



## **RE-designing Access to Cultural Heritage for a wider participation in preservation, (re-)use and management of European Culture**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.1 BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.2. ROLE OF THIS DELIVERABLE IN THE PROJECT .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.3 APPROACH .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.3.1. PROJECT INFLUENCES ON THE APPROACH OF THE INSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE PILOT .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.3.2. METHODOLOGY ADOPTED BY THE INSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE PILOT .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.4 STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3. INSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE. THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF CHANGEABLE APPROACHES.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3.1. RETHINKING THE MUSEUM.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3.2. WAVES OF CONSIDERATIONS, A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3.3. DIVERSE APPROACHES AND VIVID DEBATES .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>3.4. CHARACTERISING “PARTICIPATION” IN MUSEUMS .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>3.5. MUSEUMS IN THE 21TH CENTURY. LOOKING FOR NEW <i>MODI ESSENDI ET OPERANDI</i> .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4. INSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE: MUSEUMS AND THEIR INITIATIVES – CASE STUDIES.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4.1. INDUSTRIE- UND FILMMUSEUM WOLFEN (INDUSTRY AND FILM MUSEUM, IFM) .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4.1.1. VISIT .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4.1.2. CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4.1.3. THE MUSEUM.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4.1.4. OBJECTIVES.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>4.1.5. ADDRESSEES / PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>4.1.6. INVOLVEMENT / PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>4.1.7 INTERIM EVALUATION: POTENTIALS AND RISKS .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>4.2. HAUS DER GESCHICHTE, WITTENBERG (HOUSE OF HISTORY, HDG) .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.2.1. VISIT .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.2.2. CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>4.2.3. THE MUSEUM.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>4.2.4. OBJECTIVES.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>4.2.5. ADDRESSEES / PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>4.2.6. INVOLVEMENT / PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>4.2.7. INTERIM EVALUATION: POTENTIALS AND RISKS .....</b>	<b>45</b>



<b>4.3 MUSEUM FÜR ISLAMISCHE KUNST (SMB-PK), BERLIN (MUSEUM FOR ISLAMIC ART, ISL)</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<b>4.3.1. VISIT</b> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>4.3.2. CONTEXT</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>4.3.3. THE MUSEUM</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>4.3.4. OBJECTIVES</b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b>4.3.5 ADDRESSEES / PARTICIPANTS</b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b>4.3.6. INVOLVEMENT / PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES</b> .....	<b>59</b>
<b>4.3.6A ACCESS – ENGAGEMENT – PARTICIPATION</b> .....	<b>64</b>
<b>4.3.7 INTERIM EVALUATION: POTENTIALS AND RISKS</b> .....	<b>65</b>
<b>5. RESULTS AND IMPACT</b> .....	<b>79</b>
<b>5.1. SYNOPSIS OF SIMILARITIES AND SINGULARITIES</b> .....	<b>79</b>
<b>5.1.1. MOTIVATIONS AND OBJECTIVES</b> .....	<b>79</b>
<b>5.1.2. PARTICIPANTS AND COMMUNITIES</b> .....	<b>80</b>
<b>5.1.3. SCOPE OF ENGAGEMENT</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>5.1.4. ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORKS</b> .....	<b>84</b>
<b>5.2. EXEMPLARY INITIATIVES? A CONFRONTATION WITH THEORY</b> .....	<b>85</b>
<b>5.2.1. PARTICIPATION</b> .....	<b>85</b>
<b>5.2.2. POWER AND (INTER-)DEPENDENCIES</b> .....	<b>86</b>
<b>5.2.3. CULTURAL HERITAGE – COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATED ISSUES AND PROCESSES</b> .....	<b>87</b>
<b>5.3. MUSEUMS: SEEKING RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY – AND SUPPORT</b> .....	<b>92</b>
<b>5.3.1. MUSEUM AS MEETING POINTS OF MULTIPLE RELEVANCE</b> .....	<b>92</b>
<b>5.3.2. THE COLLECTIONS – MULTIPLE VALUABLE SOURCES</b> .....	<b>93</b>
<b>5.3.3. HERE AND NOW, THERE AND THEN</b> .....	<b>94</b>
<b>5.3.4. IT’S AN INTERNAL ISSUE!</b> .....	<b>95</b>
<b>5.3.5. DIVERSIFICATION, EXTENSION, TRANSPARENCY AND NETWORK</b> .....	<b>98</b>
<b>5.3.6. STRUCTURES</b> .....	<b>99</b>
<b>5.4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THIS PILOT</b> .....	<b>102</b>
<b>5.5. REACH PROJECT EVALUATION</b> .....	<b>105</b>
<b>6. CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>108</b>
<b>APPENDIX: BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>110</b>
<b>APPENDIX: INSTITUTIONS, PROJECTS, EVENTS</b> .....	<b>114</b>
<b>APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>118</b>



## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The REACH project established four participatory pilots that were diverse in nature, working with different types of communities and stakeholders, in different situations and political climates. Their remit was to undertake participatory activities with specific stakeholder groups to consider which participatory approaches were most effective and, perhaps more importantly, to raise the profile of cultural heritage in, and on behalf of, their associated communities.

This deliverable, D5.3 – *Institutional heritage pilot results* – presents the findings that concern participatory activities conducted in museums, institutions that play an important role within culture and cultural heritage. The analysis is based on a comparison of three museums of different types describing their concepts of participatory engagement, areas of activities, approaches, methodologies, gaps and impacts: The Industrie- und Filmmuseum (Industry- and Film Museum) in Wolfen, the Haus der Geschichte (House of History) in Wittenberg and the Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum for Islamic Art.) in Berlin. Using these three case studies, it is possible to examine their options for participatory work, and the needs, difficulties, limits and gaps of this type of activity.

Special attention is paid to the impact of participatory activities and their sustainability. Therefore, this pilot study is not just focussed on the current state of the art and mechanisms of implementation for participatory work in museums; rather, it considers what changes arise for the museum, its work, its frameworks and, furthermore, for the wider conception of such institutions, because of such participatory activity. This pilot will help to broaden the understanding of how such initiatives change the institution and whether undertaking participatory approaches can support this particular type of cultural heritage institution to fulfil its core tasks and to further develop its work.

Since participatory work concerns the interaction and communication between the institution and its (potential) stakeholders, it is worth examining the significance of such activities for their environments. It is interesting to witness how involvement in museum activities is changing the perceptions and attitudes of citizens concerning the institution and the cultural heritage that they oversee, and what kind of influence this has on the third parties involved indirectly and also on a larger scale, on communities and wider society.

As involvement and engagement are common issues of societal significance, the aim of this deliverable is to highlight the interdependence between the different societal stakeholders, both those directly and indirectly involved, and to underline their mutual dependencies and responsibilities.

Even with a focus on three specific institutions, a select sample of the rich museum landscape, it is possible to provide diverse and multi-layered points of reference that can enrich and further develop the discussion on the topic of participation, on the benefits of the interpersonal interaction around cultural assets and on the role and relevance of cultural heritage institutions for communities and societies.

Special thanks are due to the Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen, Haus der Geschichte (Wittenberg) and the Museum für Islamische Kunst (Berlin) for their support, openness, cooperation and interest in greater citizen participation and also in the REACH project.



## **2. INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 BACKGROUND**

The objective of the REACH project is to support and coordinate participatory initiatives in the area of cultural heritage. It also aims to develop a social platform that offers a forum for debate, project development and collaboration in order to broaden citizen engagement in the cultural sector and to strengthen the consciousness and awareness of the importance of culture and cultural heritage for communities and societies.

The overall project set itself the task of considering the work of current and completed projects, to understand what they had done well, what might not have been as successful and the lessons that could be identified. A wealth of information was uncovered and evaluated to consider participatory approaches for the management, preservation and (re-)use of cultural heritage (CH). To test this further, it was decided that four participatory pilots should be established that were of diverse natures, working with different types of communities and stakeholders, in different situations and political climates. The thematic pilots, Minority Heritage, Rural Heritage, Small Towns' Heritage and Institutional Heritage, form an important strand of the REACH project's work.

This pilot on Institutional Heritage, presented and analysed in this deliverable, was realised by Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, SPK) which is an association of museums, libraries, archives and research institutes. SPK assigned this project to the Institut für Museumsforschung (Institute for Museum Research). This is a research and documentation institution in the field of museums and museology that belongs to the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin State Museums – Prussian Cultural Heritage, SMB-PK). Due to its expertise in the field, the institute was a most suitable choice for the implementation of this pilot, as it conducts multidisciplinary research on all aspects of museums and their collections and provides services for museums, not just for the SMB-PK but also throughout Germany. Its tasks and areas of activity include annual museum statistics, which consider 6,771 institutions in Germany (in 2017), and also visitor research, digitisation, long-term archiving, museum management, museum documentation, new media, education, museum history, and creation and promotion of standards for museum practice. For its contribution to REACH, SPK can therefore make good use of its rich expertise and its comprehensive network.

Due to this particular institutional background, the pilot has focussed on participatory approaches applied in museums. For the study of citizens' involvement and engagement with culture and cultural heritage, this is a very interesting context as the three selected institutions are located in and deal with very different environmental and societal contexts. Thus, this focus reflects and discusses a high degree of diversity and complexity of participatory work regarding forms, approaches, materials used, motivations and objectives.

In addition to their great variety, the featured institutions are a highly fascinating pilot subject in a further sense. Cultural institutions, and especially museums, are important places for communities and community cohesion, since they provide space(s) for cultural interaction and dialogue. They are / can be partners in promoting an involved and engaged culture and cultural heritage offer, by helping to raise awareness and visibility and underlining their significance for the communities and for the



societies. In addition, they are / can provide a bridge between different societal entities and their requirements. Forming part of very different environments, they are players in diverse networks and under various framework conditions.

## 2.2. ROLE OF THIS DELIVERABLE IN THE PROJECT

The role of this deliverable, as with the pilot itself, is two-fold. One aspect is to work with cultural heritage institutions in Germany, to identify and share ideas, and elements of best practice. The other is to consider the range of participatory approaches that fit with this task to either confirm, or not, the REACH project's prior findings<sup>1</sup> that will be used within project conclusions.

This deliverable fulfils the task T5.3 – *Institutional heritage* – considering cultural heritage in museums. The combined activities of the REACH pilots provide an opportunity to stimulate and enrich the reflection and discussion on engagement and involvement, with broad experiences and knowledge, from a variety of cultural heritage stakeholders. They aim to draw on significant polyphonic insights into the implementation of participatory initiatives and provide a deeper understanding of the nature and potential of such initiatives.

Using the rich expertise and the wide network of SPK and by virtue of its complex significance for communities and societies, this Institutional heritage pilot concentrated on three German museums and their participatory activities. Even though this focus might at first glance seem limited when considering the broad spectrum of cultural heritage institutions, their contributions are diverse and offer complex knowledge about participatory work around cultural heritage. It has thus been possible to consider the issue of involvement and engagement in the field of cultural heritage in all its complexity, to merge diverse insights gained and to draw fruitful conclusions regarding the complex impact of participatory activities and the societal significance of historic-cultural collections. The three museums involved are:

- The Industrie- und Filmmuseum (Industry- and Film Museum, IFM) in Wolfen
- The Haus der Geschichte (House of History, HdG) in Wittenberg
- The Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum for Islamic Art, ISL) of the SMB-PK in Berlin

The pilot aimed to develop an understanding of why and how participatory approaches help museums to fulfil and even improve their core tasks of collecting, preserving, researching, documenting, exhibiting, interpreting, transmitting and communicating cultural heritage. It analysed the potential and needs of different types of museums to widen their participatory approach as well as the restrictions that might obstruct such development. Of special concern was the impact of such activities beyond the practical contribution looking at their social, intellectual, mental, emotional effect and value for the parties directly and even indirectly involved. Thus, this pilot had to consider a complex relational network consisting of museum management and staff, participants, visitors / users, communities, the general public and politicians. Based on the findings outlined here, it will be seen whether practical guidelines and recommendations for cultural heritage institutions can be generalised in order to support and enhance their participatory and engagement activities.

1 REACH deliverable D3.1 – *Participatory Models*, 2019, chapter 6, URL: <https://www.reach-culture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/REACH-D3.1-Participatory-Models.pdf>, accessed spring 2020. Links to the named institutions and projects can also be found in the annex.





The pilot has followed the project's objectives of fostering societal awareness related to cultural heritage and supporting the sustainability of the REACH social platform by developing stronger relationships with practitioners and other cultural heritage stakeholders and by encouraging them to discuss participatory work to consider whether they might be beneficial and important in their respective contexts. Even though this has taken place on a micro level, these poly-local debates enable the development of more extended and complex networks that have the potential to be sustained. This dialogue has also led to the identification of examples of good practice that have been collected, analysed and added to the REACH social platform / open heritage website<sup>2</sup>.

During the latter stages of the project, D3.3 – *Project evaluation report* – will examine the different pilots' findings, including this significant contribution featuring museums, in order to identify common features and areas of synergy and potential, to improve participatory work and then to reassess the hypotheses and recommendations made at the pre-pilot stage of the project. The findings will also be considered, as the project develops D7.1 – *REACH proposal for resilient European cultural heritage*.

## 2.3 APPROACH

### 2.3.1. PROJECT INFLUENCES ON THE APPROACH OF THE INSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE PILOT

Due to the intertwined structure of REACH, the interdependences between the different tasks, and the mutual enrichment from diverse perspectives and focal points, other activities were beneficial for the work of this pilot. This is especially true regarding participation and its theoretical generalisation in D3.1 – *Participatory models*<sup>3</sup> – which draws on the grading of participation presented by Sherry R. Arnstein's "Ladder of Participation" (1969), David Wilcox (1994) and Nina Simon (2010) (*ibid.*, pp. 16-17). These ideas have been considered as a basis for thinking throughout this pilot, especially reflections about "heritage from below," "community heritage" and "participatory heritage" which are of special concern here (*ibid.*, pp. 12-16). In particular, as an introduction to considerations of "participatory heritage" and cultural heritage institutions, and their participatory possibilities and efforts, the following analysis is very useful:

"'Participatory heritage' is proposed as a hybrid. Individuals and communities define their own heritage more autonomously, engaging in and creating cultural activities independent of, but in collaboration with, existing traditional institutions. Participatory heritage can hence be considered as bottom-up perspective, but, since it challenges traditional cultural heritage institutions to make changes in their governance, it also features elements of top-down approaches.

However, it is important to underline that when traditional cultural heritage institutions try to involve and engage audiences, be responsive to their requirements, and more accessible to a wider public, that does not automatically create participatory practices. This can easily continue to be a top-down, authoritative approach, simply paying lip service to the rhetoric of participation, rather than actual practice itself. Indeed, several analyses show a wide range of participatory methods and practices across Europe, which cannot however be labelled as participatory governance." (*ibid.*, p. 15)

2 Good practices are available on the Open Heritage website (URL: <https://www.open-heritage.eu/best-practices>, accessed spring 2020).

3 Cf. Footnote 1.



Furthermore, “participatory governance,” which is used as the key category in the project, is characterised as a:

“[...] process [that] has to be dynamic and flexible, representing a continuum [...]. The aim in each individual, local case of creating participatory heritage activities is to establish the appropriate framework of collaboration between multiple actors, so enhancing people’s capabilities and contributing to forge strong communities.” (ibid., p. 19)

This definition includes important aspects that are not only applicable to the management of cultural heritage and its structures and procedures, but also to the implementation of specific activities of involvement and engagement. This concept will be revisited later in the section 5 Results and Impact, to evaluate the work of the pilot.

Knowledge gained from each of the project’s workshops allowed deeper, more differentiated considerations, and provided international input, which went beyond the thematic focus of each individual workshop. In particular, the “*Daring Participation!*” workshop on participatory approaches to cultural heritage management, held in Berlin in November 2018<sup>4</sup>, highlighted aspects for the pilot, that was then at its formative stage, especially for issues which would require particular care and sensitivity. Even though the presentations showed a wide range of initiatives, all of them pointed out that the emphasis of attention has to be put on the relationship of the institutions with their visitors / users (and other potential stakeholders) and thus on the societal role of the GLAM institutions<sup>5</sup>. During the exchange, it became evident that their work is constantly increasing in complexity caused by diverse factors including technical development, political events, natural incidents, and, related to these, changing (self-)images of people, communities and societies. The workshop made it clear that GLAM institutions are currently in a kind of transitional situation that creates new possibilities and requirements and, at the same time, raises new expectations and the will for action. GLAM institutions are currently exposed to a critical (self-)questioning in order to be able to respond to multiple challenges as they try new approaches, methods, strands and medias. Discussions at the workshop highlighted how this in turn can change the perception, handling and understanding of culture and cultural institutions, and can thus influence the museums’ own ‘everyday’ work as well as how such institutions are visited and used. Graham Black, in particular, sharpened the whole discussion by emphasising that if museums do not change, they will not survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thus, this workshop was an impressive, complex and reflective prelude that offered many starting points for this pilot. The workshop also served a further purpose, as the activities of IFM and ISL were also presented. Afterwards it was possible to build deeper relationships, which, in turn, led to supportive working processes throughout the pilot.

In addition, the gathering of data on participatory activities, as detailed in D6.2 – *Good practices of social participation in cultural heritage*<sup>6</sup> – was very useful, as it provided information about a number

4 The REACH page (URL: <https://www.reach-culture.eu/events/workshops/workshop-on-participatory-approaches-for-cultural-heritage-management>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020) and REACH deliverable D4.2 – *Workshop results and lessons learnt* (URL: <https://www.reach-culture.eu/project/public-deliverables> accessed winter 2019 / 2020) will give further information.

5 Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM).

6 REACH deliverable D6.2 – *Good practices of social participation in cultural heritage*, URL: <https://www.reach-culture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/REACH-D6.2-Good-practices-of-social-participation-in-cultural-heritage.pdf>, accessed spring 2020.



of previous participatory projects. The successes and limitations of the activities described were considered, to help understand various participatory practices, ahead of defining the work that would be undertaken within the Institutional heritage pilot.

Furthermore, the RICHES project<sup>7</sup> was also helpful to the present pilot study. As with REACH, its aim was to reflect on engagement in the field of cultural heritage and how it might be enhanced. It included the work of museums as an important part of its evaluation, including considerations of these institutions as places of education and lifelong learning and of how audience involvement could be used as an inspiration. In addition, the project had already undertaken important preliminary work, building a taxonomy that provided definitions of cultural heritage terminology, and that served as valuable concepts for this pilot.<sup>8</sup>

### **2.3.2. METHODOLOGY ADOPTED BY THE INSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE PILOT**

In preparation for the pilot, SPK conducted extensive preparatory desk-based research. From this, it made a selection of three different types of museums based on varied participatory activities and approaches, and carried out site visits, semi-structural interviews with various stakeholders, participatory observation, and informal discussions with participants. In addition, SPK continued the desk-based research in order to gain background and ancillary information, and also conducted discussions with practitioners from other institutions, representing different types of museums and fields of work (and thus different approaches). This has enabled a detailed picture of the wider sector to be developed, which is discussed in chapter 3.

The focus of the pilot was based on interpersonal encounters and exchanges. These elements are of particular importance as understanding social cohesion is an objective of the REACH project. This focus also allowed both in-depth interviews with different stakeholders and participatory observation, thus providing a multi-perspective approach to this issue.

Museum statistics, already collected by the Institut für Museumsforschung in 2017, had begun to place special focus on museum education and to consider the implementation of participatory offers.<sup>9</sup>

It is the basis for the REACH collection of good practices that comprises over 100 records from 26 countries of European and extra European participatory activities in the field of cultural heritage.

- 7 RICHES (Renewal, Innovation and Change: Heritage and European Society) was another international and interdisciplinary project, funded by the EU's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration, with a term of 30 month starting in December 2013 (URL: <https://www.riches-project.eu/index.html>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020).
- 8 RICHES deliverable D6.1 – *Access, Participation, Learning: Digital strategies for audience engagement with cultural heritage in museums and libraries* (URL: <https://resources.riches-project.eu/d6-1-access-participation-learning-digital-strategies-for-audience-engagement-with-cultural-heritage-in-museums-and-libraries/>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020), and the RICHES *Taxonomy* (URL: <https://www.riches-project.eu/riches-taxonomy.html>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020).
- 9 425 museums (10.9% of the participating intuitions) stated that they had a “participatory offer” (IfM, 2018, pp. 60 / 61). In 2017, the first survey took place in the field of museum education that considered the subject of participation. In contrast, volunteering has been a topic for a longer period of time. Since 2002, this request has been repeated, considering diverse fields, such as digitisation, public relations, museum education and sponsorship. In 2002, 2003 and 2014, volunteering was a specific subject of the survey, which clarifies its importance for the museum work. The museum statistics are (partly) available via the webpage of the IfM (URL: <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/institut-fuer-museumsforschung/research/publications/materialien-aus-dem-institut-fuer-museumsforschung.html>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020).



Due to this rich existing collection of data, it was possible to gain an initial overview and then to get in contact with the respective institutions.

Besides the implementation of the first REACH workshop “*Daring Participation!*”<sup>10</sup> the participation in the conference entitled “Panacea or self-abandonment? An intermediate status on experiences, chances and limits of participation in museums,” was also very beneficial. This event was co-organised by the specialist group Historical Museums and the working group Education of the Deutschen Museumsbund (German Museum Association, DMB).<sup>11</sup> Due to its collaborative approach, this conference provided cross-sector insights that reduced the boundaries between curating and education. In addition, the presentations gave detailed information about diverse recent and current initiatives in German museums, their outcomes and the challenges accompanying them. The contributions dealt with the need for more (mutual) awareness and interest and also for time, patience and willingness to learn from the diverse sides involved (including the governing / funding bodies); the importance of flexibility in facing different processes and dynamics and to be responsive to specific and unforeseen needs and wishes; the difficulties in co-curating projects when the institution is not perceived as a partner by the community in question and the topics being dealt with are not represented by the collection; the challenges in providing access to exhibitions for as many groups as possible and in finding compromises; the different levels of willingness to get involved and to invest time; a lack of personnel and financial resources; an acceptance of failure; the prevention of restrictions and exclusion; and a long-distance involvement. In addition to mostly positive notions concerning the implementation of participatory work, uncertainties were expressed regarding the role of museum staff and the skills and equipment required to fulfil their tasks and to face challenges, especially in view of the different needs of diverse communities and in the context of current political and social debates.

Supplementing these activities, discussions with practitioners working in diverse contexts were also undertaken that addressed their experience in previous projects, such as initiatives in the small towns of Bernau<sup>12</sup> and Kleinmachnow<sup>13</sup>, located in the federal state of Brandenburg near to Berlin, at the Stadtmuseum Berlin (City Museum Berlin)<sup>14</sup>, at the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnographic Museum)<sup>15</sup>

10 Cf. pp. 10.

11 On its page, the DMB provides further information about this experience exchange (URL: <https://www.museumsbund.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/fggm-programm-2018-2-frankfurt-1.pdf> and <https://www.museumsbund.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/fggm-protokoll-2018-2-frankfurt.pdf>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020).

12 Kontext Labor Bernau: Jenseits der Gegenstände – ein Museum im Kantorhaus (Beyond Objects – A Museum in Bernau’s Kantorhaus), Bernau, URL: [http://www.2014.kontext-labor-bernau.de/jenseits\\_der\\_gegenstaende.html](http://www.2014.kontext-labor-bernau.de/jenseits_der_gegenstaende.html), accessed winter 2019 / 2020.

13 Museumsprojekt (Museum project), Kleinmachnow, URL: <http://www.kleinmachnow.de/staticsite/staticsite2.php?menuid=485&topmenu=478>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020.

14 Stadtmuseum Berlin, Wir packen unsere Koffer aus (We Unpack Our Bags), URL: <https://www.stadtmuseum.de/ausstellungen/wir-packen-unsere-koffer-aus>, and Bizim Berlin 89 / 90, URL: <https://www.stadtmuseum.de/ausstellungen/bizim-berlin-89-90>, both accessed winter 2019 / 2020.

15 The related project is focused on the collaborative revision of Syrian collections with newcomers from this region. Its project manager is likewise a Syrian newcomer. It is part of a wider project entitled “Geteiltes Wissen” (Shared Knowledge) which deals with the collaborative revision of Amazonian collections (URL: <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/ethnologisches-museum/about-us/whats-new/detail/geteiltes-wissen-gemeinsame-provenienzforschung-wissenschaftlerinnen-aus-amazonien-im-ethnolog.html>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020). The projects seek to achieve an equal presentation of diverse expertise.



in Berlin, at the Hamburger Kunsthalle (Art Hall Hamburg)<sup>16</sup>, at the Historisches Museum Frankfurt (Historical Museum Frankfurt)<sup>17</sup> in Frankfurt / Main, and at the Städtische Sammlungen Cottbus (Municipal Collections Cottbus).<sup>18</sup> Very interesting topics were discussed that further deepened the insights gained. These included: civic initiatives such as the creation of a museum as a community space and co-created exhibitions (both supported by professionals) and the difficulties of establishing it more permanently; collaborative work between people and cultural freelancers; civic engagement and opportunities for commitment in museums in the GDR; the need for new collection strategies and presentation forms; the importance of real interest in and sensitivity towards the people involved in order for successful project implementations; the importance of anchoring participatory activities on a broad basis among museum staff (noting that it is often dependent on the endeavours of individuals); the involvement of communities in the exploration of the collections and the technical developments required for this to take place.

In order to work on a comparative basis, a specific type of museum was chosen for the implementation of this pilot. The choice was made to select cultural history museums, as they deal with cultural heritage to a more comprehensive and diverse extent than natural history or art history museums. With the purpose of offering a broad (albeit not comprehensive) spectrum of perspectives, museums were selected that differ in terms of location, structural affiliation and financing, size and organisation, addressees, participatory approaches, fields of action, format, intensity and scope of involvement, and objectives.

The museums selected for this pilot (IFM, Wolfen; HdG, Wittenberg and ISL, Berlin) represent two smaller museums in small towns, which target local people especially (IFM, HdG), and a large museum in Berlin, which appeals mainly to international audiences (ISL). As museums have long-term timetables, and the pilot only had a duration of 18 months, work focused mainly on visits to the institutions to conduct interviews and participatory observation. Since the insights gained here provide a concentrated reflection on participatory work from diverse points of view, this approach will be considered in chapter 5 against the prior REACH project findings described in D3.1 – *Participatory Models* - as well as contributing at a later stage of the project towards consideration of participatory models.

The three institutions were visited in Spring / Summer 2019. While the meetings at the IFM and the HdG took place on a single day, the ISL was visited several times due to their various activities. In all three institutions it was possible to undertake interviews and discussions with participants on diverse levels and to make accompanying observations.

The Syrian part will use museum digital to present and discuss further their results. This presentation is not launched yet (URL: <https://smb.museum-digital.de/index.php?t=institution&instnr=11&cachesLoaded=true&navlang=en>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020).

- 16 Hamburger Kunsthalle, Mein Blick (My view), URL: <https://www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/ausstellungen/mein-blick>, and Open Access, URL: <https://www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/presse/ausstellungen/open-access> (accessed autumn 2019).
- 17 Historisches Museum Frankfurt, Frankfurt jetzt! (Frankfurt Now!), Stadtlabor (CityLab), Bibliothek der Generationen (Library of the Generations), and In Frankfurter Gesellschaft (In Frankfurt society), URL: <https://historisches-museum-frankfurt.de/de/frankfurtjetzt?language=en>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020.
- 18 Städtische Sammlungen Cottbus, URL <https://www.stadtmuseum-cottbus.de/>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020.



The interviews took place in spaces familiar to the interviewees, in offices, event rooms, meeting rooms or exhibition spaces. They were semi-structured and qualitative, and treated the following aspects: institutional / personal backgrounds; definitions and understanding of participation; activities implemented and their impacts on / meaning for participants, institutions and their staff and third parties, such as museum visitors, communities (participating / local / international), etc.; and desires about improvements for such initiatives.

Of special concern were gender<sup>19</sup> and ethical considerations for the conduction of this pilot. These were applied and, where appropriate, adapted in each museum visited in accordance with existing circumstances. Besides including gender-balanced perspectives, it was important to take further ethical implications into account for potentially vulnerable participants. Thus, firstly, particular attention was paid to a sensitive handling of participants' individual experiences and situations, as well as in determining interview topics. Secondly, gender and ethical considerations were integrated into the analysis of the design and implementation of the participatory activities and the issues addressed in the projects.

For the most part, the interviewees agreed with the acoustic recordings of the interviews and their internal use for the following analysis. Additionally, they agreed to be quoted after consultation.

## **2.4 STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT**

Including the Executive Summary and this Introduction, there are six chapters in this deliverable.

The third chapter outlines current debates about participation in museums. After a historical overview of attitudes and approaches from the past, the chapter is dedicated to the characterisation of "participation" considering the specific perspective of the museum sector and to the questions of what a museum in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is or could / should be and the future relationship between the institution and the public / stakeholders.

The fourth chapter individually discusses the three case study museums visited during the pilot. Following a short description of each visit, consideration is given to the local context, and especially the historical and socio-cultural environment. Next, it considers the museums' thematic focuses and their histories, their participatory activities, the characteristics of their objectives and target groups, and involvement and participatory approaches. Each section concludes with an evaluation of the positive effects of the approach in question, as well as problems and limitations, for the three main groups involved: participants, museum, and communities / wider society.

19 A central concern of REACH is to raise awareness that gender relations influence access, use and management of cultural resources. REACH therefore pays particular attention to the different experiences of women and men with regard to cultural heritage. With the aim of promoting the development of equality and diversity, the project wants to emphasise the active and central importance of women as cultural transmitters, producers and consumers and aims to strengthen them in this role. In this context, this pilot was conducted in a way that made use of approaches and addressed issues concerning gender sensitivity and balance. The thematic field of gender relation was thus taken into account, both in terms of content and form. Nevertheless, it remains important that discussions on participation that aim to reduce power asymmetries and inhibition thresholds take into account the complexity and diversity of gender that go beyond this binary focus.



The fifth chapter synthesises the findings from the three case studies and discusses the influence that collaborative/participatory activities can have on the museum and how these initiatives can become part of a museum's current work in order to achieve (sustainable) impact. It considers the multiple value of collaboration around cultural assets, and the need for collaborative efforts among diverse stakeholders ranging from the cultural heritage institution, the wider public and the political arena, in order for sustained and complex models of participation to become embedded in the museum landscape. Finally, it reflects on findings in correspondence with the REACH project's definitions and models of participation and heritage

The sixth chapter draws final conclusions, highlighting the most important ideas about the strengths and wider impact of engagement and collaborative interactions in museums.



### **3. INSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE. THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF CHANGEABLE APPROACHES**

In the field of cultural heritage, GLAM institutions play an important role in its transmission, as they deal with, select and present tangible and intangible culture. In so doing, they influence the construction of knowledge and identity, and strongly shape common understandings that imply processes of inclusion and exclusion, but also have the potential for shifting and overcoming difference(s). In particular, museums have a special function in this context as they also collect and preserve cultural manifestations and thus enable and support their permanence and validity, as well as contribute to the creation of heritage (and cultural identity.)

GLAM institutions are special in a number of ways. Not only do they hold and / or deal with cultural heritage they can also be regarded as inherited cultural practice, as cultural heritage in themselves. Due to this, a reflection on participatory approaches is particularly interesting, because two different levels of analysis become apparent: firstly, the interaction in the classical sense between the institution and visitors / users in the form of visits and / or participations in guided tours, workshops and the like, and secondly, the involvement and engagement of citizens in their work itself.

This complexity is further increased by the diversity of the institutions. For the field of museums, it should be noted that due to the different types of collections and the diverse histories of the various constitutions / research / collections of individual museums, the museum landscape is very rich. As a result of their enormous variety, they show great differences in their self-image, tasks, approaches and visions. In consequence, relationships with stakeholders and modes of interaction with the public can also be understood and cultivated in very different ways.

#### **3.1. RETHINKING THE MUSEUM**

The Institutional heritage pilot took place at a significant moment. In 2019, ICOM, the International Council of Museums, proposed a new definition of a museum:

“Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people.

Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing.” (ICOM, 2019)

It is worthwhile remembering the current ICOM museum definition from 2007:

“A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.” (ICOM, 2007)<sup>20</sup>

20 In September 2019, representatives of member institutions gathered at the General Conference in Tokyo in order to approve the proposal of a new definition of the museum.





These two different visions of the museums distinctly illustrate the movement towards new perspectives on and understandings of the institution and its natural, social and political environments, attitudes and working methods. In contrast to the current definition, the new proposal underlines the clear responsibility that these institutions have for the communities and society, and the multiplicity of their cultural, social and political relevance.

This new approach focuses on relationships and interactions between institutions and their “constituent communities”<sup>21</sup> and societies. This critical examination includes reflections on their significance for the institutions and the communities / societies and on the current situation. Furthermore, this questioning also implies historical development and requires answers relating to comprehensive social, ecological, economic, political and cultural changes.

### **3.2. WAVES OF CONSIDERATIONS, A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

The current discussion is not a recent development. Such questions of accessibility to and interaction in museums around artefacts, but also natural history objects, were already inherent in the first creations of collections.<sup>22</sup>

The following explanations show as an example the developments of cultural historical museums and the debates that had been taking place in Germany since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. By this stage, the early royal and princely collections were gathered not only for joy and delight, but also to improve the local production of tools, craft and art. Under the influence of the Enlightenment especially (and particularly energetically promoted by the French Revolution and Napoleon), former royal, princely and ecclesiastical collections were opened to a wider public and independent facilities were established. This emancipatory development also included educative considerations concerning the provision of better accessibility to museums and to the objects displayed.

Despite such endeavours and offers from the authorities, the bourgeois public increasingly criticised the social exclusivity of art ownership, and demanded participation in cultural life. Furthermore, it claimed opportunities to construct its own history beyond the feudal system. Such demands and the engagement of this social class led to an increasing number of establishments of bourgeois museums.

However, because of diverse difficulties, situations and frameworks, it was not possible to find a consensus. This discussion is therefore ongoing. This determination is the prerequisite for an institution to become member of the association ICOM. Beyond this, this definition implies political dimension, for instance, in cultural policies and their budgeting.

21 Leontine Meijer-van Mensch uses the “constituent community” in her reflection on the museum community. With the help of this concept of community, she is able to take into account a wider range of people by involving different groups: those who support, visit and / or use the museum and /or who (would) have an interest in its various fields of work (Meijer-van Mensch, 2012: p. 86).

22 The following information is based on Joachimides (2001) who focuses on discourses on the art historical museums (especially on the presentation of art) and provides interesting insights into the different intellectual currents concerning the development of museums as well as the tensions in which the institutions have always found themselves and their positioning towards the polyphonic demands. These documented controversies were certainly also perceived, carried out and influenced by the development and debates in the various museum types.



As a result of opening to a broader audience and the establishment of new local institutions, a change of the public perception of and a growing interest in these institutions could be observed. Furthermore, in accordance with the differentiation and specialisation of museums, audiences also became more diverse including the educated bourgeois public, the (lower) middle-class and tradespersons. In consequence, a more extended range of needs and wishes towards the museums and their work was expressed that triggered a further development in museum communication and interaction with the public. (Joachimides, 2001: pp. 17-22).

Besides this movement to provide access to arts and culture to a broader public, another development is observable in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that goes in an opposite direction. The further specialisation of museums, combined with development in respective disciplines at universities, led to a professionalisation of museum staff and more scientific approaches in dealing with cultural artefacts, and in their collection, research and presentation. Therefore, museum procedures began to correspond ever more to their own standards and less with the public's wishes and needs.<sup>23</sup>

Around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a reform movement emerged to counter this and to improve communication between museums and the public. Municipal authorities ordered that museum exhibitions had to be made more accessible to the general public and that their potential as educational institutions had to be strengthened (Penny, 2002: 218). Similar endeavours can be observed on the museum side. Alfred Lichtenwark, the first director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle is a prominent example of the reform movement. Declaring his position: "We do not want a museum that stands and waits, but an institute that actively intervenes in the artistic education of our population. And that's not just a moral and aesthetic question, it's an outstanding social and economic one." (Lichtwark, cited in Joachimides, 2001: p. 103; Translation by the author) Lichtwark also advocated an extended popularisation strategy, including broad-based educational offerings such as art lessons, popular scientific lectures and the establishment of public libraries and special archives within the institutions (Joachimides, 2001: p. 111).

This development must necessarily be seen in the context of the comprehensive demographic, social, political, technical, economic and cultural changes at this time, such as increasing industrialisation and urbanisation, and new possibilities, problems and requirements. Certainly, the civil and labour movements, in combination with the progressive education and its cultural and educational work, like the Volksbildungsbewegung (Movement for Public Education) in the German Empire, were important forces that influenced public debates on the social and educative politics and included the museum sector. (ibid. pp. 188-195).

In contrast to the Weimar Republic, following the takeover of power by the National Socialists museums were opened more widely. Changes were implemented that included reduced entrance fees, a broader offer of popular guided tours, and also an "anti-intellectual" approach and large-scale events with massive public effects. Thus, museums became a pillar of government propaganda and of cultural politics aiming at the creation and shaping of the "Volksgemeinschaft" (national community) controlled by the state and any further discussions and controversies concerning the museum ceased (ibid. pp. 225-227).

23 Penny (2002: p. 218), for example, shows this isolation for the German ethnographical museums and Joachimides (2001: p. 105) points out the negative implications for the art historical museums.



On a global level, after the Second World War, it was again protest and emancipatory movements that gave new impetus to museum development worldwide: for example, in the USA, in the context of the emancipation of Afro- and Asian-American citizens, and in Latin America in the context of Liberation Theology and Critical Education. Here, participation was a central matter. The historiography of participation in museums often draws on the strong bottom-up influence of such civic movements, such as Sherry R. Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969) dealing with political planning processes, and the New Genre Public Art (Piontek, 2017: p. 99). It also refers to the development of community museums that take into account the experiences and cultures of long ignored or marginalised groups, and contemporary issues. This perspective had strong impetus on the creation of eco-museums supporting community participation (Black, 2012: p. 203). These changes in practice, the appropriation of a museum discourse and activities by communities also touched on theoretical reflections on the institution museum itself and led to the development of the "new museology." This breaking with the tradition was focused especially on contemplations on the political and social role and agency of museums, and on questions about the relationship and interactions of museums with their environments, and pursued the direct involvement of the local population (Piontek, 2017: p. 98).

Returning to a national level, and reflecting on the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Germany is a very interesting and special example. Drawing on common experiences, but implemented under different auspices, the postulate of "culture for all" can be seen in both German states, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Although these endeavours were very different, both in their theoretical foundation and in their conduction, particular and multiple characteristics were developed and diverse mechanisms were used. Both systems included top-down activities, initiated by institutions or other governmental organisations and structures, as well as bottom-up initiatives emerging from the engagement of enthusiastic citizens and activist groups. Sometimes there were even smooth interconnections between these approaches.<sup>24</sup>

For example, in the GDR especially in the 1980s, civic engagement in the historical field, and thinking about and dealing with the (regional) past, came to the fore and was strongly supported by government decisions. Besides the implementation of official projects, museums, and local museums in particular, could become reference points for the realisation of a wide range of activities. Research and exhibition projects were conducted by various interested groups, such as professional and amateur historians and archaeologists, activists and working groups of national youth organisations. Depending on individual interests, they were sometimes able to pursue their own agenda rather than following the official line (personal communication with Steffen Krestin, winter 2019 / 2020).

24 Thanks are due to the director of the Städtische Sammlungen Cottbus, Steffen Krestin, and the librarian of the IfM, Vera Heyden (from 1986 until 1997 director of the City Library Prenzlauer Berg - Berlin, Adult Library Senefelder Str.) for their detailed insights into their experiences with museum education, collaborative exhibition and research initiatives, the complex relationship between culture / museum - public and museum - policies, and especially into the differences between the official discourse and the individual actions (also in museums) in the 1980s. It is also worthwhile briefly mentioning here the GDR-state programme of the Bitterfelder Weg. With its help, from the late 1950s, the government attempted to bridge the gap between culture and everyday life in the service of creating a new, socialist society. Cultural professionals were to be more involved in industrial production and workers were to be encouraged to create literature and works of art. For various ideological, aesthetic and intellectual reason, this programme was not successful. However, it is an interesting example for discussions focussing on to what extent involvement can be stimulated externally and to what extent participation is in practice possible, useful, beneficial for and actually desired and demanded by lay-people and professionals.



In contrast, in the 1980s and 1990s in the FRG, as Piontek (2017: p. 20) states, in this period, the social and educational tasks of museums were rather neglected, especially with reference to the freedom of art and science, which is guaranteed by German Basic Law. International approaches developed differently during these decades. For example, Black (2012: p. 205) identified a new challenge for the museums in the UK and also the USA: the social inclusion agenda, which concerned governmental funding of museum initiatives, depended on the proposed social impact of applied projects.

In retrospect, it seems that the discussion about the role and function of the institution of the museum - and museum reforms - takes place in waves of varying intensity, with diverse motivations, objectives, approaches, directions and agents. These have to be scrutinised within the bigger picture. It can certainly be said that the development of the museum always results from an interplay of different forces linked to each other by multi-layered interdependencies. Multiple traditions of thinking and action in culture, pedagogy, society, economy and politics have coexisted, fought and stimulated each other in different places and at different times and have influenced the development of the museum and its attitude, work and procedures. Furthermore, people involved both outside and inside the institutions, have to be considered, especially since every participatory activity depends strongly on individual endeavours and ambitions. This does not only refer to the public and to museum staff, but also includes founding and funding bodies, other museums (and institutions, such as universities, academies, laboratories, etc.), scientists (and their schools), (art) traders and politicians acting on local, national and also international levels.

When considering and evaluating the situation and development of participatory projects, all these factors have to be taken into account, as do stories and histories with all their local – demographic, social, political, technological, economic and cultural – conditions, as well as their international connections and interdependences. Further (regional and supra-regional) diachronic research, especially between 1945 and 1989-1991 (and beyond), can provide insights that are indispensable for discussions about the current and potential situations of involvement and engagement in each individual region and across Europe more broadly.

Nevertheless, this historical overview shows that the tendency towards considerations of accessibility and involvement has been steadily increasing in complexity. In terms of the political sphere, Klatt declares the 2010s a “decade of participation” (Klatt, 2012: 3) referring to participatory budgets and citizens’ forums, and to more direct democracy and participation parties. This assessment also seems to apply to the cultural sector, and in particular to the museums as the following chapter will show.

### **3.3. DIVERSE APPROACHES AND VIVID DEBATES**

The exploratory phase of this REACH pilot identified the great diversity and complexity of activities in museum. This not only implies diversity and complexity of approaches (e.g. following Simon (2010): contributing, collaborating, co-creating and hosting), strands (e.g. workshops, tours, discussion, exhibition), sectors (education, research, communication, exhibition) but also of background issues<sup>25</sup> and modes of interaction: in analogue, digital and mobile. A more generalised overview of the range of activities is due to their great variety beyond the scope of this pilot study.

25 Such as considerations of the construction and sharing of knowledge and heritage, power asymmetries and equivalence, identities and identity building, and sovereignty of interpretation and presentation.



Numerous publications have reflected such diversity of approach. They further prove that topics of involvement and engagement have become one of the main areas of discussion in the museum and cultural heritage sectors in very diverse social, political, cultural and historical contexts, globally and over the past few decades.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, a considerable number of events make it evident that in the museum world there is a great need for exchange, as well as a great desire to rethink and to further develop institutions' work and conduct.<sup>27</sup>

In accordance with specific circumstances and contexts, approaches, issues and foci are various. In Europe, it seems that such reflections are mostly concentrated on the sector of (above all temporary) exhibition and educational programmes, oscillating between the enhancement of their appeal to further visitor groups and the wish to change the relationship of the museum to its social surrounding. It is striking to note that projects such as permanent exhibition / collection, data gathering / enrichment, research, communication, events, and management, are still more rarely presented.

At least in Germany, and in contrast to contexts where post-colonial discourse has become weightier, it is noticeable that the debate on involvement and engagement has mostly remained limited to an exchange of experiences. It has yet to reach a more general and theoretical level.

- 26 For instance, Karp, 1992; Peers and Brown, 2003; Black, 2005; Simon, 2010; Galla, 2012; Gesser (et al.), 2012; Golding and Wayne, 2013; Lepik, 2013; Chambers, 2014; Historic England, 2014; Adell (et al.), 2015; Mensch and Meijer-van Mensch, 2015; Onicul, 2015; Knoll, 2016; McSweeney, 2016; Wenrich and Kirmeier, 2016; Cantauw et al., 2017; Piontek, 2017; Querol, 2017; Schuldt and Mumenthaler, 2017; Ambrose and Paine, 2018.
- 27 For instance, ICOMAH: *Museums and Universal Heritage. History in the area of conflict between interpretation and manipulation* (Vienna), 2007, URL: <https://icom.museum/en/ressource/museums-and-universal-heritage-history-in-the-area-of-conflict-between-interpretation-and-manipulation/>; UMAC: *Museums and Universal Heritage, Universities in Transition, Responsibilities for Heritage* (Vienna), 2007, URL: <https://icom.museum/en/ressource/museums-and-universal-heritage-universities-in-transition-responsibilities-for-heritage-proceedings-of-the-7th-conference-of-the-international-committee-of-icom-for-university-museums-and-collecti/>; Network Migration in Europe e.V. (et al.): *Migration in Museums* (Berlin), 2008, URL: <http://www.network-migration.org/workshop2008/index.htm>; Estonian National Museum (et al.), Tartu: *Transforming Culture in Digital Age*, Tartu, 2010, URL: <https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Publications/Display/d389075b-e2a5-451a-b157-95e62c50b97f?lang=ENG>; Roskilde University: *The Transformative Museum*, 2012, URL: <https://www.dream.dk/sites/default/files/communication/TheTransformativeMuseumProceedingsScreen.pdf>; ICOMAH: *Cooperation with Migrant Communities and with Descendants of Migrants* (Rio de Janeiro), 2013, URL: <http://network.icom.museum/icmah/events/previous-conferences/>; ICME: *Curators, collections, collaboration* (Rio de Janeiro), 2013, URL: <https://icom.museum/en/resources/publications/?q=ICMAH&y=2013&type=>; Museum Ideas: *Participation and Experimentation* (London), 2014, URL: <https://museum-id.com/museum-ideas-2014-conference-participation-risk-taking-and-experimentation/>; ICME: *Museums & Cultural Landscapes* (Milan), 2016, URL: [http://icme.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2019/01/ICME\\_Final\\_Programme\\_2016.pdf](http://icme.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2019/01/ICME_Final_Programme_2016.pdf); Bodemuseum (SMB-PK), Berlin: *Lab.Bode, Set #2: Partizipation*, 2017 / 2018, URL: <https://www.lab-bode.de/lab.bode/veranstaltungskalender/veranstaltungsreihe/set-2-partizipation/>; DMB: *Herbsttagung* (Frankfurt / M.), 2018, URL: <https://www.museumsbund.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/fggm-programm-2018-2-frankfurt-1.pdf> and <https://www.museumsbund.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/fggm-protokoll-2018-2-frankfurt.pdf>; Körber Forum, Hamburg: *Das Museum von morgen*, 2018, URL: <https://www.koerber-stiftung.de/mediathek/das-museum-von-morgen-1678>; Potsdam Museum – Forum für Kunst und Gesellschaft, Potsdam: *Smart City – Smart Museum?*, 2019, URL: [https://www.kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de/de/projekte/bild\\_und\\_raum/detail/smart\\_cities\\_smart\\_museums.html](https://www.kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de/de/projekte/bild_und_raum/detail/smart_cities_smart_museums.html); Musaces, *Museum for all People* (Madrid), 2019, URL: <http://museumforall.musaces.es/en/home/>; Deutsches Hygiene Museum, Dresden: *Macht mit! Mit Macht!*, 2020, URL: <https://www.kulturkalender-dresden.de/veranstaltung/macht-mit-macht-museale-partizipation-in-der-migrationsgesellschaft>; Jüdisches Museum Berlin: *Quo vadis Museum?*, 2020, URL: <https://www.jmberlin.de/en/event-quo-vadis-museum>; all accessed winter 2019 / 2020.



This is perhaps still difficult due to the great diversity and complexity of objectives, approaches and contexts, as well as to the ambiguity of the term “participation” and its mostly vague usage.

### **3.4. CHARACTERISING “PARTICIPATION” IN MUSEUMS**

The characterisation of “participation” is quite challenging considering its diverse dimensions and implications.

The REACH deliverable D3.1 (2019: pp. 16 / 17) presents the complexity of the term and pointing out the differentiation proposed by Simon in “The Participatory Museum” (2010). Her reflections became an important reference for the ongoing debate. In Germany, Piontek, a German culture and art educator and museologist, comprehensively dealt with this topic in the museum context and developed it further. She presents an overview about diverse approaches to participation and, based on this, proposes a very thorough definition of successful participation.

Piontek (2017: pp. 160-173) presents a differentiated perspective on the interaction between institution and participants. She points out diverse models that deal with the gradual differentiation of participation and implied power asymmetries. Besides Arnstein (1969) who serves as a basis for Piontek’s theoretical reflection, she cites Blandow, Gintzel and Hansbauer (1999) who also use a stage model. In contrast to Arnstein, the latter focus more on the processual and bilateral character of participation. However, Piontek emphasises that such gradual models are difficult to apply in practice. Thus, she refers to Hanschitz et al. (2009) who do not use a ladder / step model. Rather, these authors present participation as a continuum. With the help of this model, Hanschitz et al. highlight the fluid transitions between the different degrees of participation from the perspective of two interacting groups.

Distinguishing between different degrees of involvement and participation is not the only complexity here. As Carpentier (2016: p. 76) points out, processes are also a highly complex composition of various (inter-)actions, and thus “[p]articipatory intensities can change over time, but several components within one process can sometimes also yield differences. [...] participation in a specific process might be intense in one component, but minimal in another.”

Additionally, Piontek explains the differences with regard to degrees of engagement. In this, she refers especially to Ehmayer (2002) who presents a continuum beginning with “Aktivieren” (stimulate) through “Einfluss nehmen” (influence), “Mitbestimmen” (co-decide), “Mitgestalten” (co-create) to “Selbst gestalten” (create by oneself). Based on Brown et al. (2011), Piontek mentions another model that can further detail Ehmayer’s categories by considering further possibilities of interaction. These authors include more scope for acting as “spectating” and “enhanced engagement” that can be subsumed in Ehmayer’s “Aktivieren”, and “crowd sourcing” and “co-creation” that can correspond to Ehmayer’s “Mitgestalten.” Brown et al. consider the highest degree of participation as “audience-as-artist,” which can be likened to Ehmayer’s “Selbst gestalten.” While Ehmayer already aims with her model at the organisational level, Brown et al. tend to focus on the (probably purely project-related) participation of the audience and, as Piontek points out, on the self-control of participants regarding the range of their own aesthetic spectra of experiences. Brown et al. do not see a continuum here, but rather make a distinction between perceiving and participating activities (Piontek, 2017: pp. 160-173).



Furthermore, Piontek highlights the even more diverse degrees of active participation mentioning “Ausarbeitung” (elaboration) / “Ausführung” (execution) – “Zuarbeit” (contribution) – “Mitarbeit” (collaboration, working with) – “Zusammenarbeit” (collaboration, working jointly)<sup>28</sup> (Piontek, 2017 / 2016). In this way, Piontek succeeds in further refining Simon’s (2010) proposed division.

A further merit of Piontek’s work (2017: pp. 177 / 178) is that she contextualises participatory activities in museums within a relational framework. Piontek recognises that not only are such activities directly related to the participant, but also to the museum, its contents and further beyond that, to society in general. Participant, museum and society are in turn mutually dependent and influence each other. In this context, she also refers to a further differentiation of participation that Feldhoff (2009) develops in regard to participatory art works by distinguishing between individual, social, systemic and symbolic participation. This not only takes into account different intensities of participation, but also the entire structure of the direct and indirect participation.

Considering these reflections, Piontek (2017, pp. 89 / 90) develops the following definition, which underlines a high degree of awareness and sensitivity towards the people involved in joint interactions. She reflects on participation as a process:

“Participation is ideally understood as intentional and direct contact situation(s) or exchange processes between museum employees and (potential) participants, which, although characterised by asymmetrical power and hierarchical relationships, are based on voluntariness, openness and serious interest in the other party and aim for reciprocity and equivalence in the sense that it is not a matter of one side being cheated or instrumentalised by the other, but rather a win-win situation for both sides. Participation is conceived as an open-ended process in which mutual acquaintance and mutual respect is an overriding goal; in terms of content, participation implements an open-ended scope of action in which the actions of all participants bring about real and lasting changes; this suggests a reflective, self-critical and, if necessary, institution-critical attitude on the part of those entrusted with the participation project by the museum, since they have a *de facto* surplus of power. The (inter-)action mode ideally represents an open search movement and not the (re-)production of prefabricated ‘solutions.’ This is favoured by the fact that participation deals with serious questions and current gaps.”  
(translation by the author)

This overview of ongoing attempts to characterise “participation” and its implications (which may be partial), clearly shows the complexity, diversity and ambiguity of the term. Participation can be understood as a process, a method and an objective. Such thinking also revolves around concepts of community and new possibilities for interaction, building and maintaining relationships. These include the diversification and / or overcoming of so-called target groups, from visitors to “constituent stakeholders” respectively. This new approach consequently implies the development of new methods and forms of activities, interactions and communications inside and outside of the museum’s premises, either through interpersonal encounters and / or technical instruments.

28 This clearly shows that the term “collaboration” includes a range of interaction differing in their degree of equality. It can refer to a project in which the framework conditions are specified by one party and accepted by the other. However, the course of the project is then jointly influenced / shaped. It could also refer to an action in which the framework is already set jointly. The term “collaboration” is therefore rather vague and needs further explications. The German language, for example, allows a distinction between “Mitarbeit” (working with) and “Zusammenarbeit” (working jointly).



Since such perspectives mean a comprehensive and complex change to museum work, this awareness must additionally be directed within the institution and also involve the museum's own staff in the community work.

### **3.5. MUSEUMS IN THE 21TH CENTURY. LOOKING FOR NEW *MODI ESSENDI ET OPERANDI***

Such reflections form a central part of museums' current self-questioning about what they are, and what they and their collections are, or want to be relevant for. In such ways, a new understanding of the museum is emerging and is currently under discussion.

As the struggle to create a new definition for the museum shows, such thinking about accessibility, relationships and interactions are clearly linked to efforts to imagine the museum as responsive to current societal issues. Here, various visions have been introduced that highlight diverse aspects. For instance, Clifford (1997: pp. 188-219) characterises the museum as a "contact zone," as a place for encounters and dialogue between the visitor, the object (and their producer and user) and the institution. Black (2005) refers to this multi-dimensional interaction by proposing an "engaging museum" in which interpretation helps visitors and users to develop an understanding for themselves and to make their own discoveries. In addition, he puts a special focus on not-yet-visitors / -users, e.g. potential visitors / users<sup>29</sup>. Simon's work "The Participatory Museum" (2010) has also become a formative reference for this discussion. Importantly, Simon considers the internal and external implications and impacts of involvement and engagement. Simon's "participatory museum" has been taken up by curators Gesser, Handschin, Jannelli and Lichtensteiger (2012) whose edited volume includes further concepts and approaches by, for example, Meijer-van Mensch and Odding. Meijer-van Mensch (2012) proposes the idea of the "agora" and focuses on "constituent communities". Odding (2012) underlines the necessary development towards a "network museum" and the importance of shifting considerations from anonymous target groups to communities (including people and institutions) with whom the institution can collaborate. Hoins and Mallnickrodt (2019) imagine their museum as a combination of a "third place," an informal public gathering place, and a "third room," a space of intercultural encounters and exchange.

Even if the definition of the museum of today and tomorrow is underlined by different aspects and nuances, a common basis can be discerned: in how they especially consider a museum's relationship with its communities, these authors all imagine the museum as a safe place for encounters, dialogue and creation.

However, although this debate is comprehensive and vivid, in the case of Germany, museum statistics from 2017 clarify that there are still only a small number of museums (10.9%) that incorporate participatory activities (Institut für Museumsforschung, 2018: 60).<sup>30</sup>

29 This category is extremely important in the reflections on stakeholders, as it points to the development of opening museums up to a wider audience. However, it also underlines how not all interested groups (directly and indirectly) have been sufficiently taken into account by museums to date.

30 It is possible that some institutions do not perceive their work and initiatives as participatory even though they may well be. This could be the case in particular where volunteers are involved in or realising museum work.

Unfortunately, these statistics do not allow for any conclusions to be drawn as to what kind of participatory activities are conducted, with what purpose and to whom they are addressed. Due to the high diversity, complexity and ambiguity of what can be meant by "participation," it is important to question participatory work more in detail.





As the above literature review and preliminary exploration has shown, thinking about engagement and involvement is very complex and ‘participatory’ initiatives diverge in their approaches, strands, methods and objectives. In addition, new forms of communication and interaction are strongly influenced by the rapid evolutions of digital technologies that give rise to new possibilities and expectations. However, the focus of the study in this deliverable is placed particularly on initiatives in which real interpersonal encounters and exchange are central points. These elements are of particular importance as community and social cohesion are not only an objective of the REACH project, but also an analytical category. Furthermore, this focus allowed for both in-depth interviews with different stakeholders and participatory observation, thus providing a multi-perspective approach to this issue.<sup>31</sup>

31 The digital media applied and developed in the projects are considered here, but it is not within the scope of this study to examine their use and benefits more comprehensively.

## **4. INSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE: MUSEUMS AND THEIR INITIATIVES – CASE STUDIES**

This fourth chapter presents the procedure and findings of the Institutional heritage pilot. It is dedicated to the analysis of activities realised in the museums. After a short description of the visits, the chapter comprises an introduction to the institutions and their surroundings and a presentation of their activities that considers their objectives, the participants involved and how these activities have been carried out. Every initiative is then analysed in terms of positive effects, as well as challenges and limitations. Of primary concern is first, the characterisation of the initiatives with respect to their degree of involvement and engagement, and second, the role of the parties involved, their relationships towards each other and the possible changes in these relationships that can emerge through the interactions. Finally, each initiative is discussed with regard to the different types of heritage and the inherent spaces of interaction presented in D3.1 – *Participatory Models*<sup>32</sup>.

### **4.1. INDUSTRIE- UND FILMMUSEUM WOLFEN (INDUSTRY AND FILM MUSEUM, IFM)**

The Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen<sup>33</sup> (Fig. 1) organises the “Bilderschau” (Picture Show), where former employees of former film factory Wolfen (ORWO) are invited to participate in the content exploration of the photographic collection, whose stock comes from the archives of the former factory.



Figure 1: Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen  
© Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen

32 Cf. footnote 1.

33 IFM, Wolfen, URL: <http://www.ifm-wolfen.de/de/>, accessed spring 2019.



#### **4.1.1. VISIT**

The IFM was visited for one day, on March 20, 2019. A detailed interview was carried out with the museum's director, Uwe Holz, and a short conversation was held with museum employee Hildegard Mostový, who is responsible for the archive and the documentation of the archive items.<sup>34</sup> It was also possible to take part in the "Bilderschau." This evening event dealt with the factory's own fire brigade. After the joint session, discussions were carried out with several participants. These interlocutors did not agree to participate in a formal interview, but they were willing to take part in a short conversation regarding their experiences with the "Bilderschau". Views expressed during this meeting confirmed conclusions drawn from the observations of the event and also discussions with museum staff.

#### **4.1.2. CONTEXT**

The IFM is one of the smaller institutions visited for this pilot. It is located in the city of Wolfen which merged in 2007 with the city of Bitterfeld to form the new city Bitterfeld-Wolfen. Bitterfeld-Wolfen is located in the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt (Central Germany). Its population is 38,400 people (as of December 31, 2018) (Wikipedia: Bitterfeld-Wolfen, May 2020). Wolfen and Bitterfeld can be characterised as chemical industrial towns. Wolfen's most important factory opened at the beginning of the 20th century. This was Agfa, which produced raw film, and later, fibres. After Kodak in Rochester, New York, Wolfen's Agfa was the second largest film factory in the world. After the Second World War, it remained the most important in the Eastern Bloc. The film and fibre factory was one of the region's main employers. It employed up to 15,000 people and became the driving force for the urban development of Wolfen, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. With regard to its structure and also with a view to the gender focus of REACH, it is particularly noteworthy that the former film factory was the production plant in the GDR with the largest proportion of women in the workforce. This had a major impact on the entire social welfare system. The factory had facilities to especially serve workers, such as nurseries, kindergartens and laundries. However, as is so often the case, the upper hierarchies were mainly men who held positions of authority.

Due to the economic development that accompanied and followed the reunification processes in 1989-1990, the factory was partly closed and the production of raw films and synthetic fibres abandoned. Beyond that, parts of the factory were torn down. Many people lost their employment, and consequently, their social life and network.

Wolfen's cultural locations comprise the Kulturhaus, the Industrie- und Filmmuseum, the Johanniskirche and an open-air stage. The sports sector is somewhat more extensive with 43 sports clubs. There are three annual city events: the Wolfen Pub Night in Spring, the Association and Family Festival in June and the Wolfen Christmas during the Advent season.

Wolfen suffered a great economic shrinkage and belongs to the towns that experienced the greatest population decrease after reunification of Germany (Wikipedia: Wolfen, Jan. 2020).

#### **4.1.3. THE MUSEUM**

The IFM is one of the district museums of the city Bitterfeld-Wolfen. It deals with the industrial history of the Bitterfeld-Wolfen region and shows the production of cinema and photo film stock in original production buildings and with original machines (Fig.2).

34 Both signed the consent forms.

Beside film and cameras, film accessories, production equipment and advertising material, etc., the museum holds a rich stock of photographs taken in the former factory for the company's own journal and that documents the very diverse areas of production. The museum also has a collection of audio interviews in which former workers talk about their work and life experiences in the factory.<sup>35</sup>

At the "*Daring Participation!*" workshop, Holz described the faithfully recreation of the working environment, "it has no plaques or information boards, but is set up to feel as if the staff are just out of the room taking a break. There are film cameras displayed for a sense of nostalgia, an archive of plans and the newspapers all promote socialism and its success".



Figure 2: Guided tour through exhibition

© Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen, photo: Heiko Rebsch

The museum is located in the Chemistry Park Bitterfeld-Wolfen on the outskirts of the city. It was founded in 1992 /1993 by the aid association "Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen e. V." (Industry and Film Museum Wolfen, incorporated association) and was at first supported by regional companies. After the initial period ended, the association was no longer able to fund the museum. It was therefore taken over by the district of Bitterfeld in 1998.<sup>36</sup>

- 35 The museum director concedes that due to the small staffing levels, it has not been possible to explore and document the content of these interviews and to prepare their longer-term preservation. Nevertheless, the museum has expressed a strong desire to achieve this.
- 36 However, the association has remained active. It is still engaged in the reappraisal of industrial history in the region of Wolfen / Bitterfeld and, at the end of 1998, started publishing a series of brochures "Die Filmfabrik Wolfen - Aus der Geschichte, Heft..." (The Film Factory Wolfen – From the history...). These brochures are intended to help to reduce the negative image of the region and familiarise the public with the region's rich industrial history. With their commitment, the members of the association (and also the museum) want to fight against the forgetting of the achievements of the workers and scientists in the district. In dealing with history, they see an opportunity to strengthen the self-confidence of the people from this region and to help them find their place in the current situation. With the help of knowledge of history, they intend to foster an understanding of the present and thus open the view for future development. Additionally, the association members give lectures and participate in other museum events, such as series of film screenings.

Due to its premises and its collections, the museum is a unique feature and is therefore considered as important for regional tourist development. In addition, the museum is an anchor point of the European Route of Industrial Heritage. Furthermore, the permanent offer of guided tours through former production sites, the museum also displays temporary photographic exhibitions and shows films that have been produced with ORWO raw film stock.

The museum is mainly financed by public funds and employs eight people (four full-time, four part-time); two of whom are directly involved in the implementation of the “Bilderschau.” The IFM mainly uses a website and a digital newsletter for the dissemination of its exhibitions and events. The museum website also offers a contact form. This offer is located in a very visible place near the tabs for the homepage and the newsletter, indicating that contact is welcome. Furthermore, the museum has also a Facebook account that is operated mainly by the public relations department of the district administration.<sup>37</sup> However, the director of the museum is very critical of this channel and questions its usefulness in achieving a truly meaningful interaction and exchange of ideas and information with the public.

The collections are accessible via the museum-digital tool<sup>38</sup>. With the help of this tool, the user can find information on the objects (description, measurements, creation context, literature, and links / documents) combined with related data (further specimens, places, periods and people, etc.). Significantly, this platform also provides opportunities for various interactions: with the digitalised object (e.g., by changing the view in correspondence with the personal preferences and needs, downloading the digital copy and the information, and developing personal research lines), with the museum (e.g., by remarking errors and contributing more information) and with other people (e.g., by sharing the findings via Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, Tumblr and Pinterest or exchanging via a special video conference tool) (Fig. 3).

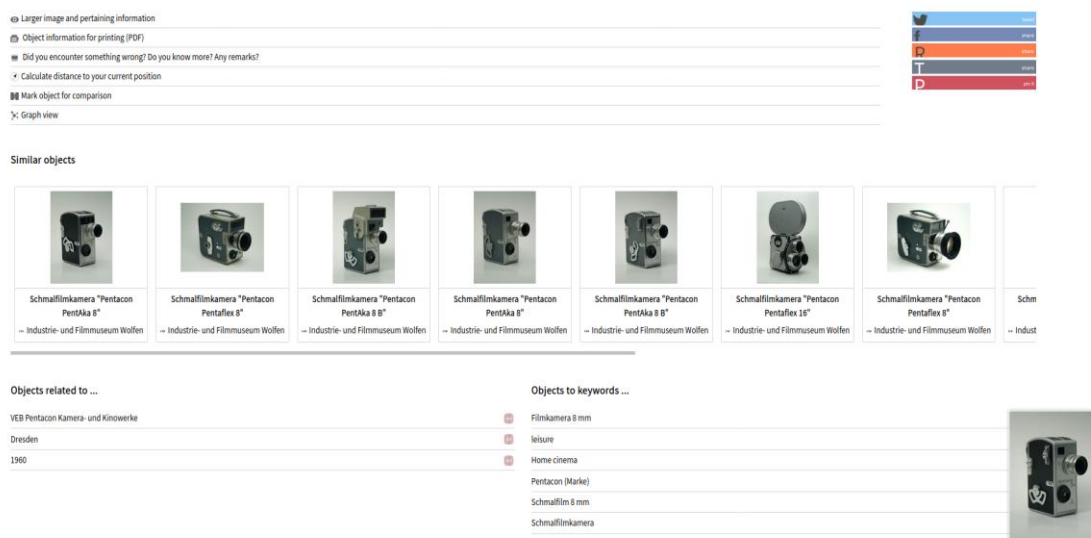


Figure 3: Connecting via Museum digital, Sachsen-Anhalt: IFM<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, it was not possible within the framework of this pilot to get to know the members of the association and the contributions that they make to the museum and its work and to scrutinise their interaction with the museum.

37 IFM, Facebook (URL: <https://www.facebook.com/IFMWolfen/>, accessed spring 2020).

38 Museum digital, Sachsen-Anhalt: IFM (URL: <https://st.museum-digital.de/index.php?t=listen&instnr=2>), accessed winter 2019 / 2020.

39 Museum digital, Sachsen-Anhalt: IFM, Schmalfilmkamera “Pentacon Pentaka 8 B“ (URL: <https://st.museum-digital.de/index.php?t=objekt&oges=1263&cacheLoaded=true>, accessed summer 2020).



The museum currently has the financial opportunity to expand its exhibition. The new part will be dedicated to the production of synthetic fibres. Due to positive responses to the “Bilderschau,” the museum management is now planning to design this new exhibition area in collaboration with the former workers of the factory.

#### **4.1.4. OBJECTIVES**

The “Bilderschau” was initiated by the director of the museum to explore the contents of the IFM’s photographic collection, which serves to document the factory’s history, and to enrich the museum’s database with the knowledge from former employees, in the form of eyewitness accounts.

#### **4.1.5. ADDRESSEES / PARTICIPANTS**

The IFM primarily addresses the communities of Bitterfeld-Wolfen as well as a broader public that visits the region of Saxony-Anhalt and is interested in industrial history. Bitterfeld-Wolfen is not a typical touristic destination.

The “Bilderschau” is aimed at the general public but appeals especially to ex-employees of the film factory. Due to the focus on the history of the factory, the great majority of the participants are older people (aged 65+). They can be considered as vulnerable in two ways. Firstly, due to their experiences after the political, social and economic changes 1989 / 1990, such as the loss of employment, the destruction of known supporting structures, and the comprehensive changes to their social life and network. Furthermore, this generation spent most of their lives and experienced their main achievements in the GDR, and has often perceived a lack of recognition of their history and their societal contribution, as well as a denial and disparagement of it. Secondly, the agency of old people in the society is insufficiently considered and they seldom take part in the public discourse (besides academics or politicians). Indeed, in socio-political and health policy discourses, this demographic is often regarded as a burden on society.<sup>40</sup>

However, this activity is not restricted to this group, as younger relatives of the employees and other interested people are also drawn to the “Bilderschau.” In the case of the event visited for this study, it was attended by some (albeit very few) young people who had a special relationship to the issue being discussed as they were members of the town’s voluntary fire brigade.

The gender ratio of this event showed a clear predominance of men, but this may be due to the specific subject of this afternoon, the fire brigade. Usually the gender ratio is more balanced, but there are often fluctuations, depending on the topic and/or the personal circumstances of the participants.

#### **4.1.6. INVOLVEMENT / PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES**

In contrast to many museums, the IFM’s participatory activity does not take place in the field of education but in documentation. The “Bilderschau” is an event that take place three / four times per year. It is financed from the current museum budget. Past “Bilderschauen” dealt, e.g., with “Film Factory,” “Fibres,” “Tradesmen,” “Power Station,” “Apprentice Training” and “Social infrastructures.”

40 At least in Germany, this is not a recent problem, but is becoming more urgent. The intergenerational contract is regularly questioned (cf. *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 8 (2005), restrictions of the social systems are considered (cf. Eubel and Siebenmorgen, 2003) and it seems being increasingly accepted that more and more old people are threatened by poverty (cf. *Zeit* online, dt, Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019, URL: <https://www.zeit.de/wirtschaft/2019-02/altersarmut-rente-armutsgefaehrung-statistik-pensinaere>, all accessed spring 2019).

The “Bilderschau” was initiated and designed by the museum director as a relatively informal meeting where participants can identify the contents of the photographic collection. The museum provides a suitable location, equipment and the photographs. The topics and selections of photographs are made by the director and prepared for exhibition by the archivist. Participants can also suggest themes, and therefore engaging enthusiastically in the process. Their ideas are very gladly accepted by the management (after examination of the photo stock). The information gathered at the “Bilderschau” is also recorded by an archivist and then incorporated into documentation.

The framework of this activity set by the museum is very free and inviting. In designing and implementing the event, the management is strongly oriented towards the wishes and ideas of the participants. Thus, the event depends strongly on the interest and the experience of the participants. As a result, it is not always easy to foresee the outcomes of each meeting. In accordance with dynamics developing among participants, the director leaves them time for their own exchanges without interruption them. In addition, he also respects their request that the exchange during the events is not recorded on video or acoustically (Fig. 4).



Figure 4: “Bilderschau,” March 20, 2019

© Friederike Berlekamp, photo: Friederike Berlekamp

Attendance and participation in the “Bilderschau” is thus determined by individual experience, and also by the current interests and possibilities of each participant. There is no obligation to attend and to contribute.



Accordingly, the group participating in the “Bilderschau” is not always the same, but rather varies in term of the number and composition dependent on each event. The subject of the individual events might also be significant here, since the desire to participate is stronger when participants have a closer relationship to the issue being dealt with. It is possible that the desire to actually contribute towards museum documentation is secondary.

In the framework of the “Bilderschau,” digital tools are rarely used. This is due to several factors. Participants do not agree to the audio-visual or acoustic recording. In accordance with their valid personal rights, photographs cannot be published via the internet to reach a wider public. Instead, the “Bilderschau” is announced in regional newspapers and via the Facebook accounts of the IFM and the administrative district Anhalt-Bitterfeld.<sup>41</sup> Regarding interaction with the people that the “Bilderschau” appeals to, and their usual communication habits, it must be noted that digital media may be less useful. Here, traditional print media and especially informal interpersonal exchange are of central importance. However, by disseminating via Facebook, the museum can reach a broader spectrum of the local public and beyond, and might further increase its visibility. In addition, national newspapers such as *Neues Deutschland*,<sup>42</sup> are also aware of the engagement and discussions realised at the IFM.

The museum is planning to extend this involvement for the design of a new exhibition space that will deal with the production of synthetic fibres. The “Bilderschau” was used as the initial event for this process and at the same time served as a needs assessment. The first gathering took place on November 26 2019 and clearly showed participants’ interest in a stronger commitment to the museum.<sup>43</sup> Following this, a second “Bilderschau” on this topic was planned for March 10 2020 that would have been the kick-off meeting of the working group.<sup>44</sup>

#### **4.1.7 INTERIM EVALUATION: POTENTIALS AND RISKS**

Considering the differentiation proposed by Nina Simon (2010), the character of the “Bilderschau” can be described as having a mixed form of contributing and collaborating. Primarily, participants are providing requested information in order to enrich the collection’s documentation. In addition, they make suggestions in terms of “Bilderschau” content. The museum designs and offers the settings (initiative, aim, location, and topic) and then tries to respond to participants’ wishes. Participants happily accept this offer without declaring any demands on more rights to design and make decisions, but still, they are using these events mainly for their own purposes: being together and jointly remembering and sharing their past. Thus, there is another layer of interaction between participants that can be characterised as collaborative and equal.

41 e.g. Landkreise Anhalt-Bitterfeld, Facebook: URL: <https://de-de.facebook.com/Landkreis.Anhalt.Bitterfeld/posts/1243203882523096>, accessed spring 2020.

42 See Lasch, 2019.

43 Administrative district Anhalt-Bitterfeld, Facebook (URL: <https://www.facebook.com/Landkreis.Anhalt.Bitterfeld/photos/pb.168518509991644.-2207520000../1407177322792417/>) and Facebook, events (URL: <https://www.facebook.com/events/521226598423458/>), all accessed spring 2020.

44 IFM, Facebook, events (URL: <https://www.facebook.com/events/521226598423458/>), accessed spring, 2020).

Due to the current COVID-19 situation, this process had to be postponed. A certain urgency on the part of people interested was noted. This is particularly due to the fact that some of them might be less agile for such ventures in the near future.





It may also be observed that the focus and the objective of the activity has gradually changed. Originally designed by the museum as an event exploring content, the social gathering and the involvement of Wolfen's population has now become the focus. Holz reflected at the "*Daring Participation!*" that "this was initially an exercise in honouring people's knowledge and their pasts, a way to give something back to them. However, the purpose is now about the discussion and the experience."

Considering the attitude of the museum's management, it is possible that this process might further develop and that interaction with the public might become even more intensive in the future since collaborative and co-creative approaches are already planned for the design of the new exhibition space. It remains to be seen whether these participants of the "Bilderschau" will be the co-creators of future activities and whether participants will desire and/or demand an even more extensive commitment in the future (beyond co-creation), including negotiations regarding a broader right to have a say and to take decisions.

The relationship between the museum and participants is a friendly one that can at the moment best be described as that of a host and a guest. However, it must be stressed that this current categorisation is determined not only by the museum's offer, but rather also by the claims and needs of each party involved.

#### **Positive effects:**

##### - For participants

For the participants, this series of events is of high emotional and social value and mental support. Perhaps for the first time, participants have the opportunity and a space to meet together and to talk about their own experiences of their past working lives. They can feel recognition and appreciation of their life's work, and experience a new significance as an individual with her / his particular biography, knowledge and skills. This is of particular importance to those affected by the closure of the factory and the comprehensive and socio-political and socio-economic changes in / after 1989-1990. Participants thereby gain new self-confidence.

Through the means of the "Bilderschau," participants can see that their expertise helps to gather information about the people and circumstances shown in these photographs, to document this knowledge and to make it available for future generations. It is therefore also another service to their home region. Seeing their contribution as meaningful, and understanding themselves as a part of the social fabric of Wolfen, participants can develop a new type of relationship with their current surroundings, as well as feelings of agency and empowerment.

It is important to note that these meetings and exchanges take place in a public space. The effect on those involved can therefore be particularly strong, because they can perceive their own achievements, knowledge and individual circumstances as being in the greater public interest. Perhaps, this event can also be regarded as a kind of recompense for both loss and ignorance granted by the public / institutions / society to the ex-workers (and to the older generation) since the participants can feel themselves as a meaningful part of Wolfen in its past and also for the present.



Although concentrated on an exchange about a familiar and quite limited topic – their common past - participants get used to meeting in a less familiar place and in exchange with other societal groups, in this case the museum staff. As a result, cross-sector exchange emerges and the people involved gain insights into until then unknown contexts, conditions and ideas about the museum and its work.

- For the museum and staff

By involving former workers in an exploration of the photographic collection, the museum succeeds in documenting important knowledge and experience. In so doing, it is able to gain more external expertise concerning its field of work - namely, the history of the former film factory - and can therefore provide more diverse and detailed information to visitors and researchers than it otherwise might. Even if the influence of the “Bilderschau” on the museum seems limited at present, as the initiative is only taking place in one area of the museum’s work, it is nevertheless fundamental for future work. Due to this type of documentation, it will be possible to focus and design exhibitions differently and to carry out micro-historical research.

Another important value of this initiative for the museum lies in its direct contact with participants. First and foremost, this leads to a knowledge exchange between the museum staff and the public about the collections and the museum’s work. On the one hand, the museum can directly communicate its mission and vision to the participants. On the other, such events also enable it to gain insights into the everyday needs and wishes of visitors, and of potential visitors and users. In this way, museum employees are sensitised to the local conditions. As a consequence of this, new forms of presentations and interactions can be developed and topics can be dealt with which are directly related to the local public and the audience.

Due to the regular occurrence of events such as the “Bilderschau,” museum staff can form closer relationships with the factory’s former employees, who form a large proportion of the local population. As a result, the museum is not only able to develop a different, more knowledgeable perception of them, but also a sense of responsibility towards them, to their histories and to Wolfen.

On this basis, the institution can rethink the possibilities of its own societal action and impact. This also has an influence on its own self-image: greater importance is now attached to social issues and mutual exchange (than to the findings of the content exploration). Thus, there is an increased awareness of the social, and political significance that a museum might have, and of the great potential of the museum itself for this, especially as it is one of the rare public spaces of reflection, exchange and discussion available in Bitterfeld-Wolfen.

The positive response to the “Bilderschau” has led the museum’s director to plan further participatory initiatives, in areas other than exploring the collection, such as the new exhibition dealing with the factory’s fibre production. This may expand the circle of addressees and possibilities of (inter-)action.

Due to such initiatives, the museum can begin to reach many more people. In a snowball effect, participants (and the press releases on the museum activities) can inform their surroundings - and beyond - about the opportunity of involvement and the experiences emerging from such processes. In so doing, they reflect on, exchange and disseminate ideas of engagement and, in addition, the museum’s mission, vision and actions. This information can attract more people and increase the interest in the institution as a place of encounter and exchange.



This in turn can encourage more museum visits by locals and tourists alike, a broader engagement with the place and (its) history, and wider participation and contribution. In this manner, the museum is able to address and affect its social environments in increasingly powerful and profound ways, as well as influencing general perceptions of what the institution of the museum might stand for.

The public awareness of the museum, its activities and its impact on societies (in Wolfen and beyond) enables a broader understanding of the societal benefits of such joint actions and spaces, and recognition of their important contribution to discussions on current and future political and social issues.

As the museum team is very small, a relatively large proportion of employees are directly involved in the “Bilderschau.” With the help of this comprehensive direct experience among staff, museum employees are able to obtain knowledge and skills concerning this type of community work and are, therefore, in a good position to discuss such development with the management.

- For society / communities

As the participants of the “Bilderschau” are members of the local community, this initiative has a positive societal impact on Wolfen and its surroundings, primarily through the experience of acknowledgment and appreciation which positively affects participants’ self-esteem and also, beyond this, their behaviour with each other and with / in the public. As such, the local societal atmosphere can shift and mutual recognition (which might also include the museum, too) arises.

With the help of such activities, dealing with the past can emerge as a more significant issue among the broader Wolfen population. Reflecting on one’s own biography and on historical development becomes more present and even perhaps more ‘normal’ – it can form the basis for reconsidering one’s current individual and common situation and for jointly developing ideas on the future.

In addition, as a result of its collections, the IFM can include the public in joint discussions on multiple topics, such as production and consumption and their multiple implications; everyday life and culture; cinematic and photographic art; local history; technical development and its effects etc. Especially for discussions about labour, due to its collections and premises, the IFM is a very important place since it is seldom possible to visit production spaces and learn about equipment. This issue can be of great societal interest that goes beyond the local surroundings. Even if procedures and tools have changed, labour is still a central feature of individual and common life and remains a crucial societal topic for designing a shared future. The “Bilderschau” (and the exhibitions in Bitterfeld and Wolfen) evidence the museum’s wish to have such debates with the public and demonstrate how such interactions and exchanges with the museum can be joyful, beneficial and meaningful events. Yet more intensive interactions and the further development of a stronger relationship between museum and public could yield another important impact for the communities. Building on positive experiences and on the mutual trust arising through the joint activities, it may become less complicated to deal with difficult and complex issues – from the past to the present, such as migration, pollution, and climate change etc. Such involvement might provoke further joint discussions and collaborative activities, initiated by / with other institutions or by the public itself.

In such a context regarding the impact on communities and societies, museum users (whether local or not) are a special cohort since they are the indirect beneficiaries of the “Bilderschau” inside the museum. The eyewitness knowledge and experience compiled in the moment and recorded in museum documentation provides visitors (post-event) and researchers with a more direct and multifaceted access to the history of Wolfen that, in turn, enables a new kind of emotional connectedness to and intellectual reflection about the past. In addition, these groups are also offered a more comprehensive notion of the museum and its work and ideas. Particularly in view of the close relationship between museum and research, it is important to point out that the IFM is making an important statement and contribution with this initiative. With its conscious decision to include public knowledge in its work, the IFM is also taking an active part in the development in the historical sciences. Its initiative to document micro-history not only provides important data, but also clearly / actively ascribes significance to it.

**Problems / limits:**- For participants

Since their commitment is very free, focused on their meeting and exchange following foremost their own wishes and needs, there are no discernible problems for this party involved.



Figure 5: Social sphere of ORWO,  
IFM archive, photo: unknown



- In / for the museum and the museum staff

The impact of the “Bilderschau” on the museum seems at present somewhat limited. The inclusion of information gained from such events in the permanent exhibition is a longer-term issue that would imply further considerations and changes in the exhibition (design, communication) in order to present it as an integral part of the collection. As yet, the influence of the “Bilderschau” on the museum is not entirely clear.

A further limitation of the effect of the “Bilderschau” lies in the apparent lack of increased interaction between the museum and the participants post-activity. At the time of writing, any closer ties between participants and the IFM, or more frequent and intensive visits or uses of the museum by participants (and their relatives) as consequences of their participation in the “Bilderschau” are not discernible. Since involvement and engagement are longer-term issues, it may just be a matter of time before this development can be observed. However, the new exhibition has the potential to change the situation comprehensively.

A significant difficulty for the “Bilderschau” and its impact is caused by the material itself - the photographic collection on the history of ORWO - that deals with the past (Fig. 5). It is almost only former employees of the ORWO factory that are attracted by the event. Consequently, the target group is very small. Additionally, due to the advanced age of the participants, this group will be potentially less available for collaboration and contribution in the near future. Furthermore, due to the historical nature of the photography collection, it has not yet been possible to include issues concerning the present or future into the interactions of the “Bilderschau.”

The visibility of the initiative is limited and this might also curb its potential impact. While announcements are disseminated via diverse channels reaching a broader spectrum, reports on the event are currently only published in traditional media. The museum’s own channels are not used for this purpose. This may be due to the wishes of the participants and also to the fact that the small staff team can barely cover the extended demands, albeit useful and meaningful, of communication via digital media. However, the dissemination of information on the course of this activity and the outcome are necessary prerequisites for the development of awareness and interest beyond those participating. By providing vivid and multiple explanations that concern the joint interactions themselves and the results, the museum could achieve even more public interest in and support (from the general population, politicians and other and potential stakeholders) of its work and further initiatives.

This initiative faces two main external limitation factors:

The exploration of the photographic collection could have a broader effect, through the use of digital media. Due to privacy rights, it is currently not possible to undertake this via the internet. For the publication of photographs that would enhance this task, the approval of the author and of the people featured is necessary. Since those people displayed in the photographs are not known, digitisation of the collection is not possible and could potentially lead to legal proceedings.

Staffing is another important limitation factor. The museum team itself is very small. The extension and diversification of their core work by including participatory approaches and initiatives would need more personnel resources. This also applies to processing collected oral history data. Current budget and other daily work commitments hinder such processes of making these important documents



available. Apparently, there are no plans to increase the budget in view of the development of the new exhibition. Although local politicians regard the museum as an important regional cultural player and see its activities in a positive light, budgeting and funding has not yet been adapted to these changing requirements.

In addition, cooperation between the museum and other institutions in Wolfen (e.g. cultural centre, churches, sports clubs, and companies) is limited and, thus, hinders the improvement of actions by using synergetic effects or shared staffing. Perhaps, this is also due to small personnel numbers. As is the case of community work, networking requires a lot of efforts and time. However, the IFM interacts with the Kulturhaus, although this is mainly limited to mutual technical assistance.

#### - For society / communities

The factory was once the central facility in Wolfen, but with the changes in 1989 / 1990, this is now past history. The specific theme of the “Bilderschau,” the ORWO factory and its history, attracts first and foremost only a small and older group of today’s population of Wolfen, who are directly connected to or interested in this past. Over the past thirty years, however, the city and its population have undergone extensive changes. Even if the “Bilderschau” manages to improve the atmosphere in Wolfen through its offer of interaction, it can only serve a limited extent as an instrument for meeting today’s challenges, especially since it barely reaches those concerned with the city’s future and therefore struggles to initiate cross-sector communication and interaction among Wolfen’s communities.

The “Bilderschau” is beneficial and meaningful for the parties involved since it provides new experience and awareness on both sides. Its impact on the two parties and concerning further engagement is very different: For the museum’s director it has led to a decision to extend participatory activities, for example, in a new exhibition. Moreover, he is open to further development. Indeed, the new exhibition will show what the next steps might be for a stronger public involvement. However, it remains to be seen whether such future interactions will also lead to changes in the institution’s structure and governance.

The “Bilderschau” is based on “history from below” or “people’s history.” Former workers commemorate and reflect about their past and historical circumstances. The issues dealt with are somehow predetermined by the collection, but their context is jointly discussed with the museum staff. Participants are free in their participation and in their thought processes. It is difficult to characterise this action as a form of “heritage from below” or “community heritage” since it is not yet recognisable how participants can develop a stronger closeness to their knowledge and experience (immaterial heritage) both among themselves and with the museum, its staff and its collections beyond the “Bilderschau,” and how the joint action of documenting, preserving and transmitting their heritage is strengthening their feeling of belonging and togetherness.

## 4.2. HAUS DER GESCHICHTE, WITTENBERG (HOUSE OF HISTORY, HDG)

In the Haus der Geschichte<sup>45</sup> (Fig. 6), citizens can engage in the framework of the Bundesfreiwilligendienst, (Federal Voluntary Service, BFD) and Ehrenamt (Volunteering), working in various areas of the institution. Its work is also strongly connected with research projects on the history of Wittenberg in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially through its strand of interviewing citizens as eyewitnesses.<sup>46</sup> Another very important and interesting feature in the context of civic involvement and engagement is that the museum was founded by a civic association and is also still run “voluntarily” on the basis of personal commitment.



Figure 6: Haus der Geschichte, Wittenberg  
© Christel Panzig, photo: Christel Panzig

### 4.2.1. VISIT

The HdG was visited for one day, on May 28th 2019, with the aim of undertaking an interview with the museum director Christel Panzig about engagement opportunities at the HdG.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, there was a joint conversation with five volunteers: Gabriele and Wolfgang (volunteering) and Steffen, Olaf and Felix (conducting a BFD) in which they could explain their experiences, their opinions and their wishes regarding their engagement (at the HdG). The management chose these five interviewees since they are very committed to their engagement in the museum.<sup>48</sup>

45 HdG, Wittenberg, URL: <http://www.pflug-ev.de/>, accessed autumn 2019.

46 This case study focuses on the voluntary work realised in the premises of the museum. As research projects are an essential part of the work of the association PFLUG e.V. and its museum, their consideration here is worthwhile, albeit limited in scope.

47 Additional information was contributed by museum staff. This data was subsequently obtained via telephone and could be recorded in a memory protocol. The HdG also provided a complete overview of the activities since 1992 and the volunteers employed for the period 2012 to 2019.

48 Although there was only one woman among the group of interviewees, this is not representative of the whole volunteers as the gender balance among them is quite balanced.



Besides the interviews, a volunteer (Wolfgang) also offered a tour of the exhibition. During the tour, he demonstrated his work as a guide and explained his interactions and communications with the museum's visitors. Within the term of this pilot, it was not possible to conduct interviews with visitors. Nevertheless, the museum guest book provided insights into their thoughts and experiences.

Due to its institutionalised framework, it was possible to contextualise these findings with empirical figures provided by the "Abschlussbericht der gemeinsamen Evaluation des Gesetzes über den Bundesfreiwilligendienst (BFDG) und des Gesetzes zur Förderung von Jugendfreiwilligendiensten (JFDG)" (Final Report of the Joint Evaluation of the Law on Federal Voluntary Service and the Law on the Promotion of Youth Voluntary Services) realised by Susanne Huth on behalf of the Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, BMFSJ) in 2015.

#### **4.2.2. CONTEXT**

The HdG is one of the two small institutions visited by the SPK team. It is located in the town of Wittenberg in Saxony-Anhalt (Central Germany) which has 46,008 inhabitants (state of December 31, 2018). From a historical and cultural point of view, this city is an important place in Germany. In the Middle Ages / Early Modern Era, Wittenberg was a royal seat and a university town. Wittenberg's intellectual and cultural life was very vivid at that time since the then Elector, Frederick III, was an important patron of the arts and sciences. In 1517, Martin Luther put his 95 theses on the entrance portal of the Wittenberg Castle Church: this is considered as the beginning of the Reformation movement. Besides Martin Luther, Philipp Melanchthon and the artist family Cranach also lived in Wittenberg at that time. This history is still very influential for the town, especially as parts of historic buildings are assigned as world cultural heritage. Based on this, Wittenberg has a comparatively rich cultural offer, which mainly refers back to its older, ecclesiastical history. Its cultural locations consist of churches, museums and historic buildings offering exhibitions: examples include the university, the homes of Luther, Melanchthon and Cranach, the castle and the old town hall. Additionally, every year there are nine public festivals incorporating a broad spectrum of entertainment dedicated to historical, cultural, musical, crafts and also sports activities; and in 2017 a large commemorative event, the anniversary of the Reformation, took place. Its historical importance and the rich cultural programme appealed to both national and international visitors. However, like many smaller German cities, today Wittenberg faces demographic problems, such as constant population shrinkages and an increase in the number of elderly people (Wikipedia: Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Jan. 2020).

It should be noted that women are of central importance in the creation of the sponsoring association PFLUG e.V. (Projektgemeinschaft Frauen, Landwirtschaft, Umwelt & Gesellschaft - Project Community Women, Agriculture, Environment and Society) and its research activities (both with regard to the persons involved and the contents), and in the museum work.

All the interviewees signed the consent forms and agreed to be recorded.





Figure 7: HdG, Flyer<sup>49</sup>

#### 4.2.3. THE MUSEUM

In contrast to Wittenberg's main cultural offerings, the HdG deals with more recent 20<sup>th</sup> century history in the Central German region, with a special focus on the Soviet occupation zone and the GDR (Fig. 7). Founded and sponsored by the association PFLUG e.V., the museum held its first exhibition in 1997<sup>50</sup>. The city of Wittenberg supports the work of the association by providing buildings for the exhibition, depots and offices. The maintenance is shared. The municipality oversees the physical maintenance of the premises. The association is responsible for the condition of the museum equipment. Furthermore, the town subsidises the museum with 10% of its costs. Remaining costs must be covered by entrance fees and project funds.

The association and its museum provide temporary exhibitions and publications about everyday history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century incorporating findings of their research projects<sup>51</sup> and dealing, in particular, with everyday life and the home region, but also with situations of upheavals, for instance, experience during the First and Second World Wars, after the end of the wars, under occupation and the political, social, cultural, economic and ecological changes after 1989 / 1990. In addition, they offer lectures with background information on museum work; guided tours through the exhibitions; workshops with school groups, and special audio guides for children through the permanent display.

49 HdG, Flyer, URL: <http://pflug-ev.de/service.htm>, accessed summer 2020.

50 The association PFLUG e.V. has existed since January 1992 and was founded mainly by historians from the former Academy of Agricultural Sciences (AdL) of the GDR with the objective of promoting research on agricultural-social processes in rural areas of the eastern states of Germany. In the context of research projects, the collection of objects of material culture also grew, which was initially unplanned, but from 1998 onwards was carried out purposefully.

51 Since 1994, the association also initiated projects in the field of its research. In these studies, association members have conducted numerous investigations with former employees of companies and factories in Wittenberg and other eyewitnesses. These initiatives included the implementation of interviews and the collection of photographs and documents that were used for and displayed in exhibitions and publications.



Within their research projects, the association also cooperates with other social and scientific stakeholders, such as the youth hostel, church communities, Berliner Institut für vergleichende Staat-Kirche-Forschung (Institute for compared investigation on state-church relationships) and the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Agency for Political Education). In addition, the association has a scientific advisory council that consists of members from various universities, the city, the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt and the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

The main museum premises are located in an old building complex at the heart of the town close to the town square. Its staff contingent consists of three persons (the director and two employees); two of whom are engaged with the museum's volunteers. Both the museum and the association communicate with the public via a webpage that promotes its exhibitions and publications, describes the collections (including excerpts from life history interviews), and announces special events. Concerning communication possibilities, the website is very clear and transparent. In every tab, the e-mail, the telephone number and the address are mentioned. Furthermore, the website also refers to Facebook to get in touch with the museum and the association via email and Facebook.<sup>52</sup>

#### **4.2.4. OBJECTIVES**

On the one hand, by offering citizens opportunities to volunteer in the museum, the association and the museum seek to make a valuable contribution to people participating in the Federal Volunteer Service and Volunteering programmes and to thus have a beneficial impact on the wider society. They hope to offer their volunteers the opportunity to gain new knowledge (especially in the context of museums, history and culture), to use and enhance their skills, to share their knowledge and experience and to make new contacts. Furthermore, they want to provide positive experiences by offering volunteers opportunities to carry out meaningful tasks that can bring joy and satisfaction, as well as recognition and affirmation, and thus the museum can foster their volunteers' societal agency.

On the other hand, helped by the engagement of volunteers, the association seeks to fulfil the museum's work and to maintain its building.

#### **4.2.5. ADDRESSEES / PARTICIPANTS**

The HdG benefits from the tourist influx that the city of Wittenberg experiences due to its rich cultural heritage. Local, national and international visitors are attracted either to look into their own past, to learn about the GDR (Fig. 8), or less frequently treated topics, such as the soldier's life (1940-1980), living together between Germans and Russians from 1945 until 1993, atheism in the GDR, Lutherism in the GDR, textile production in the GDR or East German competences.

52 PFLUG e.V., Facebook (URL: <https://de-de.facebook.com/haus.der.geschichte.wittenberg>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020).

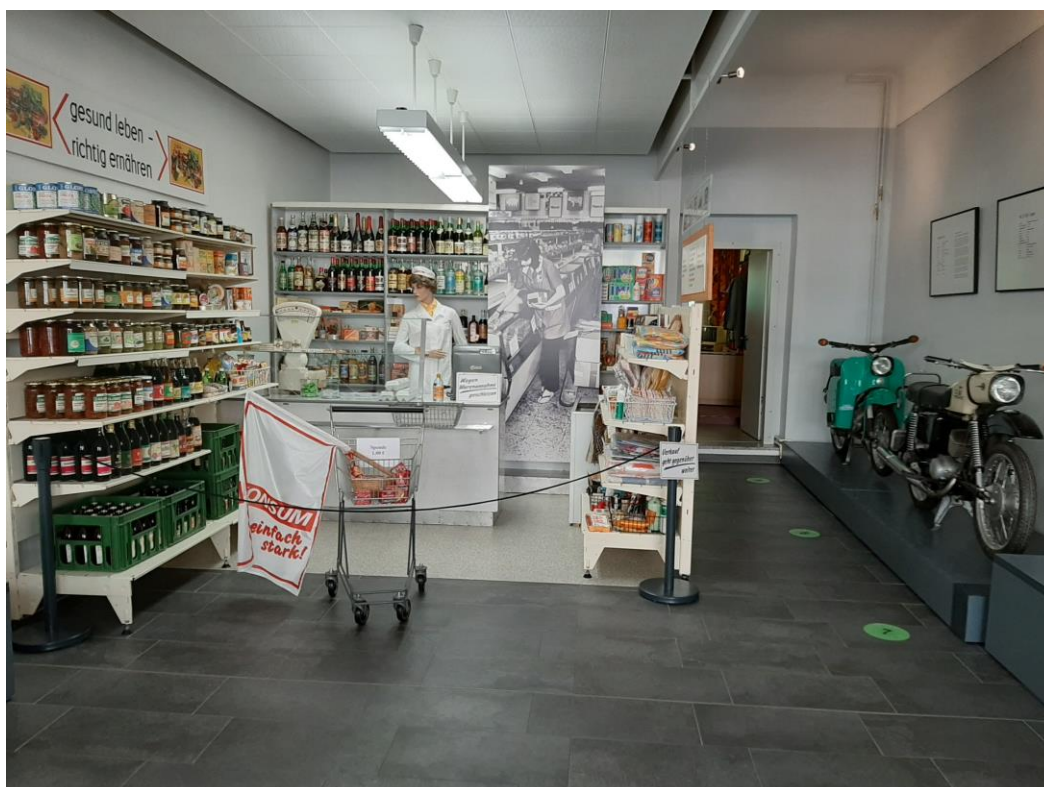


Figure 8: HdG, exhibition

© Christel Panzig, photo: Christel Panzig

The BFD and the Volunteering programme are addressed to all people interested. The persons involved in the HdG are from very diverse backgrounds and age groups. One observation is that these volunteers are often in upheaval, and somewhat difficult life situations.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, although this type of engagement is voluntary and the majority of people are involved at their own initiative, there are cases where persons are encouraged by the employment office to undertake voluntary service at the HdG.

At the HdG, this offer appeals to women and men to an almost equal extent.<sup>54</sup> Women are very important in the association and its museum; and not only in terms of staffing. Rather, the role of women has been central and has formed the nucleus of PFLUG e.V. since the time of its foundation. Moreover, during subsequent research and exhibition projects, special consideration has been given to the achievements and experiences of women in the context of life in times of (post-)war, and in the foundation and activities of women's initiatives after the Second World War.

53 Four of the five interviewees belong to the older than 50 years age group. However, this figure is not representative for the volunteers at HdG. In general, slightly more than half of the people engaged 2012-2019 at the HdG were older than 49 years (54%).

The general figures provided by the "Final Report" show, on the one hand, that the great majority of people engaged are younger than 27 years (86%). On the other hand, they clarify the high percentage of older participants at BFD 27+ (70% were older than 45). Additionally, it shows that a good majority of these participants (BFD 27+) often live in difficult or upheaval situations (84%) (Huth, 2015: pp. 72, 74, 80). This statement is confirmed by the data in Wittenberg. While the younger interviewee stated that he was able to bridge the waiting period for his studies by means of the engagement, the others explained that they would either not be able to find permanent work or were in a phase of reorientation after overcoming a difficult personal situation.

54 Between 2012 and 2019 the proportion of women volunteering at the HdG was 47% that of men 53%. In contrast, the "Final Report" shows an inverted general situation: 59% of the volunteers are women, 41% men (Huth, 2015: p. 73).



As in Wolfen, the volunteers - both the interviewees and the voluntary museum staff - have to be considered as vulnerable groups; both have experienced or are still experiencing strong upheaval. Some of the older local volunteers (and also the interviewees) had to deal with the changes of 1989 / 1990 and the following socio-economic development in the region. They had witnessed the extensive breakdown of familiar structures (work, social network, etc.) and ideas. Other volunteers have had experience of falling through the social safety net and find it difficult to regain ground.

#### **4.2.6. INVOLVEMENT / PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES**

The HdG makes use of the federal programme of BFD and also of volunteering to engage citizens. Both programmes are aimed at strengthening and expanding civic commitment.

On the federal level, the BFD is managed by the Bundesamt für Familie und zivilgesellschaftliche Aufgaben (Federal Office for Family and Civic Affairs, BAFzA) which belongs to BMFSJ. The Office describes it as follows:

“It is an offer to women and men of all ages to get involved for the common good beyond work and school - in social, ecological and cultural areas or in the field of sport, integration as well as in civil defence and catastrophe protection.” (BAFzA, n.a.) (Translation by the author)

Since 2011, the Federal Voluntary Service is also open to people who are older than 27 (BFD 27+).<sup>55</sup> It has a duration of six to twelve / eighteen months. Since 2012, the association has offered citizens the opportunity to engage in the museum’s activities in this context.

In addition, and even after the end of their voluntary service, people can continue to volunteer at the HdG. Volunteering is a freer form of engagement than BFD. On the federal level in Germany, it belongs to the responsibility of the Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, BMI). The Staatskanzlei and the Kulturministerium des Bundeslands Sachsen-Anhalt (State Chancellery and Ministry of Culture of the State of Saxony-Anhalt) defines civic engagement / volunteering as an activity that is voluntary and self-determined, oriented towards the common good, usually carried out jointly / collaboratively, public or takes place in public spaces and that is not aimed at material gain (Staatskanzlei and Kulturministerium des Bundeslands Sachsen-Anhalt, 2018: pp. 4 / 5).

At the HdG, both groups of volunteers can become engaged in the sectors of Education and Public Relations, and Collection Care and Exhibitions. They are assigned to various areas: management and documentation of collections, guided tours, cash desk and technical services (Fig. 9). With their comprehensive engagement, they help the association to fulfil the museum’s tasks and keep the museum running. In accordance with the needs of the museum and their own skills, the people engaged can gain new knowledge in diverse areas of work. If volunteers wish to do so, they can also expand their involvement with further opportunities to share their knowledge and experience through guided tours with the public. Doing so increases their remuneration.

55 The BUFDI 27+ is of special concern since the interviewees conduct their service under the framework of this programme. Furthermore, the majority of the volunteers at the HdG are older than 30 years (just 19% of the volunteers were younger). That contrasts with the findings of the “Final Report.” They show that the majority of the people volunteering in Germany (86%) are participating at the programmes for people younger than 27, that include Voluntary Social Year, Voluntary Ecological Year, and BFD (-27) (Huth, 2015: p. 72).

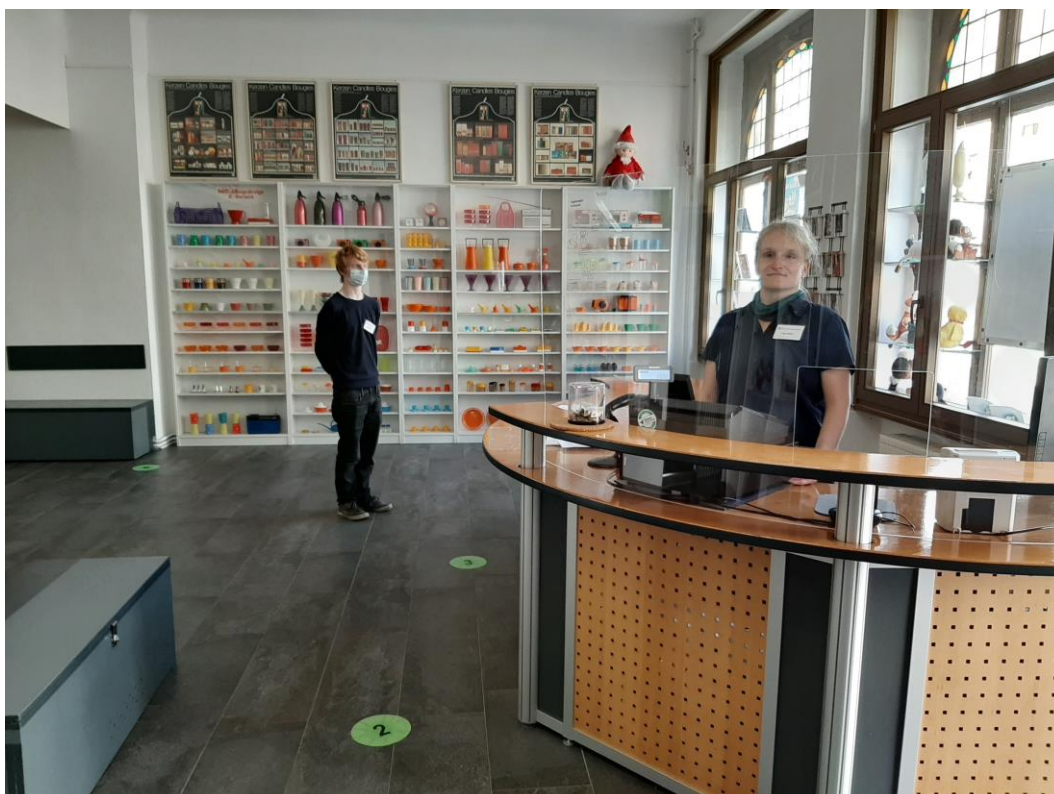


Figure 9: Volunteers at the HdG  
© Christel Panzig, photo: Christel Panzig

Due to the different organisational affiliations, the two programmes of engagement are funded by different budgets. The Federal Voluntary Service provides “pocket money” of a maximum of 402€ plus costs for accommodation and food. In contrast, the volunteers receive remuneration of 100€. <sup>56</sup>

Calls for volunteers (in the framework of BFD or as Ehrenamt) are announced on PFLUG e.V’s website, making opportunities easily accessible. Although the association also uses its Facebook account to disseminate information about museum events or partner projects, communication regarding volunteering and voluntary work does not take place through this channel at the moment.

#### 4.2.7. INTERIM EVALUATION: POTENTIALS AND RISKS

The association and the museum realise a variety of participatory initiatives. Indeed, this approach is essential since it forms the basis for the very foundation of the association and the museum, for the implementation of research and exhibition projects and for the maintenance of the museum. Even though, it was not possible to interview people engaged in research projects, their consideration is important for the evaluation in order to gain a fuller picture of the diverse activities of PFLUG e.V. and its museum.

<sup>56</sup> In addition, the museum was supported by the European Social Fund and the state of Saxony-Anhalt from July 2016 to June 2019 as part of the project “Improving public relations in the Haus der Geschichte Wittenberg.” In this project, long-term unemployed people over 58 were given the opportunity to be employed, which supported them in their professional and social reintegration into the labour market and society.



Following Simon (2010), the research consisting of carrying out interviews with citizens / workers of former companies and factories in Wittenberg can be characterised as a contribution strand. The association initiates this activity and identifies the topics to be investigated. During the term of this pilot, it was not possible to assess how this research is undertaken: neither could it be ascertained as to the kind of relationships between the association, its members and other citizens, that are developed during and by such research projects, nor what participants' opinions are with regard to the scope and degree of their involvement.

Volunteer work in the framework of the Federal Voluntary Service and Volunteering is offered by the PFLUG e.V. association, but the engagement of citizens at the HdG is mostly based on their own initiative. Even though the overall working framework is set by the museum, volunteers can organise their tasks independently (in consultation with the management and colleagues) and also develop their own workflow in accordance with their knowledge and skills, and their needs. Depending on their wishes and abilities, volunteers can augment and intensify their engagement; further opportunities for this are offered to them by the museum. However, a desire for greater involvement in decision-making processes was not evident among the volunteers interviewed. Rather, they seemed to accept the hierarchical structure in place in terms of the institution and its management. Their form of involvement can therefore be described as collaborative<sup>57</sup>, with a clear division of roles between management and voluntary staff somewhat similar to an employer-employee relationship. However, here, in contrast to an employment setting, this engagement is assigned a value other than earning a living: for volunteers, emotional and social value is clearly foregrounded. For the institution, too, the societal responsibility that it assumes through its commitment, generates a different awareness, attitude and action from than that of a "normal" employer.

#### **Positive effects:**

##### - For participants

Engagement at the HdG can offer great mental and emotional support to volunteers, since they experience an appreciation of their person, and a clear recognition of the skills and knowledge that they have to offer. Working in the museum can help volunteers to further value their own personal life and work experience, both in the present and looking towards the future. The respect that volunteers are shown can help build and strengthen both their self-esteem and self-confidence. The research projects go beyond this. By valuing citizens' accounts as both relevant to the documentation of local history and worth being preserved and made accessible for future generations, these projects underline the importance of the experience and knowledge of Wittenberg's citizens, even for the wider general public.

Due to an introduction to various working practices and then by continuing these over a period of time, volunteers engaged at the museum can get to know new areas and learn new ways of working. Additionally, the schemes enable volunteers to be integrated into a working life routine, as well as a social structure, and thereby to find new social cohesion. Furthermore, the museum staff offer support to volunteers even outside the museum setting if they are in need of assistance, for instance with local authorities. In this way, the volunteers interviewed have developed a feeling of belonging and a strong identification with their engagement and with the HdG.

57 This would correspond to the term "Mitarbeit" (collaboration, working with) (cf. footnote 28 below).



Besides their relationship to the museum *per se*, volunteers can connect with their surroundings in new ways, since their engagement supports the development of more positive attitudes both towards themselves and towards their environments. Volunteers have the opportunity to share their past and current experiences with a broader audience and can also relate these experiences to their everyday surroundings in Wittenberg. In this way they can take and maintain a more solid stance in their neighbourhood and the society of Wittenberg, by being active in a larger context.

The “Final Report” highlights that, generally, the engagement in the framework of the BFD has strong influence on volunteers’ personal development.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, it can give volunteers a sense of direction and enable them to build on and improve their knowledge, skills and personal abilities. It can also serve as preparation for employment and other future societal engagement. This pilot’s observation at the HdG confirms these findings.

#### - In / for museum / staff

Due to the engagement of volunteers working in the museum, the association PFLUG e.V. is able to run and maintain the museum. As people involved have life and work experience, the museum can draw on their existing knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, the enrichment of the museum’s work by volunteers is particularly evident in the volunteer-guided exhibition tours. These non-professionals provide a more personal approach to the museum, its objects / artefacts, narratives, and histories, and therefore, to the region more generally. This is very appealing to the audience, as the guest books show. The reason for this positive feedback could be that a less academic and more accessible approach can connect more naturally to the visitors’ own knowledge and experience. This supports an involvement with the museum, its staff and contents that takes place on a variety of different levels: intellectual, emotional, mental and practical. In consequence, such fully engaged interactions between the guides and their audience can strongly influence the forming of mutual relationships and also the atmosphere at the museum and the perception of the institution.

Additionally, the involvement of Wittenberg’s citizens in its research projects enables the museum to gather information on local history. In such a way, the museum can become a rich and complex archive for the region, holding both its tangible and intangible heritage and allowing for exchange and discussions on the region’s past, present and future. Moreover, the museum can include multi-layered data in exhibitions and publications that are directly related to Wittenberg’s present condition and current population.

58 The “Final Report” provides an important insight into the effects of participation in the Voluntary Services. For example, this study showed that voluntary work positively influences the attitudes towards personal engagement and possibilities of action (especially in the area of political participation) and promotes awareness and tolerance. According to the report, the opinion that one can influence democracy as a citizen grew during the service (53% of the respondents shared this opinion, compared to 44% at the beginning of the voluntary service). However, this opinion is less strong among the participants at the BFD 27+ (44%) than among the (younger) participants of the other programmes (Huth, 2015: pp. 209 / 210). This identified impact corresponds to the hope on the part of the museum management.



The volunteers that were interviewed through this pilot enthusiastically showed their strong connection to the museum. By sharing their positive impressions of their work and also of the museum with their surroundings, more people can be informed about the museum and encouraged to visit and/or join its interactions. Here again, the volunteers and people involved can respectively serve the museum as multipliers of its ideas and actions. Thus, the Federal Voluntary Service can be characterised as a beneficial tool for the institutions that helps to disseminate their mission, vision and activities and that also reveals the needs of the institutions.

- For society / communities

As is seen by the HdG management, this type of engagement strengthens democratic participation in society. This can be achieved by the revalorisation of life histories and through the involvement of citizens in the maintenance of the museum, in investigative research projects, in the presentation and discussion of everyday culture and history, and in compilations of differentiated and multi-layered collections of information on diverse topics of German history (including some topics that are often under-considered in historiographical and political discourse).

The museum deals with the central topic of everyday culture of the 20th century (in particular the century's second half), with which a large part of the Wittenberg population is still connected through their own personal experiences. The activities of the association and the museum thus make a significant contribution to Wittenberg's communities: in the remembering and critical discussion of this recent past not only as part of one's own biography but also as part of regional and German history. In addition, by means of their projects, the association builds bridges between different generations e.g. when visiting school groups are not just dealing with the past but rather exchanging with older people about their experiences. This contribution is of great importance, as it is still very difficult to deal with aspects of the recent past. The recognition of personal life experiences and of the multi-perspective nature and plurality of stories and histories, which are already taken into account in wider historiographical areas, are also gaining ground in the museum area. They are regarded as increasingly urgent for the further development of local and regional societies, especially in the eastern regions of Germany.

Addressing a wide range of topics, the museum offers the public a space where diverse reflections can take place or be stimulated. In particular, through these various initiatives dealing with the recent past in which citizens are actively involved, the general public can also learn that there is a possibility for action (in this place) and that such exchanges can give manifold impetus for rethinking and developing the society of Wittenberg as a whole.

As mentioned before, the "Final Report" underlines the importance of such engagement for participants' personal development. With regard to the social environment, it is important to highlight the positive effects of engagement on the awareness of self and of others including fewer familiar contexts and conditions. On this basis, the development of understanding and tolerance is enhanced: these are essential prerequisites for living and thriving together in a diverse and heterogeneous society.





**Problems / limits:**

- for participants

The limitation of BFD to six to twelve / eighteen months is seen as a problem by the volunteers. In addition, it is often difficult to achieve an extension of the Federal Voluntary Service from twelve to eighteen months, because normally a limit of twelve months at one office should not be exceeded. Even if volunteers wish to prolong their engagement, it is not possible within this framework. Due to this limitation, the volunteers lose a safe space that has helped them to find support and stability, gained just for a (relatively) short term. One way out of this restriction is through the volunteering programme that can be realised at the HdG. However, this type of engagement can engender other problems, especially financial difficulties.

Besides the temporal limitation, financial issues are regarded by the volunteers as another problem. Firstly, the financial benefit of the BFD programme is very low, and only covers the minimum for living. Secondly, the expense allowance for volunteering is also very low. This is aggravated by the fact that in the case of unemployed people receiving social assistance, the expense allowance is deducted from an already minimal state support. In so doing, in addition to their social stigmatisation, this procedure discriminates against these people in comparison with those working and / or well-off. In the particular cases of those interviewed, this situation is even more difficult, as they cannot draw on savings. It is important to emphasise here that these volunteers do not carry out complementary work, but the museum's central activities.

- In / for museum / staff

The management are unhappy with the limitations of BFD in terms of age and duration, as it is a clear factor in hindering deeper involvement. The rapid and continual volunteer staff turnover leads to a repeated loss of knowledge and abilities. In addition, more advanced tasks cannot be delegated to the participants, as they usually cannot acquire the necessary knowledge and skills within the term of the programme. Furthermore, introductory skill-building sessions are needed time and time again and this constantly ties up personnel resources. In consequence, more intensive instruction would hardly be applicable in and indeed of little use for the HdG. Thus, the commitment of the volunteers remains mainly limited to the maintenance of the museum and the performing of day-to-day museum tasks.

Volunteers are often people with life and work experience, but sometimes they can only be involved to a limited extent. Precisely because of their experience, they may also require more attention, support and efforts than they can contribute back to the museum. Furthermore, sometimes their involvement can also be counterproductive since they are not suitable for the requirements of constant engagement or, in particular, for museum work, and dealing with cultural assets, visitors and colleagues. Consequently, the museum staff and the other volunteers have to fulfil additional tasks sometimes beyond the museum work.

Furthermore, the management has pointed out that not everyone participating in this volunteering programme is interested in voluntary work, nor do they have an understanding of museums and the appropriate skills to carry out the work. Rather, their engagement is based on suggestions from social or employment offices in order to avoid unemployment. Consequently, they do not perceive this offer as an opportunity, but more as an obligation. This, of course, contradicts the scheme's underlying concept. In such a context, positive effects such as those mentioned above cannot be achieved.



The HdG staff is too small to provide extended introductory sessions and care for the volunteers. Additionally, staff are not trained or prepared to give the volunteers psychological and social support of which they may be in need due to personal problems e.g. health, isolation, debts, housing, local administration, etc. These extra duties and responsibilities are rarely perceived and appreciated by both the wider public and policymakers; as such, favourable conditions (such as training, further professional support) are lacking.

The aging local population is also a problem. Interviews undertaken with eyewitnesses form an important pillar of the research that is realised by the association. Contemporary eyewitnesses of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are becoming less available to further compile knowledge about this time period. This will also be the case for the second half of the century in the decades to come. In addition, the majority of the people involved in the HdG (museum management, staff and volunteers) belong to the older age range. However, the management has recognised the need to engage younger scientific and technical employees in the team to pass on the baton.

A further problem for the museum is that Wittenberg has a rich offer of social and cultural institutions; and the city's infrastructure is particularly influenced by church organisations. There is therefore considerable competition (with nursing homes, ecclesiastical institutions and other associations) for potential suitable volunteers.

In addition, two problematic situations can be identified. A conflict is discernible in Wittenberg, revolving in particular around recent (East) German history and its interpretation. Especially around the millennium, the museum faced a series of accusations. It was called the "Cuddly Corner of the GDR" and was blamed for depoliticising history, trivialising the SED regime (State Party of the GDR) and the GDR, and employing former functionaries. This dispute was complicated by the fact that some of the critics were members of the city council at this time. The accusations, although refuted by the museum activities, still latently shape the mood towards the museum in parts of the local society some twenty years later. Furthermore, there is a strong competition with the publicly funded Municipal Collection, that embrace the local history museum and that are associated with the council archive. This is not only a competitive situation, which makes mutual use or cooperation particularly difficult and impossible, but also a conflict with regard to budgeting.

The PFLUG e.V. association is under constant pressure regarding the financing of the HdG. Only with the help of the BFD and Volunteering is it able to run the museum. Despite its successful work (as the statistics show), the municipality does not assume any further commitments or responsibilities. This is especially difficult in the long run for the museum, since even its management is undertaken "voluntarily." Not only the engagement with Wittenberg's population but also the entire museum's work and existence strongly depends on personal commitment and possibilities. Moreover, the current COVID-19 situation in particular has revealed that institutions with insufficient and / or insecure financing and that depend strongly on the income from the tickets, can very quickly be restricted in their ability to act and engage. Without a reliable financial foundation, it is very difficult to intensify and constantly develop the work, and tackle those longer-term projects that could provide more lasting impact.



The participation and engagement activities of the HdG hardly form part of the museum's dissemination strategy. Information about such activities is transmitted mostly via traditional media; digital channels concentrate rather on the exhibition and special events.

- For society / communities

The BFD was created as an opportunity to become more engaged for the common good (beyond work and family). In contrast, in the case of the HdG, it often appears more like an opportunity of re-integration and orientation and of an alternative labour and employment structure. There is an apparent large need for such offers, but if not properly equipped, prepared and supported, institutions providing such opportunities cannot fulfil such significant societal tasks.

The circle of people attracted to the scheme is limited and does not involve the whole of society in all of its diversity. The main reason here is the low remuneration. However, the low remuneration rate is intentional because financial profit should not be a motivating factor, and it would contradict the voluntary principle. As a result, many people cannot afford to participate in the BFD or to volunteer. It is very interesting that in this context that those involved have very different social backgrounds. On the one side, people who are financially secure and have time can take advantage of the opportunity. Whereas, on the other side, many participants are in situations of change and / or uncertainty, such as between two stages of life (school - studies, parental leave – work, (early) retirement) or even long-term unemployment. In times of increasing temporary work, part-time contracts, subcontracted employments, dependent contracting and low wages and the associated rise in (old-age) poverty, it is even more difficult for people to make a commitment.<sup>59</sup>

The dissemination of information about volunteering at the HdG is limited to the website, although the association uses Facebook for its communication concerning events. The public's attention regarding volunteer participation and involvement in the HdG is therefore limited. A broader appreciation of both the museum's and the volunteers' commitment and engagement are therefore lacking; and the wider public's willingness to get involved in such comprehensive activities cannot further increase. However, it is clear that comprehensive public relations work also requires an appropriate team, which is very difficult in smaller institutions.

In summary, voluntary service and volunteering are somewhat ambiguous for both the institution and the volunteers. On the HdG side, volunteers are essential for the fulfilment of its work. But it leads to the situation that the museum team has to extend its work to areas that do not belong to its core tasks (notwithstanding its limited resources). For volunteers, the benefits can be great if their engagement corresponds to their will and abilities. However, especially in the case of the BFD scheme, these two features are not always assumed to be the starting points for volunteer engagement.

<sup>59</sup> The need for action to strengthen civic engagement has been recognised by politicians, particularly because the commitment to date has been unequally distributed. Especially in the eastern German states and in structurally weak and rural regions, civil and voluntary structures are dependent on special support. For this reason, the German Bundestag is currently (winter 2019 / 2020) discussing the creation of the Deutsche Stiftung für Engagement und Ehrenamt (German Foundation for Engagement and Volunteering) that is a joint initiative of BMFSJ, BMI and the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. As a central contact point at federal level, it is to provide services and information on organisational development (BMFSJ, 2020).



Involving and engaging are core features of the PFLUG e.V.'s activities. Since the museum is run by the civic association PFLUG e.V. and it is dealing with the regional history of everyday culture, this example includes strong elements of “people’s history,” “heritage from below” and “participatory heritage” by including the expertise of local people into the museum stock and museum work. Thus, the association succeeds in creating a centre for this particular type of (supra)-local historical research and for the public presentation of that research in the museum. The engagement of the volunteers working at the HdG can partly be assigned to this concept since they are part of the history dealt with and displayed. In addition, they may have increasing opportunities for interaction with the public and of sharing their individual expertise. However, their main contributions consist in the maintenance of the museum and the basic museum tasks (collection care, cash desk, visitor service, and technical service). Moreover, their engagement in the HdG is mostly limited in time (which somewhat contradicts the idea of “heritage”). The temporal limitation and fluctuation is further problematic for the building and fostering of communities. Over the longer term, it may be possible to assess whether a sense of community develops due to involvement in the HdG and in the ways in which engagement supports Wittenberg’s communities, despite the limiting factors mentioned above.

Concerning the museum’s management, it is evident that its structures can be described as institutionalised although, due to the financial circumstances, the management is still voluntarily exercised. An opening-up to participatory governance with people beyond the foundation association is apparently neither currently aspired to by the management nor the association, nor demanded by the public nor, especially, by the volunteers.

#### **4.3 MUSEUM FÜR ISLAMISCHE KUNST (SMB-PK), BERLIN (MUSEUM FOR ISLAMIC ART, ISL)**

The Museum für Islamische Kunst (SMB-PK) (Museum for Islamic Art)<sup>60</sup> (Fig. 10) provides several ways to become more deeply involved with its exhibitions and collections. The activities of interest in this case study are concerned with the provision of access, outreach and the use of artefacts as starting point for social interaction and (inter)cultural exchange. The outreach strand has a focus on educational work and here includes the following projects: TAMAM,<sup>61</sup> Multaka. Treffpunkt Museum (Multaka. Meeting point museum)<sup>62</sup> and Gemeinsame Vergangenheit – Gemeinsame Zukunft (Shared Past – Shared Future, GV – GZ)<sup>63</sup>. In addition, the museum seeks to improve its permanent exhibition to encourage communication and interaction with its audience. In particular, this concerns the means of communication within the exhibitions, such as texts, graphics, videos, labels, but also the setting of topics.<sup>64</sup>

60 ISL, Berlin, URL: <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/about-us/profile.html>, accessed summer 2019.

61 ISL: TAMAM, URL: <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/collection-research/research-cooperation/tamam-the-mosque-communities-education-project-with-the-museum-fuer-islamische-kunst.html>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020.

62 ISL: Multaka, URL: <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/collection-research/research-cooperation/multaka.html>, accessed summer 2019.

63 ISL: Gemeinsame Vergangenheit – Gemeinsame Zukunft, URL: <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/collection-research/research-cooperation/shared-past-shared-future.html>, accessed summer 2019.

64 ISL: International Fellowship for Museums of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation), URL: <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/collection-research/research-cooperation/international-fellowship-for-museums-of-the-german-federal-cultural-foundation.html>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020.

The museum also undertakes diverse collaborative research projects. Projects concerning archaeological sites are conducted with partners mainly in Syria; in contrast, research dealing with the collections is mainly realised with German partners (universities, museums, research institutes, inter alia Institut für Museumsforschung).<sup>65</sup> Since this study is above all focused on the interaction between institutions and citizens / non-professionals, the afore-mentioned research projects are not considered in the following reflections. Instead, the focus here is on local outreach projects that go beyond the regular education programme.



Figure 10: Pergamonmuseum, SMB-PK

© Raimond Spekking / CC BY-SA 4.0 (via Wikimedia Commons), CC BY-SA 4.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12178>,  
 photo: Raimond Spekking

Almost all of the interpretation, diversity and outreach work undertaken by the museum has been initiated by the ISL Directorate. This engagement is funded by external organisations. The SMB-PK has an extensive Education and Outreach team, but the specific ISL work is organised by its directors. It is only by their initiative that this work occurs in the first place. Nevertheless, for a deeper understanding, it is also worth briefly including further information on the regular educational offer provided by the Department of Education and Visitor Service (SMB-PK) as this not only reveals the broader context of the projects realised by the museum but also the complexity at the ISL.

#### **4.3.1. VISIT**

Due to its manifold programme and agenda, the ISL was visited on several occasions (TAMAM: May 23, 2019; Multaka: May 23, June 6, and July 13, 2019; GV – GZ: June 19, 2019; exhibition: June 4, 2019). Within the context of these projects, it was possible to carry out several semi-structured interviews, principally with the project managers. Additionally, in the case of Multaka, semi-structured interviews and discussions with participants were undertaken, as well as participatory observations in the Bode-Museum and ISL during guided tours (combined with talks to a representative of an attending group).

<sup>65</sup> ISL: Research and Cooperation, URL: <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/collection-research/research-cooperation.html>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020.



The interviewees were: Roman Singendonk (TAMAM), Hussam Z. Mohammed and Alain (Multaka)<sup>66</sup>, and Hilal Sezgin-Just (GV – GZ). In addition, Kathrin Allmann, an employee at the Department of Education and Visitor Services of the SMB-PK, who is responsible for educational projects performed with school classes at the ISL, was also interviewed. A further conversation was held with Cornelia Weber, coordination curator, responsible for the third-party funded projects.

In the case of the improvement of the permanent display, an interview was conducted with interpretation curator, Dr. John Paul Sumner. Sumner was brought to Berlin by the federal Kulturstiftung des Bundes 'Fellow Me' programme to bring interpretation perspectives and skills to the museum as an addition to the team of Art Historians, Educators, Diversity Officers and Outreach Officers, all working in the Museum for Islamic Art. By the means of a guided tour through the exhibition, he explained his approaches and his actions.<sup>67</sup>

The ISL was chosen for this study because of these diverse outreach offers that are actively supported and promoted by the museum director, Dr. Stefan Weber.

#### **4.3.2. CONTEXT**

In contrast to the other two smaller-scale museums presented in this deliverable, the ISL represents a much larger cultural heritage institution with a long tradition aimed mainly at an international audience. It belongs to SMB-PK and is located in the Pergamonmuseum on the Museum Island in the heart of Berlin. Consequently, it forms part of a rich cultural offer that can, on the one hand, lead to fruitful cooperation (for instance, in the case of Multaka within the SMB-PK and with other institutions). However, on the other hand, there is a high level of competition with other institutions, both within the building itself - where three museums display their collections - as well as on the Museum Island with its five museum buildings where seven collections of the SMB-PK are shown, and also in the city centre with its rich offer provided by diverse institutions (galleries, theatres, operas, university, museums, library, shops, bars, aquarium, churches, etc.), and even further beyond.

#### **4.3.3. THE MUSEUM**

The ISL is dedicated to Islamic arts from the 7<sup>th</sup> until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast to the other two museums, the ISL has a long tradition that dates back to 1904. It belongs to the SMB-PK and is publicly funded. As afore-mentioned, it is located in the Pergamonmuseum on the Museum Island that is also currently home to the Antikensammlung (Collection of Classical Antiquities; including the Pergamon Altar) and the Vorderasiatisches Museum (Museum of the Ancient Near East).

<sup>66</sup> Alain is a Multaka guide, so he is a participant and a multiplier at the same time. The information of Mr. Mohammed and Alain was described by Salma Jreige, project co-manager. Her explanations could not be recorded.

During the participatory observation it was possible to talk to the head of a language café group which attended a guided tour.

In October 2019, Mr. Mohammed left the project, leaving Mrs. Jreige as the only project manager, supported by Cornelia Weber. An increase in staff will take place in the near future (as of June 2020).

<sup>67</sup> The interviewees agreed to be recorded and signed the consent forms. The discussions with participants and later enquiries to the project managers and coordination curator could not be documented.



Even though the ISL is concerned with cultures and cultural assets from regions in the Middle East, there are strong links to its location in Berlin as its collections refer to long existing cultural contacts and exchange (in and with those areas) and also to cultural diversity (which has increasingly become an important issue for the German society). Furthermore, they are directly connected with a huge minority group and with newcomers from those areas that are now living in Berlin.

Recognising the museum not just as a showcase and a place of research, but rather as a state facility with a societal function and task, the museum management has initiated activities that aim to help open the museum to broader and more diverse audiences. The implementation of such projects is perceived by the management as an important contribution to and intervention in current issues in order to face societal challenges, especially in the context of debates around migration, identity, cultural exchange and tolerance towards diversity, heterogeneity and ambiguity, and which have gained in urgency in recent years. The museum recently set up a special room, the MuseumLab, within its permanent exhibition, which is specifically available for these projects and for related presentations, displays, workshops, discussions and other kinds of event. Its interior design is flexible, so that the specific needs of each event can be taken into account. Furthermore, the museum continues to broaden and extend its offer with further strands.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to the ISL-projects presented and discussed here, the Education Department of SMB-PK periodically provides workshops, talks and guided tours.

It is estimated that in 2026 the museum will open a new exhibition focussing more on historical and social contexts than on the sequences of dynasties. With this change, the museum management is attempting to move away from the transmission of historic-cultural content to a new way of approaching topics in order to enhance communication and interaction between the museum and its audiences. The improvement of the exhibition realised by Dr. Sumner is part of the preparation for this. In addition, various outreach projects are already testing how more interactive strands can be integrated into future exhibits.

Although the museum actively seeks to open itself to the general public, its communication with its audience is very limited. Besides its website, the Blog of SMB-PK- “Museum and the City” and the SMB-PK YouTube channel that are maintained centrally by the Communication Department of SMB-PK and provide one-way dissemination, the only digital possibility of the ISL entering into an multi directional exchange with its audience is through its Facebook page.<sup>69</sup> An interaction with its collections is restricted for audiences on the SMB-PK data base: SMB digital. Here, users have access to the information on the objects including dating, origin, cultural affiliation, materials, measurements and descriptions; they also have the possibility of compiling selected items into a portfolio during this online session.<sup>70</sup>

68 E.g. the project “Diversität als Narrative, Diversität als Wirklichkeit” (Diversity as Narratives, Diversity as Reality). With the help of this project, the museum aims to give greater recognition to the perspectives and positions of local urban society and to bring them into its own premises by establishing an advisory board and conducting a series of further events and initiatives (URL: <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/collection-research/research-cooperation/diversity-as-narrative-diversity-as-reality/>, accessed spring 2020).

69 ISL, Facebook (URL: <https://de-de.facebook.com/pergamonmuseum>), accessed winter 2019 / 2020.

70 SMB-PK: smb digital, ISL (URL: <http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&moduleFunction=highlight&filterName=filter.collection.highlights.1600>), accessed winter 2019 / 2020.



#### **4.3.4. OBJECTIVES**

With its initiatives the museum aims to open itself to more diverse audiences and to broaden its programme to groups that have until now been underrepresented in the museum's educational activity strand. In addition, the museum seeks to contribute to current societal issues, by promoting the cultural engagement of these underrepresented groups, by improving social and cultural skills more generally, by enabling mutual understanding, respect and feelings of belonging to broader social circles, and by motivating and encouraging reflection, discussion and action. In so doing, the museum wants to offer itself as a place for encounter and (inter-)cultural exchange and recognises its societal agency.

#### **4.3.5 ADDRESSEES / PARTICIPANTS**

The ISL exhibition is mainly visited by international touristic audiences. With its activities and event programme, the museum seeks to attract a range of visitors from international and accustomed / well-versed audiences to people who might rarely visit museums. Here, the enhancement of exhibition labels, texts, graphs etc. initiated by the ISL, are seen as a very important approach in facilitating and improving the communication with the public. It is especially aimed at non-professional audiences and considers the diversity of their backgrounds in term of their education, socialisation and cultural affiliations. The general educational programme, the main tool for interaction in and with the museum, is provided by SMB-PK. It is focused on adults, children and families, schools and kindergartens, groups and tour operators.

Besides audiences, a very important stakeholder group is the museum association Freunde des Museum für Islamische Kunst (Friends of the Museum for Islamic Art). This is a very engaged and active group composed of a range of people: from enthusiasts without professional links to ambassadors, scientists, students, artists etc. Even if these people have different backgrounds and approaches to Islamic art, it is nonetheless evident from this list that the association appeals mainly to members from the educated (upper) middle class and thus represents only a small and privileged part of society.

More significantly for this study perhaps, the museum's outreach projects such as Multaka, TAMAM and GV – GZ target groups that are rarely considered as museum audiences and that might not necessarily perceive museums as a place to visit or / and use. In accordance with the collections, these activities are especially focused on people with connections to the Middle East, but they do go beyond this.

Multaka has a double orientation aimed firstly towards those people that have recently arrived from Syria and Iraq in the wake of recent and ongoing conflicts in these regions, and secondly toward people with a family background in these regions and who are predominantly neither art historians nor archaeologists. Their participation takes place in two different ways: either as guides / interlocutors (Fig. 11), or as attendees / visitors. The team of Multaka guides comprises twenty people (in November 2019). At the beginning of the project, newcomers joining the tours were unorganised groups of individuals. Later, as a consequence of their changed life situation and residence status (refugees having becoming newcomers), attendees came as participants of language cafés or of German classes at language schools or other educational programmes. The participation of the latter became more organised and self-initiated. In response to very positive feedback, the circle of participants in this project was extended to general visitors without specific familial or cultural affiliations.





Figure 11: Multaka guides, ISL-SMB-PK

© Staatliche Museen Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst,  
photo: Milena Schlösser

TAMAM is mainly addressed to representatives of mosque communities, Islamic associations and youth organisations in Germany, especially in Berlin (in total until now 14 corporations have committed). Originally, the TAMAM team planned to collaborate with imams. However, since the cultural education and youth work are mainly carried out by volunteers (ca. 18-25 years old), the group of participants consists of other communities' members. Indirect beneficiaries and target groups are young Muslim people (ca. 16-24 years old) living in Germany as part of third and fourth generations and who have not previously been, or are otherwise rarely, involved in museums' educational programmes.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, GV – GZ targets young people (ca. 10-20 years old) from various neighbourhood youth clubs regardless of their cultural background. Very often, these neighbourhoods are characterised by diverse demographic compositions and social (political) problems. Additionally, in the context of needs assessment, besides the youth workers, this project also addressed, representatives from the Stadtteilmütter programme<sup>72</sup> and other self-organisations founded by migrants or their descendants since they or their families came from the corresponding regions and they could contribute their own particular expertise and perspectives on narratives.

71 TAMAM draws partly on the experience of the project “Extremismusprävention und Erschließung museumspädagogischer Zugänge für muslimische Multiplikatoren” (Prevention of extremism and the development of museum-educational approaches for influential communicators in Muslim communities) that was developed in cooperation with the Institute for Islamic Theology of the University of Osnabrück. Its duration was from October 2015 to September 2018. In contrast to TAMAM, this project was aimed at students and was offered as part of the Imam further education.

72 Stadtteilmütter (“Neighbourhood Mothers”) are women acting as cultural multipliers in families that have little access to cultural institutions.



A consideration of gender issues and gender balance is essential in all of these three projects. Multaka has, from the outset, aimed to ensure as equal a gender balance as possible. It is a central goal and a basic requirement for the implementation of this project. Furthermore, it includes gender-sensitive topics addressing notions on gender roles and representation traditions (e.g., in Islam and Christian cultures) and achievements of women (e.g., in the context of reconstruction referring to the experience in Germany after the Second World War). The attendees of TAMAM are mainly male. A gender quota was not set by the project, as the communities were to decide this on their own. Consequently, the participants were mostly men who were sent by their communities, although much of the educational work is performed by women. A possible explanation for this discrepancy could be that in official matters the communities' representatives are mostly men. Nevertheless, the gender roles and equal opportunities are one of the central issues discussed during this project. It includes, for instance, reflections about the definition of roles now and in the past, and their implications, as well as the conceptions of "female" and male" and their consequences. Besides this focus on gender (in)equalities, this project extends its considerations of vulnerability by addressing topics such as multiple discrimination and power asymmetries, and giving attention to the public and everyday life. GV – GZ endeavours to carry out the project with balanced groups that include not only gender but also ethnic and religious affiliation / feeling of belonging.

A consideration of diversity – and of the specificity of the needs of the groups, and also of individual persons involved – forms the basic element for all these three initiatives.

Due to the museum's focus, the projects are very often targeted at communities from the collections' regions of origin, the Middle East. As migrants and Muslims and, beyond this, as refugees, these communities are often marginalised (and even attacked) in many ways by the authorities and by wider society. As such, they are rarely conceived of as potential partners. One reason for this can be found in traditional attitudes towards immigration within German society and government. For a long time, Germany has not seen itself as a country of immigration. Labour migrants who came to the FRG from the 1950s onwards and to the GDR from the 1960s were seen as guests who would not stay in Germany permanently. This has resulted in large migrant communities, some of them now in their third and fourth generations, and who are still not perceived as, nor consider themselves to be part of German society. A further difficulty is posed by the organisational structures of certain Muslim communities, which, in comparison to churches and civic associations, are somewhat under-developed in Germany. Mosque communities work under difficult conditions, often in poor facilities and with very limited financial resources. Consequently, volunteering is a very important pillar of their community work. However, cultural education has to date not been the highest priority of their social work since the communities have to cope with serious problems that complicate their everyday life.

Recent newcomers are yet more vulnerable because of their recent, often traumatic experiences of conflict, war and escape, and an undesired separation from their homeland, and very often from their families and friends. Additionally, they now face having to live with problematic or uncertain residence status, in a foreign society that itself struggles with migration.



#### **4.3.6. INVOLVEMENT / PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES**

The involvement activities taking place at the ISL in the educational sector are realised by two different agents. On the one hand, there is the offer provided by the Education Department of the SPK and that includes dialogical guided tours, workshops, discussions, talks, lectures and further events. They are strongly influenced by art historical approaches and mainly focussed on the transmission of content but also on the experience of forms, designs and colours. While all these actions use the collections as starting points for dialogues and presentations, the workshops reach a higher degree of interaction around cultural assets and among participants. For instance, in workshops provided for school groups, participating children can intensively deal with the material, technical and iconographical characteristics of the displayed objects, and get the opportunity to (re-)use their impressions and experiences by means of their own creations. Here, the establishment of the MuseumLab has been very helpful since the children are also able to present their outcomes. In doing so, the Education Department and the ISL have shown a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness. Such a presentation had not originally been planned, but due to the wishes of the participating children, the museum and department arranged this opportunity for their creations to be displayed and invited parents to discover more about what their children had been doing in the museum activities.

On the other hand, the museum itself initiates a number of further offers for individuals and targeting groups who not sufficiently catered for by the educational programme. These offers are characterised by a rich spectrum of interactions and more intensive exchanges. Through this engagement, the museum tries to do justice to social diversity, to meet various needs, and to enhance interaction and communication at different levels and in different ways. Participatory approaches are obligatory for all educational projects conducted by the ISL.

Multaka is focussed in particular on (inter-)cultural dialogue and exchange, by means of specific exhibition tours for refugees / newcomers guided by members of Muslim and Arabic communities, held in their mother tongues. This approach was adopted in the specific context of refugee migration around 2015. Due to the common content and the ISL's situation neighbouring other museums, it was developed and is realised in cooperation with the Bode-Museum, where Byzantine art is held, the Vorderasiatisches Museum (Ancient Near East Museum) dealing with the pre-Islamic history and art in Southwest Asia from the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE until the Islamic expansions (both SMB-PK) and the Deutsches Historisches Museum (German Historical Museum) (Fig. 12). The museum wanted to provide a space where newcomers could meet and share their experiences with regard to their life both before and during the conflicts, as well as to reflect on the future of their home region. It was based on the premise that such an offer might in some way make the newcomers' arrival and settlement in a foreign region more bearable, as well as to serve as a "bridge" in giving them the opportunity to exchange views on familiar issues, to learn how much their culture and cultural assets are valued in Germany and how there are diverse histories of (inter)cultural exchange between the different Islamic regions and also with Germany. Furthermore, participants also learn about experiences of war and reconstruction within Germany. The museum collections are therefore used as the starting points for such conversations.



Figure 12: Participants of a guided tour of the project “Multaka” in the Museum für Byzantinischen Kunst and Skulpturensammlung (Bodemuseum, SMB-PK)

© Staatliche Museen Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst,  
photo: Milena Schlösser

Originally conducted in their own language, in Arabic, the tours have also been offered in German and English since August 2018, and thus further support intercultural exchange and broaden the groups of attendees. This change also serves the further linguistic integration of newcomers.

Since the guides are very often not professionals, they provide a less “art historical” approach to the museum and the artefacts on display. Additionally, they try out a new, more dialogical form of guided tours where the focus is less on the transmission of information and historical facts, but rather on an interchange between participant-visitors and the guides. In order to reduce financial disparity between the Multaka guides and the regular guides, their salary is normally oriented towards the usual guide wage. This posed something of a challenge for the project, as some of the guides do not have a clear residency status, they are not allowed to have income. Therefore, the museum and its association Freunde des Museum für Islamische Kunst declared their tours as a volunteer activity (Ehrenamt). This then enabled the guides to receive expense allowances: in order to make this possible, newcomers with uncertain residence status had to become members of the museum’s association.

In 2016, Multaka led workshops around topics, like textile work, or the representation of women in Islam and Christianity that also included guided tours through exhibitions.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, since 2016, the project has provided a series of creative and artistic workshops in cooperation with the association Berlin Glas e.V. This format serves in particular for further encounters and exchanges of experiences and ideas. In such ways, the Multaka team seeks to further diversify its original offer of providing dialogical guided tours.

73 ISL: Multaka, workshops, URL: <https://multaka.de/galerie/>, accessed spring 2020.

The project communicates via various channels. Being aware of diverse communication habits, at the outset the project team used Facebook to establish contact with newcomers. In contrast, in order to address other groups (the more general and wider European audience), Twitter was considered to be the better medium. Due to more flexible and increased digital possibilities, the team has now broadened its web presence using its own website (in German, English, and Arabic), social media channels such as YouTube and Instagram, and a digital newsletter to provide information about ongoing and special events. In such ways, the project can more widely disseminate information about experiences and interactions with diverse audiences, and the broader impact of such interactions.<sup>74</sup>

Within the framework of TAMAM, specific educational lesson units and learning materials, as well as the analogue and digital presentation of the project, were jointly discussed and developed with representatives of mosque communities in order to support their ongoing cultural and youth work (Fig. 12). These were collaboratively implemented in workshops that covered the entire production process (in terms of both content and concept). The project started with a needs assessment to identify the requirements of each community and to learn about the specific structures and framework conditions of their work. In this way, the current needs of the specific situations of Muslim communities in Germany could be carefully considered. Objects from the museum's collections were jointly chosen to be used as starting points to address issues such as connecting and connected worlds, religious diversity, and shared heritages and equality. Representatives were then entrusted with tasks, in accordance with the needs of the participants and of the project, and also with the abilities of the participants. Structurally, the project was open to further involvement of participants and the budgeting allowed for an extension of the project team. Thus, some of the people involved could be incorporated as project staff.



Figure 12: TAMAM workshop

© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst,  
photo: Alexander Papadopoulos

The first phase of the project lasted 36 months (from January 2016 until December 2018). In autumn 2019 the project's second phase was approved.

74 ISL: Multaka, website, URL: <https://multaka.de/>; Facebook, URL: <https://www.facebook.com/MultakaTreffpunktMuseum>; Twitter, @Multaka\_Berlin; Instagram, URL: <https://www.instagram.com/multakatreffpunkt/>; YouTube, URL: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UcxcdE\\_sdp9HCh9Anf8Ehe-A](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UcxcdE_sdp9HCh9Anf8Ehe-A), all accessed winter 2019 / 2020.

This project uses diverse media to transmit its procedures and outcomes. On its own website it provides the jointly developed learning materials as free to use by anyone interested in intercultural education (Fig. 13). As the project was specifically aimed at volunteers involved in the social and cultural work of mosque communities, it also supplies a pedagogical toolkit on the website. This is specifically in order to support the communities not only with educational content but also with appropriate pedagogical methods. Furthermore, it runs a blog on this page to provide further information and project news updates. In addition, the project communicates with a wider public via Facebook and Instagram: both of these platforms offer further opportunities for exchanges to take place. At the end of the first phase, the project also developed the TAMAM app to be used within the museum exhibition. This app provides the visitor with an augmented reality experience with 16 selected objects / artefacts that are also used and discussed in the learning materials developed for the project. In addition, the app provides further information about these cultural assets. Access to this data is not restricted to the museum premises alone, as the app can also be used at home, in the mosque facilities or elsewhere.<sup>75</sup>

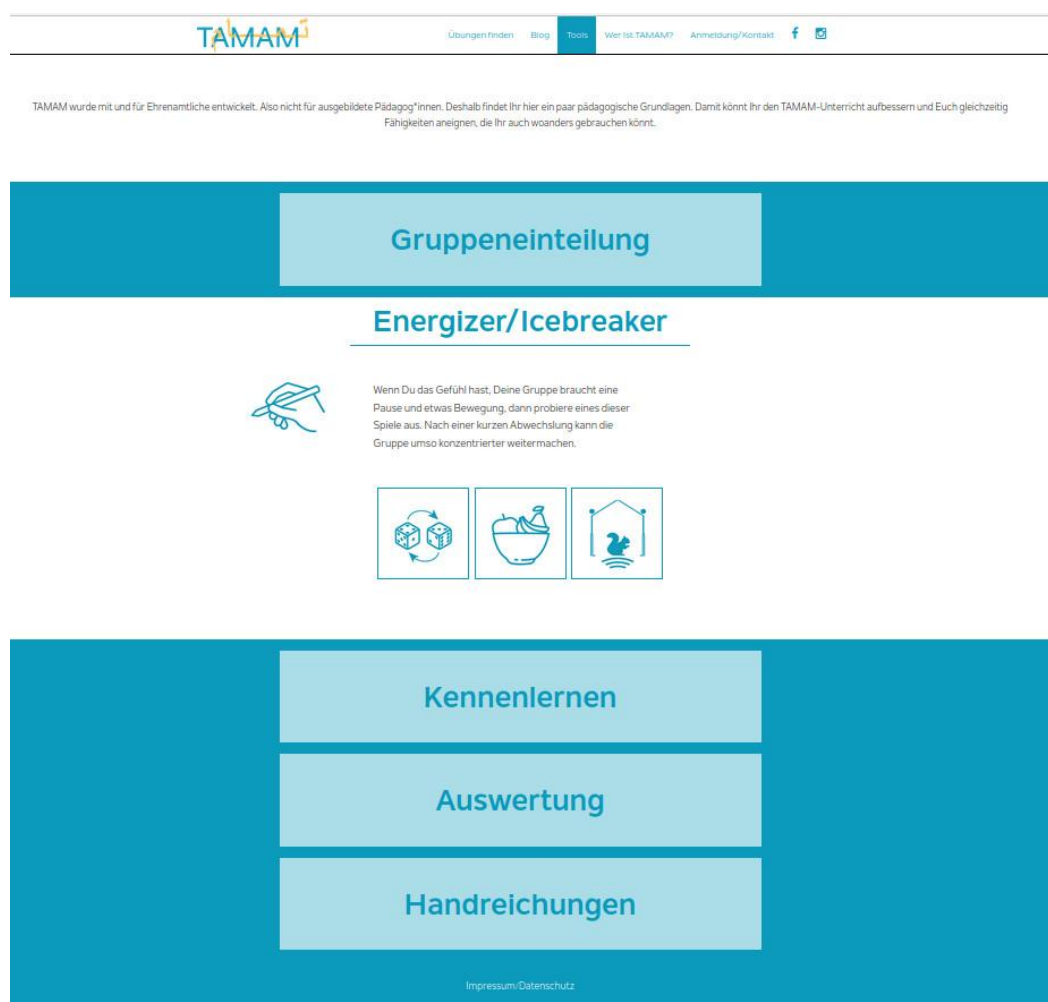


Figure 13: TAMAM, tools<sup>76</sup>

75 ISL: TAMAM, website, URL: <https://tamam-projekt.de/>; Facebook, URL: <https://www.facebook.com/TamamProjekt/>; Instagram, URL: [https://www.instagram.com/tamam\\_projekt/](https://www.instagram.com/tamam_projekt/); blog, URL: <https://tamam-projekt.de/blog/>; App, URL: <https://apps.apple.com/de/app/tamam/id1444739233>, [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=museum.smb.tamam.refrakt&hl=en\\_US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=museum.smb.tamam.refrakt&hl=en_US), all accessed winter 2019 /2020.

76 ISL: TAMAM, tools, URL: <http://tamam-projekt.de/tools/>, accessed summer 2020.

The project GV-GZ, “Gemeinsame Vergangenheit – Gemeinsame Zukunft” (Shared Past – Shared Future) is a third outreach project offered by the museum. This ran for 27 months (from October 2017 to December 2019). As a pilot project that started by undertaking a needs assessment in diverse social institutions (especially in open youth work in diverse Berlin neighbourhoods), it was concerned by what offers museums could develop that would contribute to current debates on migration, identity and transculturality. In addition, groups such as Stadtteilmütter and other migrant self-organisations were invited to the museum for guided tours and talks about the displayed sites / cultures as well as about potential improvements for their presentation.

The workshops with young people that followed were realised in collaboration with both museum and theatre educators. There, the participants were encouraged to reflect upon and talk about the history and significance of intercultural exchange and identity development through the means of different strands (such as photography, videography or drama) and using the museum collections as an inspiration. This gave the young people the opportunity to take ownership of interpretation of the collections through a personal approach. Working with and around cultural assets enabled them to develop diverse, new and individual narratives and attitudes. The workshops were originally intended to take place both in the youth clubs and in the museum itself, but in order to reduce the inhibition threshold, project staff more often went out into the neighbourhoods (Fig. 14). In addition, the project team offered special tours through the exhibition that were realised by an external guide and adapted to the particular purposes and needs of the project (concerning topics and communication). The outcome of the workshops was presented in November 2019 through a temporary exhibition in the MuseumLab. It was also published in a brochure. In doing this, the organisers wanted to make migration - and its implications - more visible to a wider public.



Figure 14: Tape Art in the neighbourhood

© Staatliche Museen Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst,  
photo: Martina Kopp

However, in terms of social media communication, in contrast to the other two projects, GV – GZ only uses Facebook to communicate its messages, events, project outcomes, and information about partner projects and other projects of interest dealing with intercultural experiences, identity and migration.<sup>77</sup>

77 ISL: GV – GZ, Facebook, URL:

<https://www.facebook.com/Geimeinsame.Vergangenheit.Gemeinsame.Zukunft/>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020.



In winter 2019 / 2020, this project started a new phase. Based on experiences gained during throughout the course of the pilot phase and also of TAMAM, the museum sought to further develop its outreach programme. In this larger-scale project, with the name “(The big) Gemeinsame Vergangenheit – Gemeinsame Zukunft,” the projects presented are united in order to enhance networking and communication between them as well as to augment mutual support and synergies between diverse projects sharing similar conceptual foundations and experiences. A larger staffing contingent would be helpful in further expanding this outreach offer.

#### **4.3.6A ACCESS – ENGAGEMENT – PARTICIPATION**

In contrast to the afore-mentioned outreach projects, the current exhibition, which is aimed at museum visitors, takes a different approach. There, both the museography itself and the explanatory texts have been revised (in terms of comprehensibility) in order to convey relevant information and the museum’s message to audiences in a generally understandable, appealing and easily accessible manner.

The interview with the interpretation curator Dr. John Paul Sumner deserves special attention here, as it provides profound reflections on the topic of participation on the one hand, and on the other, it brings in a comparative perspective (Sumner has previously worked in Glasgow). His statements regarding the use of participatory practices in the permanent exhibition in ISL, and the definition and scope of these, will be summarised here in an additional subsection that will enrich the ongoing discussion on citizen engagement and provide an international view.

Being an interpretation curator, Sumner’s work concerns all communication in the exhibition between the museum and the visitors which is performed via labels, graphic panels, audio guides, digital interaction, guided tours, exhibition design, etc. More specifically, he aims to improve the comprehensibility of the exhibition texts and graphics, coaching the curators with regard to their message and its presentation, and diversifying the types of information (including those beyond traditional art historian approaches).

The goal of Sumner’s communication enhancement is to develop new kinds of access to the exhibitions, objects and the museum itself in order to do justice to more diverse audiences (beyond art historians and “professional” visitors) and to improve the transmission of the museum’s message to a much broader audience. In terms of his work, he extracts three key elements: “access(-ibility),” “engagement” and “participation.” In combination, these three elements contribute to the overall “interpretation” of the museum. By the term “accessibility,” Sumner means the availability and comprehensibility of the content for a wider audience, including, in particular, for non-experts and non-museum professionals, especially children, families, and tourists under special consideration of their particular needs. This includes texts being be more visitor orientated / friendly and understandable. For example, information provided should not be limited to regional histories and cultures. Rather, the museum and its work, including research findings related to material, social and historical context, iconography, etc., should also be of concern. If the interpretation is successful, this scientific content can be used to illustrate relevant concepts or thought provoking and universal ideas. So, a clear communication of historical information builds towards a message that is universally familiar and relevant to a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience in Berlin. This diversity of information should be presented with all its multiple layers and complexity, alongside the aims and purposes of the museum.





According to Sumner, this type of communication forms the prerequisite for engagement and participation since it offers various potential starting points for visitors to make their own reflections. He understands “engagement” as an emotional reaction of the visitors to the contents / objects / exhibition shown and an opportunity for visitors to develop an interest and a point of view with regard to the issues / contents in question, as well as to the institution itself. Sumner states that “participation” has different meanings for different people. For some curators, “participation” means that visitors can physically interact with the exhibitions, for example in hands-on sessions or multimedia interactions; for other curators, “participation” means that visitors can contribute comments and opinion, although most visitors struggle to make insightful comments when the scientific content is distanced from their everyday lives. On another level, “participation” can also mean that the museum shifts its scope of reference into fields that are of concern and relevance to the majority of visitors. For Sumner, a first step to participation is to develop the intellectual and emotional involvement of the visitor in the concept of the museum. Here, Sumner sees important elements and abilities for democratic discussion and action.

Such modes and methods of communication do not follow the traditional path of presenting and transmitting knowledge. Rather, the museum should support the visitors to feel and to react. The curator seeks that the visit to the institution will provoke an inner emotional and intellectual change in the visitors as well as providing an understanding of the museum’s message and the complexity of the museum’s work.

Museums in the United Kingdom have undergone huge changes in the past twenty years. They have cast off many of their accumulated self-referential and self-responsive perspectives and have been forced to re-think their role in society. In many cases they have gone back to their original 19<sup>th</sup> century functions as forums for public discovery. This conversation is only now happening in Germany. Sumner observes that there is currently an awareness in German museums that museums around the world have already gone through and that German museums are going through a process of change. At the same time, the ‘high-culture’ exclusivity of traditional German museums appears to be genuinely valued, certainly within much of the museum community and this seems to go unchallenged by much of the German political society. This conflict leads to a confusion, or is maybe provoking a conversation, about what the role of museums in German society is. The museums are consciously seeking to modernise, and the presence of Sumner and those like him is evidence of this. At the same time, these institutions feel an obligation to break down barriers to exclusivity rather than a strong desire to do so.

In contrast, Sumner underlines that in the United Kingdom museums are also used for personal social events, due to the free of charge access to the museums. A further fundamental difference is that the starting point for the development of any museum project is a social purpose / impact which is crucial for the funding. Consequently, this precondition puts the museums in the UK under pressure concerning their activities. Contrary to this, in Germany, social purposes are still a secondary consideration. Furthermore, because of the strong feedback culture in the UK, the museums receive additional pressure from the visitors themselves.

#### **4.3.7 INTERIM EVALUATION: POTENTIALS AND RISKS**

At the ISL, society is the focus of interest. Its consideration and involvement are the starting points for all educational initiatives that the ISL is developing.



The ISL's outreach projects are aimed towards collaboration and co-creation (learning materials, project presentation: TAMAM; workshop, exhibition: GV – GZ, guided tours, workshops: Multaka). All these strands are participatory in the sense that the people taking part in events are directly interacting with the collections of the ISL and its exhibition, and the project staff are aiming for particular objectives. One could perhaps say that Multaka goes one step further. Following Simon (2010), the guided tours could be described as hosted events because the guides are considerably independent in the “performance” of their tours, but are still using the museum's collections and premises.

The museum is the initiator of all the activities. It is due to the strong commitment of the directorate and the intrinsic and practical support from the museum's association that the implementation of such activities is possible. The museum provides the space (exhibition and MuseumLab) and designs the framework, including the various approaches, formats and objectives of projects. Furthermore, the museum directorate applies for funding for such schemes.

People attend voluntarily and are free in their decisions as to how they attend, interact, contribute and collaborate; problematic issues, procedures and attitudes can be discussed jointly. Nevertheless, the participants themselves do not have a comprehensive agency to discuss the framework conditions since their participation started after the application phase.

From the descriptions given by project managers, it may be concluded that the relationship between project staff and participants is very respectful, interested and sensitive. Project teams were concerned with becoming aware of participants' living and working conditions and for activities to correspond to their specific needs. As far as participants are concerned, an interest in the museum and its work can be assumed. For this reason, for example, TAMAM developed a thematic focus, which is exclusively dedicated to the topic of the museum. Both parties can be seen to pursue a common goal by seeking to improve and extend the work of organisations and other corporations, and to provide opportunities for exchange. This was particularly beneficial for the people and organisations involved.

At the next level, however, the current relationship between museum and participants is more likely to be described perhaps as host and guests. The projects mainly take place inside the premises of the museum, but the interactions and their outcomes are realised mostly within the projects and hardly ever influence the regular events (apart from the MuseumLab). As the participants' interactions are mainly limited to those with the project staff, exchanges with the regular museum staff are at the moment very infrequent or even almost inexistent. However, future initiatives indicate a trend towards greater institutionalisation.

The case of the Multaka guides is a special one as they are acting almost as freelancers and volunteering guides respectively, having interaction mainly with the visitors, but also with the project staff, and due to the training programme, with the team of the Department of Education and Visitors Service from SMB-PK. However, their relationship with the museum seems rather like a mixed form between employee and volunteer.

The revision of communication in the exhibition can be described as an improvement of accessibility to the museum and its exhibitions initiated by the museum directorate. This activity incorporates some participatory techniques, and might be considered as a first step toward the development of more comprehensive interaction.

The offers provided by the central Department of Education and Visitor Services have to be considered separately. These include a diverse spectrum of education and outreach activities around the cultural assets. The joint interaction is here somehow less foregrounded. Rather, the pedagogical transmission of content and competency is important. Regarding these offers, a distinction has to be made between the permanent offers and the additional temporary projects. Cooperation projects with schools, for example, belong to the temporary offers. The experience gained in these initiatives will be incorporated into the permanent services of SMB-PK. However, the activities of the Education Department, e.g. guided tours, workshops, discussions etc., cannot be described as participatory since the intensity of mutual exchange and its impact seems very low. They are interactive, but the responsiveness of such schemes remains to be seen e.g. how they are concern children's needs, the requirements of the curriculum, if there are priorities, which priorities are set etc. However, in the case of the spontaneous exhibition, the department and the museum have demonstrated their ability to respond to the wishes of the participants. However, all these activities are very limited in duration, in their involvement of the groups (in terms of attendance and, in the case of the workshop, of the creative co-work) and in their impact on the museum and its work. As such, the relationships emerging between the participants and the museum have to be characterised as very temporary and more as 'host' and 'guest' relationships.

**Positive effects:**

- For participants

The most important value of these activities is that participants have the opportunity to express their own perspectives and opinions, to exchange and discuss these (Fig. 15) and also to share them with a more extended public (if they want) including their relatives and their further social surroundings. Such interaction enables them to connect their ideas within new circumstances with other perspectives and to develop these even further. Such positive effects can be recognised in the ISL-projects as well as in the school programmes.



Figure 15: TAMAM workshop

© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, TAMAM

Due to their complex nature, the artefacts themselves can be helpful. They allow reflection and discussion on a variety of issues (production / use, technology / material, representation / aesthetics, symbolism, object history, networks of relationships, etc.). Through interactive encounters around cultural assets, all participants (project teams, attendees and guides) can gain new perspectives in regard to cultural heritage and their significance (for the past, present and future), to history (in



particular to that of the Middle East and its relationship with Europe, Germany / German Empire), to intercultural exchanges and relationships, and to current issues concerning day-to-day life experiences (and in the case of people with migratory backgrounds including severe experiences of loss, war and escape). Through this kind of dialogue around cultural assets, considering the past and the present, a consciousness of the value of cultural issues for societies and of historical and current international interrelations and interdependences can begin to grow. The projects are extremely valuable since they underline the importance of intercultural contact and exchange and, especially, the achievements of Islamic cultures and their contributions to cultural history.

Additionally, a dialogical exploration around cultural assets can lead to experiences of as yet unknown ambiguities and complexities. The different interactions between participants with objects and also between themselves (including the Multaka guides), can foster such exchanges and enhance the development of social and cultural competences, and of acceptance and tolerance toward new ideas and heterogeneity. This will influence further reflections on their own experiences and the environment, and reconsiderations regarding attitudes and agencies.

The museum hopes that Muslim visitors will witness the high level of appreciation for Islamic cultures displayed as a part of the great treasures of the art and culture history held in Berlin (which is mainly focussed on European art history). On the other hand, using the collections as the basis for exchange and interaction, Muslim people can feel more comfortable as the starting point is familiar to them. Furthermore, the objects form links between their (cultural) homeland and their current place of residence. Dealing with the artefacts thus enables new approaches to the past, both to regional and national history and to participants' own individual and personal history. By incorporating their own experiences and bearing witness to them in such interactions, these reflections can further lead those participants involved to think about the future on both an individual and a societal levels, here in Germany, if they stay and become part of the German society, or in their homeland regions in the Middle East.

For non-Muslim beneficiaries, working with assets from foreign cultures allows them to gain new perspectives on their own and other identities and cultures, on migration and on intercultural relationships. Furthermore, an exchange with Muslim participants and their personal points of view enables a particular (emotional) access to these people and their cultures (and their manifestations) which can further enhance a mutual understanding and acceptance.

In addition, especially in the case of Multaka, the guides benefit from their participation in this project in several ways that go beyond their practical engagement and emotional and intellectual enrichment. First, they receive specific training, mostly didactic. Second, at the end of their commitment, they can receive a certificate, which can be useful for their future careers.

#### - In / for museum / staff

The diversity of the activities helps the museum's projects (and also the Education Department) to appeal to diverse societal groups. In addition, the consideration of people with diverse backgrounds as possible target groups and as further agents interacting in and with the museum and its exhibition, also leads to the development of further strands and methods which can be incorporated into, and adapted for, the general educational work of the ISL (as its inclusion is planned for the future permanent exhibitions) and in other SMB-PK institutions.



In addition, the expertise of non-professional and less regular audiences can also be used as tools for enhancement, e.g., concerning simple and accessible language and design, topic setting etc. Here, the interaction with Muslim communities is of great value, since only this direct contact can diversify the knowledge (that the museum staff could hardly otherwise access). Furthermore, such interaction provides competencies that support museum communication going beyond traditional interactions with experienced visitors and professionals. The information, outcomes and experiences developed over the course of the projects can be used in other working areas in the museum since these insights can enlarge traditional German / European procedures in museums and further encourage the development of different narratives (including more perspectives on the Middle East).

Even if these initiatives are often concentrated on a specific group, they enable the museum to reach out to further groups, especially if the social surroundings of the participants and its (even partial) inclusion are considered in the planning. Here, families can play an important role, as intergenerational exchange can take place. In reaching out in these ways, the museum can attract even more (and more diverse) addressees. However, these examples have shown that repeated efforts and invitations are needed on the part of the museum to reach out to those communities in particular that are otherwise rarely engaged with museums.

The projects often start with needs assessments. In this way staff can become aware of the current situations of potential participants as well as of the general public and their different needs, interests and expectations. On this basis, project teams can update their work as regards current topics and perspectives and include meaningful issues in their own reflections. Thus, project staff can become relevant and sensitive community interlocutors.

Such projects often include creative elements (for instance, glass, pottery and weaving workshops) using the museum's collections and other items as inspiration. This highly multi-layered approach (intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and sensual etc.) dealing with culture and cultural heritage enables complex reflections and further access to all elements and implications involved (for instance, objects, narratives and museums; personal situation, background, interests, and interpretations). In such ways, the museum collections remain a vivid part of current cultural considerations and negotiations.

The museum provides the MuseumLab inside its permanent exhibition (close to a very prominent artefact, the Mschatta-façade) for meetings, discussions and workshops, and also for the presentation of the results of the outreach projects. This physical presence and visibility can help to integrate these collaborative initiatives and the current issues that they are dealing with into the general museum work in both a physical and an intellectual way.

The projects use diverse digital channels to disseminate information on their courses and their outcomes. The ISL projects were able to develop their own communication strategy (concerning content and appropriate media). Thus, they could transmit their specific messages more purposefully both to their particular target groups (and beyond) and in correspondence with their specific objectives.<sup>78</sup>

78 It should be noted that besides Facebook, digital communication is generally realised by the small central Communication Department of SMB-PK that is not directly involved with activity. In contrast, Facebook is used by each museum and is maintained (if at all) by the trainees.



By means of these projects, the museum is able to establish a wide and diverse network of partners, such as youth clubs, mosque communities, Muslim associations, self-organisations (e.g. Stadtteilmütter), universities and other cultural, educational and social stakeholders. With the help of such projects, the museum can present itself as a reliable interlocutor and a very engaged partner in the development of projects that seek to face societal challenges.

With these activities, the museum can offer itself as a place of meeting and exchange, while at the same time underlining the importance of its historic-cultural collections as a starting point for reflections on contemporary issues and the benefits of dealing with these.

- For society / communities

The museum is undertaking various initiatives with diverse approaches, helping to do justice to social diversity. These activities enable it to respond to the diverse needs of varied communities and to enhance its interaction and communication with the public on different levels and in diverse ways. Consequently, a broad range of societal groups feels addressed and appealed to, and the exchanges become cross-sector interactions.

As these outreach projects and activities aim more to encourage encounters and exchanges, and are less concerned with the transmission of specific content, they can become examples for diverse educational programmes focussing on playful engagement with diverse cultures and histories, and joint interactions and processes - not just in museums, but also in schools and other social and cultural establishments.

In addition, such initiatives foster, extend and diversify the general work of the communities addressed (organised in associations, mosque communities, youth clubs, language schools / cafés; and unorganised: refugees / newcomers) in terms of content and form that exceed their general possibilities. This can be a useful support for these corporations since such external additional offers do not require investment of their own resources (personnel / money).

The outreach projects (and workshops especially with schools and kindergartens) can also help to reduce more general inhibition thresholds toward museums that may perhaps be caused by inexperience of unfamiliar places and situations, or connected with more formal obligations. In addition, they also offer the opportunity to involve people indirectly, in particular by considering the social environment of the participants. Especially in the context of the activities with children and teens, the positive and important impact of the consideration of their families became evident. Here, the integration of these activities into regular museum work, in forms of exhibitions, for instance, increased the possibility that relatives wish to visit the museum in order to get know and appreciate the work of their children. At the same time, they could also become more aware about the museum, and its collections, messages and atmosphere. By such means, the museum can start to change the widespread opinion that museums are still elitist arts centres.

Furthermore, these initiatives enable discussions to take place not only within the museum walls, but also in familiar surroundings. All people involved in these projects, newcomers, children and teens, social workers, Stadtteilmütter, members of mosque communities, etc. and even audiences, can become multipliers and disseminators in their own environments.



Thus, these activities and discourses disseminate further into the neighbourhoods. Using their newly gained knowledge, abilities and contacts, multipliers can extend these exchanges and discussions on intercultural exchange and identity, perhaps even taking the museum and its collections as an additional (third) room for interactions or perhaps finding other starting and meeting points.

This closer networking of key stakeholders from diverse societal and cultural fields not only enables the development of joint activities but also broader awareness and understanding across and within the network. Building on this, a sense of mutual responsibility can develop, which provides greater backing and support for those involved.

The projects can also be adopted in further contexts. Museum collections are a suitable starting point, but do not have to be a prerequisite. Indeed, Multaka has to date already served as an example for the development of 'sister' schemes in other countries (Italy, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom). The establishment of an international network of diverse stakeholders is considered in order to enhance further exchanges, mutual support and further development.

The involvement of Muslim citizens and newcomers in museum activities is of great importance, as these are still often seen in that context as marginalised societal groups. Moreover, due to the ongoing discussions on Islam in Germany, it is important to shift considerations *about* these groups to reflection and exchange *with* them. With the help of these museum outreach projects, Muslim people can feel more strongly recognised, taken seriously and accepted. Through these activities that are often characterised by intercultural exchange, all participants can enter into new kinds of dialogue with other societal groups. The case of the Multaka guides is especially interesting here as they provide the broader public with a more personal and less professionalised "art historical" approach to the museum and artefacts on display in the collection. In such a way, the encounters during these tours enable more direct and emotional reaction, not just with the guides, and with their experiences and backgrounds, but also with the museum.

In such ways, ISL's outreach activities are very important, especially at a time when living together is increasingly shaped by experiences of heterogeneity and when society as a whole must find a path to common good and cohesion. By having these projects and their events in its programme, the institution makes such actions and discourses visible and accessible to wider audiences. In turn, the general public gain new insights into current debates and are stimulated into further reflection. In addition, they can become aware of the possibilities and opportunities of interaction fostering exchanges.

In the case of ISL, the MuseumLab that emerged from the needs of the different projects has become a highly participatory element of the museum (in terms of its benefit to visitors). It helps make audiences aware of their activities, discussions and outcomes. Moreover, compared with the other museum spaces, the lab has great potential to encourage regular visitors to become more engaged and involved as well. It could become a place for comments and discussions of ideas, where their own topics could be suggested and meetings with museum staff could be held (for instance, with curators, conservators, and guards, etc.).



**Problems / limits:**

- For participants

Project teams acknowledge the financial disparity between project staff and participants as a negative aspect. In the case of Multaka, this inequality has been further exacerbated by legislation on the residency status of migrants. Even seemingly minor obstacles can make it difficult for people to participate and have an equal exchange with the museum (this might, for example, include getting to know the museum and its work on site). For instance, in the case of GV – GZ, a financial problem arose from transport costs.

Sometimes, participants (and people indirectly involved) feel a considerable inhibition towards visiting museums. This became evident in the case of GV – GZ and also in the school workshops as the museum is sometimes perceived as an unusual place for young people and many families, a place that has had little to do with their daily life, and is associated with obligatory and uninteresting visits (for instance, with the school).

Funding frameworks also influence participants. Since these projects are often funded by a third party, they respond to a set duration and fixed objectives. The possibilities, abilities, wishes and needs of the people involved can enter into conflict with these pre-determined requirements and also with the logic of project processes - in the short and the long term - since predetermined objectives and situations can hinder, for instance, more open-ended involvement and the establishment of reliable relationships.

- In / for museum / staff

Involvement and engagement seem at the moment not quite an integral part of the museum and its work. Rather, they give the impression that they are extra issues – although it must be noted that communities and societies are at the forefront of museum directorate’s considerations, and projects with participatory approaches and interactions with non-museum- / -science-professional citizens are seen as useful instruments that contribute to current debates. This is evident in the fact that the ISL has no integrated participatory / collaborative concept and no regular budget for such initiatives.

Their additionality is also discernible and perceptible in other areas:

Concerning the staffing especially, the situation is complex and cumbersome. These projects are facilitated neither by the education staff (SMB-PK) nor by the regular ISL team, but by project teams that are especially recruited. This complexity complicates internal communication and interaction. Thus, contact and exchanges between the projects and the regular education team are relatively sparse. Moreover, the same can be said about exchanges between the various project staff and the museum’s regular employees. This lack of exchange can be partially explained by the fact that the offices are located in different premises. In addition, both parties point to a lack of time for such exchanges. The negative effects of additionality are evident here in another way. Perceived as not belonging to the museum’s regular staff (and regular work), these employees and their engagement cannot form an integral part of the museum; consequently, mutual exchange, awareness and, therefore, support is weakened.





The MuseumLab also reflects this somewhat incohesive situation. While it is positive to recognise that this space exists and is adjacent to the permanent exhibition, it should also be noted that participatory, experimental activities are still currently spatially separated from the exhibition and thus cannot be perceived as an integral part of the museum's work (which might be different in the future display).

There is a similar situation concerning areas of international collaboration that are an important feature of the research sector (including documentation on sites in Middle East, support of museum work, archaeological excavation and research). While such findings are displayed in the exhibition, this information does not currently appear in an integrated manner, but rather as additional sections marking them out as different to the "regular" content. Visitors therefore do not perceive these data as an integral part of the museum narrative and thus perhaps as less important.

In summary, the inclusion of participatory and collaborative activities into the regular museum work is perceived as problematic. Traditional museum curators are part of a consensus that value the ideal that museum displays should present the highest received scientific data and descriptions. Other types of information are often considered to be unscientific. Furthermore, there is a lack of confidence in presenting ideas and content that does not originate from the scientific community and their peers. This hinders participative processes because the spectrum of discussion, in which there can be debate or input, is very narrow and almost exclusively open to those others in the scientific community. Indeed, there is an ostensible gap between the exhibition showing the museum's main narratives that contains the presentation of the sequences of dynasties with a very strong art historian approach, and projects that try to build bridges between past and present, between objects and stories, and between people and their daily life experiences. Still, by representing "high" culture, the museum display gives more weight to the (traditional) museum's and art historian view, rather than to cultural history (this is perhaps due to the existing collections). However, an important reason is seen in the fact that exhibition authority and decision making on stories, content and messages is predominantly made within the circle of art historians. The exhibition content is presented from the art historian's perspective, with assistance and input from other expertise. If a visitor fully wishes to 'participate' in the museum, they too must take the perspective of an art historian. Expertise (especially non-academic) from other areas and a diversification of information, reflecting the diversity of cultures and societies which would contain more than "high" culture items / issues is genuinely valued in the processes of the museum but would be seen as less important to be made visible in the exhibitions. This leads to a narrow spectrum of expression in the exhibitions.

The labels and texts in the exhibition were characterised as the core of the museum communication reflecting its attitudes and values. The conflict can be found here as art history professionals feel a strong duty to reflect and present the strong academic credentials of the museum and have an enthusiasm for sharing their knowledge. However, there is a reluctance to concede that the academic integrity of the museum has a wider scope than the consensus / received historical narrative. Although the topics dealt with in the display, such as conflicts, living together of different groups, tolerance, etc., are of current relevance, their communication rarely enables the visitors to relate their own experiences to the narratives / objects on display and to draw their own conclusions.



The traditional art historical approach is still the predominant focus. This might be the reason why the interactions and the involvement of non-professionals, and the poly-dimensional and multi-perspective exchanges achieved over the course of the outreach initiatives (and also during the school programmes) have so far not influenced the permanent exhibitions and the other working practices of the ISL (and other SMB museums). Moreover, the knowledge and experience gained have not yet been integrated into the museum's repository (remaining only as project's outcome). Furthermore, the projects' time limits and concomitant situation of employment instability and insecurity for project staff are problematic for participatory work, both in the shorter and longer term. Staff are only employed for the project; often they do not even know how long they will be engaged, or if their contracts might be prolonged thanks to a further project application. Such uncertainty among these practitioners has a strong influence on the degree of their commitment. Consequently, there is a very high possibility of rapid staff turnover. It can be noted that in the context of community work, such turnovers jeopardise the sustainability of participatory activities, as the development and maintenance of networking and trust building are closely linked to the original contact person. Additionally, these initiatives are usually carried out by a very small number of staff very often employed on part-time contracts. Therefore, activities are consequently limited in scope and intensity. This is of special concern, as building trust and relationships, the indispensable basis of all collaborative activity, requires a great deal of time and effort to sustain.

Of great influence on the realisation of participatory activities is the dependence on the commitment and reliability of participants and this does not always correspond to the logic of the project processes. For example, in the case of GV – GZ, this became an important issue because participants are “freely” involved in youth work. In this context, teens normally do not have to keep timetables and have no attendance obligations. Therefore, inconsistencies in participation can occur that can affect the rhythm of the entire project: in cultural institutions this can become a major risk because of tightly scheduled publication and exhibition opening dates or regarding the fulfilment of project grant application terms.

A difficulty for the implementation of successful community work lies further in the fact that the activities are third party funded (by ministries, senate and private foundations). Therefore, their budgeting corresponds rather to set funding periods than to the current needs of the community and/or the museum and often depends on the current political situation. This set scheduling hinders continuous work and the establishment and maintenance of reliable contacts. Furthermore, the financial framework is often too tight and inflexible to face unexpected or even basic but initially unconsidered issues (for instance, transport costs). In addition, the framework of the supporting programmes can have strong influence on the design of the projects and the setting of the objectives. That is why it is in principle almost impossible to characterise participatory activity in this framework (in institutions and third party funded) as open-ended engagement.

The running of the projects is highly influenced by the structures of the SPK foundation. The administration of the museums is centralised at the SMB-PK, responsible for fifteen collections and four research institutions characterised by particular needs, possibilities and ideas. Its work is very complex and its procedures are cumbersome following its administrative logic. Besides “regular” everyday challenges, the administration is also responsible for “additional” projects that are even more challenging. Often, collaborative processes and initiatives can cause unforeseeable needs that are rarely synchronised with administrative procedures.

Furthermore, due to laborious approval processes and understaffing, the administration can become particularly overburdened when it comes to spontaneous additional requirements. Such circumstances cause conflicts for project teams (even if the project has the full support of the administration). Such problems were mentioned frequently by those interviewed. For instance, in the case of Multaka, the administration was unable to manage its finances in line with the project's comparatively short-term needs. Here, the legislator set additional limits to the scope of action of the administration.

- For society / communities

The impact of the community work with participatory approaches on indirect beneficiaries (the communities) and wider society is limited due to several factors.

The current limitation of the impact of the projects for the broader public, for people not directly involved and for potential participants is partly caused by a less integrated and somewhat unbalanced approach (in comparison with regular content communication). Apart from the project's own publications, dissemination and temporary exhibition, the outcome and results have so far rarely been included in other museum communications. Therefore, general audiences have little opportunity to learn about the content or the experiences exchanged during the course of the projects. In these cases, an app such as the one developed during TAMAM could serve as a bridge between museum knowledge and the projects' own outcomes (Fig. 16). However, in so far as it is possible to discover, (outside the museum premises) this app only provides art historical information: other perspectives and further interpretative layers are not yet included.



Figure 16: The TAMAM app with the mihrab from Konya in use  
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, TAMAM

Even the museum's new communication strategy in the exhibition, which seeks to establish a more appealing and accessible form of communication and to enable other types of interaction and relations between the institution and the audience, has until now only been implemented as an add-on to the more traditional communication. As a result, it is sometimes difficult for the visitors to see and to understand the extended approach and the multi-layered information.



Additionally, complex interactions with the collections are restricted to the projects themselves. The visitors inspired through the outreach projects neither have the option nor have been encouraged (until now) to (re-)use objects (digitally) in a similar way and to present their own outcomes and reflections on the collection, and to exchange their own ideas.

The majority of the museum visitors are international tourists. As they are not repeat users / visitors of this museum, this group cannot become a critical mass to demand changes in the museum's communication strategies.

The time limit on projects is a further problem concerning the wider engagement of communities and society. Even if it is very likely that the repeated funding of the projects will be approved for a further term, the uncertainty is often very strong. This feeling of discontinuity is counterproductive in the development and maintenance of cooperation with different communities, especially with groups that are loosely organised. In consequence, the creation of reliable networks can be hindered and/or further complicated.

In addition, projects are partly financed within the framework of government programmes, whose titles sometimes support negative associations and, thus, can create a broad suspicion within public discourse. The GV – GZ project, for example, is one of the “Pilot projects on living together in the immigration society” belonging to the category of “Conflict management;” it is described as a project developed to strengthen social groups against extremist tendencies. A similar situation is observable in the case of TAMAM. The project that preceded TAMAM also developed teaching units and teaching materials in cooperation with Muslim communities. In contrast to TAMAM, it was realised with students of the Institute for Islamic Theology at the University of Osnabrück. This project was entitled: *“Prevention of Extremism and Development of Museum Pedagogical Approaches for Muslim Multipliers.”* This kind of framing reinforces a stigmatisation of the participants addressed in such projects (where such wording is used to obtain funding). In contrast, Multaka is mentioned more in the context of cultural education and integration. However, the full title of this project, Multaka: meeting point museum - Refugees as guides in Berlin museums, also raises questions for discussion and rethinking. The Multaka team would like to distance itself from the term “refugees,” as it could have a somewhat disparaging implications about participants. Its team now prefer to use the term “newcomers.”

Besides such framing, societal segregation, which is somewhat pronounced in Germany, further complicates the implementation of cross-sector activities. This can also include the mutual consideration of potential / unexpected stakeholders / partners and the mutual awareness and acceptance of their needs and wishes which can be applied in a number of ways. Furthermore, the general atmosphere with regard to Muslim and Arabic communities is described by the project staff as very complex; strong reservations about cooperation with these communities seems to be widespread among public authorities (for instance, in ministries or cultural institutions). In summary, in such circumstances, it seems that to start new partnerships assembling different societal groups is difficult and needs special consideration and expertise.



Although initiatives have been applied in diverse settings, their adoption in other areas (within the SMB-PK, by external partners) is severely limited. Insufficient communication both internally and externally, which is caused by a lack of resources, and a somewhat insufficient internal infrastructure at a managerial level, can be used for documenting the projects' processes and results, and making them available to interested parties, prevents wider dissemination of these projects and their outcomes. Furthermore, external partners (institutions, associations) can often only benefit from such initiatives for their own work and extend them only to a limited extent since they often lack personnel / resources to broaden outreach further.

The framework conditions for such community work, including youth work and cultural education, which are created by the political situation, are insufficient. Nevertheless, politics recognises the beneficial impact of community work, and of citizen involvement and engagement for the wider society. Even so, appropriate infrastructures to foster such activities are still not being sufficiently created. In addition, often even the Muslim associations or other partners themselves are unable to provide suitable frameworks. The community / social and cultural stakeholders are rarely equipped (concerning facilities or personnel, finances) to offer more elaborate educational offers. In consequence, they remain dependent on external invitations.

With the help of a broad array of activities, the museum is managing to reach very diverse social groups. It assumes a social responsibility and is trying to broaden its traditional spectrum by addressing groups / people who are otherwise rarely considered in the museum context. This awareness and attention provides these groups with positive emotional support for further reflection and action. In addition, by providing opportunities for cross-sector encounter and exchange, its engagement programme contributes positively to current public discourse on migration, Islam and heterogeneity. Furthermore, the outreach projects enable the museum to evidence the value of art historical-cultural collections - and the benefits of the interaction with these collections – both for those participants directly involved in such projects and the wider general public. The positive international feedback from participants, as well as from the general public, and from local and international institutions, affirms that the projects being initiated by the museum are appreciated and meaningful.

Considered within their particular frameworks, these projects appear to be highly collaborative, with a high degree of exchange, negotiation and co-creation. The project teams seem to be very aware, sensitive and flexible, carefully considering participants' wishes, needs, experiences and skills. In so doing, the projects also include forms of "people's history." However, for characterising this as "heritage from below" or "participatory heritage" is more difficult for several reasons. Firstly, the project's framework limits its impact and sustainability. Secondly, the collections of the ISL (still) represent so-called "high" art: every day culture does not form part of the stock and is not on display. In addition, the collections contain objects from the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, there is a further gap of experience between the artefacts and the visitors / users. Therefore, there is an inherent threshold between the collections themselves and (non-professional) participants. Thirdly, integrating the projects' findings, results and co-created items into current museum procedures / knowledge presents a challenge. Finally, the general frameworks and agenda are set by the project staff and the museum directorate: joint collaborative exchange is not the starting point. Rather, only after the project framework has been developed and funding has been applied for, are the participating groups chosen and involved in the process. Thus, the scope for participatory governance is very limited.



In so far as the ISL is concerned, a development towards wider participation and even towards “participatory governance,” is perhaps only now beginning – and this is due to the projects and initiatives outlined here. It seems that currently the museum is at a difficult point trying to balance ‘traditional’ museum and curatorial work, and newer more inclusive approaches. As long as such engagement occurs in only one sector (the traditional field of museum-citizen communication), depends strongly on the endeavours of the directorate and does not have a broader basis among staff, and the collections are held up as a “holy” (art historical) treasure, such evolution will struggle to happen. Additionally, external pressure and support from the audiences, general public, politics and funding bodies have to become stronger for such development to occur. Projects themselves could enhance this pressure by encouraging participant groups that they address or the third parties that they include to want to become more involved in ISL. In such a way, these projects can build on developing and increasing key stakeholders’ awareness of ISL not only as a credible, reliable and supportive partner for the implementation of such participatory projects, but also and especially in the shaping of society and the common good.



## **5. RESULTS AND IMPACT**

Although the selection of museums for the implementation of the REACH pilot on institutional cultural heritage is very small, these three case studies have highlighted the diversity and complexity of involvement and engagement. While it is not within this document's remit to give a broader overview of how participatory initiatives are being implemented and organised more generally in the institutional cultural heritage sector, it is clear that any activity or project planning is always dependent on the particular context of the circumstances and stakeholders involved - not only the institutions, but also the participating communities and society more widely.

### **5.1. SYNOPSIS OF SIMILARITIES AND SINGULARITIES**

The different activities presented here involve offers that are designed by institutions looking to broaden their horizons by including individual and non-professional expertise and agency into their work. It is evident that despite their differences, a common factor linking all three case studies is the finding that collaborative activities can be of great benefit to the different parties involved. Such interactions are valuable because they open up new, unexpected and previously unconsidered pathways that may even reach beyond the initial objectives for involvement and engagement and provide new insights and knowledge that help question and further develop one's own ideas about how to think and act. The impact of the initiatives is difficult to measure since it consists above all of more than mere material and practical results. In addition, these activities do not only affect those directly involved: their effects can ripple out further to other groups (regardless of their geographical location). The more intensive these collaborations are, the greater the impact and the longer lasting and wider-reaching the initiative.

This chapter will summarise the pilot's most important observations on the motivations, objectives and scope of involvement of the parties concerned, and the organisational frameworks in place, in order to prepare the terrain for a discussion about what "participation" might mean within an institutional heritage context.

#### **5.1.1. MOTIVATIONS AND OBJECTIVES**

This study has shown how the implementation of participatory activities may emerge from very diverse circumstances.

In the cases of both the IFM and HdG, citizen engagement enables the museum to fulfil tasks that their staff cannot achieve on their own (because of limited knowledge and frames of reference, and also due to lack of resources, etc.). A second intention of HdG's activity from the beginning was that such engagement might offer a valuable contribution to Wittenberg's communities. ISL's motivations are somewhat different: by means of involving diverse societal groups, the museum's management aims primarily to present the museum as a place for open discussion and interaction. As such, the museum's wish is to become an interlocutor that is responsive to the needs of diverse communities and of wider society. Furthermore, the ISL also seeks to underline the value of its historical-cultural collections for such an endeavour.



### **5.1.2. PARTICIPANTS AND COMMUNITIES**

The initiatives that have been observed here are mainly addressed at local communities. Participants belong mostly to specific population groups. This is determined by diverse factors: e.g., the specificity of the respective collections and their frameworks and funding conditions. In addition, it can be noted that the more the initiatives cover different fields of activity, the more diverse the groups of people involved are.

As the initiative at the IFM was originally focussed on one concrete objective (that is, the exploration of the content of the existing photographic collection, and in the future, the creation of the new exhibition about the production of synthetic fibres), the group respectively appealed to is mainly limited to former factory workers. In contrast, since the engagement at the HdG is broader and various objectives are pursued (e.g. gathering of information, running the museum, implementing guided tours), the people involved have a more diverse background. Nevertheless, volunteers seem to have a common characteristic: being in a situation of some sort of personal or social upheaval. At the ISL, the target groups are diverse. Importantly, here, the museum directorate endeavours to involve citizens in a way that considers society's complexity and diversity: young people, families (including from lesser-privileged neighbourhoods), newcomers, Muslim and Arabic communities, and non-professionals. To this end, a variety of activities have been both established and extended in order to appeal to wider range of social groups (that also includes regular museum visitors).

However, targeting among the different initiatives is diverse. The activity of IFM, HdG and partially at the ISL is not aimed at specific groups. In contrast, TAMAM and partially Multaka (guides and partly tours attendees) focus on communities with a particular cultural background (e.g. mosque communities, newcomers, members of Muslim / Arabic communities living in Berlin). The GV – GZ shows a mixed situation. This project targets young people in neighbourhood youth clubs. Besides this implicit local and age limitation, there are no further restrictions or foci concerning the composition of the participating groups. With regard to gender, it has to be noted that all projects seek to appeal equally to both women and men. None of these initiatives specify a quota for this, as they have to respond to the circumstances of their addressees. Furthermore, calls to engage should be as open, inviting and have as little constraint as possible. Therefore, the gender balance could not always be guaranteed. It was also shown that external factors can be very decisive here. This was particularly evident in the case of TAMAM, where the structures of some communities undermined this concern to some extent.

When thinking about these initiatives as community work, the degree of organisation of the participants, their embeddedness in further structures, and their connections with other people and parties involved and with the material being dealt with are all of special concern since this strongly influences the course of interaction and its impact. Here, the projects demonstrate very different situations.

Those people engaged in the "Bilderschau" are neither organised in terms of externally imposed nor self-developed structures. Therefore, their will to participate is to a high degree individual. Between themselves, they have loose but at the same time strong bonds with each other that they can draw on: mutual acquaintance with a long common history and shared experiences that form a common basis for understanding, thought and action. Therefore, these participants can be described as a community despite their non-existing 'external' organisation.





Their reference to the common past also includes the site of the former factory itself. It is not yet clear whether these participants have a need for greater integration or any greater common objective than to share their memories. However, their desire for common ground and to appropriate this seems already to be saturated. It remains to be seen whether the museum and its collections can also become part of this community or whether it will be able to encourage them to join a new museum community.

At the HdG the situation is more diverse, as volunteers are involved through two frameworks: the BFD and the Ehrenamt. Even though both programmes are voluntary, it should be noted that, due to its contractual agreement, the BFD provides a more defined framework (concerning especially the duration and the amount of engagement) and thus influences individual commitment. The framework of the Ehrenamt is more flexible and is based entirely on the volunteer's individual will. It seems that, above all, it is the joint engagement at the museum that forms the basis for a sense of community and that leads to an identification with, and a stronger commitment to, the work and the institution itself. Due to its limitations the BFD seems somewhat less supportive for the development and fostering of communities. In contrast, the Ehrenamt could provide a more inclusive and cohesive impact, since it provides the opportunity for longer lasting interactions that can construct shared knowledge and experience. Furthermore, at the HdG, it was not clear whether the volunteers, despite the constant volunteer staff turnover, would be able to form a community (together with the museum and the association) that had a lasting and formative character. Nor was it clear to what extent the HdG's collections of material heritage from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and working with these collections, could have a unifying effect on the group of people involved. However, importantly, the personal expertise accompanying these schemes can be seen to reduce museum inhibition and facilitate exchange and interaction.

The ISL projects reveal very diverse circumstances. Here, while some groups involved had a more organised background, others did not. Moreover, certain shifts occurring over the course of projects and these have influenced the definition of further processes which also need to be considered here.

At the ISL, only the Multaka guides and some groups of attendees of the Multaka tours (at the beginning the newcomers, and later the broader public) do not belong to organisational structures. The degree of their participation is therefore controlled by their individual willingness, interests and possibilities. Through repeated encounters and exchanges among themselves, and with visitors and museum staff, the guides begin to have a greater sense of connection to each other (and to the museum too). In contrast, the inclusive effect for the Multaka attendees seems very low since the shared experience at, and also with, the museum is very short. However, this interpretation may be misleading. Even if these visits only serve to build a very embryonic and emerging sense of community, the project can still form a foundation by providing participants with the feeling of being considered and appreciated, and by offering access to both the newcomers and the broader public not just to the museum and its collections but also to other people. It gives participants opportunities for meeting and for exchanging experience and knowledge. Furthermore, especially in the case of the newcomers, the initiative makes it possible to bring them inside the museum premises and, thus, include them. Here a parallel between participant engagement in the HdG and in Multaka may be discernible. In both cases, the people involved are in situations of upheaval and in need of new orientation. Similarly, to the HdG, this inclusive impact is of special, fundamental importance since these people can begin to feel more fully integrated into a social context and to experience a sense of togetherness and – this is perhaps stronger in the case of the HdG - of belonging too.



In later stages of the Multaka scheme, attendees are brought into the museum through the frameworks of language schools and language cafés. Thus, their participation is no longer based on individual willingness, but is more compulsory (this is more the case of the language schools than the language cafés). In addition, these participants form part of a community that is primarily kept together through their desire and/or obligation to learn German. It can thus be seen that individual motivations and interests towards the museum and its collections are very diversely pronounced dependent on the groups involved. In addition, the language schools and cafés then 'take over' the community work and inclusive efforts that are supported by the ISL offer. In consequence, the relationship between the museum and the attendees becomes more indirect, as it is arranged by the language facilities. However, this development also implies that a new agent (the language facilities located in the different neighbourhoods) enters the interaction, offering itself as a multiplier, interlocutor and partner. This can in turn then also give the way to the building of further networks and communities and further development of the outreach programmes at the ISL.

At TAMAM, the participants are members and representatives of various mosque communities. Therefore, they may share similar experiences concerning current challenges, although in detail these may be very diverse. The same can be said about their background: there may be considerations of diverse interpretations of the Islam and approaches to the past and to the present to be taken into account. Furthermore, it seems to be important that their participation is based on two different pillars: first, a participant's individual will and second, the community's interests. Here, commitment concerns especially their own community and its requirements rather than the museum or the other participants. Thus, this initiative fosters above all the individual mosque community. Besides this, it also enables and supports communication and interaction among the different communities. This can then enable further acquaintances and awareness to be developed: it may also lay down a longer-term basis for joint actions and shared notions. With the help of this activity, the ISL can initiate or promote exchange and the development of networks in which it can itself be part.

The GV – GZ shows a further picture. The teens involved here are part of youth club communities sharing common everyday experiences. In contrast to TAMAM, this organisational framework has little impact of their participation, since there is no obligation to attend the programmes and the young people are less used to honouring commitments in their spare time. Rather, they join the programme due to their own interests and this is more influenced by their peer group at the youth centre, their personal background, and the search for orientation. In consequence, here regular interaction seemed to pose more of a challenge. However, GV – GZ has one very special feature. Although implemented within the organisational framework of the youth clubs, this project spoke directly to the young people. The social / youth worker was rarely involved as a mediator. Thus, the relationship between the project team and the young people was very direct. However, the commitment of the participating young people remained weak, since the project did not aim for repeated activities. Similar to the Multaka tours, this initiative did not have foremost an inclusive effect, but it did provide access by giving participants the opportunity to exchange and interact - and this is a prerequisite for further engagement. In addition, the youth club employees have to be recognised as another community that represented both their own needs and those of the institution. They also entered into the relationship with the museum becoming known partners and interlocutors. Indeed, it is worth noting here that this network is larger still, as further external experts were involved in the GV – GZ scheme.

The ISL uses its collections as starting points for all its participatory activities (Fig. 17). Nevertheless, they do not form the basis for participants' self-understanding (either as an individual or as a community). This might be due to the nature of the collections consisting of artefacts of 'high' culture from the 7<sup>th</sup> until 19<sup>th</sup> century stored in the museum exhibitions or depots. They, thus, are not directly related to the people involved. The ISL projects can change this, since they provide new access to this cultural heritage, and the objects gain new significance through the interactions.



Figure 17: Mschatta façade,  
reflecting transcultural exchange and societal diversity.  
© Staatliche Museen Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst,  
photo: Hilal Sezgin-Just

In addition to participants involved in the museum activities, it is of great importance to also characterise the staff engaged with the participatory and collaborative activities. This can provide valuable knowledge regarding relationships between institutions and participants at all levels: it is an important feature of the research that throws light on the nature of collaborative projects and how they are rooted into the museum's overall operational framework. At the IFM and the HdG, it is regular employees who interact with the people involved. In both these cases - which are examples of small-scale institutions - activities are conducted by the museum management staff, with additional employees involved to support. In contrast, at the ISL, project teams are contracted especially for these activities. In consequence, their commitment to both participants and museum can be seen as weaker (which may be caused in part to the precarity and instability of their role, their being on fixed-term contracts, etc.). Such considerations are important, since they point to the complexity of relationships between projects and the museum's overall work.

### 5.1.3. SCOPE OF ENGAGEMENT

The three case studies reveal the diverse scope and intensity of citizen engagement in a museum context. While at the IFM and at the ISL, participants take part in a series of events /and workshops that focus on one particular remit of the museum (e.g. the exploration of content and its interpretation as part of a wider outreach / education strategy), at the HdG volunteers take part in the day-to-day business of the museum across various areas.



In additions, forms of interaction are manifold: contribution (IFM, HdG), collaboration (HdG, ISL: TAMAM, Multaka, GV – GZ, in the future: IFM exhibition), and co-creation (ISL: TAMAM, Multaka, GV – GZ). In addition, this research has considered a basic precondition for involvement and engagement: the provision of (intellectual and emotional) access(-ibility) (all activities; but especially the ISL projects where this latter point is considered as an objective and not only as an approach).

It is sometimes difficult to separate these forms of interaction from each other, and they are often found together in the projects. It is important to note therefore that all these interactions are processes. Each phase of each of the activities can be characterised by a different scope of engagement and involvement according to the particular knowledge, abilities, wishes and skills of the participants, and the specific needs of the museums and of the different processes themselves. Consequently, both the nature of such interactions, and therefore the nature of the role(s) of the participants, are not static, but rather change and evolve over the course of the activities in question.

Nonetheless, it is evident that while in all three case studies the frameworks for these initiatives have been designed by the museums, participants also have a strong influence on the museums' operational activities. It should not be forgotten that the museums are heavily dependent on the contributions and collaboration of the people involved and there is thus a complex structure of interdependencies to be taken into consideration.

#### **5.1.4. ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORKS**

The three institutions that were visited realise their activities under very different circumstances – with financial considerations a significant factor.

The IFM is publicly funded by the administrative district and is thus financially secure. However, for the implementation of extra initiatives such as the “Bilderschau” neither are there any additional resources available, nor has any further funding been requested (perhaps due to limited personnel resources). Thus, the museum is very free in its commitment and does not have to follow external guidelines (for example, budget cycles or objectives concerning desired results) and so it can develop the project as required and a more open-ended approach to the project be maintained.

The HdG is financially supported by the PFLUG e.V. association and depends very much on income from ticket sales. The maintenance of the museum buildings and operating costs are shared with the city administration. However, for the maintenance of the museum's diverse sectors and the realisation of its work, the museum mainly uses the Bundesfreiwilligendienst, (Federal Voluntary Service, BFD), as well as volunteers. In addition to this labour support for the museum, the programme provides its participants with an (albeit very low) income. In the case of the BFD, this financing is limited to a maximum of 18 months that then implies multiple difficulties for the museum and for those involved in terms of the continuity, stability and sustainability of such activities. The association also applies for funding for research, exhibition and social projects from local, national and European institutions and has thus to adapt its engagement according to these pre-set frameworks.

The ISL (belonging to SMB-PK) is funded by the FRG and the German States. All the activities presented have been realised in the framework of projects funded by government and private institutions. Thus, initiatives are often limited in terms of their duration. In addition, they are influenced by the current political circumstances, agendas and discourses.



## **5.2. EXEMPLARY INITIATIVES? A CONFRONTATION WITH THEORY**

These summary reflections enable a discussion of the definitions of “participation” that have been proposed and how those might relate to diverse forms of heritage. The following section reviews the REACH project’s initial thinking about this and further elaborates these considerations in order to develop a better understanding of the complexity of significance and potential of participatory approaches within an institutional cultural heritage context.

### **5.2.1. PARTICIPATION**

The presentation above pointed to several important features that Piontek (2017)<sup>79</sup> mentions in her definition of ideal participation. That is to say, intentional and direct contact situation(s) and / or exchange processes between museum employees and (potential) participants (in all activities, in the case of the ISL with project staff); willingness (in a somewhat limited way at the HdG and at the ISL within the Multaka project); an openness towards, and a serious interest in the other party (in all initiatives); a consideration of important questions and current gaps (e.g., an appreciation of the life experience, issues and ideas of communities less considered by or / and less visible in museums / art history / historiography). All of the activities also reveal the intention to achieve mutual acquaintance, respect and a sense of reciprocity, as well as to establish a win-win situation for both participant and institution.

To some “ideal” features presented by Piontek, this pilot provides interesting detailed insights that help to underline and also question her ideas in a yet more differentiated way:

Besides reciprocity, ‘equivalence’ is mentioned as a central objective of participatory activities. Equivalence is difficult to grasp, but this term implies an essential feature of every interaction: each party / person involved is characterised by different dispositions with particular skills, knowledge, frames of references, desires and expectations, and individual embeddedness. They, thus, represent diverse systems of values and possibilities. Nevertheless, this term emphasises that, despite all differences, each person’s experience, knowledge and skills should be appreciated as equal and should be included as meaningful contributions in the work and the discussions. Thus, this term “equivalence” can focus more on the diversity and on mutual support, replenishment and enrichment. However, the projects visited showed that it is sometimes impossible to evaluate and measure equivalence.

Regarding the desired and assumed open-endedness of such processes, it can be seen that this is often difficult to perform. This is in particular applicable to these projects since they, and especially their funding frameworks especially, are usually conceived of in the short term and from the results aimed at ‘presentable’ (e.g. measurable and easily quantifiable) outcomes: exhibition, publication, guided tours, learning materials, data collection, maintenance, visitor services, etc.

In addition, from all the initiatives studied here, it remains to be seen whether real and lasting changes will be made: it is an issue of collaborative negotiation that is to be continued. Piontek (2017) draws out fundamental aspects of what she sees as ideal participation during her study concerning participatory projects conducted mainly in exhibitions.

79 Cf. this deliverable pp. 23.



They can form a very beneficial basis for the discussion on “participatory heritage” and “participatory governance,” too, since these features describe necessary prerequisites of successful collaborative interpersonal interaction that form the foundation for sharing responsibilities and decisions.

### **5.2.2. POWER AND (INTER-)DEPENDENCIES**

In the context of management structures and procedures, of particular importance for Piontek (2017) is a notion of power asymmetry (what she terms “asymmetrical power relations”) and the need for self-critical reflection. However, a power imbalance is always inherent in interpersonal interaction. This can also apply to “participation,” since it always includes one party that makes the decision to invite another party to take part.

Power asymmetry is even more pronounced when it comes to interactions between people and institutions. This is all the truer for museums, since they have long considered themselves as institutions with great authority and have been perceived as such. Therefore (and as will be seen later) it is all the more important not to see the museum as a monolithic authority, but to consider the museum’s multi-perspective pluralities, including museum employees and project staff, as Simon (2010) does, who are themselves also part of the public.

In this context, responsibilities and interdependencies are complex. In the museum, commitment refers to objects, diverse scientific and operative requirements, colleagues, visitors and users, funding and supportive bodies, and the general public – all with their own particular needs, wishes and expectations. This relational network is pronounced very differently in each institution and, furthermore, in each project, thus allowing diverse room to manoeuvre. Relational networks are fundamentally changeable and evolve and shift over time. Thus, it is important to consider the concept of participatory engagement in the museum (and related activities) through the lens of such complexity and plurality, and keeping in mind the different perspectives and shifts in perspectives that are constantly in play.

In this context, it is not only the relationship between the institution and people that needs reflection but also the structure(s) within or behind the participating groups. These are an important factor since they strongly influence the constitution of the participating groups and their motivation for commitment and, consequently, the implementation of the activities and the radius of their impact.

Moreover, these structures are of particular concern if participatory activities are perceived as a useful means to address and overcome traditional power imbalances and to avoid them continuing over time. In this context, gender is a crucial issue as it is more broadly for REACH. Acknowledging the importance of women as transmitters, producers and consumers of cultural heritage is an indispensable prerequisite for the implementation of these participatory projects. This aspect of high societal relevance on every level (community, local, regional national, international) here merits particular attention.

It was clearly evident that the projects are not explicitly directed at women. Nevertheless, they show that women are in part very strongly anchored as a key cultural stakeholder group. This is true, for example, for the IFM in Wolfen. Here, labour and social life was strongly shaped by women (even though the directorate was male dominated).



The “Bilderschau” can thus draw on and refer to this legacy of women’s expertise and influence in its discussions. It was also particularly obvious in the case of the HdG and its founding association PFLUG e.V., where women also play a prominent role, both structurally and in terms of the content of research projects and presentations. In the projects of the ISL, the sensitivity towards this issue was also visible. This awareness had a multiple dimension as it considered women both as Muslim and as members of diverse societies (that are Muslim, Christian or secular) and, in addition, women’s representation in these different contexts. Here, for example, the “Stadtteilmütter” were consulted as experts in various instances. Moreover, equal rights are an important topic. This was considered in terms of religious and ethnic discrimination, and also in the context of gender disparity. While gender is not an issue of intrinsic interest for the ISL, its projects try to address groups of participants that are as balanced as possible. However, it has to be clearly stated that this was only possible within certain limits. On the one hand, as in the case of GV – GZ and the Multaka attendees, because participation was voluntary and open, further restrictions would have increased the inhibition to take part. On the other hand, as in the case of TAMAM, the communities involved themselves decided by whom they would be represented. In consequence, the project teams could not have influence on the composition of participating groups.

Taking into account gender and vulnerable groups as particular target groups for museum programmes is a difficult approach. In general, it should be remembered that the category of the target group is viewed critically in museum discourse since it is exclusive rather than inclusive and inviting. It has to be proved thoroughly whether and how this kind of “positive discrimination” might further reduce inequality considering the specific context in which it occurs or whether it would further manifest differentiation, segregation and unequal treatment and bring about further stigmatisation.

The projects clearly show that inequality is a relevant cross-sector societal problem. It is a collective issue that has to be jointly questioned and discussed, addressing diverse layers and revealing underlying structures. In this, the broader public with its multiple perspectives has to take part.

### **5.2.3. CULTURAL HERITAGE – COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATED ISSUES AND PROCESSES**

Drawing on the reflections and findings of this pilot, it is possible to further examine diverse types of heritage - as presented in the REACH Deliverable D3.1 (2019: pp. 12-16) - and to scrutinise the significance of the specific form of participation discussed – ‘participatory governance’ (ibid, p. 19).

In the case studies, it is clear that, apart from the exhibition revision approach at the ISL,<sup>80</sup> all the activities include forms of “history from below” which considers the experience and expertise of ordinary people, and a micro-historical perspective as meaningful contributions to the museum’s repository of ‘knowledge,’ history and culture, even though they might sometimes contradict current public discourse. The term “heritage from below” is inspired by this and can be conceived of as a further development that incorporates yet deeper (inter-)actions and negotiations around tangible and intangible cultural manifestations (including, for instance, selection, preservation, (re-)use, creation, re-interpretation, dissemination, and even rejection and destruction). In so doing, cultural assets are maintained as a vivid and significant issue for the current community. Furthermore, this deliverable states that “‘heritage from below’ aims of giving spaces for previously oppressed voices” (REACH Deliverable D3.1, 2019: p. 12).

80 Cf. this deliverable pp. 64 / 65



Certainly, neglect and ignorance can be read as forms of oppression, and in the case studies presented here, the participating groups in question (e.g. workers from a formerly important industrial area, migrants, long-term unemployed people, young people and Muslim communities [with no / little / limited access to diverse forms of capital, following Bourdieu, 1983: 183-198]) have, up until now, rarely been involved in general cultural historical discourse and museum work or been considered by them. In addition, with regard to the early history of the IFM and HdG in the 1990s, these institutions especially can be characterised by “heritage from below” as they were founded as a result of civic engagement with the aim to preserve the region’s own culture and history. However, over time, their management has been institutionalised and professionalised, and perhaps lost a direct connection to and identification with their current local communities (this is perhaps due to their specific focus on the past). The case of the ISL demonstrates something different. Here, it is difficult to discover close relationships between participants (and public) and the museum’s collections, as the collection consists of ancient art from ‘distant’ regions in the Middle East. In addition, the collected artefacts represent “high” culture, originating mainly from elite contexts. The collections therefore have less direct reference to the everyday world and experiences of visitors and participants. That is why the museum takes on the task of presenting its collections as part of a common cultural heritage. Its aim is to reveal supposedly non-existent relationships by using multiple approaches to the objects and addressing applicable topics and, thus, to strengthen / develop awareness and understanding of them.

“Community heritage” is presented as a synonymous term to “heritage from below” (REACH Deliverable D3.1, 2019: pp. 13 / 14). Without being able to discuss the terms further in the framework of this deliverable, this pilot can provide nuanced reflections on what is meant by “community.” This will be particularly relevant for the final reflections of the project since REACH aims to support and enhance social cohesion and resilience of communities by means of cultural engagement. In using the term “community heritage,” the organisational and structural forms of communities in all their diversity must be understood and taken into account. All the case studies here show that the groups involved (here considered as communities *per se* and also as potential parts of the wider museum community) rarely have organisational structures or spokespeople. However, they did have very diverse organisational backgrounds that had very different influences on the engagement in, and dynamics of, activities. Furthermore, as evidenced above, interactions in and with museums can lead to a great variety of relationships, communities can be strengthened or can newly emerge (these might include the museum), and new partnerships and networks can be built and supported. It is very likely that this observation of further diversity is in part due to the particular direction that each of the processes took, as the projects were not initiated by the communities, but by the institutions.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile adding one further aspect on these reflections on “community heritage” and that is the potential impact(s) for the communities in question of personal and group interactions with cultural heritage, especially in terms of emerging possibilities of societal agency. Beel et al. (2017: p. 463) describe “community heritage” as:

“[...] therefore represent[ing] a series of place<sup>81</sup>-based connections between individuals who come together to collect and share their historical narratives. They become entwined within a taskscape of activity, that [...] creates a set of processes that are community driven but also move well beyond the specific heritage work itself.

81 Understood here not only as physical-geographical space, but also as social and mental, and combined with the temporal dimension (cf. Döring and Thielmann, 2008; Schlögel, 2003).



It is the social formation of groups and societies, their organisation and their ongoing desire to present heritage that pushes community heritage beyond its production of archives and narratives into other areas of the community.”

This characterisation includes a very important aspect: those non-local “place-based connections” that matter not only with regard to global interactions around cultural heritage (especially in the cases of ethnographic museum, for example), but also in respect of internal and international migration.

It becomes particularly interesting when the physical component of space no longer exists, whether due to war and destruction, or even structural changes, and thus the community and its interactions must assume new forms. New mechanisms must then be developed in order to carry out heritage work and keep heritage alive and meaningful (in new frameworks) as part of new (forms of) negotiations in new contexts. This includes reorientation and reorganisation, and, sometimes, even reconnection with heritage. This pilot has identified various examples in which the participants shared and sometimes preserved their experiences and expertise within new contexts, providing knowledge and access for other / new members of this or other / new communities.<sup>82</sup>



Figure 18: Participants of a guided tour of the project “Multaka” in the Deutsches Historisches Museum  
© Staatliche Museen Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst,  
photo: Milena Schlösser.

The ISL also succeeded in realising something that is of special importance for ancient cultural heritage (from regions outside of Germany). Its participatory projects underline the importance of its historical-cultural collections as a living heritage for both those people living in and / or coming from these regions and also for people from other areas referring to interregional and intercultural interrelationships and interdependencies.

<sup>82</sup> It is important to remember that communities are never a closed entity and that their members always belong at the same time to diverse communities. Flexibility and openness, heterogeneity and interdependencies of communities have to be considered.



The museum can begin to reconnect its collections with the current, diverse public by combining the collections with contemporary topics, and also by encouraging freer interaction. Thus, regarding “community heritage,” it is of great importance that audiences, visitors and communities handle the present and the future while reflecting upon the past, considering its embeddedness in society (as well as the evolutions and shifts in its position) (Fig 18.)

Institutions (whether civic establishments or other organisational structures, or museums) can fill resultant physical gaps and support the transfer and negotiation of “community heritage” into new environments. The pilot showed how museums might be useful here.

This survey also revealed that the interactions around cultural assets observed here can be only partly described as “participatory heritage” (as presented in the REACH Deliverable D3.1 [2019: pp. 15 / 16]). A restriction must be made here because “participatory heritage” understood as “defin[ing] their [the communities, note by the author] own heritage more autonomously, engaging in and creating cultural activities independent of, but in collaboration with, existing traditional institutions” (ibid.) is only realised within the set framework of the initiatives. In the case of the IFM and ISL, this is clearly noticeable since the largely free interaction around cultural assets occurs during the “Bilderschau,” TAMAM, Multaka and GV – GZ initiatives. The HdG showed something else. Here the set framework is bigger. It is not limited to the performance of series of events, but rather includes daily work realised in diverse areas of the museum. However, here, autonomy is more limited here since the field of activity and possibilities of action are determined by the directorate. However, in the sectors to which they are assigned, volunteers can perform their activities relatively freely. The example of HdG provides a further interesting consideration. While the other initiatives have been developed on the basis of their collections, the HdG focuses more on itself, the museum. Thus, this example also refers to an important question in the context of the reflection on “participatory heritage” in museums: (To what extent) is the joint interaction actually focused on and / or using which cultural assets – the collection or the museum – or both?

Significantly, this pilot also revealed that the two small museums, the IFM and the HdG, have reached a very important step in terms of participation by including the expertise and experience of their communities - that “heritage from below” - into their collections and data repositories respectively. In such ways, “heritage from below” is entering the institution.

In addition, this study has also shown that, for the museum sector, “participatory heritage” can mean involvement in a myriad of different ways and means of approaching cultural heritage (as the core tasks of museums are “collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings” [ICOM, 2019]). All these interactions are embedded in a network of multiple needs, responsibilities, conditions and dependencies. This complexity has always to be considered and questioned critically.

The concept of “participatory heritage” previously presented (REACH Deliverable D3.1, 2019: pp. 15 / 16) implies difficulties. It manifests the imbalance that underlies participation, i.e. one party inviting another to joint action and collaboration. With its strong focus on communities, this definition particularly supports the reversal of the balance of power rather than its removal. In the discussion of GLAM institutions especially and their relations to their visitors and users and to the public, this approach can appear too one-sided. Rather, the focus of this definition should, as proposed by Piontek (2017), emphasise reciprocity, collaboration and collective.



The initiatives visited in this pilot showed this for, in all three cases, the different needs, wishes and abilities of the participants, and the requirements and possibilities of the institution, were considered in responsive, balanced and reflexive ways.

It has become clear that the activities explored in this deliverable cannot be neatly described by or 'boxed into' only one of these categories; rather, different types of heritage co-exist, merge into one another, and are mutually (inter)dependent. In addition, since these activities include a multitude of actions and processes, and sometimes even a variety of people involved, intensities and scopes of the collaborative interaction can differ and alternate with each other.

#### **5.2.4. JOINT GOVERNANCE – AN OPTION FOR MUSEUMS?**

As Piontek (2017) points out, involving people in museum work helps to enhance mutual awareness and understanding. This forms an essential base for "participatory heritage" and, building on that, for "participatory governance." In terms of the wider REACH project, "participatory governance" is conceived of as a "process, [...] a continuum [...] to establish the appropriated framework of collaboration," which should be set "between multiple actors" (REACH deliverable D3.1, p. 19). As attitudes, interactions and relationships are fundamental categories for the description of "participatory governance," the detailed characterisation of "ideal participation" as provided by Piontek (2017, pp. 89 / 90) nuances this notion of governance. It highlights an importance that lies particularly in the (mutual) enrichment and benefits that can be achieved on diverse levels by all parties involved (as emphasised in the reflections on the projects).

However, none of the projects under investigation or any of the museums visited have reached a clear level of "participatory governance." Nevertheless, this might be a process that has to be described as a continuum. It is therefore probable that participatory activities, such as those studied here, can lead, through the creation of participatory heritage, to new, more inclusive and collaborative forms of governance. However, it is not yet foreseeable if, or how, the institutions visited and their participants will drive such a step-change moving forwards. This is a crucial point. Such development can never be a one-way street; it has to be part of a shared commitment by both parties (participants / community and institution). Only longer-term studies will discover these longer-term impacts.

Even though it has not been possible to observe structural change towards "participatory governance" in the case studies, it should be noted that such development is also possible in more "traditional" institutions and is, in fact, already being tested. An example of this is, among others, the Badisches Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe (Baden-Württemberg).<sup>83</sup> Besides the implementation of various programmes of involvement and engagement, in Autumn 2018, the museum established a citizens' advisory council. This council is particularly involved in the digital reorientation of the museum. However, these are early days, and the wider and longer-term impact of its procedures and influence on further museum work will only be revealed in the future. Likewise, the ISL is planning to establish a citizen advisory council to include diverse perspectives and expertise in the museum work.

83 Badisches Landesmuseum, Bürgerbeirat, URL: <https://www.landmuseum.de/creative/buergerbeirat>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020.



### **5.3. MUSEUMS: SEEKING RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY – AND SUPPORT**

Following on from the above findings focussed on museums and their participatory approaches in terms of REACH’s initial considerations, the next section proposes some more general reflections concerning potential, or indeed necessary, changes in and for museums, and their work.

#### **5.3.1. MUSEUM AS MEETING POINTS OF MULTIPLE RELEVANCE**

This pilot has shown that museums have great potentials as spaces for dialogue, encounter and action. Moreover, museum staff can be active, reliable interlocutors and partners. They can present their premises as adequate venues for forward-looking debates; they can promote their collections and cultural heritage assets as meaningful tools and starting points for collective dialogic and collaborative reflections on current issues; and they can encourage the public to interact and engage with the museum, with its collections and its staff, with their shared past, present and future, or indeed just use it as a suitable place to visit, meet others and enjoy. By opening themselves up to a diverse public, these institutions, as repositories of cultural memory, can be positioned and developed in accordance with complex realities.

As museums (especially the larger art historical institutions) are (still) often not perceived as places of encounter, exchange, discussion and creation, it is often necessary that they take the first step by inviting the public into the space and by highlighting the varied and complex potentials of cultural heritage and its joyful and enriching uses. Here, it is useful to consider the entire range of experiences that museums can offer communities - from passive to active engagement, from individual to social experiences, and interactions with or “only” in the museum.

Although it is a top-down approach, it still remains an offer expressing the museum’s interest towards the public and without which this public might not cross an inhibition threshold. This approach could be the start for a mutual rapprochement and initial encounter. It would be a learning process – for both sides. By the help of such encounters and exchanges, mutual acknowledgement, respect and interest can begin to emerge and grow and this, in turn, can help to reduce neglect and redress power asymmetries and imbalances. Since building stronger relationships and deepening trust, as well as mutual responsibility, are processes that take a lot of energy, effort and time, it is only logical to emphasise here that such developments are long-term projects and end results are not necessarily clearly foreseeable at this juncture.

While Piontek (2017) explains the main features of participatory activity, further questions arise, such as how to achieve “real and lasting change.” This concerns the sustainability of such commitments. Here, a transformation is required from project-related activism (with its limited possibilities for long-term action and impact) into such thinking being part of ongoing, consistent and integral part of a museum’s programming and offering, as actions that do not fizzle out on completion but have a long-term influence on the museum’s work. Similarly, it is also important for “constituent communities” to not only feel the effects of their commitment for a longer period of time, but also to be able to see, use and further develop the results in the longer term.



Seven features could be deduced that are essential for this: Of central importance are the “collections” and their relationship to the past, present and future. A further element might refer to “structure,” underlining the importance of the integration of such activities into the institution and its work. The last four features concern procedures of interaction: “diversification,” “extension,” “transparency” and “network.”

### **5.3.2. THE COLLECTIONS – MULTIPLE VALUABLE SOURCES**

The outstanding characteristic of museums are their collections. As the three case studies clearly show, the collections themselves enable diverse interactions, which can be emotional, intellectual and / or physical. In addition, objects and artefacts within collections are also very complex, providing a multitude of possibilities in terms of access (focused on material, symbolic, social and historical dimensions as contact points). For a long time, museum work (and historic-cultural science) has been object- / event-oriented. However, in the context of social movements and new scientific perspectives (such as entangled history, micro-history, post-colonialism, gender studies, provenance research, material and iconic turns, etc.) and museological approaches (such as the New Museology), for example, interest has shifted recognisably towards the public (in all its interconnectedness and diversity) and the various (social) dimensions of the collected objects (here and now in the museum, there and then in their time / place of origin and also in a further shared locations). This is a reason why collections and individual objects may gain in significance as people’s personal experience of and with them forms a bridge from the historical past to the lived present and reaching forwards to the future. Initiatives such as those studied here point to a further intensification of these inter-relational processes as they enable interpersonal exchanges around tangible and intangible assets. These encounters (both with objects and with other people) are extremely diverse, multi-layered and unique. They can lead to different perspectives and approaches; they can promote identification and self-affirmation; and they can encourage the recognition (as well as the denial) of ambiguity and difference, as well as ways to negotiate the complexities of difference.

Consequently, cultural institutions that hold collections are suitable places to address and discuss social fractures, breaks and inconsistencies, features that are common to all communities and societies and that are too often ignored.

This study has clearly showed the deep need for collective gathering, reflection and creation. Certainly, this observation is not just restricted to the current situation in Germany but can also be applied to other European and global contexts. There is a clear gap to be addressed here to which the museum team could make a beneficial contribution: not only by offering its spaces for collective encounters, but also by offering itself as valuable interlocutors and partners for such encounters. In such a way, institution staff, together with the public, can translate their experiences and findings into further action, e.g. by supporting programmes of further exchange and creation, or by developing suitable forms of presentation to disseminate the work of such programmes (Fig. 19).



Fig. 19: Exchange in the IFM exhibition  
© Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen, photo: Heiko Rebsch

In addition, developing more collaborative work with collections would underline yet further the role of the publicly funded museum's staff as custodians, and not as owners, of collections that are there to serve the common good. Thus, interaction with collections, objects and artefacts can provoke not only an interest in, but also a deep sense of a common and shared responsibility towards cultural heritage. This can also be applied to private collections, since cultural heritage is a collective issue.

### 5.3.3. HERE AND NOW, THERE AND THEN

The outstanding value of the museum collections becomes evident when they are used for an engagement with the present - with current life situations and experiences – and with the future – wishes, hopes, visions. Indeed, often on the basis of their own collections, museums discuss diverse issues of societal importance e.g. climate change, migration, economic systems, globalisation, living together, joy, societal achievement. Historical collections can be very useful sources here as they can refer to situations and frameworks that are different to the current systems. They can show alternatives and explain the development of current circumstances. Moreover, with the activities undertaken, collections can also point attention towards further topics of significant general interest, such as digitisation, diversity, ambiguity, democracy and disparity. Both areas imply comprehensive reflection about future society and future ways of living and thinking. In such ways, museums can help to underline the multiple spatio-temporal interrelations that shape the current local, regional, national, and global situation, as wider contemporary discourse surrounding an understanding of self, environment and world (Fig. 20).



Figure 20: Exhibition “Way and time marks - Germans and Russians in everyday life in a Central German region 1945 – 1993”

© Christel Panzig, photo: Christel Panzig

Due to the multi-layered significance and effect of how museums work with cultural heritage collections and artefacts, they can initiate and support manifold forms of encounter, exchange, collaboration and development of issues of public concern on both local and global scales.

#### 5.3.4. IT’S AN INTERNAL ISSUE!

Parallel to an external perspective – that of a museum’s “constituent communities” and the general public, as Simon (2010) points out, involvement and engagement are also an internal issue and perceptions of inner needs, wishes and possibilities must be taken into account. Throughout this pilot, it has become apparent that employees do not simply wish to be a small cog in a larger wheel. Rather, they would like their specific skills to be recognised and developed by their employer (as well as by visitors / users). This would mean, for example, that besides the usual information provided by the curators, expertise and topics from various sectors such as preservation, visitor services, and collection care etc., that they should be more strongly appreciated and included in museum communication (in the exhibition, in publication, public discussions and workshop talks, or the like) and included in the museum’s wider methodologies and documentation. This would not only demonstrate the diversity of the museum work but would also underline the importance of every department for the overall success of the institution.

Direct contact with diverse staff members could also potentially be very interesting and enlightening for the general public. Museums would be called to demonstrate a variety of faces, showing that they consist of various people with different ideas and experiences (in both the ‘here and now’ of the museum and in the ‘then and there’ of those spaces from where the collections originate or can be used).



The public could thus further interact with them. It is due to such encounters that people (both within and outside of the institution) can reflect, question and ascertain its vision of itself, and of its past, present and future. Such transparency could further support the transformation of the public perception of the museum as interlocutor rather than monolithic authority. Thus, the institution could enhance its reputation by being seen as approachable by various participants, visitors, users, staff members, and by offering itself as a community of diverse engaged people and an interlocutor and partner for exchange and action, showing (all) its faces.

Up until now, besides eyewitness reports, the explicit mention of authorship was rare in museums. Although those realising an exhibition are mentioned in print, museum employees were rarely associated with specific statements. This changes when the people behind the scenes become more present. By being more public-facing and exposed, their vulnerability will increase since they will experience the public's reaction more directly (and this might show a broad spectrum between support, acceptance and disapproval), thus, their responsibility towards the public, but also concerning the content of exhibits, can also grow. The personal and multi-perspectival presentation of narratives and ideas (provided by the museums staff as well as by laypeople or other external experts) and direct communication can be important procedures since they can help form a foundation for joint exchange and negotiation. Such openness would help to dismantle thresholds that may otherwise prevent or hinder museum visits or encounters, as it would reduce a sense of inequality, arrogance, inaccessibility or distance.

Again, within this context, the gender issue is central, especially in consideration of the history of these institutions. In the case of museums, the role of women has various dimensions. For a long time historically, these institutions were shaped by men, as directors, curators, collectors, researchers and ministers and local authorities. This is very significant since the absence of women or their concentration in certain sectors influenced all operational fields of the museum, especially the development, perception and presentation of collections. This is also an issue of representation. Ebeling (2016: 36) suggests that although women have been seen in temporary exhibitions somewhat more often since the 1970s, they are still not very present in permanent exhibitions, and, if so, only then often in connection with traditional gender stereotypes, for example as mothers or art objects. This is important because, as described, museums make a central contribution to the development of personal and, in particular, collective self-awareness and self-confidence. Furthermore, Ebeling explains that for long time women rarely held leading positions in museums. Here, the development continues, as current museum statistics reveal and figures show a trend towards a more balanced ratio (Institut für Museumsforschung, 2015: 53).<sup>84</sup>

Besides opening up to the public, paying attention to its diverse staff and its internal workings is another important example of the way in which museums can be seen to be developing new procedures for institutional communication and interaction, as well as enhancing cross-sector approaches and projects. In particular, the implementation of collaborative activities (both within the museum and between the museum and the general public) can provide the impetus for such changes to occur, as they often fall within the remit of different working areas. However, such development cannot be the sole responsibility of a single person, either at directorial level or among the employees: there needs to be a sustained, communal response for such changes to be ongoing and long lasting.

<sup>84</sup> While in 2002 the ratio was in the German museum that took part in the survey 36.4% (women) to 57.9% (men), in 2014 a ratio of 45.8% to 48.9% was reached (ibid.).





Here, the work at an administrative level should not be forgotten, as these employees have to constantly mediate between legal frameworks and the institution's current circumstances and needs. This staff will only have room for manoeuvre with regard to specific requirements if they have a broader understanding of the parameters of the other areas of work – those of the institution itself and those of partners whose work may be embedded in other types of structures. Here, staff can make helpful contributions to the realisation of collaborative activities by sharing and developing further their expertise beyond administrative approaches and their possibilities for action. Certainly, such a broader overview again requires more effort and more time.

This implies that the whole institution and its entire staff should be involved in the process; or, at the very least, they should agree to and be prepared for such development. An intensive flow of information, an involvement in decision processes and collaborative discussion and reflection are indispensable and can create a heightened sense of community. In this way, a museum's commonality is strengthened.

Building on this, the complexity and diversity of the museum's work can be communicated in a more multi-layered and accessible way. This can, in turn, enable the museum's "constituent communities" (and other potential stakeholders) to recognise and develop perspectives about the institution, and its ideas and working methods, to appreciate and discuss these endeavours, and, importantly, to build and support a relationship with it.

Commitment to the public and staff must therefore be an integral part of the museum, alongside engagement in the collections, scientific research and presentation of that research. It should also be part of discussions about and development of the museum's wider vision and mission. It is clear that each individual institution must critically analyse its general ambition and the room it has for manoeuvre, especially within a framework of what priorities it is setting in terms of the scope and intensity of its activities, objectives, addressees, programmes, media and methods (as well as of the implications of all these things within several different sectors). Such reflection can enable a self-assurance considering an institution's own aspirations and possibilities; however, at the same time, needs assessments must also be realised in order to find out the desires and needs of the different communities and the wider society in question. Such a double interrogation can form a basis for the development of a museum's mission statement, as well as of a clear strategy to include broader citizen involvement and engagement. This can then enable ongoing critical revision, discussion and further development of the institution's position and procedures, and of these procedures' impact and validity. While no doubt requiring great effort, courage and self-confidence, if such discussion can be conducted transparently and openly, it will be yet further enriching.

The consideration of a stronger involvement and engagement of the "constituent communities" in a museum's mission statement will also create the possibility of (and an urgency for) developing such activities beyond the framework of individual projects. This 'institutionalisation' would mean that such collaborative work would become a constant feature of the museum's overall offering and attitude. It is only in this way that activities can have a longer and more sustainable impact (an impact that also takes into account both their complex requirements and the high level of responsibility that they entail).



### **5.3.5. DIVERSIFICATION, EXTENSION, TRANSPARENCY AND NETWORK**

Diversification, extension, transparency, network: these aspects are strongly interrelated and concern almost all aspects of the museum, the “constituent communities” and other (potential) stakeholders, work procedures and the work flow, and collections and outcome.

Currently, due to lack of knowledge, time and funding resources, museum staff cannot fulfil all the expectations placed upon them concerning the desire for further interaction and accessibility, the need for special attention (language problems, disease, impairment). Further support is needed. Regarding the content and display of collections, for example, the poly-dimensional and multi-perspectival information developed with citizens and other social stakeholders could potentially fill this gap. However, such a diversification of information, an inclusion of a range of perspectives, experiences and expertise, could be perceived as less “scientific”, and more subjective, emotional and potentially contradictory: this could be a huge challenge for the institution itself as well as for (some) visitors since museums and other cultural institutions are ‘traditionally’ perceived as a place of authority, objectivity, clarity and stability. Emerging and emergent discussions from strands and themes raised here might lead to further public discussions and shifts in this view. In any case, it would give the public the opportunity to build points of view and relationships with objects, artefacts, collections and exhibition themes, and institutions etc. Thus, museums and their collections can strengthen the ways in which they become important places for comprehensive reflection. By opening themselves up as spaces for discussions on current and relevant topics, museums can become an active part of ongoing negotiations of wider social issues.

In addition, the consideration and inclusion of new types of interaction and information could change museum communication, dissemination, outcome and work flow. Further media and programming might be needed to present diverse expertise and experience in an appropriate way, but this in turn could lead to a reaching out to further groups and a wider audience.

Diversifying and extending perspectives, approaches and offers goes beyond the institution’s walls and can be further intensified by the change of location. Physically leaving the building and reaching out to communities is an opportunity for the museum to leave behind its traditional role as “host.” It can enable museum staff to overcome some structural and unequal pre-settings and to find themselves reflected within a new and different framework. It can give them the opportunity to find themselves in a new, different position and in direct contact with the community’s current circumstances and needs. New insights and familiarities can be gained, unexpected collaborations can emerge and new forms of exchange and communication can be developed.

This is a balancing act that has to be managed. Various expertise needs to be given appropriate space: this applies to both discussion of content around the creation and presentation of knowledge and narratives, as well as to formal and structural matters of governance. Ambiguity and polyphony must be accepted as decisions are negotiated. Here, institutions need the courage to open up to the positive potential of ambiguity (and, consequently, of friction and conflict).



This extended scope (concerning content, space, communication and dissemination, and programming) might help give a broader social basis to the work of the museum. This is important for the museum to be able to operate as an institution for its communities and society as a whole, to shape and constantly update the topics that it considers through its work and to maintain a strong connection with communities and society, in terms of both their present and their future.

Thus, a greater social network can be created. This may call for greater scrutiny as to what types and degrees of diversification and extension can be managed, how this development is related to the vision of the museum's "constituent communities," and if this engagement could be enhanced through cooperation with further partners by mutual support and synergetic effects.

Here, with a special focus on extension and diversification, a consideration of the museum's mission statement and strategy is also crucial. The museum's strategy and long-term vision must be diversified too, including new objectives and actions that can be designed, achieved and developed in the short (concentrated on specific activities and projects), medium and, by reviewing the vision again, in the long term. This would make the institution less vulnerable to societal developments or to serious unforeseeable events that would stop or / and change the museum work comprehensively (such as demographic shrinking, the 2015 migration or the COVID-19 situation in 2020).

#### **5.3.6. STRUCTURES**

Since the demands that museums are now confronted with both internally and externally (e.g. building and maintaining relationships with the "constituent communities" and other stakeholders, participating in and [co-]creating debate and interaction, offering a space and activities in order to enhance dialogue and exchange) are very complex and require extensive effort and time, it is evident that current structural framework conditions are not appropriate. New facilities, tools and skills must be developed, since long-term exchange and interaction with a wide range of stakeholders bring about very diverse additional needs and requirements.

The more extensive interaction, communication and relationship building with different groups becomes, the more urgent a museum's need for social competency. In particular, staff must be well trained in communication and mediation skills, as collaborative processes can include negotiation of conflict and failure. Frequently, teams can also be confronted with psychosocial challenges: the case studies here clearly show the potential vulnerability of groups involved and the need for greater support. It is clear that museum employees are not social workers. However, since social issues are gaining in importance in the museum work, it is therefore worthwhile considering the inclusion of such partners as mediators and multipliers.

Furthermore, considering their existing communication and interaction, institutions are already thinking beyond their own four walls. Consequently, tasks and procedures are evolving, expanding and offering further challenges. Technological development seems to make it easier to connect with the public. However, developing and maintaining appropriate communication channels and programmes is not that simple: specialised staff and partners have to be sought who can both apply technology in an appealing, creative and conducive manner that are appropriate for the museums' needs and also create suitable methods to reach out to and to interact with diverse communities (Fig. 21).



Figure 21: Discussions with representatives of educational media during the expert exchange “Islam, culture and history in educational media”

© Staatliche Museen Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst,  
photo: Anja Deller

In consequence, museum staff require further adapted training to fulfil these emerging requirements. Furthermore, new and additional assessment criteria concerning this new and emerging remit need to be developed in recruitment processes.

The areas listed above require a great deal of effort and special skills that institutions cannot fulfil alone. Instead they must seek cooperation with external stakeholders for the areas that they cannot adequately cover themselves. From this, further cooperation, partnership and mutual support arises which in turn can yet further increase the museum’s network, perhaps even with more unexpected partners. New cross-disciplinary, multi-local and / or multi-media partnerships can emerge and help meet the wide range of needs and expectations. Here, a great degree of exchange, communication, and ongoing evaluation, is required.

At present, the existing structures seem to hardly do any justice to this new growth and somewhat rigid framework conditions seem to be creating difficulties for such activities and their development. The larger ‘room for manoeuvre’ that institutions need for sustaining programmes of engagement does not fit primarily into the fiscal period. For instance, such initiatives often develop their own dynamics, which can collide with given time schedules (especially since the exact course and results of such interactions are often not foreseeable in advance and can shift considerably). It is difficult to draw up timetables with concrete objectives, especially if project partners come from very different contexts and the processes of understanding and collaborative thinking undertaken require more time and support in every phase of the project’s development. Furthermore, the pre-determining of objectives as a central aspect of each application somewhat contradicts the nature of participation.

Additionally, museums have to be able to react promptly to current circumstances, to continue to support and implement successful initiatives. Constantly repeating short-term applications for funding is something of a hindrance. Moreover, if institutions are able to think and plan in less rigid and more diverse time periods, they may have more flexibility: and this is important because of the less predictable nature of the dynamics and flows of collaborative engagement processes.



Museums would then have more scope to devise new, evolving strategies and to develop their vision and mission statements with collaborative engagement in mind.

Furthermore, the pre-set temporal rigidity of current structures and frameworks contradicts the long-term nature of community work and of relationship building. Sustainability is endangered if it is always unclear whether or not activities can be further development, whether more funds are available to continue and build on the work and whether there is a familiar, reliable contact person at the institution over a longer period of time. Therefore, even funding programmes should ideally be developed in consultation with stakeholder organisations and in correspondence with the needs and circumstances of the communities in question. In addition, it must be recognised that the implementation of such activities also represents an extension of a cultural institution's core work, and this implies additional effort and greater complexity. There must be a common recognition not only of engagement itself but also of the greater resources needed to cover new requirements and demands. Decisions on budgeting should correspond to - and allow for - the particularities of this type of work.

Along with the particular frameworks in which museums find themselves, one should also consider the general circumstances in which they are operating. Since commitment should be aimed towards the general public, suitable conditions here would be that everyone who wants to should be able to engage with culture, regardless of social, cultural or economic background. However, the most recent survey of the Commission on Equal Living Conditions verifies an uneven commitment in Germany. In rural, structurally weak and eastern German regions especially, engagement becomes increasingly fragile (BMFSJ, 2020). Therefore, possibilities should be explored whether - and to what extent - more flexible or extended forms of engagement and improved funding could be developed to broaden the general willingness to engage and to reach a wider range of people.

In view of the lack of suitable framework conditions, the establishment of central facilities that can support engagement in a more needs-oriented manner and further promote it as a general public issue seems worth considering. Such agencies could provide multi-disciplinary assistance by offering recommendations, connecting diverse stakeholders, coordinating activities, developing methodological toolkits, etc. which should take into account all stakeholders and be accessible for all of them – institutions and public (and potential partners). However, it should also go beyond this by helping to develop strategic settings. Such agencies should also have options of action at political level, developing considerations around more flexible and/or expanded structures and improved funding, and providing recommendations and action plans.

Offices or initiatives dedicated to engagement considering civic involvement and participation already exist at a local level. Often, they are located at district offices. Being close to their communities, they take local characteristics into account and can build networks in accordance with specific local needs and desires. It is important that they can operate cross-departmentally and cross-hierarchically.

Nevertheless, if civic engagement is a general goal, then stakeholders must also have the option to act at higher levels. A recent development points in this direction. For instance, the German Government is planning the establishment of the Deutsche Stiftung für Engagement und Ehrenamt (German Foundation for Engagement and Volunteering) at the highest political level (BMFSJ, 2020).



As it seems designed as a mere information point, it remains to be seen to what extent it will really promote engagement and involvement; whether its framework will be extended beyond volunteer work and the BFD; and how it will actually be responsive to diverse contexts, stakeholders and needs, for example.

Establishing such structures for involvement and engagement could then also affect wider administrative (and political) frameworks as new cross-departmental structures and collaborative, flexible procedures would be required.

Since dealing with cultural heritage is not uniquely a local issue, there should be consideration of whether current regulations, structures and frameworks are congenial to supra-regional collaborations and what further / other provisions might be required. It is perhaps clear in any case that common principles, applicable or comparable at supra-regional, national, and international level, are needed.

Thus, the demand and wish for stronger citizen engagement and involvement, for mutual acceptance and appreciation, and for the insight that comes from shared responsibilities and visions, is an issue that concerns not only the museum world, but also the whole of global society.

Turning back to the particular focus of this pilot - citizen involvement in cultural heritage institutions - it is important to highlight the significance of this broader basis as a *sine qua non* condition. Appreciation and commitment are demanded at various levels from museum management and staff to key stakeholders to the general public to politicians. This affirmation is meant in a double sense: it concerns a wider acknowledgment of the importance of civic involvement and engagement as well as recognition of the social significance of culture and cultural heritage. The absence of one party from this vision could make all efforts and endeavours difficult, or even impossible. If culture forms the basis of society and community, then interacting with cultural assets - and discussing and negotiating the meaning of such manifestations in the public sphere - must be supported and appreciated. This can then be seen as an essential contribution to the wider evolution of that societies and communities.

In terms of the museum's own institutional development, it is important to look to how current societal situations are characterised by a deep need for social meeting, exchange and collaboration. Here, not only can the museum offer itself as a physical place for such encounters, but it can also offer the multi-layered perspectives of its staff and collections as starting points for these encounters. Mutual acknowledgement, respect and interest between institution, staff and visitor can help reduce power asymmetries and champion accessibility: these factors are essential in building such valuable relationships that might then become much long-term partnerships.

#### **5.4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THIS PILOT**

The aim of this project was to observe participatory activities in cultural heritage institutions in order to gain an understanding of the current situation, of the objectives and motives of current initiatives, of the people involved and of the various contexts in which they operate. Of special concern has been the *impact* of such activities on museums, on participants and on the overall social environment. These insights were gained directly through visits, interviews, talks and participatory observation.



On this basis, the pilot began to identify characteristics that could either favourably influence or hinder the implementation of participatory activities and that could strengthen, stimulate or reduce civic involvement and engagement. As such, it can begin to make a case for the potential impact of such activities on the museum sector, its communities and wider society.

It is beyond the remit of this pilot to discuss the whole spectrum of citizen involvement and engagement in museums. Due to its long expertise and its extensive network, the Institut für Museumsforschung focused this study mainly on museums in Germany and the focus of interest was placed on local and interpersonal interactions. As is shown in chapter 4, this sharp focus itself necessitates the inclusion of a complex range of activities involving various stakeholders and extending the traditional museum core tasks of collecting, preserving, researching, documenting, exhibiting, interpreting, transmitting and communicating. Furthermore, the selection of case studies here enabled the research team to discover and analyse a multitude of frameworks and circumstances, and the influence of diverse contexts on the implementation of such activities.

The prioritising of activities in a physical space located in or nearby the museum was suitable since it enabled the team to draw out their findings from direct talks with the diverse parties involved and from participatory observation. Moreover, this research corresponded with the REACH project's wider aim of achieving further insight into the impact of participatory work on local communities and societal cohesion. However, it was not possible in all cases to meet representatives from all the parties involved: for instance, at the ISL, it was not possible to be in contact with participants of TAMAM or GV – GZ or the project partners (e.g. youth clubs, Stadtteilmütter, representatives of the mosque communities [including the people responsible for youth and cultural work], young people). Nor does this study include detailed scrutiny of the activities and their results as perceived by the people indirectly involved e.g. visitors to the HdG or the ISL, parents of participating children (GV – GZ), young people from the mosque communities (TAMAM), the public of Wolfen, Wittenberg and Berlin or other local cultural and social stakeholders. This would have been a further important feature that may have enhanced conclusions concerning the impact of these activities by providing insights from even more diverse perspectives. This would have been particularly meaningful since the activities in the museums, especially the participatory activities discussed at length here, are always a multilateral affair, where all interests, abilities and possibilities must be taken into account. Accordingly, research about such activities must, ideally, incorporate these multi-layered perspectives. However, while aware of such 'shortcomings' for gathering additional data on wider impact, this pilot does point to significant areas of potential impact for both the institutions and communities involved.

Since community work is a long-term endeavour, attendance and observation has to be conceived as a long-term project, too. A longer-term study would enable a collection of yet more reliable data, and an identification of shifts and trends. However, given the project's timescale, while the long-term impact of such activities cannot yet be seen, this pilot certainly points to several areas of potential impact for institutions, their communities and wider society.

Each activity pointed to a variety of implications and dimensions that needed to be considered in their analysis. In the context of this pilot and deliverable, while it was not possible to address all aspects equally, the different visits to the museums and the observations of each initiative led to new and significant questions being raised: What form of participation does a volunteer service actually offer?



To what extent do projects support museums and help them to develop their core museum work further? Is it possible to synchronise or beneficially use different systems of thought and action (regarding specific requirements of / for processes / procedures that are particular to each party involved and include specific short-, middle- and long-term implications)?

The initial idea was to use this pilot as a basis for developing recommendations and guidelines for museums to support them in implementing participatory work. This was very much welcomed by the institutions visited and it has become clear that museums need broader support for their commitment to participatory work, not only in financial terms, but also in terms of selecting content and methodologies. Due to the very diverse situations and the high complexities of collaborative interactions examined in this pilot, wide generalisability is not possible (and indeed would require further exchanges with the institutions), but the pilot does point toward several indispensable prerequisites for implementing participatory work:

- a common approach and shared responsibility from museums, the general public and political bodies
- an inclusion of methods for active and collaborative work with cultural heritage into a museum's overall strategy
- an inclusion of methods for active and collaborative work with cultural heritage into different policy fields.

The general benefits of such activities ought to be recognised and appreciated, especially by politicians and political bodies, and appropriate frameworks be developed. Collaborative work is not necessarily a new method as concerns museum work, but further consideration of and support for it requires new procedures for politics.

As the case studies show, lasting change and impact can only be realised by vivid and vibrant exchange. Over the course of this pilot, while it was not possible to carry out further (longer-term or follow-up) visits to the institutions or projects, the SPK team have managed to stay in contact with the team in Wolfen; in addition to participation in the REACH project workshop on institutionalised heritage, IFM was also invited to present at the final conference of sister project Kaleidoscope<sup>85</sup>. It has therefore been possible to develop a close relationship with the Wolfen team. The IFM management has perceived this collaboration as very beneficial since the director was able to have the opportunity to present the project and to develop it further due to further exchanges with the SPK and other colleagues over the course of the various networking events. With the insights he has now gained, the director feels a greater enthusiasm and drive towards extending the IFM's participatory work. Indeed, the exchange with the institution's staff and with participants / volunteers, has revealed that they are appreciative of the attention that they experienced throughout this study. The museums and project managers have demonstrated a great interest in the results of this pilot and in continuing these exchanges in order to improve and extend their offers. It has become clear that colleagues have a great need both of support for their projects and for joint reflections on their ideas concerning their possibilities of action and societal impact. As with the activities examined, this study had an emotional and also an intellectual value for the interlocutors and the SPK team. Its broader impact might further be perceivable in the future.

85 Kaleidoscope, final conference, URL:<https://www.photoconsortium.net/50s-in-europe-kaleidoscope-final-conference/>, accessed winter 2019 / 2020.





## 5.5. REACH PROJECT EVALUATION

The full title of the REACH project is RE-designing Access to Cultural Heritage for a wider participation in preservation, (re-)use and management of European culture. The Institutional heritage pilot has explored the management of heritage collections, the preservation and sharing of tangible and intangible culture and, through the changing nature of institutions to become more collaborative spaces (in line with the revised ICOM definition), the innovative (re-)use of museums for the benefit of stakeholders and society.

D3.1 – *Participatory models*<sup>86</sup> - evaluated the results of the assessment of prior projects and messages from REACH conference and workshop presentations and drew a number of conclusions. One of the roles of each of the four project pilots was to test them, to see how applicable they were in very different fields of cultural heritage. Although the following points are brief summaries taken from those conclusions, it is possible to identify themes that feature in the Institutional Heritage Pilot:

- cultural heritage participatory activities are often overlooked, but have intrinsic, economic and societal benefits
- they must be promoted as an asset rather than a liability, and as an investment instead of a cost

Museums have always valued cultural heritage, but rather than preaching to the public, as in the past, they are now trying to engage with people, through the creation of spaces of dialogue. They are investing time and effort to change traditional perspectives of museums, to promote heritage as a meaningful societal feature and to initiate discussions on a wide range of topics to benefit their communities. This is not an easy process and requires flexible thinking and changes of approaches both internally and externally, including developing new relationships with multiple agencies, to offer new and enhanced services.

- cultural heritage participatory activities can boost confidence, build transferable, soft and work-related skills, leading to positive attitudes
- for activities to become transformative, both short- and longer-term plans / strategies are needed to embed activities
- they need to involve local people in planning and decision-making phases to maximise benefits

The three case studies have confirmed the validity of these statements. Participation, on a voluntary basis, has given people the opportunity to interact with others, to gain experience and confidence. Naturally, individuals will have to work hard to take advantage of these chances (both intellectually and emotionally). In situations where participants are given responsibility and involved in decision-making, they are able to demonstrate more critical reflection and enhanced interpersonal skills. The case studies also highlight the disadvantage of having time-restricted roles, as potential cannot be fully developed and opportunities are lost.

86 REACH Deliverable D3.1 – *Participatory Models*, chapter 6, URL: <https://www.reach-culture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/REACH-D3.1-Participatory-Models.pdf>, accessed spring 2020.



- do not restrict the scope of activity from the start, let it develop to find its own pathway and conclusions.

It could be argued that it is difficult for institutions to not be restricted within activities, especially where funding has been applied for and certain criteria has to be met and reported on, or even for initiatives and collections that are time restricted. Of course, this is true, but this deliverable has shown that museums are now operating in a new environment that involves a wider group of stakeholders in decision making and defining future operations. What has become apparent is that joint interactions have opened up new, unexpected and unconsidered pathways that have been able to go beyond the initially defined objective.

D3.1 also considered different types of cultural heritage related participatory models. Three have been selected from that list that particularly fit with institutional heritage:

- Intergenerational – sharing of traditions, stories, memory, oral histories
- Community – workshops, demonstration, role-play, non-formal education to both share and challenge perceptions
- Online – exhibitions and social media.

For all case studies, a key feature has been a less formal approach. In Wittenberg and in Wolfen, the non-academic method has appealed to the local audiences and for ISL their guided tours were designed more to initiate a wider societal debate than to discuss the intricacies of objects and collections. Moving away from traditional presentations and approaches to use collections as inspirational starting points can help to reach broader and more diverse audiences and engage with them on an emotional level.

The pilot has also shown the relationship of people to cultural heritage(s) and the potential of and need for adapting new and foreign cultural features as (part of) their own heritages. This is very particular for the museum sector, especially as collections do not necessarily have a direct link with local people (due to temporal, spatial, mental and cultural distances).

Although interaction and participation with the means of digital tools are not a significant focus of this work, the analysis of web presence and social media has produced interesting results. Despite the successful efforts of institutions to become more inclusive and to engage with ever-broader sectors of the population, this endeavour is not always reflected in its digital footprint. A number of projects and initiatives are not incorporated onto main websites and details are only available through specific, activity level, social media channels. For institutions to become stronger community hubs, using foremost conventional approaches and highlighting traditional themes and collections does not help to change the perceptions of wider society and its interaction and exchange with the institution. However, it should be remembered that very often a lack of engagement with digital and social media on the part of the institution is due to an ongoing and steep learning curve for them and also a lack of resources, specific training and knowledge as to how museums can use these platforms most effectively.



Although brief introductory statements are presented here, it is acknowledged that this is a nuanced debate that draws on highly personal perspectives. They are therefore useful starting points for wider consideration, something that the REACH project, as a social platform, is keen to initiate.

D3.1 loosely grouped the REACH pilots into pairs:

1) Minority and Rural heritage

- complex community relationships, built on trust, with a desire for a bottom-up approaches, but not always having the authority to fulfil objectives

2) Institutions and Small towns' heritage

- although innovating, a more traditional, restricted approach is taken (due to laws, rules and regulations); there may need to be top-down initiation to enable activities to begin.

Through the lens of the arguments made in this deliverable the second point can be challenged. Institutions (that are not only museums) can be active in diverse milieus and thus have wider connections. Furthermore, they can emerge from the engagement of these milieus e.g. HdG and IFM were founded by associations and the PFLUG e.V. association is still running the museum. So, community engagement can become institutionalised. The dividing line is not clear each and every time.

D3.1 described participatory characteristics of the REACH pilot, in terms of top-down and bottom-up approaches. This differentiation needs to consider a series of processes including phases with diverse potentials for role setting and for the intensity / scope of participation. Furthermore, it is important to take into account that engagement is based on (voluntary) willingness (that might be individual and / or collective) from diverse sides. Therefore, in every circumstance there needs to be clarity as to the desires and requirements of each party to demand / to offer / to contribute / to decide etc. The assessment would need to be proven thoroughly in every circumstance (in the evaluation of existing activities or in the planning that could differ between sectors and even countries). In the ISL examples, the framework was designed by the museum in correspondence with the funding programmes and the implementation was a mostly collaborative work where decisions were made together, primarily in correspondence with the needs of the participants. However, for IFM and HdG, participants are not currently interested in participating in management or other decision-making processes. Since everyone has their own objectives, interaction is a lot more complex than a simple comparison of bottom-up or top-down methodologies. In this sense, the definition of participatory heritage, outlined in section 2.3.1, takes on a greater resonance, with the initiation and shaping of activities taking place from below, but not independent from the institution that would help to initiate and support activities.

As the project set out to test participatory approaches to cultural heritage, through four very different pilots that worked in different sectors and political environments, a final task for the project will be to compare findings. This activity will be described in one of the final deliverables of the REACH project: *D3.3 – Project evaluation report.*



## **6. CONCLUSION**

This deliverable has discussed participatory activities in museums with a special focus on Germany. Nevertheless, the wider research undertaken here has opened up the overall picture with useful insights from other regions. This study has provided an opportunity to give an overview on the historical development of civic involvement and engagement in museums. It has become clear that participation has always been inherent in the museum's work. In addition, it has been possible to reflect comprehensively on what participation means, particularly in terms of its social significance, and to shed light on the highly complex and diverse structures of references of museums, of participation and of participatory activities in museums. These diverse structures concern multi-dimensional spaces between participants, museums, cultural heritage collections and the general public.

The three case studies underline how historical-cultural collections are of great value for the communities and societies since, because of their multi-layered and multi-functional nature, they can be used as starting points for very diverse interactions and discussions on relevant and current social issues. In addition, they show that collaborative interactions and exchanges around cultural assets are of great importance for the critical development of individual and societal self-awareness and the self-confidence that makes the evolution of feelings of belonging and togetherness possible. However, the ambiguous nature of culture and working with cultural heritage should not be concealed as cultural work can potentially also promote and strengthen dissociation and exclusion.

These collective activities enable experiences that reach beyond one's own everyday horizons. Besides such valuable experiences, collective moments support the development of social and communication skills that can help different parties negotiate differences and ambiguities. It is clear that both individual and collective impact depends on the attitudes and dispositions of each party and person involved. Nonetheless, interactions between people and tangible / intangible cultural heritage provide intellectual, emotional and social impetus for understanding oneself both as an individual and as a member of larger collectives (communities and society). The types of engagement with museums outlined here can further foster such thought processes; through a mutual and respectful interaction with the institution, those involved can begin to feel a greater significance, relevance and validity both personally and within wider society.

This pilot shows that collaborative activities help to build mutual awareness between people, museums and their cultural heritage. Such interactions are extremely beneficial for the development of mutual understanding, respect and responsibility, which are fundamental requirements in terms of individual and community welfare. The relevance of both cultural heritage and cultural heritage institutions, and collaborative activities between cultural heritage institutions and different communities and wider society can thus be confirmed and should not be under-estimated.

With the help of these three central case studies, it has been possible to discuss diverse frameworks and structures and their potential for improvement and extension. Thus, this study points out the large number of determining factors implied when interacting with cultural heritage is considered to be a core feature of communal and societal interaction, e.g. the broad range of parties potentially involved and the wide spectrum of possible activities.



Due to a multiplicity of references, the participatory activities in question reveal further complexities in terms of impact on diverse levels - collections, institutions, museum content, staff, participants, constituent and potential communities and wider society. It has become clear that each case study has its own set of particular conditions and circumstances and it is difficult to generalise from these. Rather, an openness towards looking at the specificity of each institution and interaction is to be encouraged.

It was of particular importance for this pilot to address the issue of the sustainability of such activities and, in particular, of their impact. It must be noted that many of these initiatives are carried out within a fixed project framework programme, which is rather unfavourable for and may even obstruct the development of sustained engagement. Moreover, collaborative and participatory activities can only be implemented and consolidated if all parties involved (museums, "constituent communities," politicians, wider society) work together to promote and strengthen them.

The insights gained during the execution of this pilot can therefore be seen to make very valuable contribution to further debates around the societal significance of cultural heritage and its promotion. To such discussions, this pilot adds useful reflections on the management of cultural heritage. Reflections on how and why collaborative and participatory activities can promote interaction, discussion and negotiation with and around cultural heritage underline the relevance of both cultural heritage, and interacting with it, as core societal features. Additionally, the thinking that is offered here can also explain how institutions can support, enrich and stimulate these collective exchanges and, through such engagement, experience further development themselves.

Finally, with regard to the special consideration of the REACH project's wider aims, this pilot shows that institutions are a particularly important feature of the project, as they are often linked to very different cultural heritage milieus, such as minority communities, rural communities, small towns, etc. They can succeed in connecting different spheres and therefore in supporting or initiating cross-sector activities. In spite of their perhaps traditionally negative image, museums have the potential to become reliable and responsive partners and interlocutors, as well as reference points for their communities and societies.

The combination of the different outcomes of REACH's diverse activity fields provides a sound understanding of the significance and impact of collaborative and participatory interactions with cultural heritage, and of the diverse benefits such interactions can have for communities, be that on a local, regional, national and/or international level. Since it regards such activities as both a constructive and necessary societal issue, this pilot therefore provides a valuable and useful foundation for multi-level recommendations for how to promote, facilitate, strengthen and perpetuate such engagement within a cultural heritage institutional context.



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## APPENDIX: INSTITUTIONS, PROJECTS, EVENTS

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## **APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

BAFzA - Bundesamt für Familie und zivilgesellschaftliche Aufgaben (Federal Office for Family and Civic Affairs)

BFD – Bundesfreiwilligendienst (Federal Voluntary Service)

BFD 27+ – Federal Voluntary Service for people older than 27

BMFSJ – Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)

BMI – Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community)

COVUNI – Coventry University

DMB – Deutschen Museumsbund (German Museum Association)

FDR – Federal Republik of Germany

GDR – German Democratic Republic

HdG – Haus der Geschichte (House of History)

ICMAH – ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Archaeology and History

ICME – ICOM International Committee for Museums of Ethnography

ICOM – International Council of Museums

IFM – Industrie- und Filmmuseum (Industry and Film Museum)

ISL – Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum for Islamic Art)

GLAM – Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums

GV – GZ – Gemeinsame Vergangenheit – Gemeinsame Zukunft (Shared Past – Shared Future)

FLUG e.V. – Projektgemeinschaft Frauen, Landwirtschaft, Umwelt & Gesellschaft, eingetragener Verein (Project Community Women, Agriculture, Environment and Society, incorporated association)

ORWO – Original Wolfen

SMB-PK – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin State Museums – Prussian Cultural Heritage)

SPK – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation)

UMAC – ICOM International Committee for University Museums and Collections

WW – World War