum's mission, but, as – implicitly- acknowledged by our respondents, a museum is focused

mainly on delivering exhibitions for the public, and, accessory, on delivering other cultural events such as conferences, concerts, traditional dance shows, fairs, and so on.

Professional associations (ICOM, the Association of American Museum Workers, the Union of Plastic Artists) and NGOs aiming at connecting museums (such as the National Network of Museums from Romania) is also regarded as valuable partners, especially if they are connected to a funding opportunity. The way our respondents are referring to one of the most active organizations within the museum sector, The National Network of Museums[2] is amongst them. "my chief accountant is always asking me why do we keep paying this membership tax? (note: the annual membership tax) how is this to our benefit?" (BT).

However, with few exceptions, it seems that the focus of museums is on cultivating relations with other museums. Knowing their public falls way back on the list of priorities, although not a single respondent has skipped over the word "community" when discussing plans and activities alike: "we aim to reach out to people and to get the community closer" BS; „it is an activity for families, and it is very popular amongst the general public" (IC); "we always seek to get the community involved in our events, in our programs, and our research" (LM).

Mentioned by some respondents, audience research is less talked about when discussing partnerships and relations. The example below points out that, although museums are using PR tools such as surveys and the idea of public segmentation, this is rather an exception than the rule: "we ran market research on one of our key public categories, one that we are already addressing – namely high school pupils. We did this market research three years ago: it was a survey by questionnaire, and we were not exactly happy with the results, we realized that we need to re-think programs targeted for the pupils and we start doing this, and we saw a little improvement, let's say around 10% more in visitors' number, so, yes, we try to get the community involved, but in the same time we use the public segmentation and we try to involve them according to those segments". (LM).

Examples of good practices for involving communities in museums projects are highlighting their exceptional occurrence: "(...) there is this street, with the highest density of cultural sites in the city (...) we contributed to the construction of community identity (...) we try to invent, to create a new tradition, blending this feeling of belonging, to increase community cohesion. We learned about all our neighbors, who they are, what do they do, and they learned about us: we had 4 exhibitions, we created (several printed materials)" (MU)

It follows that there is a marked preference for cultivating relations with institutions, to deliver on such themes like sustainability and institutional development, rather than to focus on visitors and their specific needs. Within the current context, this could make sense: given the relative underfunding, if museums ignore their current support network (other museums, associations, "well provided" cultural centers) it would become increasingly difficult to fulfill their mission towards the general public.

Absence speaks volumes

One peculiarity about our corpus research is related to the implicit assumptions respondents made when discussing their most "important" partnerships. The large majority of museums are closely working with schools from their proximity, or with schools and teachers from the same department/county and sometimes they extend these partnerships towards neighboring university centers. However, voluntary mentions about such partnerships were made only when a university (and its students or its teaching staff) were involved: "we have, of course, partnerships with schools; and a

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[2] (from Romania), an NGO aiming at connecting museum professionals from all over the country and providing museums with know-how, training opportunities, best practice cases via national conferences, mobilities, projects as well as online platforms.

positive side that I would mention is that not only primary schools and gymnasiums are reaching out to our museum, but also an increasing number of high schools and faculties (…)" (AA).

When asked to develop a little bit of current, day-to-day partnerships and activities, all respondents discussed schools and school children, but everybody was assuming that this is such a common feature that it does not need to be discussed anymore. We might conclude that closely working with schools is a recipe that currently functions and already existing networks might be considered as stable enough to provide continuity in the activity. Going back to the field literature, it seems that loyalty is ensured and cultural participation is achieved. When it comes to cultural effectiveness, there are tiny steps made towards assessing its level (a survey here, a community project here, another survey there) but, since comparing it with being able to basically function, evaluating cultural effectiveness could be already a drain of financial and human resources.

Conclusions

The concept of stakeholders evolved, resonating with the increasing relevance of the concept both from theoretical and practical perspectives. Increasingly more, organizations of all types are considering and involving their stakeholders when designing and implementing their management and marketing strategies. Museums, even more, should consider creating value for their stakeholders, while also achieving their mission of keepers of the heritage and cultural educators.

Stakeholders can directly influence the sustainable development of a museum. They offer support when the museum contributes to the wellbeing of its communities, having in mind all the four pillars of sustainability. In the museum sector, the cultural dimension offers the framework for ensuring the achievement of the other three – social, economic and ecologic. At the same time, the traditional pillars of sustainable development have to contribute to reaching long-term cultural performance and education.

A stakeholder map is a useful tool for museums to design their strategies, including the public offer. This would increase the relevance of museums for contemporary society as well as for their communities. Museums would be more attractive and convincing, contributing to the development of all the four pillars of sustainable development for them and their communities. In this way, a museum ensures both authenticity and public value.

Effective stakeholder management and involvement strategies would lead to the sustainable development of both museums and communities. The benefits for the museum are diverse, from reaching their culture and educational mission in an optimal way or developing a loyal audience, to more tactical advantages such as additional resources, open innovation or access to knowledge.

The investigation developed among middle-top manager of dynamic Romanian museums reveal that they tend to adopt a stakeholder management approach to ensure their sustainable development. Networking, sustainable development and increased impact on the museum's community are constant concerns. Nevertheless, the variety of stakeholders considered to achieve these aims is limited, attracting resources being the main target. The funding organizations are considered by far the most important stakeholders. Networking with peers and cooperating with other museums, local cultural and educational organizations are at the core of their stakeholder management strategy. This seems to be the strategy adopted to ensure a better offer, in general, to develop the museum's activity.

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