HOW TO MAKE CULTURE COMPREHENSIBLE

Comparative case study of popularisation activities at the Louvre in Paris and the Historiska Museet in Stockholm

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This thesis is the third work of this sort that I got to write during my studies. Writing acknowledgements is therefore something I am no stranger to, but I find it hard every time not to forget one of the many people that support me through it.

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Title

How to make culture comprehensible: Comparative case study of popularisation activities at the Louvre in Paris and the Historiska Museet in Stockholm.

Abstract

This work is a qualitative comparative case study of popularizing activities at the *Louvre* in Paris (2015-2019) and the *Historiska Museet* in Stockholm (1999-2005). Throughout a press content analysis, the two museums' take and initiative to promote the intelligibility of cultural knowledge is decrypted and then compared. This thesis shows how different standards and conceptions lead to a more conservative and artefact-related popularisation at the *Louvre* while the *Historiska Museet* aimed to make knowledge available to spark democratic debates. To popularise science is also shown as a break from more traditionalist views of the museum, as it means to focus on the publics and adapt the content of the exhibitions. It also shows how, through popularisation activities, museums can be another way to connect researchers and museums publics. Furthermore, this thesis reflects on the educative mission of museums and how this affects their role and identity.

Keywords

Introduction

Museums are, on the scale of human history, a relatively new phenomenon. The modern museum emerged only somewhere between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century but still, these institutions became central in society. Over the last 200 years, the number of museums has drastically increased to meet the political and societal demands for broader access to art, culture, and history. These demands have also changed significantly, therefore affecting the roles that museums were asked to take on, with equality of access and representation becoming central in the modern museum (Bennet, 2013). Since the apparition of museology as an academic discipline, researchers and specialists have been trying to answer this question: What are the roles of museums? One understands easily that there are no simple and direct answers, as this is not up to some people to decide. The roles of museums are something intricate to the very nature of these institutions, something that comes from these ever-changing political and societal demands. Museums are tools, used for cultural policy purposes and used by the publics for entertainment and education, and these are factors that naturally influence and affect the missions of the different museum institutions. But one generally well-established role of the museum since the birth of the modern institution, and accepted by both the public and political sphere, is the educational mission of the museums (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Museums are a recipient of knowledge and a vessel for the transmission of this knowledge to a broader audience. Research, whether directly conducted by the museum or within the academic world, can and should be present at the museum.

To that extent, museums have for a long time held a hegemonic position in which transmission of academic knowledge outside of the school system was mainly dominated by these institutions. However, in the age of new media, access to information through digital tools has greatly increased, challenging the dominating position of museums. Museums' publics are a broad range of people with different social and political backgrounds, and public museums are required by law to try and address a wide variety of people. This is even a legal requirement as public museums should be a place for everyone. The academic world is called upon to communicate more actively, to take a more important place in the public debate (Bourguignon, 2018). To do so, there needs to be a place that can link the academic world and the publics. Museums, with their experience and resources, could very well be the solution, turning them into an arena for democratic debate and exchange. However, the question remains: how can museums mediate the work of researchers that have been specialists in their field for all their professional life?

Background

The traditional view of museums' educational mission is therefore that of a link between a producer of knowledge and a recipient. Museums are however not conducting a passive work of transmitting knowledge: they interpret it, explain it and exhibit it to reach out to large audiences that do not hold prior knowledge (Graf, et al., 2016, p. 45). This pedagogical process of making scientific knowledge available for non-initiated audiences, by clarifying and sometimes even simplifying it, is known as popularisation. Science popularisation is a concept as old as museums themselves. This phenomenon is first observed in curiosity cabinets that flourished throughout 16th century Europe. Back then science popularisation was about bringing the extraordinary, the exotic from this early scientific world, often mixed with legends and myths, to catch the attention and enthral the visitor (Carminati, 2016). Science popularisation also develops with the early spread of printed books and the enlightenments philosophers who were among the first to attach more importance to the education of the common man. It is seen as a characteristic of the humanist philosopher and scientist: research is to be transmitted, and there is a mission to educate. Science popularisation's golden age happened during the 19th century when, through the spread of the press, a broader audience gained access to scientists' works (Lagarde, 2009, p. 139). As more European countries made school mandatory, the rate of literacy raised among the people, making it possible for a greater number to gain access to popularized articles about science and knowledge. Lagarde (2009, p. 143) argues that, in the second half of the 19th century, science became a trend and that to read and learn was more a proof of social status. To read about science was seen as healthy leisure, something that created a demand for more accessible information about what happened behind the walls of universities. Among the institutions that worked actively with answering this demand for broader access to scientific content were the public museums and libraries that spread throughout Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries: these places were accessible and attractive, and they pursued further the idea of recreational learning of science (Carminati, 2016).

Within the research field of popularisation activities, many opinions and perspectives are at play. This is already reflected in the different terms that are used to discuss popularisation. From one researcher to another, but even from one language to another, different words are used to describe the same process. In French, the word *vulgarisation* is more frequent, but it is probably more loaded in the sense that it is the same word that was used to describe the enlightenment ideals of universal science. The word vulgarisation exists also naturally in English, but it is not as frequently used. Many other terms are often used such as informal education, scientific dissemination, science communication, and science mediation, in newer publications on the topic. Schiele and Jacobi (1990, p. 81) determine that from a linguistic perspective, it is the word vulgarisation that defines best what all these different processes have in common in French: to try and mediate cultural and technical science to non-specialists. In that sense, I think

that the word that best describes the practices studied in this thesis in English is popularisation, as it is defined as the act of "making something known and understood by ordinary people" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). A similar definition of vulgarisation can be found, but the term popularisation seemed to be preferred to it, surely because vulgarisation comes with the instant association to vulgarity, a pejoratively connoted term. Furthermore, the Swedish word *popularisering* shares the same etymology as the English one, and it should simplify the understanding of the key elements of this thesis. It might be however confusing for a reader with a better understanding of the current research field. Popularisation is often left aside, as science communication and science mediation are more common. These words are more often used by people with links or even working for cultural institutions, and my understanding of it is that they are better-merchandising words. To communicate or mediate is a better selling argument than to popularise, as the word is often associated with popularity in the meaning of something that is liked. Maybe these words are clearer to some, but I would argue that popularisation is the most adapted term for this thesis, and it is also my belief that the readers will understand why after reading this clarification.

Thesis and purpose statement

This thesis aims to understand how science popularisation takes place in different museums. The foundation of this work is a qualitative comparative study of two cases: the *Musée du Louvre* in Paris and the *Historiska Museet* in Stockholm. The goal is to describe how museums can apply different methods and ideas to transmit and explain academic knowledge, as well as see similarities in different contexts. This could also shed light upon the role of modern museums and the ideological influences that affect these institutions. The role of museums and their place in our society is often discussed and understanding how they can assume the position as a link between academics and the publics will help to understand the ambiguities of the modern museum, especially in relation to political impingement. In o

Research questions

- What can museums do to popularize science and how does it fit within museums' role as a centre for transmission of knowledge?
- How do cultural policies and researchers affect popularisation?
- How can museums build on their legitimacy to convey knowledge?

Literature and previous research

In this chapter, I will provide a non-exhaustive list of works that have inspired and guided this thesis. Not only does this part shows on what grounds this work stand, but I believe it can also function as a second introduction that will help the reader understand better the different problems and challenges that are specific to museum education and scientific popularisation. It will also provide a summarised overview of the research field to which this thesis aims to contribute.

Literature about museum education

I consider popularisation activities to be a part of museums' educational programs. The notion of transmission of popularised knowledge is of course indissociable from museum pedagogy and in that optic, I will below present some of the most influential contributions to this field.

In a chapter called "Museum Education" (2006), George Hein presents three distinct missions of the modern museum: the aesthetical mission, the social mission, and the educational mission. He explains that the museum's educational mission has become more and more important throughout the years and started occupying a prominent place that it did not occupy, even 70 years ago. Hein illustrates this argument by pointing out that up to 50% of all employees in larger museums can work as education staff, carrying out a wide array of tasks in a field that is changing rapidly and always expanding. According to the author, the main paradigm shift in museum education is that learning does not come only from museum artefacts and how they are exhibited but also from the visitors' background and their interpretation of an item and its context. In that sense, modern museum education aims to leave more space for the visitor and their ideas, rather than proposing a homogenous and uniform narrative for visitors to assimilate.

Eva Insulander (2005) produced a study on the state of academic research on museum pedagogy in the early 2000s. In her contribution, she states that museums' publics have changed, and that the day of the initiated museum visitor is over. She mainly attributes this to the fact that cultural policies have had a more important role in the evolution of the museum. Just like George Hein, she underlines the newly acquired importance of museum pedagogy for modern institutions. However, she also notes that there are only a few studies published in Sweden that focuses on this topic, contrary to other occidental countries. In that sense, it seems logical to discuss primarily international research, as this field is more developed.

One such study that discusses pedagogy and its place in the museum in a Swedish context is Carl-Johan Svensson's *Festligt, Folkligt, fullsatt?* (2014). In this Ph.D. dissertation, Svensson studies the example of the *Historiska Museet*'s public activities throughout the year. In the fifth chapter, he focuses on Kristian Berg's mandate as museum director. In that sense, this is the closest publication to my thesis that exists and that I know of. In this monograph, the author focuses on debates that emerged around the exhibitions and pedagogical activities at the *Historiska Museet*. He analyses the critics of Kristian Berg and his responses and sees how the director tried to create a more equal museum, with a more active role in a democratic social debate. He opposes a linear conception of the museum's work in which research and conservation activities create pedagogical material to Berg's conception in which pedagogical activities are central and affect research and conservation as well. Svensson considers the latest to be a more modern way of functioning for museums, in which the diversity of the publics and their needs and demands directly affect the institution and its other intern activities.

Palmyre Pierroux, in a chapter named "Learning and engagement in museum mediascapes" (2019), develops further the notion of museum education as the act of offering the possibility for visitors to make their meaning of an artefact or a fact. Pierroux sees museum pedagogy as something that profoundly opposes traditional school education in a way that visitors often come without a specific learning agenda. However, because of this relative freedom in learning as it is done within museums, the author identifies the main challenge of modern museum pedagogy as the capacity to catch and keep the visitor's attention. To do so, different factors are highlighted in this chapter. First, visitors need to feel that the proposed material is relevant to them in relation to their background. This means that the visitors need to have an interest in an artefact and the story it tells. Then, visitors need to engage in the learning process in an active fashion. To achieve engagement, the author sees media support as the most efficient way to propose active engagement with minimal effort from the visitors. Finally, Pierroux discusses cultural correspondence, which is the ability to propose material that is adapted to the visitor's previous knowledge of a specific subject. It is very difficult to achieve as every visitor comes with a different set of prior knowledge, and the author, therefore, argues that this should handle more about helping the visitor understand what knowledge they possess and what they do not know.

Finally, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, who is one of the most influential authors in the field of museum pedagogy, published a book called *Museums and Education in the 21ˢᵗ century* (2007). In this monography, she studies how political, cultural, and social critics have pushed museums to rethink their roles and their educational mission. She presents two conceptions of what museum education is, the first one being that museum pedagogy is the work done by the specialist staff at museums while the second considers that everything that is done at a museum

has an educational purpose. Learning is a constant process when one visits a museum. But, according to Hooper-Greenhill, it is also unconscious learning that can remain latent for years, making it hard to study the outcomes of museum educational activities. Learning, she says, often takes place in a non-verbal way, where the visitor can assimilate what makes sense for them, meaning that bits of information can be assimilated to create an ensemble of knowledge. She also discusses education state policies, explaining that museums are often seen as a tool by authorities to promote alternate learning for visitors with a more limited academical background or lower social status. This implies funding and logistical support from public authorities but also pressure and high expectations for the museums to deliver more framed and governed material to fulfil the state's political plan. The authors consider that state intervention and influence in museum education programs can be seen as restrictive but should also be considered as positive as museums became accountable to the outside world and were forced to proceed to self-critic exercises that, Hooper-Greenhill believes, were beneficial for the institutions.

Literature about scientific popularisation

Scientific popularisation is however not a phenomenon that only happens within a museum context. This process can be studied independently by public institutions. In this part, I will present some of the main research produces about popularisation, both in and outside museums.

One of the main authors that helped me understand scientific popularisation and the challenges and problems that it raises is Bernard Schiele from the University of Montréal. His areas of study cover among other topics scientific popularisation and non-formal education in society.

In his article "Les enjeux cachés de la vulgarisation scientifique"[1] (1983), Schiele discusses true scientific processes and popularisation processes, seeing the first one as giving legitimacy to scientific truth, but accepting that popularisation, by making research accessible gives it another social legitimacy. However, Schiele sees popularisation activities, when restricted to a way of legitimizing science by making it accessible, as a process that makes science marketable in a market-based society. In that sense, he adheres to critical theory's take on the capitalist influence of culture production. The author believes that these activities influence opinion more than the true scientific process does and that by being this other canal of education, it could therefore become more influential than traditional academical production. He argues therefore for a redefinition of popularisation, as an activity not conceived only in relation to academic research, but autonomous. Indeed, he states that while academic research aims to produce knowledge, popularisation aims to spread it, which he sees as two separate processes that do

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[1] The hidden stakes of science popularisation.

not need to be seen in relation to each other, or even in conflict with one another. Finally, Schiele sees in popularisation activities a process that does not erase but instead increases the gap between people with different cultural capital: those with lower cultural capital are limited to a simplified, marketable version of scientific results while others can interact with both the true scientific process and the popularisation process.

In an article called "La vulgarisation scientifique et l'éducation non-formelle"[2] (1990), co-written with Daniel Jacobi and Marie-France Cyr, Schiele discusses three recurring processes within popularisation activities: paraphrasing, narration, and imaging. Paraphrasing is the term used to englobe all linguistic adjustments that can be done over an academic discourse to make it more accessible but also more attractive to a common reader. Narration is often used to create a context for information that is communicated in popularisation activities, combining the genuine and the fictional, often using characters to create a relatable content to which visitors can identify themselves and get a better understanding of the scientific elements of the story. Imaging is not the prerogative of science popularisation, as the authors note, but is even often used by academicals to provide a non-textual explanation or description of a scientific fact, as well as proofs of it. However, popularisers generally use different media formats to illustrate and supposedly clarify scientific facts, presenting it as the simplification of text documents considered too difficult for the general audience. These three categories presented by the authors can be used to analyse and understand popularisation projects even in this work. However, it would be interesting to add the process of making knowledge tangible, which could be described as the act of learning by doing or seeing concrete experimentations or depictions of the presented facts, especially present in museums.

Michèle Gellereau, Yves Jeanneret, and Joëlle Le Marec's "Social Sciences and the Communication of Science and Technology in France: Implications, Experimentation and Critique" (2012) analyses the particularity of the French example, which among other specificities is deeply influenced by the notion of public service. They oppose the raise of cultural policies promoting universal access to science and knowledge and the pre-existing engagement of the scientific community with this issue. They argue that politics often oppose the learned scientist and the ignorant public, blaming the academic world for not taking responsibility for promoting more open and accessible science. This does not reflect what they consider to be the reality, as they believe scientists are involved in communication activities. They believe that politics are a hinder to further popularisation activities as scientists are often denounced for their ideological and political engagement and being told to stay neutral in their communication activities. This is, for the authors, impossible to achieve. Furthermore, they

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[2] Scientific popularisation and non-formal education.

claim that research contributes to popularisation as academics help places of popularisation to understand the variety of their publics and their interests better.

In the field of more recent and museum-focused publications, Victoria Cain and Karen Rader's contribution "Science communication and museums' changing roles" (2017) has discussed how popularisation activities are the answers of the modern museums to the evolving demands of their public. Museal scientific popularisation is the result of what the authors call "the daunting task of communicating science through exhibitions and public programs to groups with diverging interests, values, and beliefs" (Cain & Rader, 2017, p. 6). They mean to say that content needs to be adapted for visitors, as their role in determining what is shown and how it's shown has been gradually increasing. Therefore, museums must provide material and facts based on research and scientific evidence to avoid controversy and ensure that the wide range of publics that museums host are satisfied with their visits. The authors see scientific popularisation as both a blessing and a curse for museums. On the one hand, popularisation offers the ability to produce scientific content that is accessible and attractive and can help museums reach out to the groups wary of the scientific discourse. On the other hand, Cain and Rader state that scientific content is by nature uncertain and subject to changes or correction, which can affect the museums' trust with the publics and force these institutions to admit what knowledge they hold, or lack thereof. Finally, the authors see in the generalised use of interactive digital tools, characteristic of popularisation, the possible beginning of the blurring of the line between museums and other places of education and exhibitions.

In the study "The Potential of Museums in the Mediation of Science and Technology" (2019), Lucie Jagošová, Otakar Kirsch, and Pavol Tišliar discuss the specificity of science popularisation for technical museums. They identify a popularisation process that is characteristic of science museums, visualisation. This paper outlines that technical museums often have in their care artefacts and knowledge that are practical and tangible. To that extent, visualisation is a commonly used process that consists of interactions and live demonstrations to introduce in a pedagogical way notions about natural and technical science. In the article, they present the example of Brno technical museum where visitors can, with the help of instructions written by the museum's pedagogical team, undertake experiments and learn from the result of their doings. The authors argue that this is the biggest strength and most useful tool of popularisation activities at science museums.

On the other hand, Pasquaré Mariotto and Venturini in "Strategies and tools for improving Earth Science Education and Popularization in Museums" (2017) present an alternative take on popularisation at science museums, stating that its text and picture panels that still provide the best way to mediate knowledge for science museums. Mariotto and Venturini state that text

panels need to be simplified, and that the chosen vocabulary needs to be adapted to the visitors for them not to experience it as boring or even useless. In this article, they state that popularisation cannot be successful without simplification and engagement from the visitors. They warn however against oversimplification as the aim of such text panels is to make a topic accessible to a wider public while still relevant for experts who might be visiting the museum. In order to achieve this, they underline the importance of exemplification through everyday life's examples that can be illustrated with intelligible texts and attractive pictures.

Theoretical framework

In the following parts, I will present the two main theories that guide my understanding of my research problem and field. In the first part, I will discuss what is Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and how it relates to popularisation. In the second part, I will discuss how Frankfurt's school of critical theory can help us understand what other motives might be at play with popularisation activities.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital

To understand why museums undertake science popularisation activities, it is important to understand the role that previous knowledge and understanding play for museums' visitors. To that end, I will take inspiration from a sociological theory and conception of culture proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. This theory will help apprehend the theoretical frame in which I argue science popularisation can be explained.

Bourdieu states that they are three types of capital that our social hierarchy builds upon: economical, social, and cultural capital. Though the three capitals are connected in Bourdieu's understanding, I choose to focus on cultural capital as it is the most relevant for this work. Cultural capital can be found under three forms, according to Bourdieu: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital is the capital that is acquired over time by a person, but also inherited passively. It is inherent to a person and cannot be separated from that individual. Items that are given a cultural value (work of art and artefacts) form the objectified cultural capital. In contrary to embodied cultural capital, they can be taken from a person or transmitted directly as an inheritance or for money. Finally, institutionalized cultural capital is the capital one gets from official recognition of sanctioned institutions, such as diplomas from schools or professional qualifications. This gives a measurable cultural legitimacy to an individual in society (Bourdieu, 1979).

So, what's the role of cultural capital, under its different forms, when it comes to museums? In Bourdieu's theory, accessibility to the museum can be understood in two different aspects: the pure possibility to access cultural artefacts and the real possibility to access them. What Bourdieu means is that pure obstacles that hinder access to cultural artefacts are few: low fee or even free entrance to museums, a spread of cultural institutions throughout the geographical space and we can even add the different adaption of museums to meet the need of physically challenged visitors. In that way everyone can get access to art, everyone has the pure possibility to visit museums, and only those who choose to exclude themselves from museums are indeed

excluded. But Bourdieu finds another reason for exclusion in museums, linked to the notion of cultural capital: it is the pure possibility of accessing cultural artefacts, and the ability to understand these artefacts. An individual with an important embodied capital will be more capable to enjoy the artwork and historical artefacts. Someone with objectified cultural capital might be able to appreciate the value of these artefacts in relation to their collection. Someone with institutionalized cultural capital could believe himself to have the legitimacy to interpret its artefacts on his own. Furthermore, Bourdieu amplifies the role of cultural capital in creating a need to consume cultural artefacts. This need, he says, is the result of the pure ability to understand and access these artefacts. Someone who can understand cultural objects, that finds meaning in them, will feel compelled to consume more. (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1969)

Scientific popularisation could therefore be seen as the museum's answer to Bourdieu's theory: to popularise science and culture is to try and make it accessible to as many as possible, regardless of their cultural capital. The goal of scientific popularisation activities is to give the pure possibility to more visitors to appropriate themselves cultural knowledge, creating therefore a need for cultural consumption.

The Frankfurt's school of critical theory and Adorno's "Culture Industry"

Having cast upon this work words such as "need" and "consumption" in relation to culture allows me to introduce the second set of theories on which this research work grounds itself. The very idea of cultural consumption is linked to theories of Frankfurt's school of critical theory, notably works by Theodor Adorno on aesthetics in the art and culture industry.

According to the critical theory, which is grounded itself in the Marxist current of thoughts, museums are a part of the capitalistic cultural tools of domination. Museum institutions are not neutral in the capitalistic society, in the sense that they are asked to fill political, economic, and ideological requirements. Even more so, museums are needed to fulfil a purpose to legitimize their existence, as every media and cultural institution in the capitalistic logic. There needs to be a demand for museums and the kind of immaterial goods they can produce and offer (Fuchs, 2022, pp. 35-36).

To create that demand, museums need to create an audience with the need to consume their cultural offer. According to Bourdieu, this need is created by getting the pure possibility to access culture, that is by getting the tools necessary to understand and assimilate. This creates a hunger for more cultural goods. Consequently, it is only logical to ask if science popularisation does not serve another purpose than the one to make knowledge available to a

larger audience, but also to create a public and therefore give more legitimacy to museums in a capitalistic logic.

Theodor Adorno, one of the main thinkers of Frankfurt's school of critical theory, developed together with Max Horkheimer the term "culture industry" to describe the way culture is produced by the capitalistic society to be consumed and further alienate the mass. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002), the two authors present their theory according to which cultural production in the capitalistic society does not only aim to fulfil an economical goal but also an ideological one, by creating individuals in line with the needs of capitalism. In *the Culture industry reconsidered* (Adorno, 2001), Adorno discusses how in the capitalist cultural logic, high and low cultures are destroyed and mixed. To understand science popularisation in the theoretical framework provided by Frankfurt's school means to understand that such activities cannot be undertaken only because of a humanistic desire to render access to science universal. Different motives are at play in this process, among which capitalistic agendas cannot be forgotten. Museums profit from producing more accessible content, not only because it benefits the institution by supporting the idea that it is a popular place, aimed at everyone, but also because it gives the possibility to a larger number of visitors to come and enjoy the exhibitions and the artefact, raising the museum's value in our capitalist society. As the number of visitors seems to be often the key factor in evaluating a museum's success, opening the halls of the institution to a larger target audience beneficiates the institution's economical value.

Research method

Methodology

In this subchapter, I will discuss with research methods I based this investigation upon. This thesis is a qualitative comparative case study of popularisation activities at the *Louvre* and the *Historiska Museet*, and I will now explain how and why I came to choose this research approach for my problem.

Qualitative research

The choice of a research method for this work is dictated not only by the subject of this thesis but also by the two examples discussed and analysed. To study and compare the two museums' theoretical and practical understanding of scientific vulgarization, there is a need for a qualitative approach. Indeed, quantitative data to analyse on such a scale would be limited, and the theoretical aspect of this work demands a deeper analytic perspective. Qualitative methods are relevant for such a work that does not aim to study data in a quantitative way (Arhne & Svensson, 2011, p. 11). Furthermore, it is an analysis of the discourse of these museums in the context in which it takes place that interests us, including the internal and external factors linked to the studied events. Much of this analysis is built on my interpretation of the studied documents and sources. Qualitative methods are built on the ability of the researcher to study things in their natural settings and to make the world visible in a series of representations through that work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Therefore, it is relevant to use a qualitative method for a work that aims to understand not only a phenomenon that happens within museums but also how this takes place in relation to their surroundings. Being a qualitative analysis, the following steps will be systematically applied to every source. First, the data will be selected, based on what I believe to be relevant. This selection will then be summarized in the analysis chapter. I will then interpret the information, both in the analysis chapter when I judge it necessary, and in the discussion chapter, in order to answer my research questions. It is important to underline that it is my own interpretation of the sources and the selected material. My prior knowledge and understanding of the subject will affect both the selection and the interpretation. Finally, the interpretation of the sources presented in this thesis is my own interpretation upon which I built my own hypothesis (Kuckartz, 2013, pp. 17-18).

Case-study

Case-study as a research method is a relevant method for a specific analysis of a new problem, in which a collection of material, qualitative or quantitative, is taken up from a case itself chosen for theoretical and not statistical reasons (Eisenhardt, 1989, pp. 537-538). This method is especially relevant when a wide variety of document formats is planned on being used in the work, and when the researcher tries to understand decisions that were taken and why they were taken but also how they were implemented (Yin, 2018, p. 15). It is also seen as the best way to

study a phenomenon in its context, especially when the context and the phenomenon are not clearly separated (Oliver, 2004, pp. 297-298). Finally, case studies are best fitted to qualitative inquiries in which the main research questions and "How" and "Why" and the studied event is not historical but contemporary, in a way that it is still a discussed problem that affects contemporary society (Yin, 2018, p. 3). Oliver (2004) writes:

> The following features are characteristic of case study research:
>
> - It does not control or manipulate variables,
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> - It studies phenomena in their natural context,
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> - It studies phenomena at one of a few sites,
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> - It uses qualitative tools and techniques for data collection and analysis.
>
> (p. 298)

In this investigation case study is considered the most relevant method for my research perspective because of my conception of the problem. I see indeed both my cases as an object of study to be analysed separately within their own specific context. Besides, I believe both my study cases to be unique, and that if one was to take another museum, we would see another pattern of activities and theories leading their way of popularizing science. This entails that I assume both of my cases are worth to be studied within their historical and social context. Finally, as a case study is, as discussed above, particularly well-fitted for the study of decisions taken by individuals and organizations, it seems to be the best method for my work.

Comparative study

If one presupposed that both cases are unique in their context, this also gives rise to two consequent statements. Both these cases will present differences and both these cases will present similarities in some ways. As clear as it may seem, this is of course of interest for my work as the stated aim of my thesis is to discuss the different ways that museums can popularize science and studying this phenomenon in different settings helps to bring to light its inner mechanisms. This study aims to describe and analyse which decisions were taken in both cases, how they were taken and implemented as well as why they were taken. A comparative study of this analysis means that two or more examples are studied in relation to each other to see why and how a particular example fails while another succeeds to draw a comparison when and if they can be drawn (Goodrick, 2014, p. 1). It is therefore the best way to analyse and use the data from the case study in relation to each other in this investigation.

Cases' selection

Here below I will present the two studied cases, as well as arguments for why I chose these two specific examples. Thereafter, I will explain which sources were selected and upon which criteria the selection process was based.

Selection of the two cases

To select two cases that could be both representatives as well as peculiar enough to be interesting for this study meant that my two examples were to be both similar and different. Furthermore, I also wanted to take advantage of my multilingual background to explore examples in two different countries.

The selection of my first example, the *Historiska Museet* under Kristian Berg, was led mainly by how many debates his time as museum's chief sparked. The *Historiska Museet* in Stockholm is a public state museum that is the inheritor of a tradition of Swedish museums that dates back to 1847. First situated in the same locales as the *Nationalmuseum*, the state historical museum moved to its current location in 1938 and became its own agency in 1998. Responsible for more than 10 million artefacts, it focuses on Swedish history from prehistorical times to the middle ages. One of the main criticisms raised against Berg during his time as museum director was that he kicked science and scientists out of the museum. As this thesis investigates how museums can promote and convey scientific knowledge to the publics, it was a very interesting statement. Furthermore, Stockholm's *Historiska Museet* is a relatively important museum in Scandinavia. As my research progressed, it turned out that what was called a scandal at the time resulted in much material and discussions being produced about the role of the museum and the place of science in these institutions.

As for the *Louvre*, my initial interest resulted in the prestige that surrounds the museum. The *Musée du Louvre* in Paris is one of the most famous museums in the world, and the biggest art and antiquities museum by its size. Started as a project in the late 18th century, it became the exhibition hall of the newly founded French Republic in 1793, with its collection emanating mainly from artefacts confiscated from the deposed monarchy and nobility. Today, more than half a million artworks are in the care of the museum. By the size of its collections and the masses the museum attracts each year, it is seen as a central museum in French, and European but even in world culture. This means that the financial means of this institution are colossal in comparison to other European museums, but also that it needs to adapt to the very diverse publics it attracts. Furthermore, the *Louvre* beneficiates from having its very own academic courses where future researchers and museum workers are educated to meet the very specific demands that lay upon the museum. I also believe that having such a world status for the *Louvre* means that its staff understands that the eyes of the world are upon it and that means that only

the very best is expected from this institution. Science popularisation activities and programs at the *Louvre* should, therefore, in theory, be among the best in the world.

Finally, I believe the two selected cases are not only relevant independently but also in relation to one another. To compare a worldwide museum to a more modest national museum means to oppose their understanding of the role of museums. If disparities are interesting, I think that similarities are also pertinent to expose. The two studied cases take place in a different period, but it is science popularisation as a theory and practice that is studied, and that the two examples are not contemporary does not affect, in my opinion, the possibility to see the *Louvre* through the prism of the *Historiska Museet* and vice versa.

The selection of the two time periods has been more interesting in a way that it was by choosing the example of Berg that I chose the example of the *Louvre*. Kristian Berg's time was a very interesting time of debate and discussion not only around popularisation but also around the role and identity of the museum. Following the museum from the time he was appointed until the end of his mandate gives us a good overview of how popularisation initiatives can evolve in relation to their context. Having chosen five years for the *Historiska Museet*, it felt relevant to choose a similar period for the *Louvre*. Furthermore, in order to increase the contrast and make the comparison relevant, looking at a more contemporary timespan was pertinent. However, with the global pandemic that started in early 2020 deeply affecting how museums could work and interact with their visitors, it was important to study the years before Covid-19 forced museums to close. Therefore, and after seeing that much of the museum programs were planned for five years starting in 2014, I decided to study the *Louvre* from 2014 to 2019.

Collection of material

The collection of material for this work followed a generic pattern and was of coursed affected by the circumstances as well as the object of the study. First, the uncertain situation resulting from the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic at the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 motivated my choice of source material that could be consulted online in case a new restriction on travel would restrain me from using sources on site. In a second time, the choice of the *Historiska Museet* between 1999 and 2005 means that the studied case is already 20 years old: to conduct interviews on an older event, especially one that sparked so many feelings and debate, could produce biased material. I believe that to understand what was done, but even how it was done, the use of contemporary sources is more relevant to this work. All sources are objectives, but they allow me to understand the events as they were understood when they happened, making me in a way a more direct observer than if I had chosen to work with interviews.

Having decided to use digital and locally accessible sources for this work, I first chose to work with official documents from both these museums. For the *Historiska Museet*, *regleringsbrev för Statens Historiska Museer[3]* are available for the period 1999-2005, as well as the *årsredovisningar[4]* between 1999 and 2005, something that gives a good insight into what were the grounding ideas and principles behind the different decisions, as well as what programs were undertaken by the museum. In the example of the *Louvre*, the *Loi des Musées[5]* from 2002, the museum's *contrat de performance[6]* for 2015-2019, and finally the various *rapport d'activité[7]* for 2015-2019 provide similar background documentation as the one for the *Historiska Museet*, allowing for comparison. All these documents are relatively long but selecting material relevant for this work means restricting the study to the parts in which popularisation activities are discussed and eventually described.

Finally, I chose to complete this selection with published articles and interviews, in the academic press as well as newspapers. The point is to illustrate the different events that took place in the two studied cases as well as give a voice, contemporary to the events, to the main actors. To work with press material means to be aware of its possible inaccuracy or biased point of view, but I believe most of the selected material exemplifies and explains the motivation behind the different projects and activities that the two museums undertook. This is especially relevant in the case of the *Historiska Museet* as the study presents it as the result of one man's vision and undertaking, that is Kristian Berg, who was active in writing articles and commenting on the main events of his time as a museum's chief in the Swedish press. In the case of the *Louvre*, communication activities are often pursued by a member of the staff to promote transparency in what motivates the museum's activities.

Ethical discussion

Different ethical questions have been up and influenced this work throughout the writing and research process. First, the topic chosen belongs to the field of cultural policies. Popularisation is a tool of education, and it is influenced by different political agendas. The point of this thesis is not to take a political stance on cultural popularisation, museum education, or even cultural policy, but to analyse and understand the role popularisation can play at museums, in relation to the political and social context. However, this thesis originates in my interest, as a student, as a researcher, and even as a visitor, to be able to understand and mediate knowledge. It is only right to assume my stance on the question to be as transparent as possible with my readers. I am personally convinced that it is the primordial for museums to try and adapt their content

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[3] Regulation letters for the State's Historical Museums (own translation).
[4] Annual reports (own translation).
[5] Museum's law (own translation).
[6] Performance contracts (own translation).
[7] Business report (own translation).

production to ensure that not a single visitor is left alone because of their cultural capital. The elitism that can, in my own opinion, still affect the world of museums and academics can create a feeling of rejection, that I truly believe, is only feeding political extremism and contributes only to increasing the gap between our society's social classes. Museums, like other public institutions, should be a meeting place for the whole of our society.

Even before starting writing this work, I had realised through my research that my cases were subject to debates. The period that I deliberately chose to study at the *Historiska Museet* is first and foremost a period of polemics. While I would like to say that the debate contributed to how the Swedish cultural policies are shaped today, I cannot disregard how infected the debate became. Attacks and critics went beyond the range of the political and, too often, targeted the individual. It is therefore a sensitive subject, but I believe that time is on my side to try and write as objectively as possible about the events between 1999-2005. I do feel comply to say that most of the people I discussed my subject with had personal and even sometimes professional memories of Kristian Berg's time at the helm of the *Historiska Museet*, and opinions that they freely expressed. To hear about my subject from their perspectives surely influenced me and this work, even unconsciously.

Finally, this thesis is my work, and as I said it is of course influenced by my background, my ideas, my understanding of the subject, and my encounters with the material. No research work is objective, and it is important to hold that in mind. I do however believe that I am offering enough transparency to my readers in order to produce an ethically correct text.

Limitations of the work

When trying to determine which subject and how I could research and contribute to it, I made necessary choices that would restrict my field of study. To focus on two museums only means that no generalisation can be drawn from this study, something that was done consciously. I believe this work should be seen as hints to understanding how popularisation activities and museum education work, and how they are influenced by other factors. I am also aware that by choosing to work with press articles and official documents produced by the institution, I base my work on a limited range of sources. However, I believe that another collection method, such as qualitative interviews, would have not enhanced the quality of my research or the results that I present. Furthermore, this thesis was written in a relatively short time-spawn and started at a time when Covid-19 related restrictions were still dissuading from travelling or meeting the interviewees in person. As stated before, my subject and my cases are sensitive topics, and in that regard, I am convinced that interviews would have not impacted my results in a significant way.

This thesis focuses also on two cultural history museums, leaving aside science and natural science museums. These latter types of museums are more often than not at the centre of popularisation studies. By choosing not to follow that trend, I hope to bring new perspectives on the topic: how to transmit and mediate knowledge about cultural heritage?

Analysis

In the first chapter, I analyse the two studied cases independently, following mainly a chronological order to summarize how and which popularisation activities were undertaken at the museums during the studied periods. In the second chapter, I will proceed to compare both case studies' understanding of the museum's role and missions before discussing the similarities and differences between the two museums' popularisation activities.

Chapter 1: Analysis of popularisation activities in two museums

1.1 Popularisation at the *Historiska Museet*

The study period for this thesis started at the end of 1999, with the appointment of Kristian Berg as museum's director for the *Historiska Museet*. Already in his first interview, he stated that the museum should be the new face of history, working to promote Sweden's history not only for schools and younger visitors but for everyone. He even stated that the museum could begin to use roleplaying to make the early Swedish Middle Ages a more interesting subject (Ingelman-Sundberg, 1999). But one of the first projects that took place at the museum was in cooperation with students from Fogelströmska high school in Stockholm, a school for students who could not come in a general curriculum. This project, called "The museum as a school", clearly showed a will to use the museum's collection to promote alternative ways of learning. These activities aimed to bring young people to the museum, where they could participate in lectures but also contribute to an exhibition about teenagers' life over the last two millennia. The exhibition was named "Noll Koll" in Swedish, something that could roughly be translated to "clueless" in English. In this exhibition, different techniques were used to make the information mediated more available but also more attractive to the students: a Viking longhouse in which visitors could watch a video about the Nordic god Thor and a representation of how fashion evolved over 1000 years. The goal of that exhibition was to attract a new public to the museum, but also for the museum to get perspective on how they worked and how it was received by younger visitors (Arnborg, 2000). In the yearly rapport produced by the museum for the year 2000 (Statens historiska museer, 2001), "Noll Koll" was presented as a project that introduced notions such as that cultural heritage was not something frozen, but something that was constantly evolving. To do so, the activities used the teenagers' perspectives to tackle existential questions.

In both these projects, happening early under the leadership of Kristian Berg, we saw elements of modern museum pedagogy and popularisation. The suggested roleplaying was quite typical

in trying to make what could be seen as a "dead history" more living again. It was nothing new, as roleplaying had been used for years, notably in folklore and open-air museums. Not only do you make history "real" and "alive", but you also can create a narrative, for example by presenting a person's life story, allowing visitors to relate to it. In the exhibition "Noll Koll", the museum aimed to set the students in a historical context, in which they became actors, so they could grasp better the discussed information. Students were probably chosen for their lower cultural capital, allowing the museum to design an exhibition that answered their questions and their interests. Interactivity and media supports were used as well, notably with the mentioned video about Thor. But why would the *Historiska Museet* push forward such projects? Well, first, there was of course a will from the museum to reach a new public, to present interactive and entertaining content, in a way to promote their activities and to improve the visitor experience. Furthermore, there was a political mission, for the museum, as stated in the regulation letter for the agency to which the *Historiska Museet* belongs (Kulturdepartementet, 1999). It could also be worth mentioning one of the initiatives started at the same time by the museum, which decided to stop charging for entry tickets during December 1999 and January 2000 (Nerikes Allehanda, 1999). When discussing topics such as intellectual accessibility, it is sometimes too easy to forget that economical obstacles such as entrance fees represent the first barrier in museums.

The examples previously discussed belong to some of the projects that took form at the *Historiska Museet* under the first year and a half of Kristian Berg's leadership. There was a clear will to promote Swedish historical science within a contemporary set of problematics, provoking new ideas and perspectives and making the museum's collections and knowledge seem more alive to the visitor. Such a stance on the role of the museum was not easy to take, as it broke again conservatisms, especially in the early 2000s. The path on which Berg decided to put his museum was not supported unanimously, even by the museum's leading organs. Two members of the museum's administration board chose to leave their position in protest against what they thought to be the transformation of the museum into a new amusement park. As a clarification of their decision, they criticised the museum's latest exhibitions and projects, which they considered being outside of the museum's remit. One of the main critics was directed toward the role that science played under Berg. According to these two former members of the board, it was the research and conservation missions of the museums that were the most important, implicitly ranking these above the communication and debating roles that the new museum's staff tried to implement. Janken Myrdal, professor in economics history and one of the two members quitting their position, stated that the research work produced at the museum needed to have a more prominent place within the museum's exhibitions (Bäckstedt, 2001).

Berg answered these publicly published comments with an article of his own. In his text, the museum's director defended his take on the museum's mission, which he believed had more to do with interpretation and the capacity of the institution to create a genuine interest and understanding of history. He stated that one of his objectives was to reach out to the public that never set foot inside a museum, notably by offering interactive pedagogical programs. He was turning the museum towards those with lower cultural capital. To achieve this, he noted that the *Historiska Museet* could not be only an archaeological museum but needed to produce material that the visitors could use for themselves and could relate to. He also discussed the role of research at the museum and in relation to the museum. According to him, it was important for the museum to be in contact with academics, promote research, and provide free and easy access to its artefacts for researchers. But Berg believed that research at museums should be done according to the museum's needs and on its terms. It should produce material that was relevant and understandable for the visitors and the whole of society rather than for the university world only. This could be seen as a direct answer to Janken Myrdal's comment about the place of science in exhibitions: it was important for Berg, but only if it helped enhance the visitor's experience and perception of the theme or the exposed artefacts (Berg, 2001).

On the following day, Janken Myrdal answered again to Berg, especially on the role of science and the relation of the museum to research. Myrdal believed that only museums had the appropriate knowledge and expertise to pursue research on their collections. He also stated that museums can produce academic research of the same quality as universities and that each institution should be able to work according to its strengths. He finally stated that museums and universities should have respect for each other's work and he compared the new line with easily consumed culture production, such as "Antikrundan", a tv-show in which people can come and show privately-owned artefacts and get them valued by antique dealers. He denounced the current production at the *Historiska Museet* as based on "what people want" and called for cultural production that emitted from the museum's qualified staff and some professional work ethics (Bohman & Myrdal, 2001).

So, what can we learn from the debate that shook the *Historiska Museet* at the beginning of 2001? Well, there were two distinct perspectives on the role of science in museum production and activities, as well as the overall missions of museums. Kristian Berg advocated for content production that was more user-focused and adapted to meet the expectations of the visitors as well as their prior level of knowledge. Creating narratives, using roleplays and interactive media as well as soliciting visitors directly for curating activities were tools to update the museum and its exhibitions. On the other hand, Myrdal advocated for a more traditional view of museum activities: conservation, research, and exhibition of the results. In his eyes, it was quite clear that it was the work of museum and university staff that should dictate the content of what is

produced. He even openly expressed despise for what he considered to be popular culture, designed for easy consumption by visitors. Myrdal called to museum's standards and ethics, referring probably to more conservative ideas about whom the museum was directed to. Can we say that Kristian Berg was a populariser? In a way, it seemed that his take on scientific research in relation to museum activities was like that of Myrdal. Science work was important for the museum's production and should be supported by the museum. But scientific production could be used as such because museums should not be only a shop front for research. Instead of exhibitions being used as window displays, it should be exhibitions that dictate research activities, focusing on what was relevant to the museum's publics, those being the whole society. Myrdal's criticism can however find some support in critical theory. To please the publics by creating a more easily consumed culture production serves a capitalistic purpose to try and attract more visitors to the museum. Berg justified many of his choices and decisions by showing the constant increase in visitor numbers. Myrdal could have argued that it is the quality of the mediation at museums that is important rather than the quantity.

At the end of 2002, a new polemic emerged that would deeply shake the institution and divide the public opinion. It all started when Kristian Berg decided to terminate the contract of nine employees among which five antiquarians, in order to replace them with people with more museum-oriented expertise and newer education (Bäckstedt, 2002a). This decision was seen as a direct attack on science and research, just because five of them were archaeologists in charge of incoming artefacts. Among the first people to openly react to this decision were some historians and academicians, who considered that the museum was cutting all bridges with researchers and students by choosing to replace educated history specialists with museum specialists (Bäckstedt, 2002b). Soon enough, Kristian Berg was accused to create a museum of popular science, betraying the archaeological and academic missions of his institution. Critics pointed out his background, explaining that someone that was not an archaeologist could not be expected to lead an archaeological museum properly. He was even compared to an editor of a popular newspaper focused on polemics, scandals, and public attention (Rentzhog, 2002). In that context, the term populariser was seen and used as a pejorative title for a museum that was no longer pursuing its higher quest for academic research, but instead focused on the public and lowered the quality of its work to satisfy a greater number of visitors. To attack and criticise Berg on his institutional cultural background, that is his university curriculum, is quite characteristic of a certain idea of who should be the cultural elites.

Kristian Berg took once again the responsibility to answer in the press. He considered that even after the staff changes that raised such worries, the *Historiska Museet* still held enough competencies to take care of its artefacts. However, he denounced a system in which archaeologists used their position at the museum to pursue their research and to produce a work

that was not meant to be used in the public activities of the museum. He took up the example of an archaeologist that had been on special leave to pursue his research for ten years or some colleagues that worked only to be able to show artefacts to their colleagues from universities. So, what Berg called for was not the end of research activities at museums but instead, the adaptation of the role of the museum as a research institution. Instead of museums pursuing research, he thought that they should work to offer the best possible work and research environment for academicians and amateurs alike, to be more attractive for external researchers. At the same time, he assumed the new line of the museum to open its doors not only for experts but for all publics. He saw the main role of the museum to be a centre for education and transmission of knowledge (Berg, 2002a).

At the end of 2004, Kristian Berg was once again attacked and criticized in the press[8]. Partly because of the scandal surrounding the exhibition "Snow White", in which the ambassador for Israel vandalized an artwork he thought to be provoking and offending, but also because of Berg's continued efforts to create a visitor-focused place of debate. In December 2004, Berg's name surfaced again in national Swedish newspapers, in another public attack directed toward the museum's chief and his latest project. The critics that emerged this time were but a concentrated list of what had already been pointed out two years before. When Berg tried to explain that there was nothing for the public to be learned directly from stone arrowheads, it was because he decided to fire the archaeologists with the proper knowledge to construe some meaning from it. He was charged with having removed knowledge from the museum, creating something snob, and ripping out history from the Swedish historical museum. One of the specific examples was that instead of showing wooden sculptures from the 12th century, visitors were instead offered the possibility to try on clothes from the studied period. Again, pointed out as the root of all evil was the removal of some museum employees with an academic background in research, and especially their substitution with museologists described as people who cared more about the form than the actual content (Östman, 2004).

A more moderate take on the situation and work produced by the museum recognized that popularisation through a pedagogical approach and narration were needed to create a past that the visitors could feel was still actual and relatable. Indeed, an editorial published in *Dagens Nyheter* in December 2004 could see how stone arrowheads were a symbol of the typical museum which focused only on classifying and presenting artefacts in an unattractive, non-stimulating, and even boring way. But on the other hand, an entertainment-based museum with actors, narration, and interactive media only was not the solution. Instead, a mix of the two approaches was seen as needed. In this take on the polemic, it was clearly stated that it was the

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[8] It could be worth mentioning that at that point the debate had become quite infested. Personal attacks on Berg's background, personality, and even appearance were not uncommon in the published articles.

museum's responsibility to strive to achieve such a balance. But here, the reproach done to Berg was that he chose neither of the two alternatives, focusing only on putting the museum in the centre of the scene in the democratic debate. The democratic debate was already present in many aspects of society, and the museum should have focused on its mission to transmit history through documented exhibitions created by qualified and well-learned personnel (Dagens Nyheter, 2004).

In what will turn out to be his last few months as chief for the *Historiska Museet*, Kristian Berg tried once again to defend his stance and his ideas for the institution. Once more, Berg underlined the importance of showing artefacts, but within a context and with information that allowed non-expert to understand and gain knowledge on the exhibited items (Bäckstedt, 2005a). For example, he believed that stone arrowheads were interesting if presented within the right background and with information and description, and not only accompanied by their provenience and a registration number (Mälarstedt & Sjöström, 2005). The museum should not be a centre for archaeology specialists, but a place that tried to match the need of the whole society. This approach was more aware of the differences in cultural capital that can exist between different visitors and why it is important to create an interest in cultural artefacts in order to succeed with the transmission of knowledge.

Having advocated for a museum that was more open and turned toward the demands of its visitors even if that meant turning its back on the traditional ties the institution had with researchers and scientists, Kristian Berg decided to leave his position as museum chief as soon as the 1st of June 2005. It was of course quite clear that these years must have been taxing for him, not only overseeing such a prestigious and important institution but also facing so much criticism for his actions and ideas. Did this mean that he admitted his defeat or gave up upon fighting for what he believed to be the role of a modern museum? Commenting on his decision to leave, Berg said that he wanted to get reassurances from the government that his successor would continue his work in the same direction as he did (Hernadi, 2005). Commenting on his time as chief for the *Historiska Museet* and having been an active observer and critic throughout the five years of Kristian Berg's leadership, the journalist Eva Bäckstedt noted that what Berg succeeded most with was putting the museum back in the middle of the public place (Bäckstedt, 2005b). He hoped to reform the institution's role and relation to its public and research, and by doing so allowed the museum to be vulnerable to a reassessment. This meant that people throughout society were able to take an interest and question and discuss museums and their place in 21st-century society. Following the debate that took place at the *Historiska Museet* during the time of Berg, there was an investigation started by the Swedish government in order to prepare for the opening of a research centre on cultural heritage problematics. Kristian Kristiansen, professor at *Göteborgs Universitet*, was asked to present a rapport on how the

institute could be created and what points should be studied (Kristiansen, 2006). Mats Börjesson and Lars-Eric Jönsson, respective professors at the *Mälardens högskola* and *Lunds Universitet*, even created a proposition for the research program of the institute under the spring 2005 (Börjesson & Jönsson, 2005). In these documents, the relationship between cultural heritage, publics and cultural institutions such as museums was pointed out as an important topic for future research projects. Cultural heritage's uses for citizens, especially its educational uses, were discussed as important research fields for the institute. In a way, this institute, which never came to see the light of the day, was a continuity of Berg's work at the *Historiska Museet*. It would have promoted research on what cultural heritage is and under what forms it could be beneficial for society.

1.2 Popularisation at the *Louvre*

The history of popularisation at the *Musée du Louvre* is not as polemic as the previously studied example of the *Historiska Museet*. But it is not that different either, being that the period that we will study in this work stretches over a similar time span of 5 years and starts as well shortly after a new director is appointed by the government. Jean Luc Martinez, appointed directly by the president Francois Hollande in 2013, took over the museum in 2014 with one clear goal: to make this world-renowned institution more accessible and more understandable. He acknowledged the political and social role of the museum as an institution and notably pointed out the fact that museums' publics changed greatly since the beginning of the 21st century. The museum welcomed three times more visitors in 1980 than in 2015, with half of the people coming to the museum under 30 years old and 75% not being French citizens. This raised issues that needed to be addressed in how the museum communicated with its visitors. Martinez stated that visitors in the 21st century were no longer experts with the same educational background or the same interest in art and museums' exhibits as before. The average visitor's cultural capital had changed. He did not point it out as a negative change, solely as something that the museum needed to be aware of in how it mediated knowledge to its new publics. He saw it as the museum's responsibility to mediate both knowledges but also desire for the collections. It was their mission to make it so that visitors would want to see more than the few major artworks that the *Louvre* was famous for. To achieve his program of renewed communication, he chose to replace different leading figures of the museum's staff with younger people, which he considered to be more in touch with the new challenges facing the museum and its publics. (Evin, 2015)

The months following the museum's take over by Jean Luc Martinez were therefore times of change for the *Louvre*. Different projects were taking form throughout 2015 and 2016. The first project was the opening of the *Petite Galerie*, a project wished by the new museum's director (Cachon, 2015). Essentially a new exhibition hall, the project of the *Petite Galerie* aimed to

target younger audiences. Directly in line with the government's educational programs for school pupils, this project aimed to popularise traditional museum content through interactive activities and adapted content. Exhibitions on different themes and of different school levels were presented over a ninth-month period, in line with the French academic school year. The guidelines and motto for this project: quality science popularisation. It is clearly stated in different interviews and the quinquennial activity plan of the museum (Musée du Louvre, 2015, p. 27). Martinez hoped to fight the feeling of morosity and boredom that young people seemed to associate with the museum, fulfilling the museum's educative mission but also winning the loyalty of a new generation (Gallot, 2016). Interactivity and transmission were quoted as two of the central terms to define the project but adding to it the word quality means that the *Petite Galerie* aimed to offer a different take on popularised content. It is worth noting that according to a review of the opening exhibition there, not a single screen was installed, and all interactive actions and information texts were analogical. Visitors were instead offered the possibility to touch imitations of the stone a sculpture was made from, or the fabric a costume was sewed with (Cachon, 2015). This translates a will of the institution to let the visitors get as close as possible to the artefacts but without providing any oversimplifying interfaces. In its yearly report for 2015, the museum described the *Petite Galerie* as follows:

> A mediation adapted to the need of a younger audience based on a straightforward speech, attractive style, concise information about characters, texts explaining the different art technics, material samples to touch, and historical and geographical markers.[9]

(Musée du Louvre, 2016, p. 94)

Here again, we see words and ideas such as "attractive" and "straightforward", meaning that the content was not simplified but rather that the museum provided adapted tools to ensure that each one of its visitors could understand the artefact and its context on their own.

To specifically target a younger audience is nothing unique in museum education. It is, per Bourdieu's habitus and cultural capital theory, the main answer to promote and create interest in museum exhibitions and cultural artefacts and fight cultural capital inequality. But this also allows the museum to create and win the loyalty of a new part of the population, people under 30, a part that in 2015 represented half of the visitors. Using the lenses provided by critical theory, it is also a survival mechanism for the museum that secures the fidelity of new visitors, visitors that will become customers once they turn 25 and are required to pay full price for an entry ticket. The presented artworks are also major pieces and the room dedicated to this new part of the museum was situated in the *Richelieu Wing*. By providing such a setting and

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[9] Own translation. Original text: "Une médiation adaptée aux besoins du jeune public fondée sur un discours simple, un graphisme attrayant, des informations concises sur chaque personage, des textes qui expliquent les techniques artistiques, des échantillons de matériaux à toucher, des repères géographiques et historiques."

allocating so many resources to this venture, the museum's direction showed how dedicated they were to this project. It is not the only ongoing work for the museum at that time, since the pyramid located in the middle of the courtyard, emblematic of the restructuration efforts of the museum in the 1980s, was adapted to the new needs of the museum. In total, it is up to 60 million euros that were spent in the two first years of Martinez's presidency, a colossal budget derived directly from the opening of an antenna for the museum in Abu Dhabi and the subsequent sponsors from the Emirates. A new permanent exhibition about the history of the museum and its building opened simultaneously, all to make the museum more accessible and more transparent. These initiatives were seen up to 2016 as proof that Jean Luc Martinez aimed to create a museum that was less elitist and closer to its visitors (Robert, 2016).

Once the bigger works of his early year as chief for the *Louvre* were completed, we see more timid attempts from Jean Luc Martinez to promote new approaches to science popularisation. Projects such as the opening of the *Petite Galerie* are craving high investment of financial and human resources, and they can be seen as the great work of one's mandate. However, this does not mean that the museum stopped working in different and innovative ways. Social media and the internet had been around for quite some years already and increasing the museum's presence and use of these mediums had also been a priority. It was noted in the museum's *contrat de performance* from 2015. To improve the museum's website and work with other digital tools were part of the points that the museum deemed would help the institution fulfil its education mission (Musée du Louvre, 2015, p. 25). On that end, the museum was not much of a pioneer, but it seemed like there was some awareness about it. Judging their capacity to reach newer publics throughout the internet and social media to be limited, or even lagging behind the standards of such an institution, the museum decided to call on existing content creators on the internet. The *Musée du Louvre* notably chose to cooperate with an existing YouTuber, Benjamin Brillaud, owner of the history popularisation channel *Nota Bene*, who in 2016 had more than 430.000 subscribers[10]. The museum invited this video maker to record three videos at the museum (Rahal, 2016). The videos, which had a clear link to the institution, were published on the YouTuber's channel, except for one video about the museum's history that was published on the museum's channel. The expected results of this collaboration were multiple: to reach a new public and reinforce the presence of the museum online, but also to exert a hold of the media produced throughout the open platform YouTube. Indeed, this informal education medium was quickly increasing in terms of audience and influence. The specialty of this channel? Analysing and decrypting historical events in a more accessible fashion. For an institution like the *Louvre*, this raised of course questions, as the museum was required to hold high ethical and professional standards in terms of research, communication, and publication. This was also direct competition. But instead of fighting it, they chose to frame it. By nature,

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[10] At the time this thesis is being written (spring 2022), the channel counts more than 2.02 million subscribers and 372 videos.

the very format of these videos does not allow the creators to present or discuss their sources. The museum, while collaborating with these creators, decided to influence them into being more transparent in their work. When the YouTuber Benjamin Brillaud worked with and for the *Louvre*, the museum's research and communication department was consulted to help and ensure that the facts were accurate and presented according to the institution's standards (Bellot, 2016). Now, Brillaud always lists his sources in the description part of his videos. It is worth noting that this project was a success, as the museum's channel went from 5.000 to 15.000 subscribers following the publication of the video. But more than the obvious objective of developing their presence on social and among this young and "digital" audience, it is interesting to try and analyse the *Louvre*'s stance. By collaborating and even employing these young creators, the museum acknowledges them and their work as useful popularisation activities for society. And instead of trying to compete with these existing, well established, and surely more competent video creators, the museum chose to invite them in, to show them how educated and experienced popularisers work, providing their reference frame to try and exert some control over the work of these new popularisers. This could be seen as showing a real understanding of both the opportunities and challenges that digital popularisation represents for an institution that clearly states its will to reach newer and wider audiences even outside the walls of the museum. Such initiatives are also important from a popularisation perspective as they allow the museum to enter a dialogue with its publics and allow collections to be analysed in a new light (Musée du Louvre, 2017, p. 134). There is even another aspect to such projects, that is not unsimilar to the *Petite Galerie* creation. According to Critical Theory, it is important for museums to blur the lines between high and low culture. Historically, popularisation videos on platforms such as YouTube are seen as non-academic and surely belonging to low culture. By collaborating in such a project, the *Louvre* can spread interest about their work to a new crest of potential visitors, and therefore benefits economically from this initiative.

Accessibility to the collections, even intellectual, cannot be detached from the more physical perspective. All mediation and popularisation work and projects completed, there is still a dimension of this approach to art and culture that brings us back in a brutal way to the realities of being a physical institution: the visitor needs to come to the museum in order to even initiate the process of knowledge transmission. The *Louvre* of Jean Luc Martinez was well aware of this difficulty, and in that sense prolonged the efforts initiated by previous directors. The *Louvre* is a central institution of Paris, but also of France, Europe, and the world. The national dimension of the museum is even more highlighted by the fact that the museum is a national institution, answering directly to the government. The project of the *Louvre-Lens*, which started in 2009 and was finally achieved in 2012, is one of the most illustrating examples of how the institution works to reach its audience outside of the capital. The project of the *Louvre-Lens* is

a cultural policy effort, with a national museum trying to reconnect to its visitors throughout the country.[11] With this antenna of the museum directly addressed to this specific region, its context, and its history, a specific form of popularisation is needed. This museum aimed to reach out to a public that was not familiar with museum visits and lower cultural capital, something that the museum succeeded in doing as more than half the visitors were not used to coming to cultural institutions (Musée du Louvre, 2018, p. 7). Instead, thought-out exhibitions were needed to produce museum material that is relevant to Lens (Hubin, 2017). Interactivity was also a key concept there. In the second half of 2017, an exhibition about music during antiquity opened. While offering material, artefacts, and information about music in ancient Rome, Greece, and Egypt, this exhibition also offered the possibility to listen to how the music could have sounded. The exhibition was first a sound-based experienced, making it more accessible to visitors lacking previous knowledge about Antiquity. However, Jean Luc Martinez declared that this process was not popularisation, but a way to meet the challenge of talking about something like a sound, that was hard to describe without making people hear it (Debelder, 2017). Similar projects were taking place even closer to Paris, in places in which the residents were often underrepresented in the museum's publics. This was the case in Sevran[12], in which an exhibition showing copies of some of the museum's masterpieces was opened in a culture house. The staff of this state-financed institution received a formation with the personnel of the *Musée du Louvre* on how to popularise and transmit knowledge and interest in culture, art, and history (Musée du Louvre, 2018, p. 122). This was part of the museum's field actions to increase its visibility and reach out to a socially challenged group of the population. In terms of statistics, this was a real success as all the first visitors had never been inside a museum before. This initiative was however heavily criticized as being demeaning for the target audience as the artwork shown were digital copies, something that accentuates the gap between people who can afford and have the interest to go see the real museum, and people who get an ersatz version. Offering only digital copies took away the pleasure and the emotion one can feel while seeing an authentic historical artefact. Through a copy, the museum was able to mediate knowledge about a special artwork but offering access to art only to promote education should not be the aim of a museum. The museum staff argued however that without using digital tools, such an initiative could have never seen the light of day (Zawisza, 2017).

The *Musée du Louvre* multiplied its efforts and initiatives to promote art and culture popularisation. Some answered to a political agenda while others met the institution's agenda. It could even be argued that different initiatives gained more support from the administration

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[11] The city of Lens, situated in the north of France, is a symbol of the older industrial and mining regions in which unemployment and poverty reached an all-time high as factories moved to other countries and mining activity (mainly coal) shut down.

[12] Sevran is a city in the administrative region of Seine-Saint-Denis, one of the poorest in France.

and others. Could a prioritizing be identified? It is hard to say, but when one compares a project like the opening of the *Petite Galerie* with the digital museum of Sevran, one can wonder about the real investment of the museum in the latter initiative. The *Petite Galerie* aimed to satisfy a group of existing visitors, families with children, that voluntarily chose to visit the museum. While children, the main announced audience of this project, visited the museum, they beneficiated from free entry. As they were specifically targeted by the exhibited material and the information contents, they could enjoy an exhibition that would create sympathy and loyalty for the museum. Their parents or accompanying adults were however required to pay full price on their tickets. From a capitalistic perspective, as theorised by the Frankfurt's school, by offering a product that is in demand, the museum does not only fulfil its educational mission but also its economical ambition. At the same time, it is easy to mirror the effort deployed for such an initiative, which as pointed out earlier generates not only morale benefits but also an income for the museum, with the project supported by the *Louvre* in Sevran. There, the museum meets political demand for a broadening of science accessibility in a disadvantaged area, without generating a real income. And while observers and critics praised the projects of the *Petite Galerie* as a popularisation success, the digital museum of Sevran was seen as a poor attempt to mediate culture and art knowledge in an area where none of the visitors could see a museum before. To that extent, popularisation can be seen as a tool to fulfil a purpose rather than an ideological belief to make science and culture universally understandable.

One of the identified challenges with popularisation at the *Musée du Louvre* was to identify the target audience and their cultural capital to adapt to the level of required popularisation. Popularisation activities cannot consider that there is one uniform audience, and at the *Louvre*, the problem was to find the right word not to create a feeling of condescendence. In the aftermath of the refugee crisis following the civil war in Syria, the *Louvre* started to offer a specially designed tour of its collections to refugees. These tours, free of charge, were aimed to create a feeling of legitimacy for this peculiar audience to visit the museum and to appropriate themselves to the culture of the *Louvre*. However, the museum pedagogues understood quickly under the term "refugees", people with different backgrounds and variable cultural capital were found. To treat this public as one homogenous group was therefore a mistake, and to mediate with refugees was a challenge the museum tried to face. The person in charge of audiences in the social field preconized, therefore, to take some extra time at the beginning of the visit to learn to know the different participants and to try and identify their social background (Maurot, 2016). Despite all the efforts of the museum, many visitors still felt that the cultural heritage that the museum oversees, their cultural heritage, was far too intellectually inaccessible. The very size of the museum and its collection was identified as a problem: there was too much to see and too much to do. This problem was accentuated by the price of the ticket, 15 euros, which refrained visitors from splitting up their visits over more than one day, pushing them to

try and see the whole of the museum at one time. Popularisation was criticized as pushing for art consumption for the masses, not proposing relevant material for specific and different publics, and especially not serving some higher purpose for the universality of science (Audeguy, 2017). Something that we can connect to the Frankfurt's school of critical theory and their understanding of what motives are behind activities that aim to draw more people to the museum.

In 2018, the French government decided to renew its trust in Jean-Luc Martinez by granting him three more years at the head of the *Musée du Louvre*. However, it seemed like the director's agenda and the guidelines set by the government somehow did not focus on the same points. While Jean Luc Martinez defended his first five years at the head of the French museum by pointing out to the new publics that were reached and the different initiatives to make the transmission of knowledge more efficient, the government set the focus of the following years on increasing the *Louvre*'s influence and collaboration with other culture and research institutions in the world (Bellet, 2018). In terms of popularisation activities, the years 2018 and 2019 were relatively quiet regarding innovations. The museum continued to exhibit different copies of its artworks throughout France to support initiatives increasing the influence of the museum across the French territory. In the city of Châlons, more than one thousand digital copies were shown to the public, using interactive supports to allow visitors to read further informative texts about exhibited artworks (L'Union, 2019). New collaborations with science popularisers on social media were pursued, always aiming to maintain the scientific quality standards of the museum but using these platforms to talk to a new audience (Hellio, 2019). The creation of a loan system for overseas territories was however noteworthy as this is the first time that the museum's artefacts were shown there, promoting the presence of French cultural institutions even outside of metropolitan France. The museum's leadership aimed to reproduce a similar partnership with the other French oversea territories (Louvre, 2020, p. 152).

Chapter 2: Comparative study of studied cases

2.1 Two understandings of the museum: institutional role and missions

To compare two museums, situated in two different countries and which are studied in timeframes that are 10 years apart, some contextualisation for each example is required.

Both museums are regulated and directed in different formal and informal ways. The *Historiska Museet* belongs to the agency for national history museums[13] and in that regard gets a yearly

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[13] In Swedish: Myndigheten för Statens Historiska Museer.

regulation letter from the Ministry of Culture[14] that defines the principal goals for the coming year of activity, how they shall be evaluated, and the budget that the agency will be granted. Every year, the agency is required to produce a rapport that presents the different projects and investments, and how they believe that they fulfilled the goals set for them in the regulation letter. This rapport is the responsibility of the agency chief, who also is the chef for the *Historiska Museet*: Kristian Berg for the year 1999-2005. This chief is named directly by the elected government and directs the museum with the help of the different department directors inside the agency (Statens Historiska Museer, n.d.). There is no representative of the government inside the board of directors. At the time that this thesis focuses on, there was no specific museum law in Sweden.

The *Musée du Louvre* is considered a French state museum since 1848, and a national public establishment of an administrative nature[15] since 1992. The museum is under direct control of the elected government, with the ministry of culture in charge of defining a cultural policy for the museum to follow, and the French president personally choosing the museum's chief for an undefined mandate. This means that a newly elected president could choose to remove the current director and put another person in charge of the institution. The museum published every year an extensive rapport describing the principal activities that the museum contributed to and what objectives it believes have been fulfilled. A five-year cultural policy plan is also sketched up by the museum's direction and the ministry of culture to offer renewed goals and guidelines that the museum should follow. The administration board is composed of the museum's chief, six members of the museum's staff, seven culture and research personalities chosen by the government and the museum's director, and 3 members of the government directly appointed by the Ministry of Culture. The museum is also required to follow the French law on public state museum drafted in 2002 (Sénat de la République Francaise, n.d.).

Already in the organigrams of both institutions, it can be easily observed that the *Louvre* is influenced in a greater way by the elected government. This means that government cultural policy is the main guideline for the museum, as the administration board is dominated by personalities chosen by the Ministry of Culture and the President. A newly elected government could therefore change the line of the museum by simply removing the current director and the majority of the board members. In that sense, the hierarchical structure of the museum emanates from the top of the state down to the museum's personnel, while at the *Historiska Museet,* despite the director being chosen by the ministry of culture, the rest of the board is independent of direct governmental involvement. One could argue that the yearly regulation letters of the Swedish government are yet another control form over the agency for national history

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[14] In Swedish: Kulturdepartementet.
[15] In French: Établissement public national à caractère administrative

museums, especially as it decides on the budget granted for every year, but it seems that there is greater autonomy and freedom for the Swedish institution. However, both institutions are public museums, working under state directives and to a high degree funded with tax money.

Comparing the museums' stated purposes according to their respective administrative documents can help us understand the cultural policy differences and similarities between the two institutions. In the ministry of culture regulation letter for the year 2000, the stated goals for the general cultural policy of the government were as follow:

- To safeguard freedom of expression and create real conditions for everyone to use it.

- To promote opportunities for everyone to participate in cultural life, experience culture, and create.

- To promote cultural diversity, artistic innovation, and quality, thereby counteracting the negative effects of commercialism.

- To enable culture to be a dynamic, challenging, and independent force in society.

- To preserve and use cultural heritage.

- To promote educational aspirations and to foster international cultural exchanges and encounters between different cultures within the country.

(Kulturdepartementet, 1999, p. 100)

These goals were approved by the Swedish parliament and were national cultural policies guideline. In extension to this, the specific goal of the agency for national history museums was to preserve Swedish cultural heritage while developing and transmitting knowledge as well as experiences to provide a perspective on the development of society (Kulturdepartementet, 1999). While some parts presented a common take on cultural policy, others could be interpreted more freely by the museum. To counteract the negative impacts of commercialism brought forward a political stance on the role of museum education. If popularisation activities are understood as a way to make knowledge accessible to a greater number, often by using interactivity and by implicating the visitor in the exhibition, it answered the part about the transmission of knowledge and the conveying of experiences. The museums were expressly requested to promote content that would reflect democratic ideals, which also implies that they were free to present material that would support certain perspectives on society. This document granted the right for museums to assume a non-neutral, democratic position in their educational programs.

A similar document for the *Musée du Louvre* listed the specific missions that the state determined to be the responsibility of the institution:

- to conserve, protect, and restore on behalf of the State and present to the public the works in the collections listed in the inventories of the Musée national du Louvre and the Musée national Eugène-Delacroix and its custody, as well as to conserve, protect, restore and present to the public, under the conditions provided for in the agreements governing them, the works deposited in the Tuileries gardens.

- to contribute to the enrichment of the national collections by acquiring cultural property on behalf of the State, whether in return for payment or free of charge.

- to ensure that the museums and gardens groups together welcome the widest possible public, by all appropriate means, to develop attendance, promote knowledge of their collections, to design and implement educational and dissemination activities aimed at ensuring equal access to culture for all.

- to ensure the scientific study of its collections.

- to contribute to education, training, and research in the field of art history, archaeology, and museography.

- to manage an auditorium and develop its programming.

- to preserve, manage and develop the buildings it owns under the conditions set out in article 7 of this decree.

- to conserve, protect, restore, enrich on behalf of the State, and offer for public consultation the library and documentation collections of the Musée national du Louvre and the Musée national Eugène-Delacroix, which are in its care.

(Musée du Louvre, 2015, pp. 7-8)

One sees that in the French museum's document, the educational mission was limited to the transmission of knowledge about the collections and the museum. There was no equivalent to the Swedish clear statement that the museum should play a role as a democratic institution, even though the document from the *Louvre* was 15 years younger. To include the widest possible public, as stated in the *Louvre*'s mission, stood of course for the openness of the museum, but debates are not as actively encouraged. Both museums highlighted the importance of working to support research on their collections and cooperation with universities.

From this comparison on an institutional level, one can see a clear difference between the two institutions. Both museums are state museums, and to that extent influenced by state cultural policies, but at the *Louvre*, the influence of the state is felt more actively. At the same time, the *Historiska Museet* from the years of Kristian Berg felt more open to changes, innovative ideas, and experiments to become a place for democratic debates to emerge. This could partially explain why the different projects that Berg stood for during his time as museum's chief were more debated. Educational policies at the *Louvre* emanated from the government and could be seen as a whole, while what feels like more freedom on the side of the *Historiska Museet* meant more personal responsibility from the museum's direction.

2.2 Similarities and differences in practice and theory

So, what differentiate popularisation at the *Musée du Louvre* from popularisation at the *Historiska Museet?* Well, while some differences might be strictly due to the context, temporal, societal, and cultural, others speak of a different perception of the role of the modern museum and what popularisation can bring to the museum. At the *Louvre*, there was a carefulness in the popularisation activities of the museum. Some examples of it could be seen in how the museum chose to talk about and describe previous projects: quality popularisation for the *Petite Galerie*, an accessible exhibition that does not give in to popularisation for the *Louvre-Lens* music exhibit and more. There were some reserves as to talk about popularisation, as the choice of words can exemplify. The museum's personnel used more often the French word "médiation culturelle" instead of "vulgarisation", "popularisation" or even "education". It seems like the word popularisation was often associated with an over-simplification of knowledge, and maybe the public lost touch with the meaning of the word, as in democratisation of knowledge. It could also be that popularisation sounded vulgar and not in accordance with the higher standards that the institution stood for. At the *Historiska Museet*, popularisation was seen by the critics as the renunciation of science, as if the two could not co-exist. To adapt the narration or change the focus of an exhibition to give the visitor a possibility to relate to it meant in their eyes the downfall of the museum to the rank of a fair hall. For both museums, popularisation was a tool to reach a larger audience, but the two museums' ambitions were quite distinct. The *Louvre* was and still is one of the most visited museums in the world. Many visitors only come once or twice in their lifetime as part of a touristic visit to Paris. They are therefore first-time visitors, mainly from abroad, with a wide panel of previous knowledge and very mixed backgrounds, often seeking to see some of the masterpieces the museum has to offer. In that sense, reaching this public in its entirety means adapting the content so that anyone can get contextual information about an artefact. At the *Historiska Museet*, the target audience is more national and local in Stockholm, and the exhibitions are more often renewed to draw visitors back to create a meeting place at the museum. Most popularisation projects at the *Louvre* were not opened in the museum, but instead in antennas or directly in situ with the target audience.

In 2002, Kristian Berg published an article in the Swedish journal *META: medeltidsarkeologisk tidskrift* (Journal of Medieval Archelology) in which he argued for his conception of the museum. He started by declaring that museums were facing a crisis: a crisis for recognition but also for a clearer definition of what a museum was, and what role they had to play. To answer this problem Berg discussed the original mission of national museums, and more specifically his museum: to create a national history and therefore a national identity. He called the early museums for "temples of science, where the incomprehensible becomes comprehensible" (Berg, 2002b. p.5). However, he saw this vision as outdated and blamed the lack of a clearly stated mission as the root of the crisis that museums go through. He summed up the challenge

that the museum faced in three questions "What are we for? Who are we for? What is our assignment and on what do we base our new legitimacy?" (Berg, 2002b. pp. 5–6). Berg wrote that what most museums did was to ensure their role as caretakers of their collections while trying to fit in with the growing entertainment industry, what he described as "presenting old knowledge in a new packaging" (Berg, 2002b. p.6). But Berg believed the real mission of national museums, like the *Historiska Museet,* was to reinforce historical awareness within society and to take an active part in the debates that influenced the community. To achieve these goals, he stated that "museums cannot be passive vessels for research" and that "still common is the idea that the museum is science public arena". Museums had to use the results of research but should not see research as their aim, as Berg considered that this was not their role. His conception of academic research and its place within the museum was made quite clear: research should be in the service of the museums, and not the other way around. He argued for a stronger link between civil society and the public, for a museum that was oriented for his visitors and not for researchers. He believed that information should not be passively mediated as facts but that the museum's mission lay in its capacity to show how history could be useful and meaningful in concrete, democratic situations. What this meant was that he wanted popularisation of science within museums to be done meaningfully, and not just to mediate knowledge. It was an important part of museums' mission and their identity, but it needed to be done on their terms and not on the researcher's terms (Berg, 2002b).

Marina-Pia Vitali, assistant manager for mediation in the museum at the *Musée du Louvre* in Paris, answered an interview about her unit's role and its mission within the frame of the institution in 2015. She discussed her work and its importance within the context of a museum that received more than 9 million visitors every year. First asked about the meaning of vulgarization, mediation, and interpretation of knowledge at the museum she defined it as follows:

> The scientific production is created by our conservators and our team is responsible for a strict vulgarization of this production. "Vulgarization" because our work is to allow everyone to come into the wonderful world of art history and the museum. "Strict" because we wish to show that it is doable to be comprehensible without lowering our standards like you sometimes hear and that we aim to keep a high standard dialogue but accessible. Give access to the world of the specialist gives people a boost while maybe creating a desire for some to go further
>
> (Fraysse, 2015)

This illustrated quite clearly the goal that she and her employees pursued on behalf of the museum. What came through this text was a will from the museum to give intellectual access to more visitors and to create an interest in them the museum and its collections while still holding up the standards of a world-leading museum and research centre. She discussed even further how this shift happened within the museum project, as she explained that in the 1980s, exhibition material was thought to people who often visited museums and had prior knowledge,

for example, people who mastered the vocabulary specific to art history (Fraysse, 2015). She enumerated different projects and investments that the museum made in more recent years to rectify this course under the leadership of museum director Jean-Luc Martinez, whose outspoken goal was to attract primo-visitors and non-initiated to the museum. She said that the challenge they took on was to "have both a scientific vocabulary (we are a research museum and a centre for specialists), while also finding the right word to define, explain or complete an information about an artefact" (Fraysse, 2015). Marina-Pia Vitali believed that it could allow the initiated and the non-initiated, the specialist and the novice, the student, and the tourist to assimilate new information and learn while at the museum. Discussing how the museum worked concretely for greater accessibility, she took up how dates were being transcribed with Arabic numbers instead of roman numbers. Her unit's mission did not stop with the transmission of facts and knowledge. They even believed that interpretation of art, while free and individual, could be guided and ignited to allow more to think on their own about the meaning of the artefacts. She thought it was the role of the museum to offer an opinion or a perspective to spark dialogue (Fraysse, 2015). To ensure that this was done constantly, the museum's specialists and researchers always worked in pairs with a mediation assistant that saw that the information was clear and comprehensible for as many as possible. The museum's project was also to promote transparency by presenting a history of the museum, as a building and an institution, and of its collections and the people behind it.

Discussion

In this part, I will draw from the analyse of sources and the comparison of the two studied cases to answer my research questions and expand upon my research problem. I will first see what the role of popularisation at museums is, and which processes are used, before describing what is the relationship between museums, politics, publics, and researchers. I will also answer what the uses of popularisation can be for museums. Finally, I will take up the example of science museums and their popularisation activities to give more perspective to my answers.

The role and processes of popularisation in museums

Museums' educational mission has become more and more central throughout the years. It is the result of a paradigm shift that has seen the numbers of museum educators increase, sometimes at the expense of other professions. New norms are required for exhibition production: relatability, interactivity, new design, and more awareness of the differences between the museum's publics. Popularisation, vulgarisation, mediation… all these words fall now under the broader term of museum education, a special concept that describes the process of transmitting knowledge and experiences, but also to awake interest and the ability to take a critical stance.

At the *Historiska Museet* of Kristian Berg, creating a real interest in the exhibited material was a mean to an end. By making the exhibitions intellectually accessible, relatable, and interactive, they would become attractive. Attractive exhibitions would in turn provoke an engagement on the side of the visitors, sparking ideas, questions, and debates. In that conception of the museum, popularisation was the unspoken name of all the activities that Berg was criticized for. Roleplaying and the possibility for visitors to try on clothes from the Middle Ages, teenagers writing an exhibition about their life to bring new perspectives on being a teenager throughout our time with the project *Noll Koll*… All these projects were ways of making the content of the exhibitions more accessible to a wider audience. This was also done in conflict with the traditional, and surely conservative, museum personnel. Archaeologists, historians, and other academicians were pushed aside to give more space to the new museum professions. Under the leadership of Berg, the museum was to focus on being a centre for knowledge transmission and political debate, as the museum's chief thought that research had to be done by universities, in cooperation with the institution, but outside of its walls. In short, the museum would provide full access, even digital, to researchers from universities. They would in turn produce research material that the museum's staff, especially educated in that field, would turn into museum

material, that is material that is contextualised, clarified, and interpreted to allow people with lower cultural capital to appropriate their cultural heritage.

At the *Louvre* academicians and museum educators work in pairs. *L'École du Louvre*, the museum's university, educates the future employees in both research and mediation, to try and achieve a balance between popularisation and the standards that the institution wants to meet. The studied period is more recent, and the ten-year gap that separates the two cases represents a consequential difference on the scale of the young discipline that is museology. That the example of the *Louvre* meets more the criteria and ideas that are discussed in the program that I am currently reading than the *Historiska Museet* did, is, therefore, no surprise. The *Louvre* advocates for a broad popularisation of its activities and content, having pointed out that the museum public became museum publics. This means that visitors are often younger, with less prior knowledge, and less used to museum norms and codes. These people need first to be attracted to the museum, and then satisfied with their visit. Furthermore, the *Louvre*'s international status means that most visitors are foreigners, tourists often coming from all over the world. These groups have different expectations with their visit to the museum: there and then, scientific popularisation's lines get blurred with entertainment policies. But popularisation activities at the *Louvre* can be divided into two categories. The expected tourist masses' need for cultural consumption needs to be satisfied, and yes, popularisation can be a tool to ensure visitors' satisfaction. However, as seen in the analysis, the museum also targets other publics: families and young visitors and different target audiences outside the walls. The *Petite Galerie* project is a typical example of modern popularisation: interactivity and intellectually accessible material. Collaboration with popularisers on social media contributes to the museum being able to reach this new audience and establish what can be the first contact with the museum. As discussed in the analysis, these collaborations also allow the museum staff to share their knowledge and work ethics with those who could be seen as taking over some of what had historically been the museums' missions.

Museums, publics, politics, and researchers

What the analytical work of this thesis made clear is what are some of the ties that exist between universities, museums, and politics, and how they influence each other. The example of the *Historiska Museet* showed how academics had historical control over the world of the museum. Academicians had historically sat in control of research and conservation duties and were even often in charge of producing new exhibitions. The paradigm shift in museum education meant that some of these ties were severed, and that authority was transferred to museum staff. Of course, academicians felt this was an attack on their legitimacy. The raise of popularisation activities was then seen as if museums were becoming places of cultural consumption, leaving aside their research mission. Comparing what was done at the *Historiska Museet* with the

popular Swedish tv program *Antikrundan* illustrates fully the misunderstanding that led to the first polemic. To try and decrypt this first polemic, we need to understand it as a fight for legitimacy and authority at the museum. Maybe more than a clash between museologists and archaeologists, it is probably the opposition of an older, conservative group against a younger, reformative side. The research-controlled agenda of the museum is replaced by a cultural policy agenda, that tries to make the museum more modern, more welcoming, and an active part of the democratic society. To take up an example, we can again look at the debate that sparked the third and final polemic of Berg's time as a museum director. When Berg said that iron axes were not relevant as such in a modern museum, he meant that these artefacts had a value and a meaning for researchers, but not so much interest for an average visitor. They also had to be interpreted and arranged in a certain way to gain an exhibition value for the museum. In the meantime, archaeologists and historians were offended by such comments, as they deemed these artefacts to be essential, and that they should be shown at the museum.

At *Louvre*, however, the collaboration between scientists and museum educators seems to be more established. Working often in pairs, they produce content that is adapted to the museum public, but still, as often pointed out in the analysis, meets the requirement and the standard of the museum. This system seems to be quite comprehensive. What is more interesting to see is how the museum's direction appears to be careful with the word popularisation. They oppose popularisation to the mediation work that they do, meaning that popularisation would be an oversimplification of knowledge. Choosing to work hand in hand with researchers, the museum wants to promote high-level intellectual content, with a language or a medium that can still reach out to a larger audience. Instead of trying to separate scientific research and scientific popularisation, they attempt to make the process a collaboration. In contact with educators, scientists learn how to adapt their communication to reach to a larger audience. In the same way, educators gain increased knowledge on a specific subject or artefact by appropriating knowledge from the discourse of the scientist. This process is probably what is described by the museum as quality popularisation. The *Louvre*'s conception of its "higher standards" could also be interpreted as pretentious: doing popularisation without doing popular culture, not giving in to some lower, easy to consume culture. One could wonder if the museum is not ambivalent in its relation to popularisation. On one hand, museums refrain from using the word in their mediation projects and activities while on the other the status and publics of the museum force them to have an easily digested tour that visitors can take while on a one-time short visit. There we get in touch with the political influence that shapes popularisation activities at the *Louvre*. As the main cultural French institution, and a central one even in a European and world context, the museum is largely influenced by politics. It needs to reflect the cultural greatness of the nation, its rich cultural heritage, and the state of its research on cultural matters. It is a key element in the French soft power politics, while also having to serve a necessary role in the

internal social policies. Opening an antenna in Lens serves national social policies, opening an antenna in Abu Dhabi serves an international relationship end. And it is because the museum must serve both purposes simultaneously that this ambivalence in its popularisation activities is present. Applying both Bourdieu and Adorno's theory, we can understand that the museum is charged on one side to contribute to the cultural capital of the whole country while filling a capitalistic purpose, both economically and politically. Making the *Louvre* the museum of the French people and popularising its content openly and on a larger scale would probably diminish the standing of the museum in the international cultural and academic community. The political factor at the *Historiska Museet* is surely not as dominant. We saw it when we analysed the organigram of the organisation and discussed how much freedom Berg was granted in conducting his policy. There and then, the stated aim was to transform the museum into a people's museum, making it relevant to contemporary society and the questions that were essential to it. Of course, it serves a cultural policy end: allow the audience to educate themselves and take a critical stance on societal debates.

The uses of popularisation

Popularisation activities aim to be able to convey knowledge to a wider audience. The philosophy of such initiatives is to be able to welcome anyone at the museum, regardless of their cultural capital. Popularisation is, in fact, an attempt to fulfil the mission of public museums to be a universal centre of education. In this thesis, we discussed popularisation as a broad set of ideas and actions: scientific and cultural popularisation, but even geographical aspects of accessibility, financial and cultural. It is simply because, even within the frame of this thesis, we cannot disregard how these initiatives work in relation to one another. When Berg decides to make the *Historiska Museet* entrance free of charge, it contributes to popularisation. When the *Louvre* opens an antenna in Lens or a digital museum in Sevran, it is popularisation. But more than all these aspects, popularisation is a way to connect or reconnect scientists and publics. I am not stating that there is a fracture between these two parts of society. Scientists are often active in societal debates, throughout traditional or new media. But maybe popularisation activities in museums can allow them to mediate their research directly to an audience that actively chose to take part in such a process and that is an environment adequate for it. Researchers and the publics might not be disconnected; however, museums could be the link to reinforce cooperation and transmission of knowledge between the two. First, because modern museums advocate for the active participation of their visitors. This means that popularisation activities could be the seed of productive exchange between researchers and museum visitors. Secondly, because many people get their information through uncontrolled channels, and that misinformation is rising. Museums have always beneficiated from a high trust with the public, namely by basing their knowledge transmission on artefacts, tangible proof of what they state. By allowing researchers to interact directly with the publics, within

the context of this high confidence, they give researchers a privileged platform to debate and transmit knowledge. Museum educators, using their experience with the public and with popularisation tools, can act as somewhat of translators between the jargon of the academic world.

Different examples and take on popularisation

There is a crucial aspect of the two studied cases that has been only named or quickly pointed out in this thesis. What the *Historiska Museet* and the *Louvre* are responsible for is transmitting and constructing cultural heritage. And while there is a real discussion around how to popularise and mediate knowledge for cultural institutions, a discussion this thesis enters, museum popularisation englobes even other types of institutions: technical, scientific, and natural science institutions. As shown in the chapter about previous literature, articles have been written on how experiences and texts could be used in these museums. At the Brno technical museum, visitors are encouraged to try and experiment on their own to understand how and why a physical or chemical phenomenon happens (Jagošová, et al., 2019). However, throughout this study, we saw that our two cultural museums also used concrete demonstrations in their popularisation activities. At the *Historiska Museet*, visitors could try on clothes replicas from the Middle Ages, and at the *Louvre*, people could touch and feel the texture of a sculpture. Maybe these technics are more common for technical museums as they transmit tangible knowledge. One could argue that it is easier to exemplify how electricity can be produced through friction rather than hierarchical relations in the early Middle Ages. But these processes might not be so different, as through exemplifying and making knowledge tangible, the goal for both types of museums is to activate more senses of the visitor. To touch and feel, to smell and to hear, rather than passive transmission through texts.

The experience room in the Brno technical museum is a place in which visitors can put the information they got from the other parts of the museum to use (Jagošová, et al., 2019). At the *Louvre*, the *Petite Galerie* could be seen as the museum's experience room. The pedagogical advantages of offering an active exchange with the visitors, to engaging them to interact with the museum and the artefacts are seen as a justification for popularisation activities (Pierroux, 2019). However, for cultural heritage institutions to make collections more lifeful and to offer experiences to the visitors, not unlike what science museums have done, they need to break away from the traditions that surround these museums. Experiences are often more accepted in the sphere of science museums as they are the very ground on which much of the scientific knowledge is built. To allow visitors to take part in these experiments is to take the scientific research process and make them accessible to them. In cultural history museums, they are seen by some as the transformation of the museums into tourists' entertainment centres. This is a polemic topic, as we saw with Janken Myrdal's comment from 2001 when he compared Berg's

version of *Historiska museet* to a new kind of Disneyland (Bäckstedt, 2001). But to allow visitors to experience more of cultural heritage could be a way to wake their interest in order to ensure better transmission of knowledge.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I discuss popularisation activities at museums and what their role and uses can be based on a case study of two museums. In the following chapter, I will conclude this thesis by showing what are the main challenges for popularisation activities at museums as well as reflecting upon what this can tell us about the future of museums.

Scientific popularisation and its challenges

The modern museum has a clear cultural policy mission: to be universal and general. What I mean is that it should be everyone's museum, and it should be able to present stories, information, and artefacts that everyone can identify to, everyone can be challenged by. Cultural policies are affecting museums in the sense that they push for openness and accessibility, trying to make the museum a place of democracy. As seen in this investigation, museums are well aware that the typical visitor profile of the 1980s, a person used to museums and with a certain cultural capital, is no longer valid. Visitors are younger and have less experience of the world of museums and less prior knowledge. Diversity is also a key concept, as museums must represent the multitude of publics that come to visit them. As they are public institutions, often financed by public funding, they are required to be open and open-minded. Popularisation activities are a way for the museum to create accessible material and stories for people to understand, sometimes relate to, and build upon to gain knowledge and information on a topic. However, there is a certain power structure at play here: museums should be seated on the knowledge that they would graciously transmit to an ignorant public. Of course, this view of popularisation is problematic and, way too simplistic. Popularisation is, instead, the process of adapting a certain material to make it intelligible to people without or little specific knowledge in that specific area. It is the opposite of a condescending simplification of education. Popularisation at museums is based on the principle that anyone can learn and understand anything if given the proper tools and the proper support. To that extent, popularisation is a natural process for public museums as they aim to become universal.

But can there be good and bad popularisation? And how do we find the limit between mediation and oversimplification? As seen in this study, some believe that popularisation goes against the standard of the museums and that it should be first and foremost a place of high-level research. Others see it only as a way for the museum to guarantee ever-increasing visitor statistics, giving in to public trends and becoming another element of the growing world tourist industry. But elitism is not either the answer, as closing the doors of public institutions and rejecting people with the wrong cultural capital would surely only feed the rising extremism. In that sense, it is

important for museums not to be the only institutions of knowledge. They need to be questioned and their role needs to be debated. They need to cooperate with scientists and researchers and give them a place on the stage so that they can communicate with the publics. Museums can be the tool needed to allow a constructive and interactive exchange between the general public and the research community.

Popularisation and the museum of the future

Scientific popularisation has never been exclusive to museums. Through books, movies, shows, and now even social media, many actors take upon them the responsibility of popularising different sorts of knowledge for different publics. The difference is however that museums have a well-established status and have earned a high trust level with the population. Having been recognized as a place of research and mediation, many believe that museums are truthful and selfless in their agenda. They are public institutions that serve the greater good. But of course, this is a changing conception of the museum. Being asked to be more active in the democratic debate, they sometimes take stances that bother, that can be seen as political. Having given up on pretences of scientific objectivity, museums have exposed themselves to harsher critics, maybe even destroying this image of an all-knowing institution. Therefore, when it comes to popularisation, is the line between museums and, for example, a YouTube channel about History, not as clear as it was some years ago. But whereas a social media account will be able to quantify its success by looking at how many people watched a certain video, how many subscribers it has, and how many users interacted with a certain content, museums face forever the same dilemma. Should we consider that a successful popularisation activity is the one that draws the most visitors? Or should we argue that it is what knowledge is gained by visitors that determines the level of success? And if so, how can you quantify such a result? Furthermore, there is always an agenda at play for museums: personal, political, or economic, there is always a motivation for a project that costs the museum financial and human investment. Much research is still to be done in this area.

So how are museums supposed to compete with emerging popularisers and other places of culture? The use of newer digital platforms and tools is often presented as the solution to mediate more efficiently. However, this requires competencies that seem to be less often found in museum staff. At the same time, it is surely the analogical tools that museums possess, that is their collections and artefacts, that are so unique and can make them more attractive than other institutions. Tangible cultural heritage is the biggest strength of museums. Having such fantastic collections is of course a logistical and sometimes ethical challenge, but it is also a fantastic opportunity for museums to be able to discuss almost every possible aspect of society. With popularisation activities, museums can pass on their knowledge and engage visitors as citizens in a democratic debate and fulfil their educational mission.

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