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Reclaiming the Past and the Present

The Presentation and Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Cultural Institutions

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Course SIMZ51 – Master Thesis 2024
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Abstract

Cultural institutions such as museums and art galleries are important agents in educating the broader public on matters where current awareness is missing, inadequate or inaccurate. In this study, I focus on one such matter, which is the knowledge regarding ethnic minorities, their history, traditions, and current challenges. My primary focus is on how cultural institutions utilise their exhibitions, and how they approach their exhibitions' narratives, atmosphere, and the aspect of respect.

In my research, I examined cultural institutions dedicated to one of two ethnic groups – the Sámi or the Roma people. I conducted qualitative research using the multi-sited ethnography method, studying five different institutions across the Czech Republic and Norway. These institutions were the Museum of Romani Culture in Brno and the exhibition "The Open Road" in Prague in the Czech Republic, and the Sámi Museum, the Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art, and the Sámi Art Collection in Karasjok, Norway.

My research revealed several key findings. First, the features of each exhibition's narrative are heavily dependent on its context – this includes the prior knowledge of the institution's visitors, the socio-cultural environment, the goals of the institution and discourse regarding curatorial practices. Second, the exhibition's atmosphere not only engages the visitors but also assists the particular community to reclaim the narratives related to them. Finally, for an exhibition or the institution to be respectful, it is necessary to ensure collaboration with the community being represented and make their voices and perspectives lead the narrative and the way artefacts are presented. By representing ethnic minorities with consideration to all three aspects – the narrative, the atmosphere and the respect – the cultural institutions can create an environment which makes a lasting impression on its audience and creates a positive impact on both insiders and outsiders of the represented communities.

Keywords: Social Anthropology, Cultural Institutions, Exhibition Narrative, Exhibition Atmosphere, Respect, Sámi People, Roma People

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who have supported and guided me throughout the long journey of writing this thesis. I am particularly thankful to my thesis supervisor, PhD Nina Gren, for her endless patience, insightful feedback, and unwavering support throughout the entire process. Without her professional and personal support, I might still be struggling to find my research direction and complete the thesis.

I would also like to acknowledge the help of my research participants, whose willingness to take part in the study and share their experience was crucial to the success of this research. I have learned a lot from their work and perspectives, and I am most grateful for their contributions.

I would further like to thank my friends and family for their support, encouragement and also practical feedback in proofreading and editing my thesis. My research and writing have been long and challenging, but their encouragement has kept me motivated.

Finally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Silje, who did not turn away from me when I appeared for the first time in Karasjok for my research fieldwork and provided me not only with a roof over my head but also with a sense of belonging and support.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Cultural institutions, such as museums or galleries, play a significant role in sharing knowledge and shaping common narratives in society. Whether the institution uses contemporary art or historical artefacts, they have the power to create an engaging environment which educates the public on issues that are not commonly known or discussed. "The transformative quality of the museum environment and display formats, with regard to objects and object relationships, is fundamental to the socio-cultural responsibilities of these institutions and their ability to affect social issues" (Saunders, 2014).

Education is one of the key goals of these institutions. Their particular focus might vary, but the overall objective remains the same – to provide informative and transformative experiences for their visitors. To achieve this objective, cultural institutions must provide experiences that are not only informative and accurate but also engaging and memorable. No matter how noble a particular institution's mission might be, if it fails to effectively engage with its audience, it cannot fulfil its educational role.

Cultural institutions which direct their attention towards ethnic minorities face a unique challenge in ensuring their representation is accurate and respectful and leads the visitor to a better understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage of these communities. The institutions have to navigate their socio-cultural environment and make crucial decisions regarding their activities, such as which particular narratives to prioritize, how to interpret and display cultural objects, and how to engage with diverse audiences, all while keeping in mind what is feasible and what are their limitations and ethical responsibilities. Balancing those variables is essential for all those institutions' activities, and necessarily leads to different strategies even while targeting similar goals. Loukaitou-Sideris & Grodach (2004) pointed out significant differences regarding for example size of museums:

> Some ethnic museums (usually the smaller ones) are vested in particular neighborhoods and are primarily local constructs [...] Often these museums attempt to construct sites of difference and contest, where the status quo is questioned and challenged. Such museums view themselves as antidotes to a cultural hegemony that privileged national or elite cultures. Their didactic and polemical role can sometimes be misconstrued, however, as promoting cultural balkanization.
>
> Other ethnic museums (usually the larger ones) [...] increasingly cast their gaze to the whole city and to global audiences. In doing so, they find themselves

> under the tension of having to reconcile the different needs of local and global publics. Often these museums try to present themselves as "zones of contact," engaging in dialog the wide range of communities and cultures that comprise the city, the nation, or globe. In their attempt to reach a larger audience, they resemble their mainstream peers. (p. 70)

In my study, I aim to examine which particular strategies cultural institutions employ to reach their goals of education and representation. While many institutions commonly use a variety of ways to engage with their audiences, such as exhibitions, guided tours, workshops, public debates or educational programs, I will only focus on the first strategy mentioned – exhibitions. Exhibitions are usually the primary way through which museums and art galleries communicate with the public and therefore are the first choice for analysis in this study. I will explore how are the exhibitions curated, what is the intended narrative of the exhibitions, how is it communicated, and how is the engagement of the visitors ensured.

The particular strategies of the cultural institutions are heavily dependent on which ethnic minority they focus on and what is their socio-cultural environment. To avoid an excessively narrow focus, I decided to direct my attention to institutions that represent one of two ethnic groups – the Sámi or the Roma people. These two ethnic groups were chosen because, while they are not directly related, have a special position within Europe. The Sámi people are the only indigenous people in Europe, and the Roma people are the largest European ethnic minority group.

Despite their significance, the awareness about these ethnic groups is still limited and often distorted because of historical marginalization and stereotypes. Formal education provided in European societies concerning the history, traditions, and present state of these ethnic groups is often insufficient or absent. Therefore, "a growing number of nongovernmental organizations are agitating for the rights of these embattled, small populations struggling for living space within, and sometimes across, nation-state borders" (Clifford, 2013). Understanding how these institutions approach the issue of accurate representation which also promotes understanding and empathy among the broader public is essential for promoting diversity, inclusivity, and social justice.

Research questions

Based on the primary focus areas of my research, I have defined my research questions as follows:

Main research question

- How do museums and art galleries use their exhibitions to represent ethnic minorities, specifically the Sámi and Roma people?

Sub-questions

- What do the cultural institutions prioritize in creating and promoting the narrative of their exhibitions?
- How do cultural institutions ensure the memorability of their exhibitions' narratives?

- How do the institutions approach authenticity and respect towards the cultural heritage and lived experience of the ethnic minorities they represent?

Research methods

I have selected five institutions for my research. Two of these institutions represent the Roma people, namely the Museum of Romani Culture in Brno, Czech Republic, and the exhibition The Open Road in Prague, Czech Republic, and three institutions represent the Sámi people – the Sámi Museum, the Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art (Sámi Dáiddaguovddáš, SDG), and the Sámi Art Collection, all located in Karasjok, Norway. Selecting these particular institutions allowed me to examine institutions of diverse focus, which provided me with a wider perspective while also narrowing down my research scope to only two national contexts to ensure feasibility and in-depth analysis.

Since I analyse several institutions in different geographical locations, I use the approach of multi-sited ethnography. With this approach, I view my field not as a single geographically bound area, but as multiple sites defined by the presence of a predefined phenomenon, in this case, an exhibition of a cultural institution. Multi-sited ethnography allows me to collect data about this phenomenon throughout different locations and contexts, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the single strategies and practices.

Thesis Outline

To begin my thesis, I first describe the methodology of my research. I conducted fieldwork, particularly a multi-sited ethnography, and collected my data through semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In this section, I also reflect on my position as a researcher in the field and describe the ethical considerations of my research.

After that, I move to summarizing previous research on the representation of ethnic minorities in cultural institutions, and the analytical frameworks I will use to analyse and interpret my data. The most important frameworks are the anthropological theory of art proposed by Gell (1998), the role of atmosphere described by Bjerregaard (2015), and the theory of values by Strauss (1992).

In the following chapter, I will provide a comprehensive description of the context in which my research takes place. This will involve examining the institutions I have visited and addressing the historical background of the Sámi and Roma communities, specifically focusing on their experience within Norway and the Czech Republic respectively.

After providing this context, I will move on to describe my research analysis and findings. The chapter "Exhibition Content" will explore the narrative of each exhibition I have visited from multiple points of view. The concept of exhibition is crucial here, and as a theoretical framework to understand this concept, I use the anthropological theory of art proposed by Alfred Gell in his book *Art and Agency* (1998).

In the next chapter, "Unsettling the Visitor", I will examine the atmosphere of each exhibition, the emotional response of the visitor and the importance of an immersive environment that engages the visitor on multiple levels. I base my analysis on the

findings of Peter Bjerregaard in his article *Dissolving objects: Museums, atmosphere and the creation of presence* (2015), and use part of the analytical framework proposed by Rita Kottasz in an article *Understanding the influences of atmospheric cues on the emotional responses and behaviours of museum visitors* (2006)

Finally, I will explore the concept of value, respect and disrespect as themes that resonated across all the institutions I have studied. I understand the concept of value as described by Claudia Strauss (1992), who stresses the importance of life experience and exemplary persons in creating and perpetuating one's value systems. Respect is closely tight to the concept of value, and could be seen as a generally desired outcome of the cultural institutions' work. They aim to educate and inform visitors and the wider public about the history, culture and current issues of ethnic minorities to foster a more respectful society. The concept of respect is not commonly discussed in anthropology, so I draw some insights from the field of philosophy, and then, based on my data, propose a definition of respect and disrespect and how they are tied to the concept of value.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Research design

I have collected data for my work through ethnographic fieldwork to obtain first-hand experience and an in-depth understanding of the field of my study. The primary area of my research revolves around examining museum and art exhibitions across different ethnic and national contexts. Since my field consists of institutions in several geographic locations, I have adopted a multi-sited ethnography approach.

The method of multi-sited ethnography is defined, as its name suggests, by conducting research in multiple sites or locations. Although the practice of this method involves mapping out different locations, its objective is not to provide an all-encompassing portrayal of the global system. Multi-sited ethnographic research means studying a phenomenon by examining it in various sites and contexts. The mobile nature of the object being studied means that any ethnography conducted on it will inherently have a comparative aspect to it (Marcus, 1995, pp. 99 – 102).

Generally speaking, the practice of conducting research solely on a single location is no longer as prevalent as it once was. In the past, the emphasis was solely on studying peoples, places, and cultures in their immediate surroundings (Marcus, 2016, p. 181). The concept of "field" was typically understood as something external to the anthropologist's home, encompassed within a clearly defined space and explored primarily through participant observation. "Bound up within these practices is the assumption that culture is located 'out there,' with ethnography being about the unfamiliar 'other'" (Mand, 2012, p. 43). This approach became, however, heavily criticised, for example for seeing the researched community as an isolated entity. An influential critic is for instance Arjun Appadurai (1996), who argues, that the concept of "isolated society" has never existed, and today more than ever is losing any relevance. The nature of the reproduction of group identities is changing from social, territorial and cultural perspectives, and that needs to be accepted. "As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic projects, the ethno in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalized quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 48). In line with this critique, the practice of multi-sited ethnography has emerged as a response to the interconnectedness and global dynamics that shape people's lives.

In multi-sited ethnography, the conventional notion of studying a single object in a specific location is not suitable. George Marcus (1995) suggests studying the object through different modes or techniques, which means either following the people, the

thing, the metaphor, the plot or story or allegory, the life or biography, or the conflict (pp. 106 – 110). But neither of these methods fully aligns with my research objectives. Thus I decided to adopt James Ferguson's (2011) perspective on multi-sited ethnography. He proposes that, by engaging in methodological reflection, we should begin to understand our research object as a set of practices, and then study these practices simply there, where they are happening. The process of methodological reflection is common, even when multi-sited ethnography is not being considered. Research ideas often start as very abstract, and it is necessary to ground them in concrete realities. As researchers, we need to transform the idea, and "work towards changing the question, translating the objects originally named into specific activities engaged in by specific people" (Ferguson, 2011, p. 200).

In my research, the above-mentioned "set of practices" is the way ethnic groups are portrayed in cultural institutions. The practice central to my research is the institution's interaction with the public through its exhibition, in particular, what narrative is created in the exhibitions and how is it presented to the public.

The field of my research

To include various backgrounds and focuses of institutions, I visited five institutions that represented diverse geographical and cultural contexts. These institutions are the Museum of Romani Culture in Brno, Czech Republic, the exhibition of Roma artists named The Open Road, held in the National Museum in Prague, Czech Republic, and the Sámi Museum, Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art, and Sámi Art Collection, all located in Karasjok, Norway.

It was my original intention to select institutions which varied in terms of the ethnic groups they focused on. I chose to focus on the Roma and the Sámi people, as they are both groups of stateless people, each spread across multiple nation states, but with the status of minority in each of them. These groups also hold significant importance, because the Roma people constitute the largest ethnic minority in Europe, and the Sámi are recognized as the only indigenous people of Europe. Despite the unique status of each of these communities, there is a lack of awareness among Europeans about these peoples, which makes the role of the institutions crucial, and my research topic highly relevant.

The selection of the particular institutions followed naturally. The Museum of Romani Culture was chosen because it is one of the leading institutions dedicated to Roma culture and history, with no other institution like it in the whole of Europe. The exhibition The Open Road was created from the art collection of this museum, with the National Museum providing its spaces. It was highly beneficial to observe how this exhibition was curated and showcased within a mainstream institution.

Regarding the institutions focused on the Sámi people, their benefits lie in several aspects of their work. The Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art is a leading international institution for Sámi and other artists who are of indigenous or ethnic minority background or focus on themes related to those peoples. The Sámi Museum and Sámi Art Collection are institutions that fall within the authority of a larger organisation RiddoDuottarMuseat, which manages the largest collection of Sámi cultural artefacts and art in Norway. Thus their participation in my research provided me with an important understanding of the representation and preservation of Sámi cultural heritage.

The first period of my fieldwork took place during September and October 2022, when I visited the institutions in Czechia and Norway, respectively. After that I returned to my studies, and only made a short visit to Czechia in November, to visit a public event in the exhibition "The Open Road". Before the second period of my fieldwork, I analysed part of my data to narrow down the focus of my research and prepare for the second visit to the field. I finished my fieldwork in early 2023 when I went to Norway for the second time during February, and to Czechia during March.

Reflexivity

The process of conducting fieldwork requires a deep level of reflexivity, which is a concept that holds great significance in contemporary anthropology. The shift towards reflexivity means that fieldwork is now acknowledged as a dynamic process, where the relationship between the researcher and their research participants shapes knowledge creation. By being reflexive of their position, researchers consider how power relations impact every aspect of the research process — from data collection to analysis and including the writing process. Additionally, emphasizing self-awareness can provide valuable insights into the context in which the research was conducted (Mand, 2012, p. 49).

Given that my fieldwork was conducted across various locations, it is crucial to engage in introspection and critically analyse my position within each setting. "Multi-sited fieldwork must be conducted with a keen awareness of being within the landscape, and as the landscape changes across sites, the identity of the ethnographer requires renegotiation" (Marcus, 1995, p. 112).

To examine the shifts in my positions throughout my fieldwork, I have to provide some background information about myself. My identity is closely tied to the Czech Republic as that is where I was born and have spent the majority of my life. Additionally, Czech is not only my native language but also holds significance as both my citizenship and potentially contributing to aspects of ethnicity (albeit without a particularly strong national attachment, more general categories "Slavic" and "European" hold comparable, maybe even bigger significance to me).

Reflecting on oneself in the field usually starts with using the categories of being an insider or outsider, which refers to whether one is or is not a member of a particular group. These terms serve as fundamental tools for self-reflection during ethnographic research, but they are not simple binary labels. Instead, the dichotomy exists on a spectrum and can be assessed on various dimensions such as ethnicity, age, gender identity, socio-economic status, and educational background among others. Nevertheless, what I considered to be the most crucial aspects during my research, were my ethnicity, nationality and language.

During my research in Czech institutions, I encountered people from Czechia and Slovakia, of both Roma and non-Roma ethnicity. Language-wise, despite the people's diverse backgrounds, there was no significant language barrier. The Czech and Slovak languages are highly similar, and it is common for native speakers of both languages to communicate effortlessly with each other. This applied also to my interactions with Roma people. While there is limited available data regarding native Roma speakers, it can be stated that a majority of Roma people primarily speak the language dominant within their country, alongside one or more dialects of Romani. In the census from 2021, 21 691 people stated "Roma" as their nationality, and 28 102 people indicated the Romani language as one of their mother tongue, of which only 4 280 people stated

it as their only mother tongue[1]. The number of people who entered "Roma" as their nationality and "Czech" as their mother tongue is not available in the public database, as well as other indicators of language proficiency. Nevertheless, the data still point to the fact that there is not a considerable language barrier (Czech Statistical Office, 2021).

During my fieldwork in Norway, I had to rely solely on English, as I do not have any knowledge of Sámi or other Nordic languages. This language barrier was not significantly limiting during casual conversations or formal interviews, as all the people I talked with were used to communicating in English, and they were highly proficient. At times, it even worked in my favour as my need to use English exclusively drew attention and sparked curiosity among people. As a result, I could easily get to know them and engage in casual conversations. On the other hand, language became very limiting during public events. They were held in Sámi, Norwegian or Swedish, and thus I had to rely only on what was later translated for me and what I could observe.

Apart from the language, there were significant differences in how much I was familiar with the social, cultural, political and economic environment of the institutions and people. As a Czech citizen, I am deeply familiar with the socio-cultural environment of my country and keep track of the political and economic situation. This awareness made a critical difference when considering the marginalization of the Roma people. I do not claim to fully understand the lived experience of being an oppressed ethnic minority. However, I am somewhat familiar with the form of discrimination, and how rooted it is in the majority. Many times, and especially since I started working on my research, I have been a witness to discriminating opinions, ranging from subtle inappropriate remarks to openly racist and hateful speeches. It was a part of doing my research that I was the least prepared for, as most of these experiences were within the circle of my friends and family. I was surprised how many people could not comprehend that I am interested in the Roma people, and how they tried their best to convince me that Roma people are – roughly paraphrasing their remarks – "not worthy of my interest".

To compare the reactions of the same people to my interest in the Sámi people, there were not a lot of similarities, except for having a distorted perception of the people in general. Many lacked knowledge about who the Sámi people were, but once I provided them with a brief explanation, they became intrigued and eager to learn more. Many regarded the Sámi as "exotic" and some even romanticized them as "noble savages", inhabiting igloos in the northern regions. However, they were willing to listen to my corrections and learn about the complexities of the Sámi culture and identity, which was hardly ever the case during conversations about the Roma people.

My encounters with individuals in Norway had a distinct quality. While in Karasjok, the majority of those I engaged with were either affiliated with institutions I studied or were Sámi themselves. As a result, my role was more focused on listening and learning rather than speaking or explaining. My research interest was not perceived as such a surprising topic, and when I mentioned the Roma people, there was generally a level of awareness and understanding about the challenges they face as an ethnic minority. One Sámi nurse, whom I met during my travel to Karasjok, even drew parallels between the experience of the Roma and Sámi people, highlighting the shared struggle against discrimination and marginalization.

[1] "Mother tongue" was defined as language, which the mother or other people raising given person used in their childhood. It was possible to state one or two languages.

I have met non-Sámi people mostly during my trips to Karasjok, because for my first visit, I took a plane to Tromsø, and for my second visit to Lakselv, both times then hitchhiking to Karasjok. This allowed me to interact with a diverse range of individuals, including locals and immigrant foreigners. These conversations were very casual and informal, and while reactions to my research topic varied, there was generally a very mild interest in my work, and people were much more interested in learning why I decided to hitchhike, and where would I sleep if I did not make it to Karasjok the same day.

It is true that the demographic of the people I met during my trips varied in terms of their ethnicity, gender, age or occupation, but it is still important to note that they were hardly a representative sample of the population, since they had one crucial thing in common – they have decided to help me, to let a stranger into their cars and share a part of their journey with me. In my experience, such people tend to be more open-minded and generally very kind. Therefore, the fact that I did not experience any hostility or negative responses, did not come as such a surprise. Nevertheless, it still had an impact on me as I have felt more welcome and comfortable during my fieldwork journey.

Reflecting on my identity and background was further important not only in personal interaction with the people but also in the exhibitions. A significant part of my data is also how I experienced each exhibition, what left a lasting impact on me and how it contributed to my understanding of the Sámi and Roma communities. The exhibitions in the Czech Republic were more personal, and sometimes left me feeling guilty for my society's treatment of the Roma people and perhaps not standing up against it enough. The exhibitions in Noway, on the other hand, were not as emotional by default. However, when a particular atmosphere or way of presenting the narrative struck me, it had an even deeper impact and created a memorable experience.

Data and analysis

During my fieldwork, I collected a range of data through different means. By visiting the institutions, experiencing personally the exhibitions, and engaging in conversations with staff members, I had the opportunity to gather first-hand information about their perspectives and practices related to their work. To ensure comprehensive data collection, I used several techniques including making on-site observations, taking detailed field notes and conducting semi-structured interviews.

Additionally, I examined the websites and social media of the institutions and visited some public events, to see how the institutions communicate with the public outside their exhibitions. While the primary focus of my research was permanent and temporary exhibitions, experiencing these additional public events was still beneficial, as it provided me with some more context and general knowledge about the institutions' work and their audiences.

After I finished my fieldwork, I transcribed and coded all my interviews, to find similarities and differences between the perspectives of different individuals and institutions. I also analysed the data collected from on-site observations and field notes, looking for common themes and patterns. I was especially focusing on the patterns in the dimensions regarding the target ethnic group (the Sámi or Roma people), their respective national contexts (Norway and Czechia), and the institutional setting (museum or art gallery).

2.1 Ethical consideration

Throughout the entire research process – my fieldwork, data analysis and writing – I kept reflecting on my position as a researcher and considered the potential ethical implications of my study.

As a researcher, I was mindful of the power dynamics and the potential influence I had as an outsider conducting research. I kept in mind the necessity of respectful behaviour and maintaining a collaborative approach with the individuals and institutions involved in my research.

My data consists of semi-structured and unstructured interviews, observations, and public websites. The semi-structured interviews were recorded with the informed consent of the participants. I have transcribed the audio files without giving access to either the audio files or the transcriptions to any third party. The unstructured interviews were not recorded but were based on informal conversations, where I informed the individuals of the purpose of my presence.

It is the most common and accepted practice to ensure the anonymity of research participants. In the case of my research, most of the institutions I have visited have only a few employees and it might be relatively easy to identify individuals based on their affiliation. Therefore, when using direct quotes from my interviews, I will generalise the participants' affiliations as much as possible to protect their anonymity, while still providing context that is relevant to the topic discussed. I will also leave out any personal information about the participants.

I will, on the other hand, provide the names of artists whose exhibitions I have visited and therefore included in my analysis. It might be pointed out that, while presenting their artworks in public spaces, these artists have not explicitly given their consent for their work to be discussed and analysed in research. However, I believe that it would rather unethical to comment on their work without providing proper acknowledgement and recognition.

Chapter 3

Previous Research and Analytical Framework

3.1 Previous Research

Extensive research has been conducted on museums, examining their purpose, operations, and interaction with the environment. Numerous studies have explored the overall functions of these institutions as well as specific case studies highlighting individual museums. In the following literature review, I will summarise some key findings from research with similar focus, to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic and identify the general context of my research.

A significant amount of research agrees that the role of museums and their purpose has evolved. As Moira Simpson (2012) describes, these institutions are turning from focus inwards to focus outwards. That means they are shifting from being primarily concerned with the preservation and display of artefacts to revitalisation, actively engaging with the wider community and addressing contemporary issues. This tendency was visible in my research since all the institutions included in my study displayed a clear emphasis on the objectives of both directions. While expanding the collections has been a primary focus in the past, museums now put a strong focus on education, social engagement, and community involvement.

It is, however, important to note that both goals are essential and closely interconnected since an extensive historiographical collection can be crucial for cultural revitalisation. Simpson demonstrates this in several examples, such as the following three:

During the 1970s, a mobile museum was created in the Philippines as part of an effort to revitalize traditional crafts and provide tribal communities with a reference collection.

At the South Australian Museum, the study of the wood carvings collection has led to the revitalization of traditional practices that had been lost for many years within an Aboriginal community. It is worth mentioning that there are now more Aboriginal users than white Australians and other researchers utilizing these collections.

As a final example, museological records and collections proved highly valuable for the construction of the traditional houses in the Grand Hall of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, designed to resemble Northwest Coast structures from the 18th and 19th centuries.

The study concludes that the role of museums has undergone significant changes, which are seen as positive and should be welcomed and supported. "Instead of avoiding potentially controversial issues, curators should exploit public interest and the publicity potential of such issues by contributing information and artefacts in displays which are designed to enlighten the public and add to the debate" (Simpson, 2012, p. 264)

The efforts of revitalisation, however, do not always have a clear positive outcome. Some downsides and challenges have also been identified in the literature, such as in the paper from Arlene Dávila (1999). It examines the case of the "Latinization" of culture in the US, which means the generalisation of multiple cultural identities and practices into a singular "Latino" category. This category is a mix of "a highly heterogeneous population, including Mexicans, Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Nicaraguans, Peruvians, any other person from any Spanish-speaking country of the Caribbean, and South America, and even Spain" (p. 184).

Through the example of two particular museums, the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art and El Museo del Barrio, the author illustrates that such generalisation leads to the establishment of hierarchies and stereotypes regarding Latino art. Traditional and mythical themes became the most popular, often overshadowing other artistic expressions within the given context. Furthermore, artists from specific nations were often given more prominence than others, and displaced artists tended to be disregarded as not authentic enough. The focus on the origin, whether it be nationality or ethnicity, therefore, outweighs the recognition of their actual artistic merit, which is a problem also mentioned by my research participants on several occasions (Dávila, 1999).

Ethnographic museums often deal with the challenge of representing diverse identities and cultural practices without falling into excessive generalizations. This problem was also highlighted in a paper from Vidar Fagerheim Kalsås (2015). This particular research paper is highly relevant to my thesis due to its thematic similarity. The research was focused on two exhibitions – "Latjo-Drom", an exhibition at the Glomdal Museum, focused on the Roma people, and "Sápmi – Becoming a Nation", an exhibition at Tromsø University Museum focused on the Sámi people.

A notable distinction between these two exhibitions was the contrasting approaches to time and self-representation. The Sámi focused exhibition adopted a chronological approach, guiding visitors from the past to the present as they walked through the exhibition. The element of time played a significant role there. In contrast, the Roma-focused exhibition took on a thematic arrangement without clear markers of time reference or grounding. Consequently, portraying the Roma people tended towards essentialism. This may have served a strategic purpose, since by presenting the Roma people as rather a homogenous group, the exhibition highlighted their distinctiveness from Norway's majority and justified their recognition as an ethnic minority.

Regarding the element of self-representation, when an institution presents an ethnic minority or any historically marginalised group, the issue of involvement of the community becomes crucial. It is currently considered highly problematic when individuals who are not part of an ethnic minority take charge of narrating and depicting other cultures.

Each of the exhibitions approached the authenticity of their exhibition and narrative differently. The Glomdal Museum had Roma people actively involved in setting up the exhibition and its narrative. In the Tromsø University Museum, on the other hand, the Sámi exhibition was created in cooperation with academics, who had experience

with studying Sámi related issues.

The research summarises that while these exhibitions were created around the same time, there are notable differences in both the production processes and museological expressions. This suggests that when a museum aims to empower historically marginalized minority groups, the ethnopolitical context surrounding these groups becomes crucial in influencing the content and exhibition strategies employed (Kalsås, 2015).

The national environment and political situation are crucial for every museum to consider, and they can shape the narratives and representations within its exhibitions. Since my research was conducted in two different countries, the national and political environment are also important factors to consider. This particular matter was addressed for example by Oliver Tappe (2011) in a study focusing on institutions in Laos. Every museum falls under the control of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), and therefore, every exhibition narrative must follow the same ideology. It has to support the idea of "the LPRP as the rightful ruler of a culturally rich multiethnic nation imbued with a noble patriotic spirit. The party's claim to power in the political domain is underpinned here by the control of historical memory" (p. 606)

As a reaction and adaptation to the national environment and politics, the institution can support the current situation, as is the case in Laos, but it can also challenge it, as illustrated in the case of Taiwan by Maria Varutti (2012). Her research describes various cases of museums that decided to step away from the rather traditional role and embraced a more active approach, for example in supporting victims of natural disasters or empowering indigenous groups. The latter case has gained more significance in recent years, as there has been a growing significance placed on the representation from the inside. This is due to the context of nationalistic projects that seek to redefine Taiwanese national history and identity as separate from mainland China.

The politics of independence was also stressed in the research focusing on the National Museum in Estonia, in particular, the discussion revolving around building a new National Museum (Runnel et al., 2010).

The old National Museum was an example of the traditional approach to museums. It approached the Estonian culture as highly generalised, which made it easier to distinguish from Soviet Russian culture. It emphasized boundaries between the categories of "us" and "them" and therefore supported the idea of distinctiveness and right to independence. The debate surrounding the new museum centred on choosing between maintaining the conventional storyline or adopting a more comprehensive and varied portrayal of Estonian culture.

This issue relates closely to the topic of my thesis. Both Sámi and Roma people are culturally diverse ethnic groups, and while there is no major movement for independence within these communities, the representation and recognition of their cultural identities have become increasingly important.

In the case of the Estonian National Museum, the authors conclude that "the role of the museum is, in this setting, to provide all audiences with thought-provoking materials rather than just comfort blankets. If the national museum is able to take on this active role in reimagining the nation in this way, then rather than simply being a site of social memory, it can also be a place of cultural innovation and cohesion" (Runnel et al., 2010, p. 335).

In conclusion, the examples presented in this review demonstrate the shifting role of museums in re-imagining national history and identity. As discussed, museums have the power to either support the status quo or challenge it, depending on the specific context in which they operate.

When the institution utilises a generalised approach and presents a certain community as rather homogeneous, it can strengthen its position and reinforce a sense of distinctiveness and independence. However, this often results in the creation of stereotypes and a hierarchy of certain identities over others. On the other hand, when museums adopt a more inclusive and diverse approach, incorporating multiple perspectives and challenging dominant narratives, they have the potential to promote cultural innovation and cohesion.

3.2 Analytical Framework

In this section, I will discuss important theoretical concepts that I use to analyze and interpret my data. To begin, it is necessary to define ethnicity and related terms as my study focuses on two specific ethnic groups. Therefore, a clear understanding of the concept of ethnicity is crucial to effectively describe the nature of my research. Secondly, I will describe the term institutions, which marks the boundary of my field. Finally, I will discuss the theory of art, which describes the agents and relations within my field.

3.2.1 Ethnicity, Nationalism and 'Race'

Ethnicity is a complex concept that shifts and changes depending on context and encompasses various aspects of individuals' identities and group affiliations. For this study, I will refer to ethnicity as described by Thomas H. Eriksen in his book *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2002).

He defines ethnicity as an aspect of identity and group belonging, which arises when different groups have certain contact with each other, are aware of each other's existence, and consider themselves as culturally different. "Group identities must always be defined in relation to what they are not — in other words, in relation to non-members of the group [...] for ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group" (Eriksen, 2002, pp. 14 – 16).

To fully comprehend the concept of ethnicity, it is necessary to approach it together with two other closely related concepts – nationality and 'race'. While there is considerable variation in the definitions of ethnicity, nationalism, and race, it is widely recognized that ethnicity and nationalism are valid concepts for understanding group affiliation and intergroup dynamics. In contrast, race lacks scientific legitimacy as a concept defining identity and group belonging.

Eriksen summarises the criticism of the concept of race as follows. The first critique highlights extensive interbreeding that has occurred between human populations throughout history. This challenges the notion of distinct boundaries in hereditary physical traits. Additionally, it is widely agreed among scholars that cultural variations can't be solely explained by hereditary characteristics. Such an explanation of cultural variations overlooks the complexities and intersections of social, historical, and environmental factors, and overall lacks credibility and nuance.

Nevertheless, even with the rejection of the concept of race as a scientific category, we cannot disregard the historical and social significance it had in shaping power structures and hierarchies. In my thesis, it is an important aspect to consider when discussing the history and development of the relationships between the Roma or the Sámi people with national majorities. Both groups have been targets of racialisation and discrimination, based on perceived physical and cultural differences.

While physical traits do not determine one's identity and ethnic group affiliation, the impact of racialisation on where people draw boundaries between "us" and "them", and what characterises the relationships established between these people, should not be underestimated. It is important to acknowledge that "such relationship crucially involves differentiation, although it is not a matter of finding difference on the body. Rather, differences are established in the very marking out of boundaries between bodies, by the very ways in which bodies inhabit the world differently, or are touched by some others differently than other others" (Ahmed, 2002, p. 61).

The difference between ethnicity and nationality is, according to Eriksen (2002), defined by the group's relationship to the state, in particular, the power over a state or a desire to have such a command. While the concept of ethnicity does not assume any political power, nationality is based on a shared sense of belonging to a specific nation-state. It is important to note, however, that these are not mutually exclusive, and both ethnicity and nationality are just a fraction of every individual's identity. As in the case of my research, people who affiliate themselves with Roma or Sámi ethnic identity, also hold a national citizenship within the countries they reside in. Citizenship is a legal requirement for individuals and does not necessarily align with one's ethnicity or nationality, however, it does provide certain rights and play a role in shaping one's identity.

3.2.2 Cultural Institutions

Another important term is the concept of institution. "Institutions" can have various meanings in social sciences, and are generally defined as complex social forms that are comprised of positions, roles, norms, and values within specific social structures. These institutions play a crucial role in organizing stable patterns of human activity related to essential tasks like resource production, individual reproduction, and maintaining societal structures (Miller, 2019).

The term I use in this thesis is, in particular, cultural institutions. These can be defined as "institutions with an acknowledged mission to engage in the conservation, interpretation and dissemination of cultural, scientific, and environmental knowledge, and promote activities meant to inform and educate citizens on associated aspects of culture, history, science and the environment" (Open Method of Coordination, 2014). This definition fits my research well since museums and art galleries share the mission of conserving and sharing knowledge with the wider public.

Museums with exhibitions focused on world cultures are usually referred to as anthropology or ethnographic museums. "While the terms 'anthropology' and 'ethnography' are often used interchangeably, the former implies a more analytical and often comparative approach, whereas the latter tends to be primarily descriptive" (Herle, 2016, p. 2). I will be using the term ethnography museum in this thesis. While the museums included in my research have some anthropological goals and analytical approaches, their exhibitions are rather descriptive and not comparative.

Art galleries can be broadly defined as cultural institutions that specialize in exhibiting various forms of art. Defining the concept of "art" itself, however, remains a complex task, as it encompasses a wide range of creative expressions and can vary across different cultures and historical periods.

3.2.3 Theory of Art

I use the anthropological theory of art described by Alfred Gell (1998) to define the concept of "exhibition". This approach helps me to analyse the role of cultural institutions, their visitors, curators, and ethnic groups they aim to represent with their exhibitions. Before I delve into this theory, it is important to consider previous approaches to the concept of art, to understand the broader context in which Gell's theory operates and which ideas it is trying to challenge.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, the understanding of art focused on aesthetic value and institutional recognition. Only objects recognised by high society and institutions were considered art. Due to this elitist perspective, people from non-European societies and marginalised European communities were excluded from the art world and their works were not considered "art".

Such an ethnocentric approach was, however, not unique to Europe. China, for example, also had a long history of defining art based on traditional Chinese aesthetics. What was considered art in Europe, the Chinese labelled as craft, not real art.

The theories and anthropological understanding of art have evolved, challenging ethnocentric perspectives and expanding the definition of art beyond certain cultural norms. This is where the anthropological theory of art, as described by Alfred Gell (1998), comes into play. Gell distances himself from theories that define art based on its aesthetic value or function as a means of communication. Instead, he defines art based on "agency, intention, causation, result, and transformation" (p. 6), as a system of actions and relations, which involve the index (the art object), the artist, the recipient (viewer), and the prototype (what is represented by the art object).

It is common to approach art with the intention of searching for its meaning, trying to "read" it and understand its symbolic messages. However, Gell deliberately avoids talking about art as a language, because there is no universal grammar or set of codes that can be applied to art. Instead, he uses the concept of abduction to describe the semiotic inference process involved in understanding art.

Abduction is often called "inference to the best explanation" and it involves making hypotheses based on evidence and then selecting the most reasonable explanation. In abduction, the conclusion is not logically drawn from the premises, instead, it is based on the best available explanation that fits the evidence (Douven, 2021).

The theory of art proposed by Gell (1998) is important for my research because it relates to the environment of all institutions included in my research. The index, in the context of my research, may include not only individual artworks but also the entire exhibition design and object arrangement, whether in a historical museum or a contemporary art gallery. Consequently, the category of artist, as an originator of the index, will include the curators, exhibition designers, and any other individuals involved in the creation and presentation of the artworks. Finally, the recipient is the viewer or visitor to the institution, and the prototype is the concept or idea represented by the entire exhibition. It is between these actors that the five actions – agency, intention, causation, result, and transformation – take place.

3.2.4 Theory of Values

The concept of value is occurring in various anthropological works. Schwartz & Bilsky (1987) summarised features of values that appeared across the literature. According to their review, "values are (a) concepts or beliefs, (b) about desirable end states or behaviours, (c) that transcend specific situations, (d) guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and (e) are ordered by relative importance" (p. 551).

Value is often approached from two major perspectives – the structuralist approach, and the action-oriented approach. The first understand value as embedded in the social and cultural structure of each society, and thus independent of individuals. Value is therefore a static and objective phenomenon (Robbins et al., 2016). Significant work on values understood through the structuralist approach was written by French anthropologist Louis Dumont. He described values as a concept, that itself has universal occurrence, but "is eminently variable with the social environment, and even within a given society, according not only to social classes but to the diverse departments of activity or experience" (Dumont, 1982, p. 289). The hierarchical, yet variable nature of values is clearly described through the example of a relationship between a king and a priest in India. The priest – Brahman – consecrates the power of the king and is spiritually superior to the king. However, Brahman is materially dependent on the king and is subordinate in matters of public order (Dumont, 1980, p. 289). Therefore, a hierarchy of values is not a "chain of super-imposed commands, nor even a chain of beings of decreasing dignity, nor yet a taxonomic tree, but a relation that can succinctly be called 'the encompassing of the contrary'" (Dumont, 1980, p. 239).

The second, action-oriented approach, is distinct from the first one as it understands value as dependent on individuals, and is concerned with the process of value creation, where human practice is deemed crucial and necessary. In the Marxist tradition, the value of a commodity is understood as a direct result of labour invested into its creation. This theory served as a basis for several other approaches. For example, in the neoclassical approach, the value of a commodity is derived from the utility it has for its user (Robbins et al., 2016). Terence Turner, on the other hand, modified the theory so that it could be used in other than capitalist societies. He criticised Marxist theory as it does not account for unpaid labour, for example, domestic work, which does not earn any wage, and yet "makes a massive contribution to the production of the key commodity of such systems, labour power" (Turner, 2008, p. 46). Therefore, he understands value as "not determined by the absolute amount of labour that went into its making but by the proportion of the total social labour-power of a system invested in it" (Robbins et al., 2016, pp. 4 – 5).

Nevertheless, none of these two approaches and their variations suit my research, since they do not adequately account for cultural differences or capture the complexity of individual experience. This problem was addressed by other contemporary anthropologists during the postmodern turn when the concept of "shared culture" became increasingly criticised. "It was this turn that made notions of shared culture seem too deterministic, too disrespectful of the reality of chaos and complexity and of the true individuality of persons" (Robbins, 2015, p. 20). Therefore, the theory of value that does not account for this reality loses its relevance. The core problem was aptly summarised by Claudia Strauss (1992):

> Knowing the dominant ideologies, discourses, and symbols of a society is only the beginning – there remains the hard work of understanding why some of

> those ideologies, discourses, and symbols become compelling to social actors, while others are only the hollow shell of morality that may be repeated in official pronouncements but is ignored in private lives. Our key question thus becomes: How do cultural messages get under people's skin? (p. 1)

For my thesis, I will use the framework that Strauss developed as an answer to her question. She emphasizes the importance of exemplary persons and personal life experience in her explanation of how individuals work towards making sense of values, selecting from options suggested to them and internalising certain values rather than others.

First, she demonstrates how being exposed to the same social messages and value preferences can still result in different internalised values. As an example, she mentions two women, Zoe and Chloe. They have very similar backgrounds, and they both have been exposed to the same two positively valued schemas – to get married and have children and to go to college and have a career. Nevertheless, the difference is that for Zoe these two schemas are not mutually exclusive, as she knows women who followed both of them. Chloe, on the other hand, knows only women who follow only one of these two paths. Therefore, she sees them as opposing each other and might internalise just one.

In another example, she explains how past life experience linked to basic universal needs can become powerful in individuals' decisions. She demonstrates it again in the decision-making of another couple of young women, this time named Gina and Tina, who were exposed to the norm of getting married and having children. Gina grew up in a stable, loving family, and thus has this schema associated with positive feelings. Tina, on the other hand, was not so lucky. She grew up in a harsh environment and thus has this schema associated with negative feelings. These experiences and feelings linked to them could significantly affect which values these women internalise, and how strongly they do so (Strauss, 1992, pp. 11 – 14).

In my research, I have to consider both cultural differences and individual experience in order to understand different value systems and how they are internalized by individuals. Therefore, the theory proposed by Strauss is highly relevant and insightful for my study.

Chapter 4

Research context

Before I proceed to the theoretical background and my research findings, it is necessary to provide some brief background of the Sámi and the Roma people, as well as the institutions I have focused on in my study. Regarding the people, I will briefly outline their history with special emphasis on the national context where I have conducted my fieldwork. I will then follow to describe the institutions, what services they offer and what are their primary goals.

4.1 The Peoples

The Sámi people are the only indigenous people in Europe, living in Sápmi, the north of nordic countries and Kola in Russia. There are several sub-ethnic groups, with different languages, and different cultural heritage.

The Sámi people had to undergo long-lasting oppressive colonial practices in all areas of Sápmi. In Norway the practices of forced assimilation are referred to as Norwegianization. In order to speed up the cultural transformation during the 20th century, majority of Sámi children was sent boarding schools. The education there was supposed to teach them the dominant language and culture, alongside with the belief that Sámi people are of lesser worth (Hansen, 2022, pp. 329 – 330). In addition to the targeted cultural assimilation, the Norwegian state also implemented policies to ensure ownership of Sámi land and resources through adopting the Land Sales Act of 1863 (Ravna, 2020, p. 3). The active policies of assimilation were discontinued in the wake of the Second World War, however, the stigmatisation of the people remained.

The passive Norwegianization was greatly challenged during the 1970s, a period which became known as "Sámi spring" (Kraft, 2020, p. 61). In the late 1960s, the Norwegian Water Resources and Electricity Board decided to use the river Alta as a source of hydropower. Their plans included building a dam and creating a reservoir, which would flood the Sámi village Masi and disrupt the environment for Sámi reindeer herders. Therefore, with these consequences in mind, people began nationwide protests (Andersen & Midttun, 1985, pp. 318 – 319). These protests included methods such as a hunger strike, occupying the prime minister's office or a blockade of a construction site, provoked an unparalleled use of police force at the time, and are considered to be the largest and most important acts of civil disobedience since the Second World War (Falch et al., 2018).

Due to their extent and importance, these protests resulted in strengthening both the ethnic identity of the Sámi people and their political power. In 1980, the

Norwegian authorities began cooperating with Sámi representatives and laid the foundations for legal status and rights of the Sámi in Norway. Subsequently, in 1987 the Sámi Parliament was established to protect Sámi rights and safeguard their culture (Özerk, 2009, pp. 138 – 139). As the website of the Sámi Parliament in Norway states:

> As the Sami's elected body in Norway, the Sami Parliament's aim is to work for the recognition of the Sami's fundamental rights as a basis for safeguarding and strengthening Sami culture, language and community life and the existence of various Sami traditions. The Sámi Parliament shall strengthen the Sámi's political position and promote the Sámi's interests in Norway, as well as contribute to equal and fair treatment of the Sámi people (Sámediggi, nd).

Later in 1990, Norway became the very first country to ratify the ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent States (Sámi Law and Rights in Norway, p. 2), which grants indigenous peoples the right "to be consulted on matters that may directly affect them" (Henriksen, 2008, p. 23).

Regarding the land rights, a change of the Norwegian state's land doctrine, which was in effect since the Land Sales Act of 1863, came only when the Finnmark Act was passed and the Finnmark Estate (FeFo) was extablished (Ravna, 2020, p. 3). According the the Finnmark Estate website:

> The Finnmark Act (Finnmarksloven) of 2005 transferred about 46 000 km^2 to the residents of Finnmark County in Northern Norway. Finnmark Estate (Finnmarkseiendommen) equates to around 95 % of the county's total area.
>
> FeFo is managed by a Board of Directors comprising six members. Three of these directors are appointed by the Sami Parliament of Norway and three by the Finnmark County Council. FeFo owns and administrates the land and natural resources in 96 % of the area of Finnmark County (Finnmarkseiendommen, 2022).

It is clear now, that over the years, the Sámi people made a significant progress in fighting for their legal rights as well as being recognised and respected by the majority. Nevertheless, even today many Sámi people experience discrimination and prejudice, especially in coastal areas, where the past forced assimilation had the highest impact. In addition, such experiences are even more frequent, when the people make their ethnicity "visible", for example by speaking Sámi language or wearing the traditional clothing (Hansen, 2022, pp. 336 – 337).

The Roma people are the largest European ethnic minority. Currently, there are around 10 to 12 million Roma in Europe, of which about 6 million are residents or citizens of the EU (European Commission, 2020).

They came to Europe from northern India, the region currently known as Rajasthan, in multiple waves between the fifth and tenth centuries. With their nomadic lifestyle, they did not keep any written records, so their history has largely been reconstructed through linguistic studies and genetic research (Moorjani et al., 2013).

They migrated through Asia Minor and into southern Europe, eventually spreading to northern and western regions. They lived a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle, and their livelihood consisted of occupations such as horse trading, metalworking, entertainment (such as music and dance), fortune-telling, and craftsmanship.

Their relationship with majorities has always been complicated. The majorities valued the Roma people for their skills and contributions to various trades, but they

also faced discrimination and persecution throughout history. The beginning of their discrimination can be traced back to their arrival in Europe, where they were often treated as outsiders and subject to stereotypes and prejudices. Due to their distinct cultural practices, language, and physical appearance, they were often portrayed as "other" and considered partly as interesting and exotic, but also as a threat to social order. This resulted in harsh legislation, which allowed people to take Roma as slaves or kill them without being persecuted. Ian Hancock (2002) states, that "it was not illegal to murder a Romani and there were sometimes 'Gypsy hunts' in which Romanies were tracked down and killed like wild animals, forests were set on fire to drive out any Romanies who might have been hiding there" (p. 35).

In Central Europe, larger Anti-Gypsy sentiments emerged in the sixteenth century, mainly since in 1526 the Hungarians were defeated by Turks in Mohács, and the Roma were seen as the fifth column of the Ottoman Empire. After the Turks have been pushed back, these sentiments resulted in issuing decrees for a large-scale prosecution. People, who were labelled as Gypsy were mutilated or executed. This practice was later replaced by the first large-scale forced assimilation ordered by Maria Theresa (Vermeersch, 2006, p. 47).

A significant change came after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. All the people considered "Gypsy" had to be registered and carry a so-called "Gypsy ID". These were later used by the German protectorate to identify people of "Gypsy origin", who were considered "racially inferior", and became subject to systematic persecution, including placement in concentration camps and mass killings (Doubek et al., 2015, p. 134).

The exact number of Roma people living in Europe before the war is unknown, and so is the exact number of Roma people killed during the Nazi rule. The official Nazi Party's statements estimate that there were about two million Roma people before the war, but this is considered to be an under-representation. Regarding the casualties of the war, it is estimated that as many as 1.5 million individuals perished during this period (Hancock, 2002, pp. 47 – 48).

After the war, the Roma people did not acquire a lot of justice, as they did not receive the same recognition and compensation as other victims of Nazi persecution. There was nobody to testify on behalf of the Roma survivors at the Nuremberg Trials, and they were not included in the compensation programs implemented by the German government. The Roma community was overlooked even by the United Nations, as they were not provided with any assistance during or after the Holocaust, and were not mentioned in the documentation produced by the US War Refugee Board (Hancock, 2002, pp. 48 – 50).

The history of the Roma people is marked by a long and painful experience of persecution and violence, but the general knowledge and awareness of their history remain limited. Focusing on the Czech Republic, the country of my fieldwork, there are no mentions of Roma history in school curricula, textbooks, or public discourse. This lack of education and awareness perpetuates stereotypes and prejudices against Roma people, contributing to their continued marginalization and discrimination in society. The majority often consider the Roma people to be a burden to the state, exploiting its social welfare system. Due to these negative attitudes and subsequent social exclusion, many Roma people struggle with poverty and unemployment, having to rely only on the lowest paying, even illegal work, and other illegal activities, which further perpetuates the cycle of marginalization and discrimination (Doubek et al.,

2015, pp. 137 – 138).

4.2 The Institutions

The Museum of Romani Culture is an institution located in Brno, a city in the Czech Republic. It was founded in 1991 and today works as a state contributory organization of the Ministry of Culture (Museum of Romani Culture, 2021).

The museum provides various activities and services. They have a permanent exhibition called "The Story of the Roma," where visitors can explore the history of the Roma community, including their migration from India to Europe, cultural traditions, as well as the challenges they faced such as societal oppression, discrimination, and their tragic experience during the Roma holocaust. Objects used in this exhibition come from the museum's collection funds, which have been its primary activity since its foundation.

The museum also organizes temporary exhibitions, concerts and literary readings, featuring Roma artists, musicians and writers, or non-Roma individuals who contribute to promoting Roma culture and history.

To further improve public knowledge, the museum conducts educational programs and workshops for schools, universities, and the general public.

The organization is also responsible for overseeing the management of two memorial sites – Hodonín u Kunštátu and Lety u Písku. These sites hold great significance as they were once used as concentration camps. Additionally, an important establishment known as the Roma and Sinti Centre can be found in Prague under their supervision.

The institution, similarly to many other museums, has a dual purpose, encompassing goals for both transformation and preservation. The first category of goals primarily revolves around the broader public, including both Roma and non-Roma people. Regarding people from the Roma community, the goals aim at providing support and fostering empowerment. On the other hand, the goals towards non-Roma people, the objectives aim at promoting understanding, facilitating education, and dismantling stereotypes associated with the Roma community. The goals focused on preservation are related to preserving the material cultural heritage of the Roma people, including historical objects and contemporary works.

The exhibition The Open Road is an exhibition of art created by several Roma artists. It was curated by Emília Rigová, Roma artist, art teacher and curator, and Petra Hanáková, non-Roma curator and art historian, and it was held in the Ethnographic Museum of the National Museum in Prague.

The exhibition is divided into two sections. The first section, organised in a gallery format, is called "The Great Masters", and features works from Ján Berky, Rudolf Dzurek, Daniel Kováč, Július Lakatoš and Markéta Šestáková. The second section, "The Open Depository", is a representation of the diversity and complexity of art from Roma artists across multiple mediums. All the works presented came from the vast collection of the Museum of Romani Culture.

Occasionally, the exhibition also offers guided tours and facilitates public discussions. These events provide an opportunity for visitors to engage with the artwork and deepen their understanding of the art, the artists, but also other topics related to the Roma community.

The exhibition was created 30 years after the Museum of Romani Culture was

established, and thus partly works as a reflection on the work done by the institution. The curators decided to focus on the art solely created by Roma artists to present reflections on the Roma culture from the insiders. While the room The Great Masters serves as a tribute to noteworthy Roma artists, the section The Open Depository is "(perhaps not quite methodologically consistent) aestheticized into a kind of altar (where Lakatoš's painting of an open palm with a crown coin hovers over the Virgin Mary instead of the Holy Spirit)" (Tomková, 2022).

The Sámi Museum is located in Karasjok, Norway, and is one of the four museums managed by the organisation RiddoDuottarMuseat.

The museum has two permanent exhibitions, indoor and outdoor. The indoor exhibition is focused on the history and traditions of the Sámi people. They exhibit various types of clothing, tools, handicrafts, and artworks that showcase the cultural heritage of the Sámi. The outdoor exhibition features a replica of a traditional Sámi settlement, providing visitors with an immersive experience and insight into the traditional way of life.

By the time I visited the museum, they also had a temporary exhibition called "The Return of the Sámi Drums", where they showcase a drum repatriated from Denmark as well as contemporary artworks related to the Sámi drums.

Furthermore, the museum organizes various events for the public, such as guided tours, and provides interaction through social media, such as hosting podcasts and creating options for a digital museum and 3D scans of their artefacts.

Similarly to the Museum of Romani Culture, the Sámi Museum also work towards preserving the cultural heritage, sharing their knowledge, and promoting a better understanding among outsiders. They strive to be an institution led "by Sámi, for Sámi", meaning that they prioritize Sámi perspectives, knowledge, and participation in all aspects of their work.

The Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art is a centre which provides spaces for Sámi contemporary artists to explore and showcase their art and supports them in their work.

SDG does not have any permanent exhibition but they regularly host exhibitions and events featuring the work of contemporary artists. They also host various public events, such as artist talks and workshops, to engage with the community and promote dialogue about contemporary art and the representation of indigenous people.

Additionally, they run a small shop, selling artworks, books and jewellery, and a library with books related to the Sámi people and art.

The institution strives to be a platform for Sámi contemporary artists to explore and express their creativity while also promoting dialogue, understanding, and appreciation of contemporary art. They intend to be an attractive place for both the local community and international audience, both Sámi and non-Sámi.

The Sámi Art Collection is another institution under RDM. Their purpose is to manage and safe keep a vast collection of both traditional Sámi handicrafts and contemporary art.

This institution does not have any publicly available exhibitions, but it lends its artworks to other institutions for temporary exhibits. They also provide access to their collection for researchers, scholars, and artists who wish to study or reference Sámi art.

Their main goal is the preservation of valuable artworks from the Sámi community,

both traditional and contemporary.

Chapter 5

Exhibitions' content

5.1 Understanding Exhibitions

The organization of exhibitions in cultural institutions has undergone several shifts. Previous research indicates that cultural institutions have expanded their focus to include interaction with a broader public and active engagement with ongoing social and political discussions, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Considering both past and contemporary goals, cultural institutions possess a significant ability to handle and present knowledge, thus exerting a degree of power over it. They have the authority to determine which information is presented, from which sources it originates and how it aligns with larger public and scientific discourse. For example, when the theory of evolutionism was predominant in anthropology, museums arranged their artefacts accordingly. That means they arranged the objects based on their external characteristics and grouped them based on their form and function to demonstrate linear evolutionary progress. One of the first to criticise this approach and promote exhibition arrangements closer to what we know today was Franz Boas. He argued that the emphasis should be redirected from the external attributes of displayed objects to their internal qualities, which can only be understood after holistic analysis and examining the given object's context. This approach naturally led to grouping all artefacts linked to a single ethnic group (Jacknis, 1985, p. 79).

In modern development, the focus has further shifted from one-sided understanding to cooperation and ethical treatment of both people and objects. Source communities should be able to tell their own story, and artefacts they donate to the institutions should be treated based on their conditions. Some objects might be demanded to be returned, some not to be publicly exhibited, and some exhibited only on certain conditions. For example, in "order to connect with the ancestral past and the spiritual presence of sacred objects, it may be important to touch fragile materials and use museum artefacts in rituals and performances" (Herle, 2016, pp. 8 – 9)

Regarding its consumers, a contemporary exhibition is an art, which should educate its viewer and leave an impact on them. In order to do that, it needs to embrace two paths. The first one is remembering, which is about "uncovering that which might be blurred or even concealed by the prevailing societal consensus, simply put, it is about making things visible. The other has to do with imagining things otherwise, investing these imaginaries into another future" (Baker & Hlavajova, 2013, p. 26). Through these two paths, the exhibition can not only educate the outsiders

about the represented community, but also empower the insiders and encourage their revitalisation and self-determination efforts on all scales – the local traditions, national agendas and symbols, and transnational movements (Clifford, 2013). By remembering specific historical events, the people represented in the exhibition select which symbols and narratives they want to build their group identity on, and by re-imagining these narratives, they create shared visions for a future to strive for. All of these goals are highly context dependent, and decisions made in this regard will direct the positioning of the exhibition.

5.2 Dimensions of the Exhibition Narrative

The content of each exhibition I have observed differs in various aspects. The general differences can be summarised based on Gell's (1998) theory of art since all four agents (the index, the artist, the recipient and the prototype) act as variables and are different across institutions.

The index (the exhibition) is a representation of the prototype (theme of the exhibition), created by the artist (the curator) and consumed by the recipient (the visitor). The curators are individuals with specific perspectives, knowledge, and experience that shape their choices. The recipient, or the museum visitor, is a crucial component in shaping the interpretation of the exhibition. Not only do the institutions adjust their activities to accommodate particular target audiences, but each visitor brings their background and perspectives that influence how they engage with the exhibition. Finally, the prototype, in plain terms refers to what is represented by the exhibition. In the case of my research, this would be either the Roma or the Sámi community, and their history, contemporary issues and artistic expressions.

The exhibition is a result of the interaction between these agents, and its content reflects their choices and qualities. In this chapter, I will analyse this content as something that originated from or was intended for these agents, but which now exists independently of them.

When curating an exhibition, the institution faces several critical decisions. These include determining the overarching message that they wish to convey, figuring out effective ways to present historical narratives, selecting which particular aspects of history deserve emphasis and deciding whether and how to address contemporary issues. Through all of these decisions, the institution creates a narrative, which is then presented to the visitors.

During my research, I have observed and documented the distinguishing features in the narrative of each exhibition I have seen. Through the analysis of my data, I have organized these differences into categories – dimensions of the narrative. Each dimension is a scale between two opposing extremes that reflect different approaches or perspectives on the exhibition's content. The dimensions and their opposing extremes are Subjectivity – Objectivity, Tradition – Modernity, Unity – Diversity and Offence – Defence. In the following sections, I will discuss each dimension in more detail and examine where each exhibition falls on these scales.

5.2.1 Subjectivity – Objectivity

The dimension of subjectivity – objectivity refers to the extent to which the exhibition presents information and interpretations that reflect personal perspectives and opinions. In practice, every exhibition – an art object – is a result of subjective choices made by curators and other professionals – the artists. Every individual involved in the decision-making process brings their own biases, experience, and beliefs that shape the exhibition's content. Therefore, the final exhibition design and narrative will always be to a certain degree subjective.

The main focus of this dimension, however, is not how the exhibition was created, but rather how the final result is presented to the visitors. Instead of subjectivity and objectivity as factors that influence the creation of the exhibition, this dimension examines the extent to which the exhibition explicitly acknowledges and presents its subjective nature. The inclination towards subjectivity would mean presenting interpretations and perspectives that are openly subjective and showing the institution as an agent that has the power to shape and influence the narrative. On the other hand, the inclination towards objectivity would mean presenting information and interpretations that appear rather fact-based and balanced, without explicitly revealing any personal viewpoints.

The expectations surrounding curating art exhibitions have significantly shifted when it comes to how subjective or objective curators should be. Traditionally, the curators were mostly responsible for the assessment and categorization of artworks, determining what was to be considered "art" and evaluating whether a particular piece possessed the necessary quality to be showcased in exhibitions.

In the "curatorial turn" during the later half of the 20th century the general discourse shifted from the critique of artworks as autonomous objects of study to a critique of what surrounds the artwork, how the space of the exhibition is curated, and the narrative that is constructed around it. Thus, aside from the practice of the artist, the practice of the curator began coming to the forefront as an object of study and discussion (The curatorial turn). "More than art critics or gallery leaders, they establish the meaning and status of contemporary art through its acquisition, exhibition and interpretation" (Ferguson et al., 2005, p. 15).

Museums have not been unaffected by this shift in curatorial discourse. Bjerregaard (2015) discusses the role of curatorship and the importance of space in museums, stating that while for some people the creative approach might seem unnecessary and unscientific, the design and layout of exhibitions play a crucial role in shaping visitors' experience and interpretations. He suggests, that exhibitions which accept and emphasize the subjective and creative nature of curatorial decisions can provide a more engaging experience.

It is clear that artists, curators, and other involved individuals all become the artists of the exhibition and its narrative. They become cultural agents, who participate in the creation of cultural value (O'Neill, 2007, p. 15). In the following sections, I will examine the subjective and objective features of each exhibition I have seen and the effect of these tendencies on my overall experience.

Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art

In SDG, there was a strong emphasis on the cooperative approach. The creation of the exhibition and its narrative were described as a result of intensive communication and

collaborative efforts between curators, artists, and other stakeholders. In particular, my participant closely involved in this matter described the curatorial work as follows: "I think that the role of the curator is very much connected to that dialogical approach, in the formation of relations. If the curator gets too much power, then the triangle of curator-artist-audience is broken."

From my interviews and observations, it follows that this cooperation and intensive communication is agreed to be the ideal approach. Nevertheless, there can still arise challenges to this ideal in the curatorial process. For instance, the artist might not be able for various reasons to participate in the exhibition-making process, or there may be conflicts and differing visions among artists when group exhibitions are being curated. The latter was the case during my observations in SDG.

SDG was preparing an exhibition of art purchases and acquisitions of the Sámi parliament between the years 2020 – 2022. In this particular case, more than 50 artists were featured, each with different visions and ideals regarding their artwork's placement. Therefore, the curator had to step up as a mediator and coordinator to ensure that each artist's vision was represented in a cohesive and meaningful way, under given conditions.

In this particular case, the curator has to exercise their judgement and decision-making skills to balance the diverse perspectives, while maintaining a cohesive narrative. Therefore, the curator's creative skills and power are brought forward. This example demonstrates that while cooperation and power sharing are highly valued in the curatorial process, in reality, there may occur instances where the curator must take on a more authoritative role to ensure the success of the exhibition.

The Open Road

The Open Road exhibition was developed from the already existing art collection of the Museum of Romani Culture. This was a major difference from the exhibitions I have experienced in SDG, as the curators did not create a narrative by direct cooperation with the artists, but rather with the institution.

The curators declared their positioning right upon entering the exhibition. In an introductory text printed on the exhibition wall, they described their intentions, the collection they worked with and the intended narrative of the exhibition. Therefore, they made clear that the interpretation and presentation of the objects on display were predetermined by the curatorial team.

While the curators had more significant creative freedom, there were still certain boundaries within which they had to operate.

One curator acknowledged that she initially had a different concept in mind for the exhibition's theme and narrative. Her original idea was to juxtapose the works of young professional artists with those of non-professionals, to highlight the diversity and range of artistic expressions within the Roma community. However, upon reviewing the collection, it became clear that the collection primarily consisted of works from the older generation, which did not align with her initial concept.

Reflecting on the collection and general state of preservation of the material culture of the Roma people the curators said:

> I was mainly surprised by the fairly wide range of quality of what the museum collects. Only later did I understand it better: the museum is actually "playing for time" – traditional Roma culture is disappearing, if it hasn't already. [...] In

> a crash course in 30 years, the museum has done work that has been neglected for at least the last 100 years. (Petra Hanáková, as cited in Tomková, 2022)
>
> Despite that Roma culture has been part of the European culture for more than 500 years (and hypothetically much longer, but we do not have enough archival materials for that), we only have a weak torso of the material culture of the Roma today. And this is a fact that does not only apply to our local environment, but to the whole of Europe since the position of the Roma in the past was what it was... It is a great pity that in the 1970s when the pan-European efforts of Roma intellectuals were at their strongest, museums similar to ours in Brno were not created in other countries. Today, we would have a much larger and more diverse view of Roma culture. (Emília Rigová, as cited in Tomková, 2022)

This explains the state of the collection in the Museum of Romani Culture and the challenge it posed to the original idea for the exhibition. Nevertheless, the curators could use a lot of their creative freedom and managed to create an exhibition that highlighted the richness and diversity of Roma culture, albeit with a focus on the older generation.

The final exhibition was then a product of the two curator's ideas for the overarching theme and narrative and then naturally gave the impression of them presenting the visitor with the artists and their work. They added text descriptions of some of the artists, themes of the exhibition and also video recordings of interviews with some artists. On Figure 5.1 we can see introductory text, which provided general context regarding the exhibition and its focus, and Figure 5.2 shows the section "The Open Depository", where we can see the purple panels with descriptions of different themes characterising each section.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the curators also take part in events related to the exhibition, such as guided tours and public debates. Therefore, their views come forward not only through these texts, but also through actively engaging with their audience. The subjective choices made by the curators and the position of the Museum of Romani Culture were influential in shaping the narrative and present in the final exhibition. The curators and the institution did not pretend to be detached observers but rather used the means of the exhibition for clear and articulated statements.

The Sámi Museum

In the Sámi Museum, the temporary exhibition was created to present the recently repatriated drum and objects linked to the theme, such as replicas of other historical drums, information about the use of the drums and their expatriation, and contemporary artworks with the theme and symbolism related to these drums. This exhibition was a combination of artworks, written and recorded storytelling, historical objects and related information. On the other hand, the permanent exhibition provided a comprehensive overview of Sámi culture, history, traditions and diversity in every one of these aspects.

The permanent exhibition was inclined toward an objective style of presentation. It stressed the cultural diversity among the Sámi people and thus highlighted multiple experiences and viewpoints. The exhibited objects were mostly placed to demonstrate this diversity and were accompanied by pieces of text describing the objects' names, materials, typical use etc. As we can see on Figure 5.3 both the clothing (a) and the

Figure 5.1: Introductory text for the exhibition The Open Road, Prague (Czech National Museum, nd)

duodji (b) are exhibited in a well-arranged manner. There was no significant notion of subjective interpretation or political stance of the curators or the institution, and the narrative presented was focused on providing an educational and informative experience for visitors.

The temporary exhibition, on the other hand, took a more contemporary and artistic approach to curatorship. While still offering educational and verified information, it embraced a more expressive narrative. The following text extracts demonstrate how subjectivity was utilised in the narrative:

- "The sacred drums were taken from the Sámi without their consent. The drums shall no longer be stowed away in the warehouses of European mega-museums or be exhibited as obscure curiosities from the Arctic."

- "This exhibition recognises the value of Sámi indigenous terminology and deliberately avoids the use of terms shaman or shamanism as inappropriate."

- "There are only two old drums with first-hand information provided by their owners. Other interpretations are based on scholarly texts and missionary accounts. In this exhibition we emphasise the Sámi explanations."

- "In this way, Sámi artists and artisans return the power of the drum symbols to strengthen Sámi identity and to forward self-determination. Drum symbols in Sámi arts and crafts serve as visual manifestations of Sami ownership of our own culture."

Figure 5.2: Section Open Depository from the exhibition The Open Road, Prague (Czech National Museum, nd)

In the first extract, we can see negative sentiments towards the repatriation and storage of the sacred drums. Through this particular wording, the institution shows its subjective opinion.

The second and third extracts show a preference for knowledge and terminology originating from the insiders. While they provide complete information of what are possible sources and terminology, they also take a side and preference.

The fourth extract is a demonstration of ethnic affiliation. By using wordings such as "our own culture" the institution admits that it is not a detached observer, but that people representing the institution are the Sámi themselves.

While making deliberate use of the subjective approach, the exhibition does not give the impression of being unsupported by scholarly research or lacking in factual information. In the following extracts, we can see some examples of how claims are supported, or, how uncertainties are addressed:

- "According to Sámi oral tradition..."
- "According to a Coastal Sámi story..."
- "The North Sámi, Anders Poulsen confessed in 1692 that with the help of the drum he could remove evil sorcery..."
- "There are only two old drums with first-hand information provided by their owners."
- "Whether these forms represent humans, non-human beings, or ancestors, is difficult to decipher."

- "Most Sámis were nomads. Therefore, it is challenging to locate the places where the drums were expropriated in the 17th and 18th centuries on modern maps."

The differences between the permanent and temporary exhibitions illustrated the contrast between the more traditional and contemporary approaches to curatorship and museum exhibition designs, respectively. The permanent exhibition leaned heavily toward the objective style of presenting a narrative. The temporary exhibition was, on the other hand, more subjective. Through the means of the exhibition, the museum showed that it is not only able to preserve and showcase material culture but also stir discussion, engage with contemporary issues and be an active political agent.

(a) Clothing

(b) Duodji

Figure 5.3: Permanent exhibition at the Sámi Museum, Karasjok

The Museum of Romani Culture

The name of the permanent exhibition – "The Story of the Roma" – suitably captures the essence of the narrative. It is created as a form of storytelling, where the visitor is taken on a journey through the history of the Roma people. While the exhibition has a very different design from the permanent exhibition in the Sámi Museum, particularly in the storytelling aspect, it similarly tends to avoid making explicit value judgements or interpretations. Instead, it presents historical facts and lets visitors draw their own conclusions.

Several examples of this inclination towards objective presentation can be found in the first room, which focuses on the roots of Roma people in India. The visitor can learn that it was researchers mostly in the field of genetics and linguistics who confirmed the Indian origin of the Roma people. In addition, the museum provides visitors with an interactive screen that can be used to play recordings of different words in Hindi and Romani dialects to demonstrate the linguistic connection between the two languages.

To provide a holistic view, the museum also presents some uncertain facts and questions, to which there are still no answers, such as why did the Roma leave India in the first place and began travelling.

In this first room, the museum's presentation of historical information is supported by scientific research and acknowledges uncertainties, providing a holistic view. The exhibition takes an objective approach without offering its own interpretation. This approach can be observed throughout the rest of the exhibition.

To provide some further examples, I make use of the virtual tour of the exhibition. There the viewer can see a short description of each room, which summarizes its content but also the general approach of the museum towards presenting the material. Following are some extracts which illustrate a preference for objectivity:

- "[The first hall] sheds light on linguistic, historical and cultural research connected with the earliest history of the Roma"
- "Archival materials document the period of persecution of the Roma population in Europe"
- "From preserved archival documents we learn about the Roma..."
- "The topic of the Roma Holocaust is presented with explanatory texts, photographs, memories of witnesses and official documents of the time"

These extracts show that the museum aims to present the information objectively, referencing research findings, archival materials and statements from witnesses. As an institution, it refrains from offering its own interpretation and allows the visitors to form their own opinions based on the presented information.

The temporary exhibitions in the museum are mostly focused on visual art. They showcase the work of contemporary Roma artists as well as art that explores themes related to Roma culture and history.

The first exhibition I saw there was the later case. The name was "Impressions of Journeys", and it consisted of photographs from Claude and Marie-José Carret, a travelling couple who documented their encounters with Roma communities across Europe.

The artists' perspective was central to the narrative here. The exhibition design was minimalist, as the photographs were displayed on the walls without any elaborate presentation. The accompanying textual information was kept to a minimum. Additional details regarding the photos and their authors could be accessed through informational leaflets distributed by the museum. These leaflets provided additional insight into the authors' motivations, without any strong interpretation of the curators.

One of the leaflets, written by the curators, states:

> They [the Carrets] went from being French strangers to becoming friends whom the locals began to invite to weddings, bašavels, Holy Communions and funerals... They opened the doors of insight into the ceremonies and rituals where, in addition to the frequently attractive, visual form on the surface of these events, their invisible essence can also be revealed. People gradually shared their personal feelings and moments in the lives of their families with them, as well as their personal devotion (Holubovský & Mazárová, 2021)

This example illustrates the essence of the exhibition. The curators aimed to present the lived experience of Roma communities through the lens of the artists, without pushing forward their own interpretation.

The second exhibition named "Vesmíry/Kosmosa/Universes" focused on the artist Zdeněk Daniel, and presented the different "universes" of his life and interests.

Upon entering, visitors were greeted with the first few paintings and introductory text written by the curator and printed on the wall. It provided a brief background of the artist and the thematic focus of his work. It also stated that "the initial interest of the museum may have been concentrated on those of his [the artist] works that directly touch on the culture and history of Romani people in their subject matter, but it soon became apparent that this theme is also indirectly present in his oeuvre as a whole."

This passage illustrates that although the institution initially had a predetermined narrative in mind, they adapted it to accommodate the artist and his work, rather than forcing their preconceived notion. To create an alternative narrative from its original concept, the museum chose to renounce its requirements and embrace the artist's personality and diverse interests. This is another example of avoiding subjectivity and allowing the artist's voice and perspective to take centre stage in the exhibition.

5.2.2 Historical – Contemporary

This dimension refers to a preference for displaying objects and information related to either certain historical periods or contemporary issues and events. The distinction of what is considered historical or contemporary can vary depending on the context of the exhibition. Since it cannot be defined in absolute terms such as years or decades, I will instead use qualitative descriptions. For example, the inclusion of living artists or events that have living witnesses or participants would point to a contemporary focus. On the other hand, if an exhibition features artefacts and narratives that are only kept in collective memory or historical documentation, it would suggest a historical focus.

Nevertheless, even with the use of relative indicators, it is important to note that the distinction between historical and contemporary is still not always clear-cut. This is for example true in cases where artists or participants engage with historical themes or artefacts in a contemporary context. However, this is not to be considered a problem, since the purpose of this dimension is not to rigidly categorize exhibitions into either historical or contemporary, but rather to provide an analytical focus and to examine the emphasis and relevance placed on different periods or contexts within the exhibition.

I have deliberately avoided the use of terms of traditional and modern in defining this dimension since these terms imply a style, technique, or aesthetic preference rather than a temporal focus. Nevertheless, these concepts are still related to this dimension and will be discussed more throughout this chapter.

Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art

The SDG, as its name suggests, focuses on contemporary artists. Since there is no permanent exhibition, each temporary installation addresses different themes and therefore the thematic focus of the institution is extensive and varied.

To further discuss the narratives of the exhibitions and the inclination towards historical or contemporary themes, it is necessary to first explain the concepts of "duodji" and "dáidda". Duodji is a Sámi term used to describe traditional

craftsmanship and artistic expression, and it encompasses both the process of creating objects as well as the final product itself. This practice utilizes materials such as fur, skin, wood or bone to craft a diverse range of practical items, for example, knives, boots, wooden cups, clothing and jewellery. Dáidda, on the other hand, refers to art in "Western" understanding. It includes art expressions such as paintings, photography, sculpture, installations, or performances (Storm & Isaksen, 2014).

Nevertheless, just as with the general distinction between historical and contemporary, the boundaries between duodji and dáidda are not always straightforward. Contemporary artists may incorporate duodji techniques, materials or objects into their dáidda artworks, blurring the lines between the two categories. As Gunvor Guttorm (2017) states, "Duodji artisans and craftsmen do not live in a vacuum, as if there were an unambiguous connection from the past to the present without influences from the outside world. Today, artisans are interpreters of multiple realities" (p. 175)

One of my participants from Karasjok also emphasized, that while we can situate a particular artwork or artist to a time period, meaning stating a time when given piece was created, it is important to recognise that the various influences and techniques used in the process in the end comprise one artwork. She further says:

> If we look at the current situation, that [the traditional and the modern] is very much intertwined. And I can say an example, here we have Joar Nango's travelling library of various social, cultural, historical and contemporary items [...] so that that could be the case, which very explicitly underlines that we cannot separate the components of the artworks. It is just one entity.

Therefore, in the context of SDG, while the focus is on contemporary artists, the narratives and themes of the exhibitions and individual artworks presented there can encompass both historical and contemporary elements, as artists may draw inspiration from both the past and present influences.

The Open Road

As already mentioned, this exhibition did not feature the younger generation of Roma artists, who are exploring more contemporary themes and artistic expressions. The section "The Open Depository" presented works of several non-professional artists working with various themes. These artworks mostly reflected the personal experience, individual narratives and passions of the creators. For example, we could see portraits of family members or carvings of musicians. Therefore, this part of the exhibition focused on the intersection of personal identities and artistic expressions of Roma artists, rather than any particular period or events.

In "The Great Masters" section, a lot of artworks were related to the traditional, even romanticised cultural heritage of the Roma people. My very first impression was critical of this decision, as it seemed to reinforce stereotypes and exoticize the Roma culture. However, upon further reflection, I realised that it was my misunderstanding of the artistic and curatorial intentions behind this exhibition.

As the name of this section suggests, these artworks were created by respected Roma artists. However, they were not academically educated artists and their inspiration came from other sources than the younger generation of professional artists. The curator noted the following about this section:

> When you see, for example, Markéta Šestáková in the Czech Republic, that's exactly the beautiful and naive view of life – under the stars, in a tent somewhere, the nomadic lifestyle, even though she never nomaded, but created – as Jana Horvátová once said – the pictures for the gajos. And that's exactly what has settled in the majority, the view of who are the Roma, what they look like, and how wildly they live. So for her, it was the fantasy world that inspired her [...] But these contemporary Roma authors already re-contextualize historical events that are written down by the majority and react to them.

To understand this difference, it is important to acknowledge the context of when the artworks of the "Great Masters" section were created. In general, artists often draw inspiration for their work from various aspects of their identity, which may be for instance their ethnic identity. Individuals from the majority have access to a lot of information about their history and background from the formal education. However, the Roma people do not experience the same thing, because the Roma history is not part of the mainstream curriculum. As Ágnes Daróczi (2013) points out: "In the present, we only exist as a social problem, a burden, while we have been erased from the past. This is of course the symbolic destruction of our future, which is none other than one of oppression" (p. 149) Therefore, when Roma persons want to access more relevant information about their ethnic history, they have to do it on their own.

Only when a person reaches some form of specialised higher education, they can obtain support and guidance in their further learning. For example professional artists can get the support to reach some information about the history and experience of the Roma people if they decide to use it as a source of their inspiration and create some critical artworks. The older generation of local Roma artists whose works were presented in the Open Road exhibition did not have this education and opportunities. They were a generation who experienced first-hand the challenges of forced assimilation and persecution, but who was also the first to begin reclaiming their ethnic identity. Their artworks reflect the retrospective narratives of oppression, but also the hopeful visions of the future and freedom of expressing the traditional aspects of Roma culture.

The Sámi Museum

The permanent and the temporary exhibition place emphasis on "the traditional", although, and especially in the Sámi context, this does not exclusively mean "the historical". In this museum, the aspect of time is strictly used to situate presented objects within a particular context. In the permanent exhibition, this mostly means a year or a period when given object was created, and in the temporary exhibition, which historical events or cultural developments influenced the fates of the objects, such as the impact of colonisation or the era of Christianisation.

The reason why the emphasis on "the traditional" does not align with the concept of "the historical" in this museum is rooted in the understanding of the concept "traditional" itself. If we understand the concept of "traditional" as something belonging to the past, we also define it as something contradictory to the present, which may be unsuited for many indigenous peoples worldviews. Jelena Porsanger (2011) questions the dichotomy between "traditional" and "modern" [1] and states: "I

[1] In her article, she also briefly reflects on the distinction between "contemporary" and "modern", and notes: "In this statement, I deliberately use the word 'modern', more in the dictionary sense,

do not consider the established division into binary oppositions as problematic, but I share the view of many indigenous scholars who argue that the division of tradition and modernity into binary oppositions is hostile to indigenous epistemologies." (p. 225).

She further argues that in general Western understanding "traditional" means something which has been handed down from generation to generation, something inherited and conserved. In Sámi view, however, what could be seen as "traditional" involves a process of constant change, a cumulative rather than conserved knowledge, and adapting to new circumstances through innovation and trial-and-error experiments. It means a process rather than a system (Porsanger, 2011).

The distinction between "the past" and "the present" as defining features of "the traditional" and "the contemporary" is therefore contested within Sámi worldview, but might be easily misunderstood by people not aware of this perspective. As one of my participants recalled during an interview: "In the museum in Karasjok, somebody was writing about the museum and they had this comment: 'Why don't you have so many photographs?' And then the museum said: 'We don't want, we think our culture is a living culture. And if we have a photograph, it's static'."

This further illustrates how displaying traditional objects does not necessarily mean exhibiting them as relics of the past. They can be both representations of the past and living symbols of a continuing cultural heritage. While this characterised both exhibitions in the museum, it was especially evident in the temporary exhibition, which exhibited objects created both in the past and the relative present, and therefore highlighted the ongoing cultural practices and innovations within the community.

5.2.3 Unity – Diversity

The Sámi and the Roma people are both culturally diverse ethnic groups. In this dimension, I will focus on whether the content of the exhibitions acknowledges and highlights this diversity, or instead presents a unified narrative and commonalities shared across these communities.

Each approach has its own merits and challenges. As previous research shows (Dávila, 1999; Kalsås, 2015; Runnel et al., 2010), presenting a unified narrative can foster a sense of unity and political power. On the other hand, acknowledging diversity can challenge stereotypes and promote a more nuanced understanding.

Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art

In SDG, since there are only temporary exhibitions, the diversity is shown through the inclusion of artists with various backgrounds and perspectives, art styles, and subject matters. Therefore, a visitor's experience is heavily dependent on what kind of exhibition is there at the time of their visit, and how many times have they visited the institution before.

The exhibitions I have experienced provided a comprehensive exploration of each artist's identity, interests, and cultural influences. For example, during the first visit, I saw an exhibition "Remembrance: When Shapes and Shadows Speak" by Tomas Colbengtson. The exhibition presented various artworks of different styles and

which implies involving the latest techniques, methods, concepts, information, approaches, etc." (pp. 246 – 247)

together created an immersive and thought-provoking experience. The informative paper available in the exhibition stated:

> Uniting different modalities, such as printmaking, glass, and installation, the visual expression translates into dialogue with the space of the exhibition and timeline of his research material – dealing with language and religion prohibition in the Sami area, racial biological research conducted at Uppsala University, and cultural oppression (Colbengtson & Griniuk, 2022)

This exhibition acknowledged and highlighted the diversity of art forms, experience and cultural influences that shaped the artist's work.

The Open Road

This exhibition mostly explored two aspects of diversity – thematic and individual. The thematic diversity was dominant in the "The Open Depository" section. This section was divided into different thematic areas, such as music, family or work, showcasing the diverse interests and talents of selected Roma artists.

The "Great Masters" section was an exploration of every individual artist presented there. Despite the relatively compact size of the room, each author was allocated a distinct space designated solely for their work (each artist with paintings has designated one wall of the room, while sculptures are placed on pedestals, see Figure 5.4).

Already when I visited the exhibition for the first time, I got the impression that the artworks were presenting the artist, rather than the artist presenting the artworks. This was due to the fact, that the artworks are presented relatively close to each other, and there were descriptions about each artist. This is not to say that the artworks were less important, but rather that the personal experience and identity of each artist were intentionally brought forward more than I have seen in other exhibitions.

This intention was later confirmed to me by one of the curators. She said that they wanted to stress the individuality of each artist and, while showing their artistic talents, also highlight their personal experience. They also used recordings of interviews with the artists, which provided further insights into their perspectives, opinions and lived experience. As she points out:

> When you watch the video clips that are there, you will really find out how shy Daniel Kováč is and how he thinks about his work, how he wants to do big things and doesn't have the material to do it, he doesn't actually have the money to buy stone tools. And then on the contrary you will see a completely bohemian Dzurko there, who is already – from the exploitation of himself, as the media image of him was strong – how it got on his nerves a little. We write it in the text too, as he said several times – 'Hey, I am no monkey'. So there are different views on those authors. And especially what kind of environment they were from, when you look at how beautifully Ján Berky talks. With Ján Berky you can watch there beautifully, that Šestáková talks about her family, that's her view, but Berky, he is pissed off, like how can the situation still be the same. But very nicely, indeed he is an intellectual, he is an intellectual who has certainly lived a difficult life, but it has not broken him.

The Sámi Museum

In the Sámi Museum, the permanent exhibition highlighted cultural diversity, while the temporary exhibition demonstrated unity in terms of the continuity of traditions

Figure 5.4: Section Great Masters from the exhibition The Open Road, Prague (Czech National Museum, nd)

and values through time.

The permanent exhibition, as already mentioned, displays objects and clothing from different parts of Sápmi, thus showing the visitor the ethnic diversity within the Sámi culture. The temporary exhibition presents the visitor with a more culturally cohesive narrative. It shows how the Sámi drums are valuable objects and symbols for the Sámi people in general, and how this importance does not diminish across different periods.

The Museum of Romani Culture

The permanent exhibition is, as its name "The Story of the Roma" already suggests, mostly a unified narrative. It is also important to note that the exhibition is very rich and diverse, and therefore some aspects of diversity are also present. The unified narrative, which presents the history of the Roma people as "one people", is the central and dominant one. It focuses on shared experience and milestones that contributed to building some form of shared Roma identity. However, within this central narrative, there are also incorporated individual stories and representations of different Roma communities, regional variations, and artistic expressions. For example, the individuality was presented through extracts from literature, books or short stories, printed on small wooden boards. These texts were written either by Roma authors or by authors who were non-Roma but wrote about the Roma community.

My data show that individuality and individual differences are indeed important for this institution in general. Many people in the Czech Republic have a preconceived and overly unified image of the Roma people, such as that they all live in poverty

and untidiness, are not willing to work and instead engage in criminal activities. The museum is therefore trying to educate the public about the complex nature of these problems, but also about different experience and social and economic conditions within the Roma community.

All of my participants from this museum at some point during the interviews emphasized that the remark they just made was true only for some Roma people, whether it was related to their socio-economic status, educational attainment, or cultural practices. In particular the phrase "we can't put everyone in the same bag" was mentioned several times, which highlights the awareness of diversity and a push against generalizations or stereotypes.

5.3 Fitting the Narrative to its Context

Considering the positioning of each exhibition, it becomes clear that this message is heavily dependent on several factors – the general discourse regarding curatorial practices at the time the exhibition was created, the socio-cultural environment of the country where the exhibition is taking place and who are the most common visitors of the exhibition.

Regarding the discourse, for both museal and art exhibitions, there has been a significant shift from what is expected from the curators. In the past, the traditional approach was that the curator did not let their subjectivity through, trying only to present the collection without making any subjective statements. However, in recent years, there has been a recognition that curators have their own creative perspectives and that these can enrich the exhibition experience. Curators are, in a way, artists themselves, creating a narrative and telling a story through the selection and placement of objects and artworks.

The permanent exhibitions in the Museum of Romani Culture and the Sámi Museum were the oldest exhibitions I examined, and they both strongly leaned towards objectivity. On the other hand, the other exhibitions utilised a more contemporary approach to curatorial subjectivity. This was most visible in the temporary exhibition in the Sámi Museum and the art exhibition The Open Road. The Sámi Museum used the temporary exhibition to make a political statement about the need for the repatriation of Sámi material culture, and in the Open Road exhibition, the curators acted as guides, presenting the visitors with the artworks and providing context and related information.

The discourse around curatorial practices affected the narratives of the exhibitions mainly in the Subjectivity – Objectivity dimension. The other two dimensions were, on the other hand, more heavily influenced by the socio-cultural environment of the country. To understand this, we must consider what the common stereotypes and misconceptions about the ethnic minorities represented in the exhibitions are and how these stereotypes are challenged by the curatorial choices.

In the Czech Republic, public awareness regarding the history of the Roma people is very limited, including such significant topics as the Roma Holocaust. As a result, for example, the permanent exhibition at the Museum of Romani Culture focuses heavily on history, and since it needs to cover a lot of ground, it leans towards a single unified narrative. The curators of the exhibition The Open Road had a limited option to position their narrative on the Historical – Contemporary dimension, as the art collection they had to work with did not have many contemporary works. Nevertheless,

they decided to highlight the diversity of Roma artists, mainly their different individual interests, artistic styles and techniques.

In Norway, it is necessary to consider one additional factor – the area of Sápmi is not only the homeland of the Sámi people but also a popular tourist destination. Tourists may come with preconceived, oversimplified notions about the Sámi culture or even view them as "primitive and exotic noble savages". This was primarily reflected in the Sámi Museum. While focusing on the traditional aspects of Sámi culture, the exhibitions are not necessarily embedded on a timeline. This narrative challenges the notion that Sámi culture is frozen in the past, instead emphasising its ongoing presence. On the dimension of Unity – Diversity, the focus is on cultural diversity and the rich variations within Sámi culture, challenging the stereotype of a homogeneous indigenous group.

To conclude, every exhibition is a result of complex decision-making, which must balance various factors. Returning to the notion of understanding an exhibition as an art medium, the exhibition (the index) is a result of an actions and relationships between the artist, the recipient and the prototype. The artist (in this case most commonly the curator) creates the index (the exhibition) with certain goals and influenced by certain discourse, for a certain recipient (the institution visitors) with particular identities and levels of previous knowledge, to represent a prototype (certain community) with its own history and cultural nuances. All these agents, their characteristics and relationships between them shape the final product of the exhibition.

Chapter 6

Unsettling the visitor

The previous chapter focused on the concept of the exhibition itself. While the exhibition is a result and representation of the choices and perspectives of many agents, I mainly examined its narrative, which exists as an independent entity, and is only consumed and interpreted by the visitor. This chapter will shift the focus to the relationship between the exhibition and the visitor, specifically exploring the importance of the atmosphere. The atmosphere is dependent on the visitor's presence, perception and interpretation. It is something that comes into existence from the gap "in-between objects and subjects" (Bjerregaard, 2015, p. 80), between the physical environment of the exhibition and the emotional response of the visitor.

A particular atmosphere is induced by a combination of so-called atmospheric cues, which create emotional responses in visitors. If they are used well, they create an engaging environment which motivates the visitor to explore the exhibition further, deepening their understanding of the artworks or artefacts on display.

Rita Kottasz (2006) summarised different approaches to the atmosphere and factors that contribute to it and therefore affect the visitor's experience, and created a comprehensive model. The model is presented in the scheme in Figure 6.1. It takes into account the atmospheric cues, the type of the institution and the exhibition itself as well as the personal characteristics of the visitor and situational factors of their visit. Kottasz's model then examines, how these factors influence the visitor's emotions through the PAD dimensions [1] and subsequently affect their behaviour and judgement of the exhibition.

All of the variables have undoubtedly an impact on the visitor's experience, however, for my study, I will only focus on the atmospheric cues, as the institution has significant control over them and they are directly related to the physical environment of the exhibition. Regarding the internal response to these cues, I do not use the pre-defined PAD dimensions, as I intend to focus on the emotional responses of the visitors in more detail.

[1] PAD stands for pleasure, arousal and dominance. In this context, pleasure was assessed as feeling happy as opposed to annoyed, arousal as feeling excited as opposed to relaxed or calm, and dominance as feeling autonomous and in control rather than being guided and controlled.

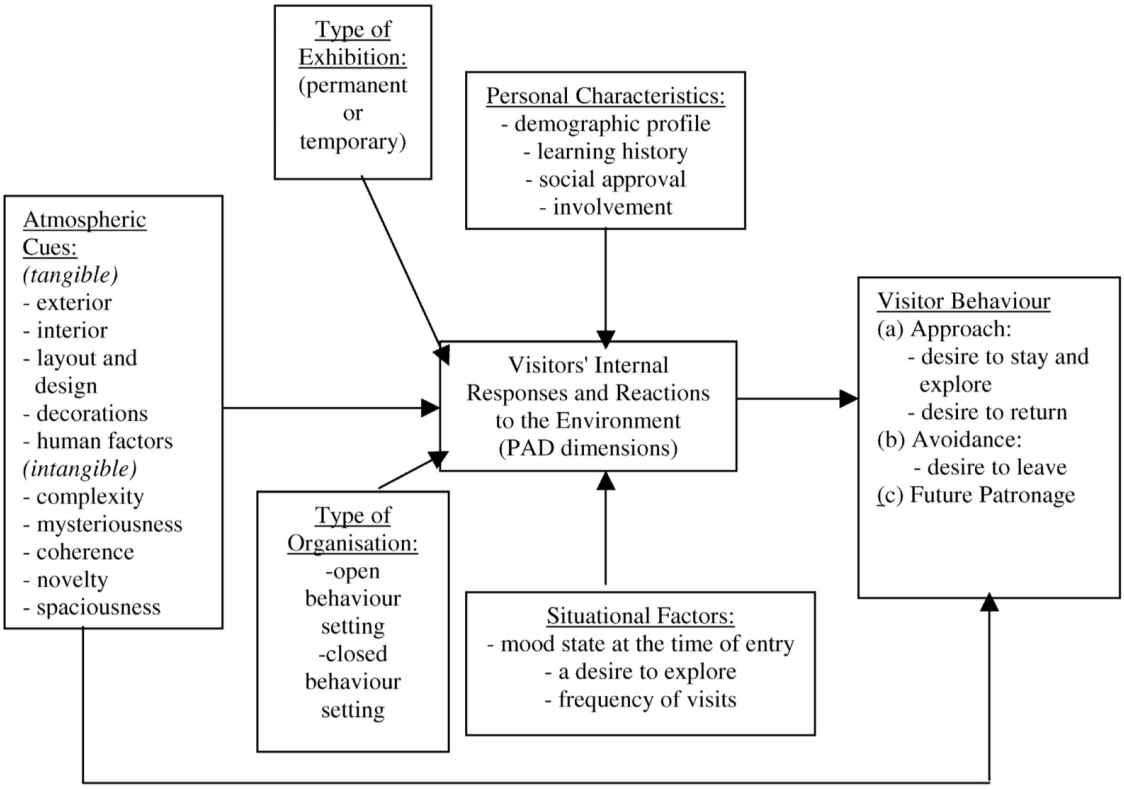


Figure 6.1: Scheme illustrating the effect of atmospheric cues and other variables on visitor's behaviour (Kottasz, 2006, p. 98)

6.1 Atmosphere, communication and emotions

6.1.1 Using Atmosphere for Engagement

By using atmospheric cues to create a certain atmosphere, the institution makes the visitor engaged, it makes them feel present in the exhibition, open to learning, and allows them to connect with the artworks or artefacts on a deeper level. In the following sections, I will point out specific instances which illustrate the importance of atmosphere in museum and art exhibitions.

The Case of the Sámi Museum and the Repatriated Drum

When I first entered the room in the Sámi Museum where the repatriated drum was exhibited, the environment got me hooked. If I were to select one instance where the work with atmosphere was done very well, it would be this room. It used a range of different atmospheric cues to create an immersive and curiosity-inducing environment. There were both tangible atmospheric cues, in particular lighting and sound, but also intangible ones, in this case, complexity, mysteriousness and novelty.

The lighting of the room was dim, creating a sense of intimacy and emphasizing the sense of presence and importance of the displayed drum, whose lighting was brighter and more focused. As for the sound, there was a very slow drumming playing in the background, further enhancing the atmosphere and creating a sense of rhythm and connection to the exhibited object. The combination of low light and slow beating of the drum gave a feeling of being in the presence of a sacred object. This only stressed my need to learn more – learn why is the object sacred, and important, and what is the story behind this drum – which is precisely what an atmosphere should stimulate.

Visiting this room was visually complex, but not an overfilled experience. The sense of complexity is characterised by "visual richness, ornamentation [and] the rate at which information is presented" (Kottasz, 2006, p. 99). These were made with large screens covering the walls of the room, displaying 3D scans of other drums, which created a dynamic and visually immersive environment for the visitors (see Figure 6.2). Using this modern approach and design also added to the sense of novelty. The sense of mystery was supported by the fact that most of the textual information was left outside this room. There were some panels with factual information about each drum (its origin, the materials used), but the main focus was on the visual and sensory experience. The atmosphere thus came to the fore and captivated the visitors' attention and further interest.

The Case of Museum of Romani Culture and Cejl

Here I will analyse the atmosphere of the permanent exhibition, as something the institution has direct power over, but also the atmosphere of its surrounding environment, which is not directly controlled by the museum.

The permanent exhibition of this museum is characterised by the atmospheric cues of layout, design, complexity and coherence. "Layout and design variables involve object placement, traffic flow and sectional locations" (Kottasz, 2006, p. 98). The exhibition is meant to tell a story, a unified narrative starting with historical events and going to the present. Thus the objects, sections and flow of the exhibition were planned to guide visitors through this narrative. This also strengthened the intangible

Figure 6.2: Anders Poulsen's drum exhibited in Sámi Museum, Karasjok (Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat, nd)

atmospheric cue of coherence, which relates to "order, clarity and unity" (Kottasz, 2006, p. 99). The layout and design of the exhibition created a sense of order and unity, allowing visitors to easily navigate through the different sections and comprehend the narrative with ease.

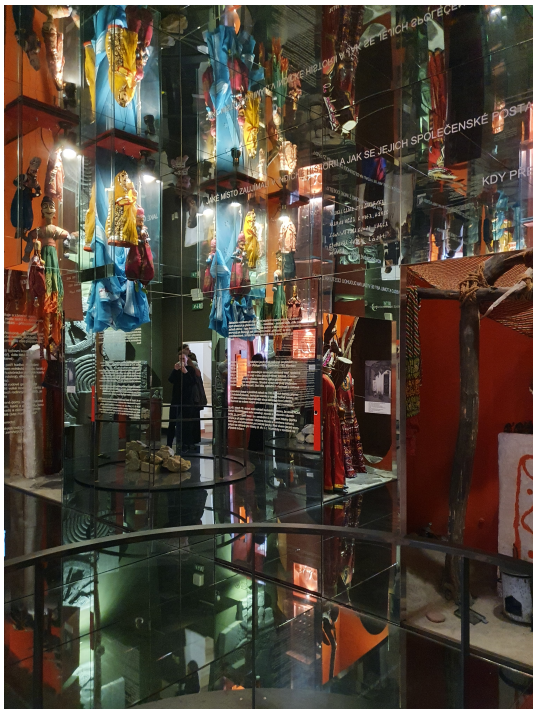
While the exhibition narrative was unified into a single story, it did not impede the complexity of the exhibition and subsequently the visitors' experience. Each room was filled with a range of objects and thematically structured information. The information crucial for the entire narrative was written in the biggest font, highlighting its importance, while additional details were presented in smaller fonts. In addition, there were red and black wooden boards and red wooden poles with memories of Roma people, memories of non-Roma people, and Roma sayings, respectively. This gave the visitor a choice of how much they wanted to learn and how deeply they wanted to engage with the exhibition.

The complexity of the exhibition was also enhanced by a high level of visual richness. The first room had walls, floor and ceiling covered in mirrors, which reflected the objects and colourful dresses exhibited there, see Figure 6.3a. In another room, there were black blocks on the ceiling with text quotes of laws aimed at the Roma community (see Figure 6.3c) or musical instruments placed in various positions (see Figure 6.3b). The last room of the exhibition displayed a reflection of the Roma people in newspapers, with walls and three turning plastic rectangles covered with newspaper titles and articles. All of these examples were creating a visually complex experience, where information is not presented only in plain text, but structured and presented in a novel and engaging way.

The atmosphere and emotional state of the visitor may be also influenced by things the institution does not have direct control over or intends to create. This can be for example the visitor's mood, their prior knowledge or experience, and even the weather outside. In the following analysis, I will discuss the impact of the location and environment surrounding the institution.

The city district, where the Museum of Romani Culture is located, is generally known as Cejl. To the citizens of Brno and many people throughout the Czech Republic, Cejl is a very well-known neighbourhood with a very negative reputation. It is associated with mess, noise, danger, and the presence of many Roma people, who are seen as both the source of the mentioned features and as a negative trait on its own.

The area is located near the city centre and used to be occupied by textile factories. After these factories closed, the citizens of Brno started moving into this area and occupying the former workers' apartments. Some Roma people have already been living there since they were working in the factories. Over time, these flats have become outdated and do not meet modern living standards anymore. As a result of the deterioration of the buildings and apartments, socially vulnerable individuals including some Roma people have moved into these flats. Around the year 2000, Brno college students started residing in this area. Multiple students commonly share rented flats, with each flat usually accommodating around 4 to 6 people. Students usually try to cut down their living expenses, which is the main reason for choosing the area. Over time, several initiatives have been undertaken to improve the living conditions in Cejl and challenge its negative reputation. However, the reputation remains a result of deep-rooted discrimination and systemic marginalization of the Roma community (Brožovičová, 2019, pp. 33 – 35).



(a) The first room of the permanent exhibition

(b) Musical instruments

(c) Laws regarding the Roma community

Figure 6.3: Exhibition "The Story of the Roma" at the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno

Figure 6.4: The building of the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno

When I went to visit the Museum of Romani Culture for the first time, I was unsure what to expect from this area, as I had heard of its reputation before, but never been anywhere around. To describe my feelings upon walking through the area, there was indeed some mess and noise, but to a large degree caused by construction work happening in a couple of places. In general, it was not the most beautiful neighbourhood I had ever seen, there were some run-down buildings, but there were also new and renovated ones. The people there simply minded their business, except for one child who loudly greeted me and asked why am I taking a photo of the museum. As you can see on this photo in Figure 6.4, the building adjacent to the museum is visibly old, but the buildings on the other side of the road are nicer and likely renovated. In general, I considered it far from the dangerous and intimidating place that I had heard about.

This demonstrates the bias towards the Roma people and the negative stereotypes associated with their presence. It is true that as individuals we cannot be completely unbiased, and I too am subject to my prior expectations and assumptions. I was convinced before ever seeing the area, that it would not be as bad as it was portrayed, because I was aware of the common prejudices against the Roma people. Moreover, I wanted the area to not be as bad so that I could argue that the reputation is based on stereotypes and not actual reality. These views could affect my final perception of the area.

As such, the surroundings of the museum can illustrate the current struggles of the Roma people, where many are fighting poverty, unemployment, and limited access to higher education. On the other hand, it can also reinforce some negative stereotypes, perpetuating the notion that the area is unsafe or undesirable.

The Case of the Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art and the Preparations of an Exhibition

What surrounds the objects in a museum or art gallery exhibition also serves to target the visitor's attention and create such an environment, which does not distract the visitor where distraction is not desired. If the environment gives an unwanted impression or is even slightly disturbing, it can detract from the overall experience of the exhibition and hinder the visitor's ability to engage with the artwork or artefacts on display.

It was in SDG, that I realised the importance of details. The staff was in the middle of preparing a new exhibition, so I offered them my help. There were a couple of dark grey painted tables, that needed to be repainted to a lighter shade of grey. Some old stains of paint needed to be sanded off before the painting, which revealed about four old layers of paint of different colours – for several exhibitions when these tables were used, they needed to be adjusted for the particular exhibition setting. And it was not just the tables, entire walls had to go from black to white in just a couple of days. This is the type of work where a measure of its quality lies in its imperceptibility. Even such a thing as the wrong shade of a table or wall colour can disrupt the overall atmosphere and detract from the visitor's experience. You can see the tables during (Figure 6.5) and after the painting proces, used in the final exhibition (Figure 6.6).

We can also imagine this hypothetical situation in the Sámi Museum. I have mentioned, how the atmosphere was very well crafted. Now, take an example, where the atmosphere of something sacred, created through certain lighting, sound and visual elements, was disturbed by some bad smell, or bright red paint on the walls. It

would, without a doubt, disrupt the visitor's perception and experience. The visitor will not particularly think about the absence of these things, but their presence would detract from the intended atmosphere and overall impact of the exhibition.

Figure 6.5: Tables used for the exhibition of Geir Nustad during the painting process, in SDG, Karasjok

Figure 6.6: The tables painted and used for the exhibition of Geir Nustad, in SDG, Karasjok (Sámi Dáiddaguovddáš, nda)

6.1.2 Using Communication for Education

As already mentioned several times, the institution uses the exhibition to create a narrative and share it with the visitor. In other words, we can say that the exhibition is a way of communicating with the public. Each of the institutions uses several means of communication in addition to the exhibition, such as social media, public events, meetings or workshops, or through providing information to the news media. Through all these channels, the institution aims to convey a message and knowledge and raise public awareness about relevant topics. The quality and consistency of communication are crucial for the long-term purpose of each institution. As one of my participants from the Museum of Romani Culture noted:

> By presenting ourselves in some way, we also help people to open up and accept other opinions. And if the public events and the language we use to speak to the people were not good, if it would be confusing and inconsistent, then, of course, we would not contribute to spreading awareness.

Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art – Exhibition About Sickness

Exhibitions tend to explore various topics, which the visitors may not have a direct experience with. These might be deeply personal experiences, events unique to a particular location or historical events. However, there might also be aspects that are familiar to all visitors, regardless of their background.

One of my participants highlighted a particular art exhibition in SDG. It was by a Sámi artist, who focused on the topic of sickness. The exhibition was successful and received good feedback from the visitors, because, as my participant put it, it was related to something that everybody knows. The artworks were created and connected to the artist's personal experience, but the overall theme was relatable to all visitors, regardless of their background or previous knowledge. Due to this familiarity, the visitors could more easily connect with the artworks and read the narrative of the exhibition.

Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art – Using Published Materials

The communication between the institution and its visitors may be further enhanced by providing additional context or information to the visitors through gallery texts, audio guides, or guided tours. Not only does such material help the visitor to understand the symbolism and meaning behind the artworks, but it also gives them the option to engage with the exhibition after leaving the physical space.

This was one observation of my participant from SDG. We discussed the exhibition by Ole Lislerud, which has just been taken down, and she provided some more insights on the communication with visitors. She said: "This exhibition convinced me more than 100 % that we need to have published material [...] What surprised me is that statistically maybe 50 – 60 % of people bought the catalogue. So that would mean that it's not enough for people just to visit the exhibition, they want to read more, they want to learn more."

The participant's observation highlights the importance of providing additional materials such as catalogues or published information to complement the exhibition experience. When the visitor is engaged by the exhibition, their interest is raised, and

they seek further information to deepen their understanding and connection to the narrative.

Venice Biennale – The Black Butterfly

The previous example from SDG was a demonstration of an exhibition showcasing how the personal experience captured by the artist could easily resonate with a wider audience. The case of "The Black Butterfly", an artwork from Kiba Lumberg at the Venice Biennale (see Figure 6.7) , however, presents a different instance. Its meaning could be best described by the artist's own words, as mentioned by my participant: "My soul cannot fit into a gipsy skirt".

This particular artwork was mentioned by one of my participants in Czechia when she reviewed the first Roma Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. She talked about this particular artwork because of the importance of understanding and conveying narrative to the visitors.

My participant then explained that, in the context of the Roma Pavilion at Venice Biennale, "it was the only work that the viewer could read without knowing what it was about because Kiba worked with things that normally work in contemporary art – she used visual shortcuts, like a knife, and a skirt, as a representation of a woman... So people got into it easily. But the other works there, I'm not saying that they were bad, but they were more difficult to decipher."

The experience leading to creating "The Black Butterfly" are specific and personal, such that might not be easily understood or relatable to all visitors. The visual shortcuts and symbolism utilised in the artwork help convey its message even to those who may not have prior knowledge or understanding of the artist's experience.

Figure 6.7: Installation "The Black Butterfly" by Kiba Lumberg, exhibited at Venice Biennale in 2007 (Haupt and Binder, nd)

6.1.3 Using Emotions for Understanding

The atmosphere itself serves several purposes – the visitors' immersion, engagement, and attentiveness. The atmosphere helps the visitor to be present and open to learning, but on its own does not necessarily promote actual understanding. It is rather the combination of atmosphere and communication of emotions that is essential for visitors to go beyond mere factual learning.

Some suggest, that using the atmosphere and emotions in an exhibition can help create a deeper connection between the visitor and the subject matter, allowing the visitor to put themselves in the shoes of those being represented (Paver, 2016, pp. 397 – 398). I would argue that such statement is inaccurate, as I believe that fundamental aspects of identity and a lifetime of experience cannot be fully conveyed to another person in just one visit to an exhibition, regardless of how well-crafted the atmosphere is or how compelling the narrative may be.

That does not mean that emotions and atmosphere are not important in exhibitions and cannot invoke a sense of empathy and understanding. While the experience of the represented group may be intensely personal and specific, the raw emotions such as pain, anger, sadness, and joy can be universal, which allows the visitors to relate with their own lived experience. An example was mentioned by one of my participants from the Museum of Romani Culture, when she compared the behaviour and stereotypes regarding the Roma people held by older and younger generation, and pointed out:

> I don't think that we're going to change the old generation [...] But I think that the younger people are better. Many times students told us, when we have a program about prejudices, they have told us 'That's exactly what I am also dealing with'. They fight to have their sexuality accepted or whatever else, they experience the misunderstandings, they know how difficult it is to defend it.

This remark illustrates that emotions can serve as a bridge for visitors to connect with the subject matter, and while they cannot relive the experience and adopt the memories of others, they can relate to the emotional impact of those experiences. This is what most effectively prods the visitor to reflect on their own beliefs and perspectives and promotes empathy and understanding.

Exhibition "Language and Identity – The Sámi Pain" by Ole Lislerud

One of the strongest and most immediate emotional responses I have experienced was in the SDG, right upon entering the exhibition from artist Ole Lislerud called "Language and Identity – The Sámi Pain". The exhibition showcased the artist's paintings, and it was meant as "a commentary on the Norwegian states' colonialism and structural racism towards the Sami people" (Sámi Dáiddaguovddáš, 2022).

The entrance was partly covered by a temporary wall with a painting reflecting ethnic discrimination and racial segregation. This was the only painting immediately visible, and to enter the rest of the exhibition, the visitor had to walk around the wall from either side. However, the direction, from which the wall should be avoided, was specified by the painting. If the visitor was white or European, they were directed to the left, and if they were Sámi or black, they were directed to the right (see a view over the exhibition from the inside on Figure 6.8, and a scheme of the placement of the temporary wall on Figure 6.9).

The direction did not have any practical implications, as the room I was about to enter was the same regardless of which side I chose. In addition, there was nobody to

enforce this directive or to monitor which direction visitors chose. Thus it might seem, it practically did not matter. However, the emotional impact of this simple choice was profound. It was a situation I did not expect. I went to simply look at the exhibition, to be a passive viewer, and suddenly I found myself being told which way to enter, based on my origin and the colour of my skin. Immediately I saw the entire exhibition differently. I felt like I got a glimpse into the experience of marginalization and discrimination, but within the safe space of an art exhibition and with the knowledge that I am, in fact, a member of the privileged group.

Figure 6.8: Exhibition "Language and Identity – The Sámi Pain" from Ole Lislerud in SDG, Karasjok (Sámi Dáiddaguovddáš, ndb)

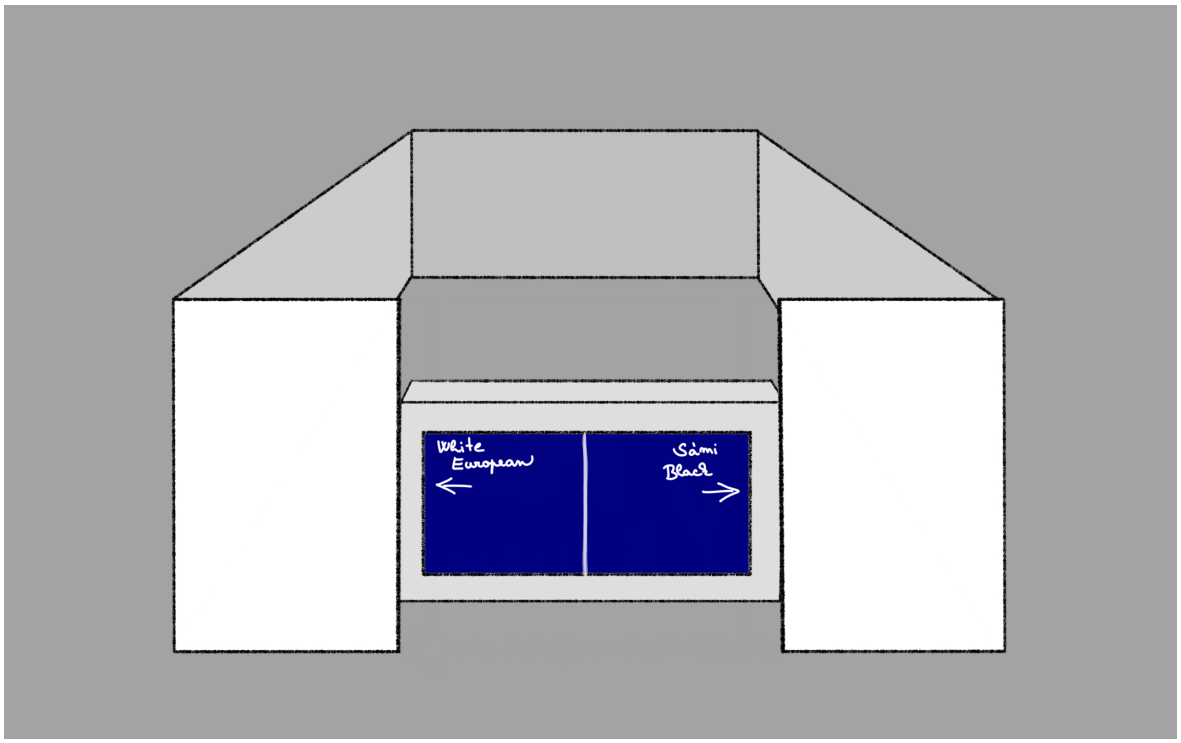


Figure 6.9: A scheme of the placement of the temporary wall in the exhibition in SDG, Karasjok

6.2 Changing Perceptions and Reclaiming Narratives

This chapter explored the importance and impact of atmosphere and emotions in museums and art exhibitions. Using a range of atmospheric cues, visual shortcuts, and interactive elements all work together to unsettle the visitors, challenge their views and biases, and make them learn, think, and feel in new ways.

Bjerregaard (2015) proposes that the exhibition atmosphere serves as a tool that engages the visitor and strengthens their sense of "being here", immersing them in the exhibition's narrative and context. While I do agree with this statement, I also believe that this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the power of atmosphere in museal and art exhibitions.

Going back to the findings of previous chapter, the institution uses the content of its exhibitions to create narrative suitable for the social and cultural context and the desired learning outcomes. However, even when the exhibition as a whole functions as a means of communication, it is not to be seen as a language, as Gell (1998) pointed out, since it does not have fixed grammatical rules and single way of interpretation. Instead, it is through the process of abduction that the visitors derive meaning of the exhibition. Therefore, while the exhibition's content comprise the main narrative and message to be conveyed, the atmosphere and emotional engagement help to limit the scope of interpretation and guide the visitors towards intended understanding. In addition to learning plain facts presented in a written form, it promotes a clear understanding of the exhibition as a whole as well as lasting impact of the experience.

In conclusion, the content and atmosphere of an exhibition are tools for reclaiming and rewriting narratives that were created outside of these ethnic groups and without their voice and perspective. My participants frequently shared experiences of encountering negative stereotypes or discrimination in their daily lives, whether as members of an ethnic minority or through their institutional connections. As my participant from the Museum of Romani Culture noted: "Yes, that's an evergreen, all the jokes that everybody says, like 'Oh, and what do you have in the exhibition? Stolen phones?'"

These stereotypes and discrimination is mostly learned and perpetuated through dominant societal narratives. The institutions are therefore using the exhibition to provide alternative narratives to those created outside of the marginalised communities. This not only challenges the existing narratives but also creates a sense of empowerment and validation for the marginalized communities. Another participant from the Museum of Romani Culture mentioned the effect of their lectures and workshops on the Roma children, when she described:

> Here we very often experience the strengthening of identity. The outside world somehow tells them 'You are like this, and that is wrong', and then they come here, there is this institution standing here, which, on the other hand, tells them that there is some history, the history is interesting, and I think we tell the history quite interestingly here... And we see the strengthening of their identity [...] Also, what I noticed, is that the combination of both [a Roma and a non-Roma lecturer] is ideal there, that for those Roma kids, when some blonde gajo[2] woman is interested in their culture, and actually she talks like

[2]A term for a person of non-Roma ethnicity

> it is interesting, and it seems like it elevates them, that some gajo is showing respect to them

Therefore, creating an atmosphere which is welcoming, immersive and emotionally engaging is crucial in conveying the intended message and impact of an exhibition or other activities. By creating a memorable and transformative experience for its visitors, the institution, and by extension the community they represent, is reclaiming the narratives and working to tackle the power imbalances embedded in society.

Chapter 7

Value, respect and recognition

It is undeniable that objects exhibited in cultural institutions, whether they are contemporary artworks or historical artefacts, hold significant value. However, as already explained, this value will vary for each person based on their environment, exemplary persons and life experience (Strauss, 1992).

The concept of value is closely related to the concept of respect since respect could be in most general terms understood as acknowledging the value of a given object or person. Nevertheless, while the concept of value is a common topic in anthropology, the concept of respect is not as widely explored. Therefore, in this chapter, I will draw some theoretical framework of respect from philosophy, where the concept has been more extensively discussed, and then propose some additional perspectives derived from my own data. In particular, I will focus on what is the relationship between respect and values, and how we can understand disrespect.

In philosophy, respect is seen either as a behaviour or as an attitude. While both may occur at the same time, it is not necessarily always the case. Respect as behaviour without the underlying attitude may be for instance adhering to regulations, guidelines or contracts, such as following traffic rules to avoid fines rather than out of a genuine need for safety. On the other hand, respect as an attitude without corresponding behaviour may be a result of external factors. For instance, a teenager may genuinely feel respect for their parents, but do not show it through their actions due to peer pressure of fitting in with their friends who rather value rebellious behaviour.

Respect as a concept itself but especially in the instance of respect for human life and dignity is widely considered as one of universal values, together with concepts like equality, trust or freedom (Burmeister et al., 2011; Tanaka, 1998; Faneye, 2014). However, it is important to note that the expression of respect may differ depending on cultural and societal norms. An example may be direct eye contact – while it can be considered a sign of respect and attentiveness according to some cultural norms, it may be seen as a violation of personal boundaries by others (Treis, 2005).

7.1 The Value of Material Culture

During my research, the concept of value and respect was most commonly mentioned in the context of material culture. While it may seem obvious and straightforward that material culture holds value, and therefore should be treated with respect, the reality is much more complex. There are issues arising from cultural differences, power imbalances, and nuances that make the reality challenging to navigate.

In the past, museum collections often consisted of objects taken from communities without their permission during colonization. However, there is now a shift towards a more ethically sound approach. Many museums are actively working to engage with source communities, advocate for repatriation of cultural treasures, and involve them in decisions regarding the display and interpretation of these objects. Unfortunately, these efforts are not universal, and even when they are employed, the requirements might be misunderstood and the results inadequate. The respectful treatment of material culture does not end with the ethical acquisition of the object. It extends to how the object is preserved, displayed, and interpreted. This was stressed for instance by Rosanna Raymond, an artist from New Zealand, when she stated in an interview:

> I was at Te Papa, our national museum. I made an appointment with Suzanne, one of my Pacific sisters, to talk about seeing Kākahu the 'Twenty-first Century[1] Cyber Sister', which the Pacific sisters made. We made her and we presented her in about, it would have been in the early 1990s, at Te Papa Museum. We were so excited to be reconnected with our sister and we hadn't seen her for years. So we got her out of her box, and the first thing they did was ask us to put gloves on. I was just like, 'You're joking right?' They were talking about 'it's for conservation'. Then they got a lecture from me about how engaging physically with our bodies is part of the proper conservation of the object. Yeah, I was really shocked. We had made this. And to preserve her, she needed contact, physical care and nourishment. I sat there – I know, and I was actually really stunned because she had been disrespected anyway, by being locked away – and then I said, you want to talk about conservation? There were seeds which were very, very dry, I said, and without oil, without being oiled, these will crack and disintegrate. Of course, oil is not a certified conservation methodology. So I'm sitting there rubbing it all over my skin, getting the oils off my skin in there (Rosanna Raymond, as cited in Tolia-Kelly, 2016, p. 286)

Raymond mentions two issues here – disrespecting the artwork by locking it away, and the misunderstanding of necessary conservation practices. These remarks highlight the importance of engaging in continuous dialogue and collaboration with the source communities to ensure both permanence and respectful treatment of the object and by extension the people who created it.

To examine closer the relationship between the value of an object and what a respectful treatment of a given object is, I will use a similar case from my own research.

There was one particular case which stood out as a prime example of a highly valuable artefact, which has been the subject of misunderstanding and disrespectful treatment – the repatriated drum now kept and owned by the Sámi Museum. It is not up for debate that the way this drum and many others first came into the possession of European museums was unjustified and highly unethical by modern standards. However, the aspect I want to discuss is how the drums still owned by non-Sámi museums are stored and taken care of.

Large European museums own collections of artefacts of great value, and therefore also hold the responsibility to preserve and care for these objects. In mainstream preservation practices, this involves proper storage conditions, such as temperature and humidity control, to prevent deterioration of the materials. In the case of these large museums, there is little doubt that these basic requirements are met. And yet,

[1] This is probably a typing error as the name of this artwork should be "Twenty-first Sentry Cyber Sister"

the storage of the Sámi drums is often considered inappropriate and disrespectful, as hinted by the extract I already mentioned once, to highlight the subjective and political stance that the Sámi museum shows in their exhibition: "The drums shall no longer be stowed away in the warehouses of European mega-museums or be exhibited as obscure curiosities from the Arctic."

Focusing strictly on the value of these drums, it is clear that they are considered highly valuable for both European museums and the Sámi institutions. After all, if they were not considered valuable by both parties, the efforts to repatriate them would not be so long and complicated. Therefore, if respectful behaviour was simply such behaviour that reflects the overall perceived value, the behaviour of European museums would not be considered disrespectful by the Sámi institutions. The differentiating factor must lie somewhere else.

The explanation that suggests itself next is the cultural difference of the proper conservation practice, such as the example of the 21st Sentry Cyber Sister. However, in the case of storing Sámi drums, I would argue this is also not a valid claim, because just like in the European museums, the Sámi museum in Karasjok keeps their drum in a climate-regulated case. After all, the risk of damage due to improper storage conditions is widely acknowledged.

The case of the repatriated Sámi drum shows, that the question is not only "how much" valuable a given object is, but also "why" is it valuable. In other words, which aspects define the value of the object? In the context of European museums, the perceived value of a Sámi drum will reflect how old and well-preserved the drum is, and what is its cultural significance. For the Sámi people, however, the additional aspect is that these drums are viewed not just as objects, but rather as persons, and therefore, they should be treated as such.

To ensure that the treatment and presentation of the drums are respectful, the Sámi Museum did several things. As stated in the exhibition: "Drums are not merely objects of use but rather they are considered as powerful non-human beings with their own will and with a voice. Therefore, the exhibition presents the drums with respect, as persons. Their life stories are told as biographies." Additionally, during one conversation I had in the museum, I was suggested to take notice not only of the drum itself, but also its placement. The drum was placed on a stand, which was decorated with a leather cover. It was explained to me, that the artist, who created this cover, deemed it disrespectful towards the drum to use a machine while working with the leather, so she decided to hand-stitch it instead. The additional effort in creating the leather decoration, therefore, reflects the commitment to respecting and honouring the cultural practices and values associated with the Sámi drum, instead of merely creating a visually pleasing display for the visitors.

These examples show that the storage of the Sámi drums in European museums is considered disrespectful because they are treated only as objects and their spiritual value is not recognised. To honour the value of the drums as perceived by the Sámi people, the drums need to viewed as persons and need to be with their people, as further highlighted on the Sámi museum website: "Placed in foreign environments, the drums became voiceless: no one to talk to or with, no language to share, no stories to tell, no one to listen to or to understand them, with no purpose to fill" (Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat, 2022)

While the previous cases of respect and disrespect were results of knowledge and intention or, in the opposite case, misunderstanding and lack of knowledge, I have also

experienced a form of disrespect resulting from a lack of resources, which made the perceived disrespectful behaviour the only possible outcome.

This was the most obvious in the case of the Sámi Art Collection. When I first arrived to see the Sámi Art Collection, I was almost sure I arrived at the wrong place. The map on my phone showed I was at the right location, but all I could see was an old garage building, see Figure 7.1. However, my map was right and I was soon let inside and introduced to the truly extensive collection of artworks including paintings, sculptures, photography prints, or traditional duodji.

Figure 7.1: The location of the Sámi Art Collection

The contrast between the value of the collection and the environment in which it was kept was evident. The impropriety of the situation was reflected also by the staff working in this institution. As one of my participants pointed out:

> We have to have a proper storage room. Like any museum. And to have the space for conserving and showing the art. At some point, we have to move out of here because we don't have the space. I can show you the garage, the little space we have left, and there is more money for buying art this year, so we know more is coming... so that's the problem we have. And we're not alone, I know that every museum at some point face this, but this is not ideal in any way, and I think it's not a respectful way of keeping the art. So yeah, just get some storage room so we can keep the art in a more respectful way than it is now.

It is clear that the expressed frustration at the location of the art collection is due to both practical and symbolic reasons. There are several rooms dedicated to storing

the art, but they are running out of free space, which makes it necessary to use every available corner, even if it means placing the artworks in cramped and less-than-ideal conditions. The amount of space but also the state of it do not reflect the value of the collection and the significance it holds for the Sámi people. Therefore, the result is the perceived disrespect towards the collection.

7.2 Respect for Ethnicity and Individuality

Being respected is a fundamental human desire that extends to all aspects of one's identity, including ethnicity. However, the distinction that emerges from my research is the importance of respecting both the collective identity of ethnic minorities and the individuality of each person within that group. An individual might seek respect for their ethnicity, but also be respected as an individual regardless of their ethnicity.

This was especially apparent among artists and other people working within the art field. To be a successful artist, one must be creative, have interesting ideas and knowledge of themes, and of course, skills to bring their ideas to life. While the ethnicity of the artist can influence their perspective and the themes they explore in their work, it does not directly determine individual creative abilities and contributions. The artist may be proud of their ethnic background and demand respect for this part of their identity, but being praised and favoured in the art world for their ethnic background alone undermines their individuality and talent. Ethnicity is only a fraction of one's identity, and while it may hold a significant value for some people, it should not be seen as the sole defining factor or the only aspect worthy of recognition.

An example of different interests was the exhibition "Vesmíry/Kosmosa/Universes" in the Museum of Romani Culture since it displayed different interests – "universes" – of the author. A significant part of the exhibition was the topic of the Roma holocaust, which is a very specific and crucial event in Roma history, but it is not the only interest of the author. The rest of the exhibition included landscapes, the universe, or religious themes, which may be rooted in ethnicity, but they are not as specific or traditional in their representation. An example of artworks with different themes from this exhibition are shown in Figure 7.2. On the left, there are three paintings connected with the theme of universe (a) and on the right, a painting related to the Roma Holocaust (b).

This topic was brought also with my participants from the Sámi Art Collection. Many Sámi artists, who specialise in dáidda, contemporary and non-traditional art forms, create artworks which are political and activist in nature, addressing issues such as land rights, cultural preservation, and the oppression of the Sámi community. However, it is important to recognize that not all Sámi artists focus solely on these themes. Some may choose to explore personal experience, emotions, or abstract concepts unrelated to their ethnic identity. As one of my participants from Karasjok described:

> I know some artists change around, wanting to be more personal, like Synnøve Persen, she told me that she started out being an activist, she was part of the Mázi group and the work with art was meant to be an activist, like with the Alta situation and... but eventually she evolved to become more an artist she wanted to be, she told me that it went from being like activist to be more about paintings and the abstract depictions, personal, so it really depends.

It is important to be cautious about overemphasizing the connection between an

artist's ethnicity and the themes they explore in their work. When institutions solely focus on presenting themes closely tied to the ethnicity of artists, they run the risk of unintentionally reinforcing stereotypes. They might be strengthening the idea that while individuals from majorities are free to explore a wide range of subjects and themes in their art, artists from ethnic minority backgrounds are not as complex individuals and are limited to producing art that solely represents their ethnic identity or community struggles.

This approach would consequently affect the artists themselves, as they might feel pressure to conform to the expectations. If political and activist themes are the only ones presented in galleries and exhibitions, creating artwork that deviates from these themes may be seen as less valuable or important.

Closely related to the issue of what we value in artists is the question of their integration or separation. As a result of recognising artists solely based on their ethnicity, there is a risk of marginalizing them and segregating their works from the broader art world. This might lead to a lack of opportunities for these artists to engage with mainstream art institutions, limiting their visibility and potential for career advancement.

Giving special opportunities to artists of ethnic minority backgrounds can be beneficial to establish their names and be more recognised. Nevertheless, it is important to approach such opportunities with sensitivity to avoid promoting harmful stereotypes or reinforcing the notion that these artists do not have a place in mainstream artistic discourse and should be relegated to a separate category.

This issue is particularly discussed in the context of Biennale exhibitions. Biennale (or Biennal) are large international art exhibitions held perennially in different cities around the world, showcasing contemporary art from a wide range of artists. They are "temporary spaces of mediation, usually allocated to invited curators with support from a local socio-cultural network. They are interfaces between art and larger publics – publics which are at once local and global, resident and nomadic, non-specialist and art-worldly" (O'Neill, 2007, p. 16).

One of the most prestigious biennales is the Venice Biennale. This particular biennale is important to mention because there were already made spaces available, particularly for artists of Sámi and Roma backgrounds. The first turning point happened during the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007 when the Roma pavilion was opened for the first time. The second turning point could be assigned to the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022, when a Roma artist Małgorzata Mirga-Tas was selected to represent Poland, and the Nordic pavilion was transformed into a Sámi pavilion, featuring three Sámi artists – Pauliina Feodoroff, Máret Ánne Sara and Anders Sunna.

Being featured in such high-profile international platforms can greatly contribute to raising the visibility and recognition of artists from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, there are also critical voices arguing that "despite any curatorial self-reflexivity in recent large-scale exhibitions that may exist towards the global effects of 'biennialization', the periphery still has to follow the discourse of the centre. In the case of biennials, the periphery comes to the centre in search of legitimization and, by default, accepts the conditions of this legitimacy" (O'Neill, 2007, p. 17). I would, however, argue that in the context of such a prestigious event as the Venice Biennale, providing spaces for the Sámi and the Roma people is more important than the potential risk of them accepting the conditions of legitimacy created by the

dominant discourse. I see it rather unfair and discriminatory to expect people from those communities to be able to only follow and conform, when, instead, they could actively contribute to shaping and redefining the discourse itself.

One of the curators of the Sámi Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale also shares this view and highlights the positive symbolic impact of creating a space designated for Sámi artists. She states:

> The transformation of the Nordic Pavilion into the Sámi Pavilion is an act of Indigenous sovereignty that highlights the relationship of the artists to their homeland Sápmi, an area that pre-dates the concept of the Nordic region and presents a pavilion that encompasses all of the lands and people of what was originally a borderless region.
>
> It is a symbolic reversal of colonial claims that have sought to erase Sámi land and culture. It is a historic first in Biennial history in Venice or elsewhere. It is the first time a pavilion exclusively presents Sámi artists and the first time that a pavilion recognises the Sámi as a nation in an international pavilion (Katya García-Antón, as cited in Dáiddadállu, 2020)

In addition to the symbolic achievement, there are practical benefits to providing spaces for ethnic minority artists at the Venice Biennale. Daniel Baker, a Roma artist, researcher and curator, acknowledged the negative aspects, but also highlighted the practical implications of being present in high-profile biennales like the Venice Biennale:

> Yes, the Biennale is an elitist institution. Yes, it seems remote from the situation for Roma on the ground, but it is also where governmental policy can be influenced and international perceptions persuaded toward alternative points of view.
>
> Roma presence at the Venice Biennale contributes to the preservation of Roma cultural capital by promoting narratives that can be influential in changing attitudes. Our presence also helps to build alliances with like-minded organisations, as well as representing a quantifiable enhancement of contemporary art discourse in terms of diversity—a much-needed state of inclusion which contemporary art networks are coming to rather late in the day (Baker, 2021)

Being present at the Venice Biennale is not only an opportunity to present one's art to a large number of visitors but also to make connections with other artists, curators and organisations. These connections add to one's social capital, which can be very useful for future collaborations and opportunities. A biennale might be elitist and centre-focused, but it is also an opportunity for ethnic minority artists to snatch themselves more power and challenge the existing hierarchy, which has historically marginalized and disregarded their voices and perspectives.

Creating special spaces for ethnic minority artists has both positive and negative implications, each slightly different depending on the size, importance and prestige of a given exhibition. The positive impacts include visibility, powerful symbolic statements, opportunities for networking and increasing one's profile within the art world. On the other hand, the negative implications may include perpetuating stereotypes or exclusion of ethnic minority artists from mainstream art spaces. As my participant summarised:

> I keep saying that we do not need an institution for the contemporary art of professional Roma artists, because it naturally, on the basis of the author, gets

(a) Paintings "Floating Ještěd" (top), "M 42" (bottom left) and "Little Planet" (bottom right)

(b) Painting "Flawless Hygiene"

Figure 7.2: Artworks by Zdeněk Daniel from the exhibition Vesmíry/Kosmosa/Universes held in Museum of Romani Culture, Brno

> into the environment of the majority. I am exhibiting in Mumok, in Italy, Skopje, I don't know where else. And I don't need my works to have any prism that I am a 'Roma author' or that I make 'Roma art' [...] Therefore, to rush the professional contemporary authors under one roof could be a sort of, I don't want to say a segregation mode, but we would actually repeat what we ourselves opposed. We want to be a part of the bigger scene and that's how it should be.

All of these factors should be considered when creating such spaces for ethnic minority artists, as they have the potential to both empower and marginalize. Nevertheless, the most important factor is that the decision-making is done by or in consultation with artists, curators or representatives from a given community. Without their active involvement in the decision-making process, the only result would be tokenism and a shallow attempt at inclusivity.

Linking these statements back to the theory of respect, the approach is similar to respecting material culture. As previously mentioned, the key consideration is not the value placed on a specific object, but rather understanding why it holds value. This principle applies when showing respect for material culture, but also for artists. If we only value the artists for their ethnic background and not their skills and artistic merit, then we are not truly respecting them as artists. Therefore, if we separate ethnic minority and majority artists, we place higher value on their ethnicity rather than their artistic abilities. Even when the original intention may be positive, such action can be read as disrespectful.

7.3 Defining Respect and Disrespect

To conclude, I will continue from the definition of respect mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, explore further how the concept of respect relates to the concept of values, and how the concept of disrespect can be defined.

As already mentioned, respect can be both an attitude and a behaviour. Additionally, the concepts of respect and disrespect assume one key condition – a relationship. Respect is always felt about, paid to or demonstrated towards an object (Dillon, 2022). Respect as an attitude is personal, and it may or may not be exhibited in one's actions. When it is not shown in actions, it only reflects one's personal value systems and does not have a tangible impact on others. In this case, the feeling of respect is an acknowledgement of high value. Disrespect, however, cannot be understood simply as a lack of acknowledgement, since that would only result in the feeling of indifference. Disrespect is the attitude of disprovement of value, assigning negative rather than positive characteristics to someone or something.

Understanding and recognizing respect as an attitude is rather an easy task, as it is personal, and until one expresses it with their behaviour, it does not have a direct impact on other individuals. Respect as a behaviour is observable and can be judged by others and therefore also becomes a basis for conflicting interpretations, expectations or value systems. This is true for both the receiver of the given behaviour, as well as any other observers. Considering these factors, it becomes clear that defining the concept of respect and disrespect is more complicated than in the case of personal attitudes.

For the following analysis of respect as a behaviour, I will also assume respect as an attitude. That is because even when an individual aims to behave respectfully without their behaviour reflecting their attitude, they still behave as if they hold a corresponding attitude. While respect as behaviour does not necessarily align with one's true attitude, the factor of sincerity is not part of my analysis.

As I already mentioned in the previous sections, respectful behaviour does not only signify how much we value an object or person, but also what aspects we value. This will have significant implications on what behaviour we consider respectful. Subsequently, what I already touched upon but did not explicitly address, is that whether a behaviour is assessed as respectful (or disrespectful) depends on consistency (or inconsistency) between values assigned to an object and what behaviour is associated and expected, given those values. I will illustrate this by returning to the case of 21st Sentry Cyber Sister. The people from the museum assessed the object based on certain characteristics – its cultural significance, artistic craftmanship or how it adds to the overall value of the collection of their museum, for example – and used these characteristics to infer what behaviour is appropriate, and therefore respectful. Just like with other museal objects, they considered a respectful behaviour such behaviour that preserves the object, which, according to their education and knowledge, means storing it safely and handling it carefully with gloves. The values they assigned to the object were consistent with what behaviour is expected towards object of such values, and therefore, according to them, their behaviour was respectful. However, considering what values the artists assigned to the object and what behaviour they expected, their idea was significantly inconsistent. Therefore, the behaviour shown by the museum and its staff was perceived as disrespectful by the artists, even though there was no intent to harm or disrespect on the part of the museum.

This inconsistency between the artists and the museum staff could be defined as external inconsistency, since both parties assess their own behaviour as respectful, and only when put into evaluation from the outside, the inconsistency was identified.

In my research, I have also seen a case of internal inconsistency, which I described in the case of the Sámi Art Collection. My participants expressed appreciation and respectful attitude towards the objects in the collection, however they also considered their behaviour – having to store it in given storage facility – as disrespectful. It could be argued that they themselves do not have much power or resources to influence where the artworks are stored, and that is definitely an important note to keep in mind, especially to avoid an unjustified accusation of their actions. Nevertheless, the inconsistency between the values they assign to the objects of the collection and the environment they have to keep it in still result in an internal inconsistency, and therefore force them into behaviour, which they themselves deem disrespectful.

In conclusion, the assessment of particular behaviour as respectful or disrespectful, whether ones own or that of others, depends on consistency between the particular values assigned to the object and behaviour expected towards an object of such qualities. Therefore, in the case of ethnic minorities, their material culture and the recognition of artists with ethnic minority background, it is crucial to consider their own values and expectations in terms of how their artefacts and artworks are collected, exhibited, and stored. As outsiders of these communities, using our own value systems may result in behaviour perceived as disrespectful, even when given behaviour was meant in good intention or without any intent of harm.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In my study, I have examined how museal and art exhibitions are created with regard to their context and desired outcomes. I have identified practices that are helpful in a particular environment – exhibition narrative – and practices that may be universally applicable – exhibition atmosphere. Regarding the exhibition narrative, based on my data, I have established three dimensions that describe the positioning of each exhibition. First, the Subjectivity – Objectivity dimension turn out to be most dependent on the time when given exhibition was created since inclination towards one or the other was a heavily debated topic of curatorial practices. Before the curatorial turn, the conventional approach was the objective presentation. However, in the contemporary discourse, the subjective style of presenting a narrative is more common.

Second, the Historical – Contemporary dimension reveals that the curators choose a particular focus depending on the previous knowledge of their audience, but also that the two directions can be intertwined and used together to tell narrative and emphasize certain message.

Lastly, the dimension Unity – Diversity highlights how exhaustively accurate representation of ethnic minorities is not optimal, and careful generalisation on certain levels can contribute to reaching desired outcomes. Presenting the people as a unified community may strengthen their sense of group belonging and therefore their ethnic identity as well as improve their political power. On the other hand, presenting a certain form of diversity within the community will help to challenge stereotypes. Depending on the nature of these stereotypes, the focus may be put on ethnic, linguistic, religious or socio-economic diversity. Presenting the history, culture or artistic expressions of any ethnic community will be to a certain degree generalised and not every individual's experience and perspectives will be fully represented. While it is important to avoid reinforcing harmful stereotypes, a certain selective generalizations contribute to clarity of the narrative and put emphasis on the most important message.

Exhibition atmosphere is an important aspect regardless of the socio-cultural context, as it encourages proper learning and engagement. I have identified three elements that enhance the visitors' experience: the atmosphere, the emotions, and moving the visitor from a passive role to an active role. The atmosphere is the key element for the visitors' engagement and willingness to learn. When the exhibition environment is complex, rich and immersive, it supports a sense of curiosity and intrigue, encouraging visitors to explore further. Emotions, on the other hand, are a

key aspect of understanding. The exhibition narrative itself might be foreign for the visitor and, therefore, could be complicated to grasp. However, delving into the emotional aspect of the represented experience helps the visitor connect on a deeper level and make sense of the information presented. Finally, moving the visitor from a passive to an active role helps create memorable experiences. By providing interactive elements, such as hands-on activities or opportunities for personal reflection, visitors become active participants in the learning process and are more likely to remember the information they have engaged with.

As I already mentioned, an exhaustively accurate representation of given community is not optimal. Instead of attempting to present the exact image of reality, I argue that the goal of the exhibitions is reclaiming the narratives which have been created and perpetuated outside of the represented community, and providing a platform for the voices and stories of the ethnic minorities themselves to be heard and understood. An exhibition is pieced together through the use of multiple artefacts, text panels, interactive displays or sound installations, all of which comprise one entity that aims to convey a specific narrative. This narrative is not read as a piece of text, but interpreted through the process of abduction, which is influenced by the visitor's prior knowledge, personal experience, and cultural background. Therefore, engaging atmosphere and effective communication of emotions is crucial to ensure that the intended narrative was conveyed.

In the final chapter of my thesis, I have stepped out of focusing solely on the concept of exhibition to discuss another issue that is closely related to the cultural institutions' practices and is highly important to address – the need for respect. Respect is a concept which resonated in all the contexts I researched as a highly desired outcome of the institutions' work. It is, after all, where all the efforts of raising awareness and education lead – to a more respectful society.

Respect fundamentally arises from the consistency between the value and the attitude or behaviour. If this is not the case and inconsistency occurs, the result is a disrespectful attitude or behaviour. Regarding the work and activities of cultural institutions, respect is mostly demanded either for ethnicity and individuality, material culture, or skills of artists. Respect for ethnicity and individuality is mostly revolving around avoiding stereotypes and excessive generalisation. Respect for material culture involves treating objects with care and understanding not only their historical significance but also their cultural value and meaning to the communities to which they belong. Finally, it is important to respect artists for their skills and creativity and avoid considering their ethnic identity as the only factor defining their work and its worth.

Ideal scenarios of creating an exhibition that provides a transformative experience and lasting impact for the visitors are complicated, if not impossible, to reach. Every institution has to balance multiple factors, including their available resources, the socio-cultural environment of the country they reside in, the demographic of their visitors, and the specific goals and values of the institution itself. Nevertheless, the strategies and practices described in my thesis can be used as guidelines to improve museal and art exhibitions in areas where these limitations can be avoided or overcome. I have experienced many creative solutions in the exhibitions I have visited, and I have learned, that when the visitors, the represented community and the material artefacts are treated with care and most importantly respect, the exhibition can become a space where even the most complex or controversial topics can be explored and discussed in

a constructive and educational manner. After all, the ultimate goal of most cultural institutions is to promote empathy and understanding and be a catalyst for a positive social change.

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