

Exploring Art Democracy during the Pandemic

*A Case Study Based on the Poldi Pezzoli Museum: the Effects of an Audience-Centred
Approach*

submitted by

Chiara Burdo & Flavia De Angelis

(125400 & 124503)

supervised by

Professor Christian De Cock

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Keywords – Museums, Cultural Industries, Art Democracy, Audience Development, COVID-19

Abstract

The purpose of this study lies in understanding the impact of art democratisation within the museum industry. To analyse this phenomenon a qualitative case study research was conducted. Through semi-structured interviews and indirect observations, we explored both the perspectives of seven experts of the field and four employees of our case organization, the Poldi Pezzoli museum. An analysis of the data suggests that the concept of museum evolved over time. The museum is now considered a place of education, enjoyment and study. By shifting from a collection-centred to a audience-centred approach, cultural institutions were able to create a new way of communicating with their public, where storytelling acquires a key role. It was impossible for us to ignore the consequences that the recent pandemic is having on museums. The challenges that the COVID-19 caused resulted as an opportunity to foster innovation within the field. Museums across the world had to adapt to this new scenario, changing their paradigms and opening up to different audiences. Exploring how museums could cope with the long term effects of the pandemic could be a possible path for further research. The themes analysed in this study belong to a growing body of research on art accessibility.

Keywords – Museums, Cultural Industries, Art Democracy, Audience Development, COVID-19

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1 Introduction

Art can help people to escape from their ordinary routines, making their life more meaningful. Exercising creativity and making art becomes one of those unnecessary necessities that gives purpose to many individuals by improving people's lives. The existence of a cultural heritage generates positive externalities in our society as art elevates an individual's life experience developing its critical thinking. Each year, people visit art museums to admire and learn about history, culture, and diversity. These are places of knowledge and education welcome to everyone with the purpose of enriching society.

The term museum comes from *museion*, a Greek word, which means "place dedicated to the Muses", mythical figures protecting the arts such as music, tragedy, dance, history, poetry, but not plastic arts defined as painting, sculpture, ceramic etc. The concept of museum does not come from the nature of the objects collected, but it is linked to the creative process and to the purpose behind collecting. The first museums were founded in the late XVII and XVIII century with the opening of the Uffizi Galleries in Florence, British Museum in London and Capitoline Museums in Rome. Yet, the modern conception of museum came only later, with the French Revolution. The idea was that all men, without distinction of class, had the right to admire the masterpieces of art. The collections of kings and nobles were then confiscated and declared property of the people (Günay, 2012). Under this vision, the Louvre museum was founded in Paris in 1793. Since then a museum is no longer a mere exhibit used to showcase talent. These cultural institutions are a centre of observation, learning, and questioning (Günay, 2012). Institutions not just for the niche connoisseur but a place for the public. Today, museums still have an elitist stigma as places relevant for the experts and for the people with an understanding of the language of art. This reaction of the general public comes from the objects displayed in the collections as they have a high symbolic value. It is then necessary that the museum acts as an intermediary figure between the collections and the public. In this direction, many museums are acting applying a modern vision focused on the audience.

Since cultural activities describe a collective phenomenon this sector is relevant for the economy of each country. There is growing attention in managing and effectively communicating cultural initiatives to reach as many people as possible. The tools used for this purpose are constantly changing, the common trend is reaching out for innovation. Some industry experts tend to be skeptical and cautious using managerial practices, since they fear that these may distort the essence of the museum and the works of art. Management is used to increase the perceived value of the museum and ensure greater autonomy to the institution. The goal of the museum is not merely to reach as any visitors as possible,

but to stimulate the desire of knowledge and participation within the cultural field keeping a high quality of collections.

1.1 Empirical Setting

In this section the cultural organization and the agents involved in our research will be introduced. Our objective is to ensure a clear understanding of the museum chosen as a case study, the participants of our research and the context in which they work. We here provide an overview on the cultural sector in Italy, with relation to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency the world is currently experiencing. Then, we present background information about the participants of our study, explaining how they will contribute to our research.

1.1.1 The Cultural Sector in Italy: Its Complexity & Developments

According to Art. 9 of the Italian Constitution, "the Republic promotes cultural development, scientific and technical research. It safeguards natural beauty, historical and artistic heritage of the Nation" (*Italian Constitution*, 1947). It is clear that cultural activities have been important for the Italian government. Although no major innovation was introduced until 2014 when the Italian Minister of Culture, Dario Franceschini, promoted reforms that led to radical change in the management of museums. These new laws revolutionized the organization and functioning of state museums. The new system encompasses 31 autonomous museums and archaeological parks including a network of 17 cultural clusters. In order to create an integrated offer for the public the government strives to foster a continuous dialogue between different audiences and private museums in the community. To achieve this result, a fundamental role is played by the General Direction of Museums (GDM). The GDM is composed of a Board of Directors, a Scientific Committee, and a Board of Auditors who develop the Statute and the Service Charter. The reform strengthened the policies of protection and enhancement of our cultural heritage giving greater autonomy to museums who were restricted in their potential. The museum gained its recognition as an institute with technical, scientific and managerial autonomy, according to the principles of International Council of Museums ¹. According to I Quaderni di Symbola (2017), the Italian cultural production system reached 96 billion euros last year, which is the equivalent of 6,1% of the country's GDP and this sector gives a job to 1,55 millions people. The supply chain is growing in terms of added value (+2.9 % compared to the previous year) and by employment (+1.5 %). We could even notice that the creative sector performs better than the average of the Italian economy (+1.5 % vs +0.9%). The creative sector is clearly one of the most representative

¹ICOM is a global organization that works as a network between museums and professionals in the field.

and distinctive of the Italian economy. Art is critical for the development of the society and the diffusion of the Italian identity. Despite pervasive reforms that were introduced to increase the autonomy of cultural institutions, museums in Italy are still managed in a traditional way. Therefore, we thought it was worth delving into matters that concerns such a significant sector for our country.

1.1.2 Museums & the COVID-19 Crisis

It was impossible for us to not acknowledge the advent of COVID-19 in our research as the way people can still access culture now that museums are closed is a major current issue. This situation is vital to our research because it is directly affecting the public's access to consume artistic goods. Moving forward, both short and long term effects must be considered in our managerial approach during the pandemic. Museums have been forced to close in compliance with government orders to prevent mass gatherings. The online cultural experience, previously neglected by the industry, has been revitalized during the lock-down period. Virtual tours, online courses, video-talks, webinars, game challenges took over and allowed people to experience museums from the safety and comfort of their home. Numerous initiatives were launched internationally to make sure that art could remain a presence in the public's lives. University students from IULM carried out a study with over 500 participants on how Corona virus has impacted the cultural industries. The study demonstrated that 60% of the respondents had never used cultural online services before the arrival of COVID-19, yet only 5% did not use them during the lock-down (Venezie Post, 2020).

With the shift of museums moving online what will happen once public bans are lifted and museums are allowed to reopen? Once exhibits are shown online, free of charge to the public, how will museums generate the revenue necessary to stay open? The exhibition experience will be completely changed and the access to museums will be limited. Developing new methods and strategies to draw the attention of visitors into the museum will be a priority for museum managers in the months following the lift of the social bans.

1.1.3 Our Case: The Poldi Pezzoli Museum

The internationally recognized Poldi Pezzoli museum is situated in the centre of one of the most vibrant cities in Italy, Milan. Poldi Pezzoli museum is the house and collection of the Milanese art collector, Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli (1822-1879). In 1881 the museum was opened to the public accordingly with his final wishes. In his will, Gian Giacomo expressed the desire of making his house and collection available to the Milanese so that everyone could dispose of the cultural good he had. He truly believed in the power of culture and its ability to improve the quality of people's lives. The museum is recognized

to be one of the most renowned house-museums in the world, appreciated and cherished by the local and international audience, because of its collections and offered activities. Also, its location helps the museum to be easily visited as it is located in a strategic area of Milan, close to the *Alla Scala Theatre* next to the fashion district. This location has heavy foot traffic and attracts both tourists and the Milanese with ease. Visiting this house-museum is a journey through history where different centuries unfold before the viewer as they tour through each room.

The Organisational Structure of Poldi Pezzoli Museum

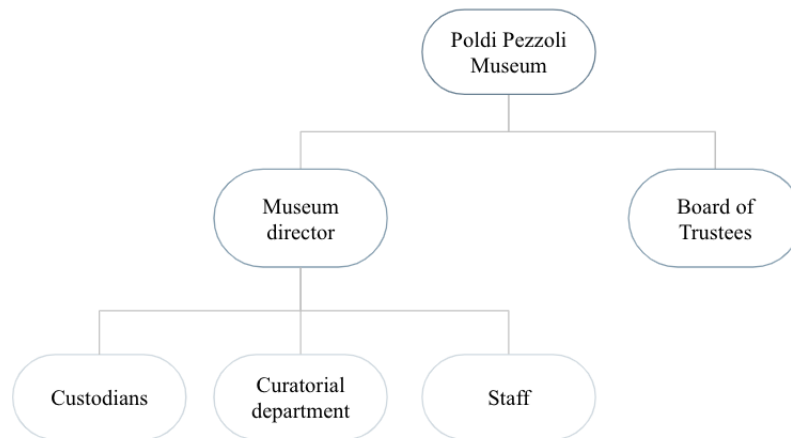
The Poldi Pezzoli Artistic Foundation was founded with the opening of the house museum. It is a non-profit organization that has the mission to conserve, preserve and display the pieces of art that Gian Giacomo collected during his lifetime. It is "managed by a Board of Trustees which includes: the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage of Milan, representatives of the Ministry of Culture of the Lombardy Region, of the Province of Milan, the Municipality of Milan, and of the Main Supporters, as well as a heir of Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli" (Poldi Pezzoli Museum, 2020b).

Annalisa Zanni, Poldi Pezzoli museum director, has been leading the organization for the past twenty years. Annalisa and her team have developed a program of activities to study, conserve, enhance, and share the tangible and intangible heritage of the museum. The Curatorial department is composed of two Curators and one Collection Manager whose objective is to maintain the artworks and the building in which they are preserved. The Staff supports the objectives identified by the museum director by creating and implementing a set of activities. There are also ten custodians that make sure visitors respect the artworks and the ambience in the show rooms (Poldi Pezzoli Museum, 2020b).

The Concept of the Historic House-Museum

Poldi Pezzoli Museum is part of a network composed of 10 house-museums in Milan. A historic house-museum is a self explanatory concept. A house is transformed in a museum because of its historic cultural relevance. According to Pinna (2001), the definition of this term was one of the most tricky tasks which the DemHist committee ² had to deal with. Special value and significance are the two fundamental factors to consider a house-museum as such. The role of an historic house-museum is to create a link between the past and the present allowing the visitor to be immersed in another century. Its value is related, not only, to the building, but it also includes the collections and the original furnishings. As a result, this cultural institution is recognized for its great social and political significance (Pinna, 2001).

²the DemHist committee is an ICOM International Committee focusing upon the conservation and management of house museums (DEM HIST Website, n.d.).

Figure 1.1: Organizational Structure of Poldi Pezzoli Museum

Source: Personal Elaboration

1.1.4 Why Poldi Pezzoli Museum?

Location, size, and public image were among several reasons assuring us that the Poldi Pezzoli museum was a perfect fit for our case study. First, we were interested in carrying out research in Italy as it is our mother country. Since we have a deeper understanding of the environment surrounding the museum we were confident this would facilitate us elaborate and provide a comprehensive and profound analysis. In Italy there are many medium-sized museums that host valuable exhibitions and represent our cultural heritage. Among all the beautiful cities our country has we selected Milan as it is one of the representative city of Italian museum panorama and center of economy. Among 5,000 museums this territory offers, we chose the Poldi Pezzoli museum because of its desire to be of service to the audience. Despite the wishes of its founder to use its collections to benefit the Milanese, the museum has developed a reputation of having a niche collection and struggles to spark interest in the general public. The museum is trying to revert to the original vision of its founder by creating new stimuli to reach and engage a broader audience.

This study would also serve as a resource for similar organizations. The Poldi Pezzoli museum is an outstanding Representative of the Italian heritage and an ideal candidate for this study. It has a great reputation among museums and it is dedicated to making art widely accessible. The organization is open to external suggestions and embraces continuous improvement of its strategy.

1.1.5 The Experts Perspective

Since the phenomenon of democratization of art concerns a large part of the museum sector we believed that it would have been relevant to consider the experiences of various museum's experts. The practices carried out by all our eight experts and their cultural institutions work as a benchmark to analyse our case. The figures of expertise were chosen specifically considering the short-term strategic goals their museums have, goals that focus on opening up to new and wider audiences. When we started our project, we contacted experts with different roles in multiple organizations of different dimensions, with the aim of understanding how they were dealing with the issue of democratizing the art museum experience and what was their take on it. Thus, the point of view of researchers and curators was taken into account together with a more managerial perspective. Their contribution added depth to our level of analysis and allowed us to have a more comprehensive understanding on the topic. We had the pleasure to interview eight experts of the museum sector and four of them are working in National Galleries. Since these museums are state owned, they conserve collections which belong to the country; consequently, democratizing the art is a priority for these institutions. From the National Gallery of London we interviewed, Letizia Treves, the Head of Curatorial Department that was able to present a fresh understanding of the role of the curator and the cultural institution. At the National Gallery of Denmark (also called SMK - Statens Museum for Kunst) we interviewed Jonas Heide Smith and Christina Jensen, both working for the Digital Department of the museum, bringing in the conversation interesting insight of the role of digital media within art. Jørgen Wadum, senior researcher of the National Gallery of Denmark, introduced us to the necessity of integrating the digital and physical experience to enhance the understanding of an art piece, valuing now more than ever the onsite experience. The experience we have with Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket was very interesting for two reasons. Firstly, the collection of the museum comes from the Danish industrial collector Carl Jacobsen (1842-1914), so it is a privately owned collection, very similar to the concept of our case study, and it is also similar to Poldi Pezzoli museum in terms of vision and size. Secondly, by interviewing the Head of Interpretation, Julie Lejsgaard Christensen, and the Head of Communication, Camilla Jensen, we were able to get an insight on their strategy. The museum is currently trying to shift from an elitist reputation to a more democratize experience. By contacting Luca lo Pinto, art director of the MACRO - Museum of Contemporary Art Rome - we were aiming to discover the experience of a collection closer to the contemporary society for its nature, and we were hoping to find an innovative vision to apply to our case. The perspective of Daniela Porro, Special Superintendent of Archeology, Fine Arts and Landscape in Rome was taken in consideration to provide a broader context to the Italian framework.

1.2 Problem Formulation

A rational and creative way of thinking have been used to gather our ideas for generating clear research questions. We examined our own strengths and personal interests, scanning the media and searching relevant literature topics that apply to our area of interest, to develop a research question that was "just right for investigation at this time, by this researcher in this setting" (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012, 34). With the purpose of studying how the concept of museum changed to make art widely accessible, we developed a feasible and appropriate research question as follows:

How does the phenomenon of art democratisation affect the concept of museum?

This question is the result of an iterative process. During the development of our study, our research question evolved. Whitehead and McNiff (2000) would argue, it was a process of "progressive illumination". Breaking down and delving deeper into the topic sub-questions emerged. The Russian doll principle, described by Clough and Nutbrown (2012), was used to make sure that we were able to get to the heart of the issue we wanted to analyze. This led to two more detailed questions, which are:

1. **How does the use of an audience-centred approach shape the Poldi Pezzoli museum practices?**
2. **How does the Poldi Pezzoli museum deal with COVID-19 emergency to keep making art accessible?**

The Poldi Pezzoli museum, as we learned, is very involved in the two issues of implementing an audience-centred approach and dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The first sub-question will investigate the new managerial approach Poldi Pezzoli is implementing; while the second sub-question will study how this new approach is used with the aim of democratising the museum collections in a moment of crisis.

1.2.1 The Grand Challenge & Academic Conversation

In this section we outline the contribution that our research will bring to the museum industry, explaining the nature of the grand challenge analysed, and how the project fits in the current academic conversation concerning the phenomenon of democratisation of art.

The "grand challenge" goes back to 1900 and it refers as "... specific critical barrier(s) that, if removed, would help solve an important societal problem with a high likelihood of global impact throughout widespread implementation" (Grand Challenges Canada, 2011, p. iv). Concerning this

matter, the management contribution is to achieve "...objectives that harness science, technology, and innovation to solve important national or global problems and that have the potential to capture the public's imagination" (US Office of Science and Technology Policy, 2014, p. 7). These global societal challenges are urban poverty, insect-borne disease, global hunger to name a few. They are major issues which potentially can have a solution, yet they affect numerous individuals and they are very profound matters (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016).

In our case we want to contribute to the existing literature solving a piece of a larger puzzle that the museum sector is facing: how to shift from an elitist perception of art to a more inclusive view. Within this context we are contributing reporting practical experiences from museums implementing innovative ideas and projects to involve a wide audience in their museum experience, and therefore trying to change the elitist preconception of the general public.

The grand challenge we described can be classified as what (Brammer, Branicki, Linnenluecke, & Smith, 2019) recognized as global challenge. It represents a core pillar of the cultural sector that is being at service of society regardless of race, religion, or privilege. This issue can be identified as global since it relates to multinational or multi-regional in scale and scope (Brammer et al., 2019). It appears this is a problem that is shared between the international museum community.

It is our belief this research is not to propose a new theory, but to enrich the academic conversation surrounding art by producing innovative questions within the existing literature. During our research there was a gap in the existing theoretical conversation describing how the phenomenon of democratisation of art is changing the concept of museum. We focused our research bringing the visitor-centred approach as a main strategic focus and analysed the affect that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on museums. Despite finding relevant literature concerning art democracy there is not extensive literature about how these topics are connected and even less on the role of digital tools in situation such as COVID-19. We are aware that academics will soon close the gap, yet according to Sandberg and Alvesson (2011) our research is an example of gap-spotting specifically identified in under-researched areas.

1.3 Structure of the Research

This research originated from our interest on the art field. After numerous discussions with our peers, families, and having visited many museums in our own country and abroad, we realised that museums are not places appreciated by everyone. Since they represent the culture and history of our ancestors, we found very interesting to acknowledge that still many people are not interested in going to museums.

Museums are aware of this stigma for being places for a niche audience and they are trying to reverse this common thought by changing their practices.

This body of research is to show how the social phenomenon of democratisation of art is changing the museum sector. We focus our attention on the Italian Poldi Pezzoli museum. We search for deeper understanding by consulting subject matter experts about problems facing the museum sector and in which direction the field is heading.

To achieve our goal in answering our research questions, we structured our research in six chapters as follows. This first chapter introduced the reader to our research project by presenting our case, our research questions, and how our research fits with the context and literature already existing on art democracy. The second chapter regards the theoretical framework we used to frame our research, finding in creative industries, art management, democracy of art, audience development, and crisis communication our main topics. The third chapter outlines the methodology of this research, which is based on Thornhill, Saunders, and Lewis (2009) model, and the three methods we used to collect data - interviews, observation, secondary data. The fourth chapter explains the findings of our research presented in four macro-category, which take into account Poldi Pezzoli museum as a central case and the perspectives of different subject matter experts including: MACRO - Contemporary Art Museum Rome -, Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket, SMK - Statens Museum for Kunst -, Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, and The National Gallery of London. The fifth chapter integrates findings and literature together creating the discussion of our research. Lastly, the sixth chapter presents the conclusions of our research giving an answer to our research questions, presenting the limitations of this research, providing strategic advice and suggestions for further research.

2 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter we present the theoretical framework we used to answer our research questions. The objective is to identify specific existing literature which can help us understand how the social phenomenon of democratisation of art is changing the concept of museum, introducing an audience-centred approach and role digital tools, in particular social media, are having in this reality. The chapter is structured in four parts. First, the concept of *creativity* was explored to have an understanding of the distinctive features of the creative and cultural industries. Then, *art management* was analysed to express the existing connections between art and business. Afterwards, we delved into the phenomenon of *democratisation of art*, presenting the concepts of art and democracy. Theories concerning *audience development* were then presented to understand the value of the audience and the literature paths that were developed around the topic. Finally, literature on *crisis management* is presented to provide an understating on the strategies organizations may implement to overcome a crisis.

2.1 Creativity

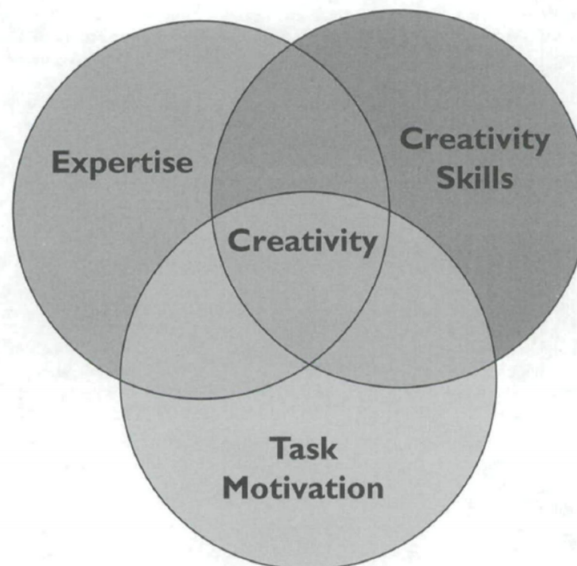
Understanding the meaning of the term “creativity” is fundamental in order to have a clear idea of what are the creative industries and how creative processes work. Researchers put their efforts in defining the concept of creativity. Amabile (1996) thinks creativity is related to the production of something novel. This perspective is shared with other experts, such as Sternberg and Lubart (1999) and Runco, Pritzker, Pritzker, and Pritzker (1999), that also relate creativity with the concept of novelty and originality. Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that the term varies its definition depending on the context in which it is used. Since creativity plays a significant role in technical innovation, teaching, business, the arts and sciences, it has different meanings in each of these contexts (Runco, 2007). According to De Cock, Rehn, and Berry (2013), creativity can be identified as a tool to achieve both artistic aims and to build cross-functional skills to increase competitiveness, regional development, corporate strategic advantage, entrepreneurial potential, individual capacity and even general welfare.

Even though different interpretation of creativity can be explored, there are some consistent aspects. Creativity is connected with the generation of a novelty and valuable outcome. Also, it is generally agreed that everyone can be creative, if they train this ability. Creativity effects both the individual and the collective competences so it has a significant social value (De Cock, Rehn, & Berry, 2013). Within this framework, Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin (1993) conceived creativity as "the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure or process working together in a complex social

system" (p. 293). More recently, Alves, Marques, Saur, and Marques (2007) conceptualized the term underling the value of the individual, the process needed to generate a new concept and the outcome of this process - which is, indeed, creative.

The extent of creativity that an individual is able to express is directly related to their intrinsic motivations. These motives are connected to the sphere of interest, involvement, excitement and level of satisfaction of the person. According to the *componential theory*, when there is an overlap between the creative skills, the area of expertise and personal motivation - which are forms of intrinsic motivation -, individual creativity will be present (Figure 2.1). The greater each component is, the greater the level of creativity will be. Expertise should be considered as the base for the determination of any creative work. It is portrayed as a cognitive framework, composed of the capability to remember notions, technical abilities and talent, which contributes to the development of a problem solving capability concerning a specific matter. Creative thinking should be regarded as a special skill that enables someone to pursue a creative outcome. Even if an individual is an expert concerning a specific subject matter they would not be able to conceive something creative, unless their mind is capable of generating a creative work. This specific component is deeply interrelated with the personal attributes and qualities of the persona (Amabile, 1997).

Figure 2.1: Amabile Creativity Model



Source: Amabile (1997)

The concept of creativity is not only connected with the development of individual capabilities, but also to its social economic value (De Cock et al., 2013). This means that creativity could also be seen as

an asset for any organization that can impact the processes used to carry out even ordinary operations. After all creativity generates value because of its inherent ability of fostering innovation and progress (De Cock et al., 2013). De Cock et al. (2013) suggests to adopt a more critical view on creativity, to understand its potential in business. However, the role of creativity could sometime be misunderstood, since it is not just a tool that can be used whenever needed. Creativity is a transforming process that can help opening our eyes to let us imagine how we could do things differently.

2.1.1 Creative & Cultural Industries

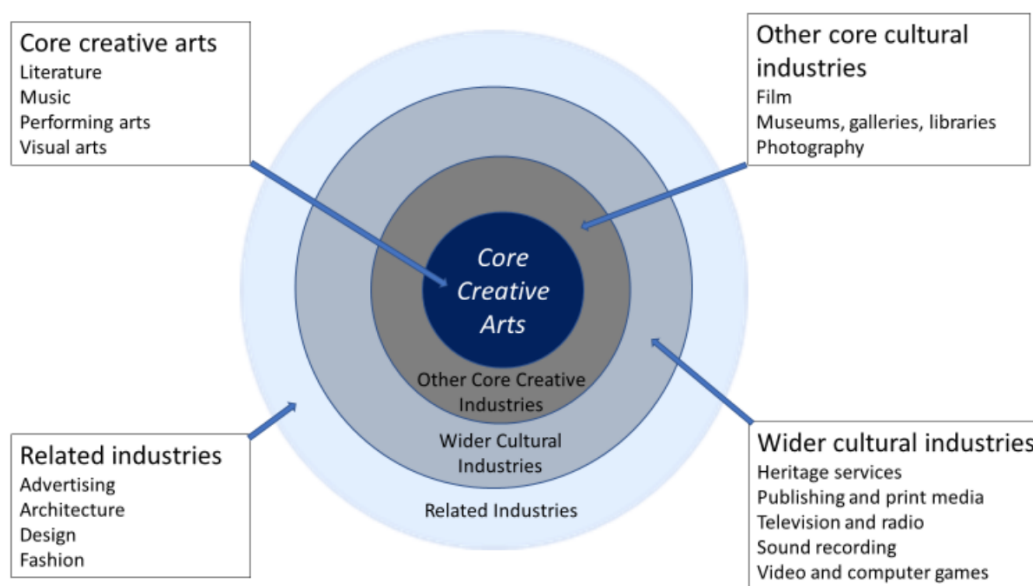
Creative industries are based on individual creativity (Towse, 2010). The term refers to those products or services that are involved with some kind of artistic or creative activities. According to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media Sport (2001), the creative sector includes "advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio" (p.3). It is worth noticing that this is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy (UNCTAD, 2013). Consequently, creativity creates jobs significantly impacting the wealth of a nation. The creative industry substantially contributes to the generation of the national gross domestic product of every country. The evaluation of creativity spans beyond the commercial value and explored further into the interpersonal connection made with the consumer. The distinctive feature of a creative economy is related to its ability to generate both commercial and social value. Therefore, they are able to generate economic growth and well-being. As Pamela Coke-Hamilton, the director of UNCTAD³'s trade division, stated "the creative economy has both commercial and cultural worth" (UNCTAD, 2018). Analyzing the trends in trade, the creative industries expanded with average export growth rates of more than 7 % in 2019. In Trends in International Trade in Creative Industries report UNCTAD (2018) stated that the value of creative market doubled from 208 billion US \$ in 2002 to 509 billion US \$ in 2015. However, the paradox concerning the creative industries is related to the inefficiency on how they are managed. Often creators lack on business and managerial skills that would enable them to make their organization sustainable in the market. Bridging the gap between the purely creative and the profit-driven is one of the challenges that this sector has to face.

The concept of cultural goods should be viewed as a subset of the creative sector in reference to the *ideation*, development and distribution of an intangible cultural goods or services. Different models were developed to identify the fine line between these two. According to the concentric circle model, described in Figure 2.2 formulated by Throsby (2008), there is a "core of cultural arts" which includes literature,

³United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

music, performing arts and visual arts. In the model shown below, core creative industries include film, museums, galleries, libraries and photography. The wider cultural industries comprehend heritage services, publishing and print media, television and radio, sound recording, video and computer game. The outer level, which is classified as "Related Industries" is composed of advertising, architecture, design and fashion. The UNESCO & UNDP (2013) ⁴ expressed two critiques concerning this model. The first is that the lines between levels are indistinct. Secondly, it should not be implied that artists are at the highest point of the creativity hierarchy.

Figure 2.2: Concentric Circle Model

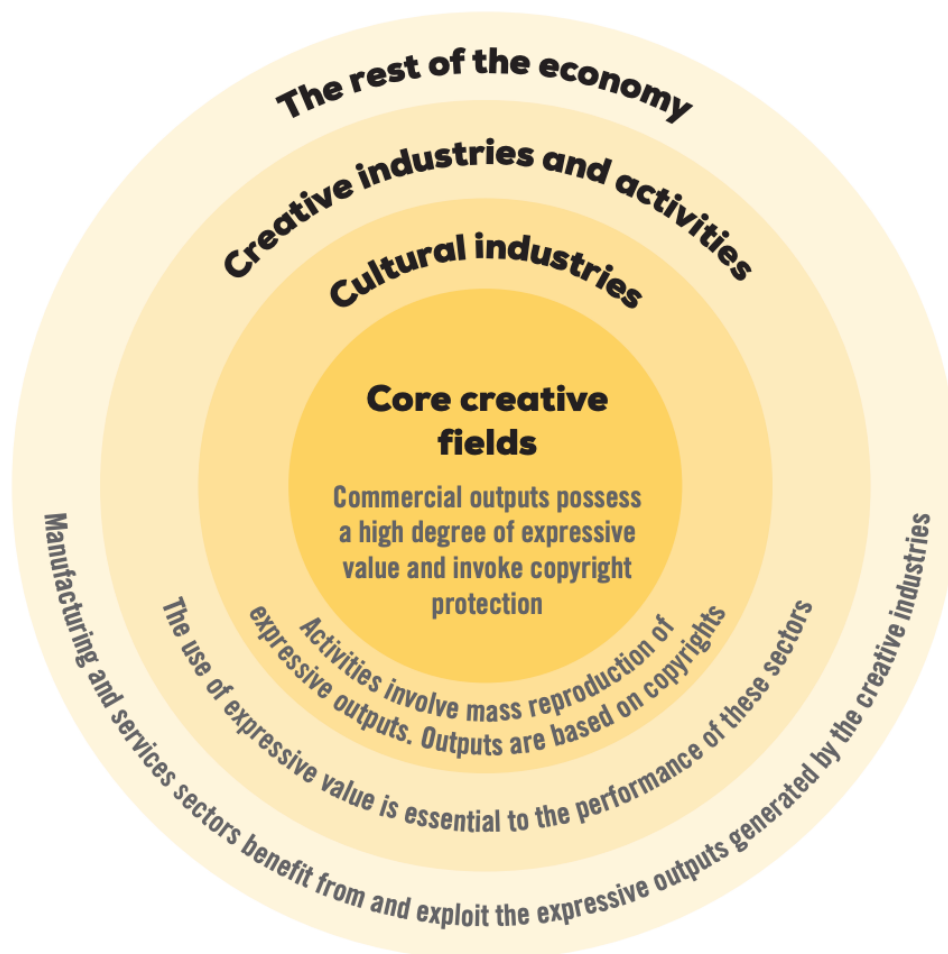


Source:Throsby (1994)

Artists may sometimes be part of a bigger organization where processes are initiated by humdrum people. This is the reason why the UNDP suggested to reformulate the original sentence "core creative arts" into "core cultural expression" (UNESCO & UNDP, 2013). The Work Foundation in the United Kingdom developed a model where the concept of "expressive value" is key. As can be noticed in Figure 2.3, this model is able to differentiate between the cultural and creative industries placing emphasis on the role of creativity and copyright (UNESCO & UNDP, 2013). This core creative field is composed of products with expressive value, which requires intellectual property rights protection. The foundation relies on activities that "involve a mass reproduction of expressive outputs. Outputs are based on copyrights and the use of expressive value is essential to the performance of these sectors" (UNESCO & UNDP, 2013, p. 24).

⁴The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization & United Nations Development Programme.

Figure 2.3: Work Foundation Concentric Model



Source: UNESCO & UNDP, 2013

The term "cultural industry" was first used in the Frankfurt School ⁵, between the thirties and the forties, as a merger between art and the capitalistic societies. The term cultural industry was created to generate a sense of surprise and shock (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2007). At the time, the term "culture" was linked to art and other "exceptional forms of human creativity" (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2007, 24). However, Adorno and Horkheimer ended up commodifying this term, conceiving cultural product as goods that can be bought and sold. This led to the merger of two terms: culture and industry (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2007). From then onward, it appeared that culture, society and business were becoming increasingly more intertwined. During the 1960s, multiple discussions arose concerning

⁵The "Frankfurt School" concerns a group of academics, such as Max Horkheimer, T.W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Lowenthal, and Erich Fromm, who developed powerful analyses of the changes in Western capitalist societies that occurred since the classical theory of Marx. They highly contributed to the development of a critical social theory of the importance of mass culture and communication in social reproduction, generating also one of the first model of critical cultural studies that analyses the processes of cultural production and political economy, the politics of cultural texts, audience reception, and the use of cultural artifacts (Kellner, n.d., 1989, 2003).

the limitations of the cultural experiences at the time. Some French sociologists, such as Morin (1963), switched from using the term cultural industry to cultural industries. Using a plural, rather than a singular, may not seem of high significance, yet it opens a new perspective on the complexity of the forms of cultural production (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2007). Moreover, as argued by Benjamin and Miège, introducing industrialization and new technologies in the development of cultural products concurred in the increase of commodification and innovation (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2007). The use of the plural form implies the acknowledgement of the problem of cultural industrialization and the refusal of simplifying this issue. If the French sociologists thought that there was an ongoing battle between art and business, Adorno and the Frankfurt school had a more pessimist view where capitalism already won and culture was controlled by the capital.

2.2 Art & Business

Art ⁶ and business are often treated as two separate sectors. The two fields come from different foundations and face distinctive problems with different limitations. On one side there are the creative people, who operate using their imagination and spontaneity to create content and spread a message. On the other side, business is represented by analytical people. They think logically and are numbers driven in order to improve their efficiency (Bendixen, 2010).

Since the people involved in the two disciplines are different and sometimes even opposites, what they deliver are unlike results and values. A painting or a music performance have more an aesthetic and symbolic purpose rather than utilitarian (Lampel, Lant, & Shamsie, 2000) and profitable like the production of a medical device or a phone might have. The outcomes of art sector consists of two aspects: the material good and the immaterial value of it. According to Findlay (2014), "All works of art have the potential for commercial value, social value, and essential value. But none of those values are constant; all are enhanced or diminished by the fluctuating mores and tastes of different times and cultures" (p. 9). The commercial value is intended as the objective value of the painting, the concert, the theatrical performance, meaning the actual price of the good. The social value is meant as it has an impact on the human and society welfare. Even though the cultural good is sometimes complicated to understand it creates always a reaction in the human mind, and this reaction can lead to an action of engagement towards others. The last feature of the cultural good is the essential value, which concerns the intrinsic value of the item, so the meaning of the cultural good that the artist themselves and/or the audience can see in it.

⁶In this section, art is considered as: literature, music, performing arts, and visual arts.

It may seem ambiguous for some to consider art and business two compatible disciplines, since art is connected to freedom of creativity, individuality and creative chaos, whereas management consists in effectiveness, productivity, and financial success (Ioanna & George, 2019). Nonetheless, these two spheres can co-exist if cultural management is intended as a process which points to the successful creation and implementation of a project, service, and good (Ioanna & George, 2019). Cultural and non-cultural goods have a feature in common, the commercial value. In this sense, both categories of goods can be called as "product" by the literature, since they are designed to be put on the market and be sold. Also, both the outcomes, such as a painting and a medical device are the results of a process of actions. As both art and business deliver products on the markets, they both share the same results (the product itself). Therefore both areas might share part or similar creative process to design a product. Because both disciplines create a commercial value through their production, art can be studied at a business level. However, since the two disciplines differ for certain aspects, there was a need to create a specific branch of management related to the art field.

2.2.1 Art Management

Art Management intersects managerial, economic, and aesthetic interests (Chong, 2002). The need for creating a new branch of management dedicated just to the subject of art was a consequence of the development of the art world and its definition. Art, from a classical definition identified in the ideal beauty based on the imitation of nature, is now assuming a more ordinary and less abstract definition being exposed in museums (Evard & Colbert, 2000). According to Yves Evard and François Colbert Evard and Colbert (2000), "... beauty no longer resides in the object itself, but in the eye of the *regardeur*" (p. 5). The artist is no longer the main centre, but the consumer or the audience is increasingly becoming relevant in the art market.

Since art management is still a young discipline the history of its development has been documented partially. In 1945, the foundation of the Arts Council Of Great Britain (ACGB), which emerged also in some of the Commonwealth countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, can be considered as the founder of art management. The ACGB played a relevant role in proposing art management classes and encouraging business involvement in the arts (Chong, 2002). It took 15 years for this new discipline to reach the US in 1960s as part of what is called "cultural economics". In these years, the Arts Administration Research Institute and the Harvard Summer School Institute in Arts Administration were founded. According to Throsby (1994) the practice of "cultural economics" officially started with the publication of the book *Performing Arts, the economic dilemma* by two professors of economics William Baumol and William Bowen in 1966. The Princeton professors wanted to investigate the

financial problems that the performing arts field was facing. However, not only the business side approached the art field, but even the art world moved towards the business sector. For instance, the famous artist from the Pop art movement Andy Warhol represented the American commercialism on canvas.

The establishment of an international association for Arts and Cultural Management can be taken as an action that arts management was trying to gain its independence from cultural economics branch (Evard & Colbert, 2000). Another sign was the willingness of the association to assert its autonomy came with the foundation of the *International Journal of Art Management*, which contributed to improve and enlarge research in this field and reinforced its legitimacy academically and professionally (Evard & Colbert, 2000).

The International Encyclopedia of Public Policy and Administration (1998) defined art management as a discipline that applies five traditional management functions: planning, organizing, staffing, supervising, and controlling to facilitate the production of the performing and visual arts and the presentation of the artworks to the public (Martin, 1998). An artist is not a manager most of the times ⁷. For example, a conductor of an orchestra directs his musicians so they play in harmony (Bendixen, 2000), but he does not organize, plan, supervise the production of the actual presentation to the audiences. Paradoxically, the professional figure of the artist can be compared to the one of the engineer. Both of them invent and create, but they usually need someone who communicates with the external environment about their creations. A professional mediator is then needed, and in the cultural industries this professional figure is called "art manager". In this regard, the figure of art manager can be compared with the one of financial broker ⁸ in a more traditional business field; the only difference is that the art manager cannot facilitate two parties equally since they are biased by the product or service (i.e. painting or concert) they are delivering onto the market.

A business manager oversees a group of people and contributes to the business in many ways such as increasing the profits applying strategies, motivating the employees, making progresses in the company. On the other hand, an art manager has to find a balance between the art world (the content), and the business side (Bendixen, 2000). In the case of art management the success of the art manager depends on the reputation and excellence of the artist, practice that can be identified as more content driven. Sometimes, finding a balance between the commercial side and the content side can be very challenging for the art management practice. In some cases, it can hit the two extremes: being

⁷In some cases, the artist and the manager figures coincide when the outside environment is transparent and stable, so the artist does not face any obstacle to communicate with the audience (Bendixen, 2000).

⁸Who is in charge of mediating with a lender to arrange a loan or mortgage for a third party.

too commercial and so losing the value of the actual work of art; or too content focused, limiting the artwork to a niche. Therefore, the art manager has to control these two poles and bridging the gap between the language used by the artist and audience's way of expressing and feeling. The more complex is the external environment and the artist's broader vision, more preparation and support are required by an art manager (Bendixen, 2000). To conclude, the main objective of an art manager is to establish a certain reputation in stakeholders' minds such as the public, the media, the critics, experts, and investors.

2.2.2 Museum Management

The museum of today is no longer a place dedicated to exclusive people, but it is intended to create an experience for the public. The conservation and preservation are not the only primary objectives for museums. Today, a museum is identified as a non-profit permanent organization at the service of society and its evolution. It is an institution dedicated to the culture, "...open to the public and which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (ICOM - International Council of Museums, 2008, p. 1). Museums are places where past and present meet and communicate to the public, from the adults to the kids. Museums are community assets economically, culturally, and educationally (Fogarty, 2016). Everybody should be able to find some kind of connection in a gallery or museum since they represent humankind and their experience. According to Edson (2014) museums are wonderful locations of interesting objects, where people can experience journeys travelling with their minds and spirits, exploring natural phenomena and historical events with the purpose of gaining a deeper awareness of the human life. Museums,⁹ since they are storytelling of society and its progression, are trying to abandon their "...monolithic nature of museological establishment..." (Mayrand, 1985, p. 115) and to embrace the society's pace, staying constantly in motion and changing, if necessary, to satisfy the diverse needs and expectations of their people. As in every organization, museums must rely on their creativity to stay alive. They have to adapt to the changes the environment they exist in is taking, otherwise their practice will shortly decline. The survival of museums depends on "... their ability to live up to their commitment by adapting to a changing social and intellectual environment" (Zolberg, 1995, p. 60). The museum sector has been recognizing this fundamental need for survival. From the middle of the last century it has been involved in a transformation and modernization of its sector (K. Arnold, 2013). In 1971, it was claimed that museums were considered elitist, isolated from the modern society and obsolete. Museums were places where the collection and curators were the main

⁹Intended as every category of museums, from the fine arts museum to the maritime museum.

focus, and they were considered by the public as a sort of "cultural authority" (McCall & Gray, 2014a). As a consequence, the museums were of interest of small and exclusive groups, who were art educated and had a passion for the field.

To counteract this, a new philosophy has been developed with the name of "new museology"¹⁰ around museums to understand how museums work and the relationship that has changed between museums and societies (McCall & Gray, 2014a). This new practice has gathered new visitors with new interests and displaced traditional ways of presentation of the objects. On a more general level, the "new museology" is reinventing the role of museums, considered now a place of discussion relevant not just to the museum experts (K. Arnold, 2013). It brought changes in "...value, meaning, control, interpretation, authority and authenticity within museums" (McCall & Gray, 2014a, p. 20). The new practice puts an emphasis on being dynamic and innovative, by giving important roles to temporary exhibitions, visitor experience, and interpretation. This new way of preserving the objects by offering the creation of public spectacle has led to special initiatives such as digitized collections, visiting scholar programs, and visible storage. These new implemented processes are bringing art to a variety of people, opening up the museum (K. Arnold, 2013) while providing the knowledge of the specialists to everyone (McCann Morley, 2014). This new way of considering the museum practices comes from the need to return to the major social role museums have by civilizing and disciplining the mass population to show and teach them their position within society (Bennett, 1995).

However, it is relevant to outline that not every museums or employees share completely this new current way of thought of changing strategy and paradigm in terms of new communication and new style of expression with language and education at the centre of this new practice (McCall & Gray, 2014a). For some, the new museology is bringing a "downgrading" for the role of curators as a more managerial perspective is taking place. As a matter of fact, the role of curators is changing by assigning more administration and management element to their job, "...limiting curators to collections care..." (McCall & Gray, 2014a, p. 26). Consequently, less importance may be given to the collections and the quality of the product. In this way, less tools for the interpretation and understanding of the artworks will be provided to the public, making the museum experience less enriching and stimulating.

2.3 Democratisation of Art

The objective of museums is to contribute culturally providing the access to cultural heritage and encouraging a broad cultural participation, by offering informal education (Ioanna & George, 2019). To

¹⁰According to Mairesse and Desvallées (2010) "...entirety of theoretical and critical thinking within the museum field" (McCall & Gray, 2014b, p. 20).

accomplish this, museums need to adjust themselves into the new environment to win the attention of the audience. Consumption, competitiveness, technology and constant development are the features that shape our actual era, where many aspects are continually changing. Both for-profit and non-profit organizations have to respond to new scenarios adopting and implementing efficient and effective management. This is the reason why, since the last century, practices of museums have been reinvented. In this regard, the new museology theory aims to a new form of communication and expression to reach people focusing more on the way they experience the museum over the exhibits and the collections, by offering a more audience-oriented approach rather than a collection-oriented approach (Ioanna & George, 2019). The object itself is no longer the centre of the attention for museum practices, but the audiences are. According to Kotler and Kotler (2000) three ways of attracting and reaching a higher number of visitors are: enriching the exhibits, enhancing products and services offered, designing comfortable and accessible facilities. The great challenge in bringing people to art museums could be overcome by education and engagement with the piece of art. These actions and practices might be very challenging since the artworks do not contemplate a prefixed meaning (T. Jackson & Meecham, 1999), as the same work can have different meanings simultaneously to different audiences. Since an artwork can have various narratives depending on the person standing in front of it, art should be considered as a product for everyone. Museums are now places where the art does not speak anymore for itself, but it has to be explained creating a dialogue. In this way the museum is used as a place to investigate different points of views challenged by peers and life experiences which create debates where people are able to test their thoughts and ideas (T. Jackson & Meecham, 1999). Today, art is used more as a resource for understanding and self-improvement. In a nutshell, museums need to implement an audience-oriented approach to attract and engage a diversity of audiences. They also need to develop a portfolio of museum services suitable to a variety of audiences to keep the old public and attract the new one (Ioanna & George, 2019).

2.3.1 The Concept of Art Democracy

The concept of democracy has its roots in ancient Greece, when the country was divided into *polis* - small communities who agreed to live under certain rules and customs. Democracy means "the power of the people" coming from the combination of the words *demos* translated "the people" and *kratos* as "power" (Ober, 2007). As a result, the authority of the people derives from their capacity of being able to do things, therefore it is the regime through which people - *demos* - have the strength and ability to change and recreate the public realm through actions (Ober, 2007). The concept of democracy is now being applied to the artistic and cultural field to explain how cultural institutions are trying to spread

their cultural product to as many individuals as possible, since culture is part of everybody background and story.

The concept of democratising art has a long history. In the 1830s, the idea of more accessible museums began to appear in Great Britain (Booth, 2014). From that time museums started to open up to wider audiences with the purpose of being at the service of society. The concept of delivering the cultural products to a relative "oligarchy"¹¹ has now been mutating into a democratisation of the arts, making culture accessible to a relative "everyone". According to Bailey, Miles, and Stark (2004), the democratisation of art is a condition in which the arts should be democratically available to a variety of people, bringing the arts even to those who are not familiar with them. Even though, museums are now trying to open up to new and wider audiences, people are still feeling detached from the arts. The majority of individuals see art as the final physical product, not as the effect of the random universe, or as a product of a man's intelligence and skills (Hutchinson, 1916). They acknowledge only the product of art such as paintings, sculptures, architectures, theatrical performances, but not the intellect and skill of the artist. In this way, art has taken into account by many as something distinct from the everyday life (Hutchinson, 1916), something that does not belong to them. This way of reacting towards the arts becomes more emphasised when the piece of art is cryptic to understand or because it seems distant to what a person believe in and embrace in their daily life.

The primary cause of this popular negative attitude towards cultural institutions comes from the museums and art galleries themselves. They have always been associated with high social classes, so instead of working as institutions of homogenization, they kept adopting a meaningful role in diversifying the elite from the lower social classes (Booth, 2014). Thus, numerous demographic studies showed that most visitors of museums are mainly Caucasian, educated, and professionals (Davidson & Sibley, 2011, p. 128). Researches demonstrated that the ratio of museum visitation is either levelling off or in decrease and that "... demographic characteristics of museum visitors have remained fairly stables, both over time and across studies in a number of countries ... adult museum visitors tend to be younger, better educated, and more affluent than the general population, and be drawn particularly from the "white professional classes"" (Booth, 2014). For instance, in the German capital Berlin, a museum visitation study identified that visitors of museums are mostly tourists "... well-educated with good incomes and high status occupations..." (de Esteban Curiel, Antonovica, & Idoeta, 2012, p. 313).

Art is now considered a product of the people and it is made for the people with no meaning of raising debates on diversity. This is why today the arts are being studied as a social force, a tool to

¹¹A small group of people in governing a country or organization.

show people's own value, a mean to enhance thinking skills, and a living process to create and improve communities (Laughton, 1993). However, another research taken place in the UK studies the continuous diversification of the concept of culture among different social classes. It has been found that the 40 % of people who participated in the study think they do not have enough knowledge to understand, and so appreciate, the visual arts. The majority of the participants stated that art can be everything, they are not able to identify a clear definition of art, and a negative evaluation of the visual arts appeared to be made by people with lower cultural capital (Bennett et al., 2009). The main challenge for the arts is to engage with the public, and choosing the art world over the other leisure activities ¹². To create a bond within the audiences, the cultural institutions need to create "cultural renewal": the condition for which audiences and visitors can view themselves in the piece of art, generating a personal involvement and a closer relationship with the artworks.

The challenge of the cultural world is to create a cultural definition, societal enrichment, and building a community other than just creating an emotional release through a passive reception looking at a piece of art (Laughton, 1993). With this purpose, the new museology is trying to offer personalized visitor experiences, which do not require any particular cultural or social capital. It is a practice that is opening up the museum and the way people see and consider these cultural institutions, usually identified with culture, boredom, knowledge. What the audience is now trying to experience when visiting a cultural site is the paradigm of the spectacle or performance. People want to feel part of a community, but even be performers; they want to observe but even to be watched. To create a more engaging and interactive environment, museums are implementing more and more multimedia exhibits. Emphasising entertainment over the meaning of the contents exposed is a technique that gets the museum experience more democratic and empowering for the visitors (Stylianou-Lambert, 2010).

The relationship between art and democracy is not always an easy one. For instance, one of the conservative critics on democracy, Henry James has a negative vision of art democracy. He believes that "the new, the simple, the cheap, the common, the commercial, the immediate, and, all too often, the ugly" (Hersch, 2000, p. 463) would lead to an impoverishment of the value and symbolic meaning of the cultural good. According to Hersch (2000) the democratization of art brings in the discussion three major issues: mass culture, postmodernism, and multiculturalism. The mass culture argument concerns people. M. Arnold (2018) thinks that art has positive outcomes on people, yet he is afraid that the general public is not able to appreciate high culture, which will lead to an inferior form of art ending into mass culture. On this matter, Simon et al. (1999) believe that art is "inherently

¹²Activities done for pleasure after usually completed all the responsibilities in charge of. For instance: going to the cinema, to a concert, to the gym, etc.

elitist, exclusionary, despotic" (Simon, Marcus, Rockwell, Danto, & Hollander, 1999, p. 28) so not democratic as "The public has no taste, and never will have" (Simon et al., 1999, p. 29). The mass culture phenomenon is directly connected to postmodernism, people's inability of interpretation of high culture (Hersch, 2000). This concept is linked to the meaning of the artworks in term of "...rejection of transcendent truth or meaning" (Hersch, 2000, p. 468), considering that art has a very high symbolic value. In this perspective, a single truth of meaning would consequently decade creating multiple and diverse perspectives, which identified the multiculturalism issue in the art field. Recognising different perspectives means accepting those opinions as equally valid, so multiculturalism "... is an attack on aesthetics standards of quality..." (Hersch, 2000, p. 468). In this sense, the quality of the artworks will be questioned and not interpreted correctly by the general public.

2.3.2 Constraints of Art & Democracy

To engage with a more general audience, museums have to face the leisure constraints of the public. Constraints are factors that model people's leisure liking, limiting participation, or decreasing the level of enjoyment and satisfaction (Jun, Kyle, & O'leary, 2008). According to Crawford and Godbey (1987) leisure constrains can be classified as: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Intrapersonal constraints are described as linked to the psychological states that identify the leisure activities as interesting or uninteresting, appropriate or inappropriate. These types of inhibitors derive from the needs of each individual's personality. Interpersonal constraints are referred to all factors coming from interpersonal interactions meant as relationships with friends, families and others. Lastly, structural constraints are defined as variables interceding the individual's leisure preferences and the actual participation. They can be identified in the cost of the activity, the time required by the activity, and the transportation needed to get to the activity (Jun et al., 2008).

The importance of constraints depends on "...personal, social and situational contexts signified by socio-demographic characteristics" (Jun et al., 2008, p. 42). Some specialists agreed that socio-demographic factors depend on how particular groups perceive obstacles and limits (Jun et al., 2008). According to E. L. Jackson and Scott (2005), among the socio-demographic factors the most influential descriptors are: gender, age, income, and children. For instance, the gender is a social construction that appoints special roles and responsibilities to the different sexes. From the literature on gender, women are perceived as the most constrained in their leisure life compared to the male gender, and they are likely to score higher on descriptors like "...time availability, transportation access, fear of crime, family responsibilities, lack of partners, lack of skill and ability, and a lack of self confidence" (Jun et al., 2008, p. 42). Also, the life-cycle influences the constrains of the leisure activities, since skills and

competences usually follow a directly proportional trend; while the cost factors decrease with age; and the interpersonal variables (social relationships with others) usually follow a U-shape (E. L. Jackson & Henderson, 1995). The inhibitors from "...cost, transportation, companionship, health and available activities and programs..." drop with a growing income (Jun et al., 2008, p. 43). Finally, even the location of the museum or cultural institution has to be taken into account, because bigger cities have more offers regarding leisure activities than smaller cities, and the laziness of the individuals has to be considered too.

2.4 The Audience-Centred Approach

What would be the purpose of the museum if it did not have visitors? The question clearly answers itself since a cultural institution would be purposeless without an audience ready to see what the place offers. In the last twenty years, museums had a tendency of refocusing on the audience, going forward an audience-oriented approach. From the early 2000s onward, different academics wrote about how the definition of the museum itself should change (Adams, 1999; Briggs, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000) to shift become less elitist and more inclusive (Coffee, 2008), places of education rather than places of learning (Kelly, 2004).

Even if this shift does not mean that collecting, documenting and preserving should not be considered anymore part of the core functions of the cultural institution, a more comprehensive view of the museum is needed (Waltl, 2006). This concept is aligned with the 2007 version of the Code of Ethics, written by ICOM¹³, which states that museums should be defined as "... A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (ICOM - International Council of Museums, 2009). This definition highlights the importance of a) the social role of the cultural institution and b) the necessity of focusing on people.

Museums should be considered as places where knowledge and learning are developed and shared with the audience. In this context, it is clear the reason why people are so crucial. Studies show that visitors tend to prioritize the environment and the possibility to interact with the exhibition spaces rather than the quality of the collection itself. Therefore, cultural institutions should focus on developing an engaging experience for anyone visiting their exhibitions (Waltl, 2006). The value of the experience has been studied by multiple academics, such as Pine, Pine, and Gilmore (1999), who stated

¹³ICOM is the International Council of Museums. It represents an international organization that allows museums and professionals of the field to network and support them in the achievement of the museums' missions.

that enjoyable experiences tend to be preferred rather than regular products or services. Redesigning the museums visit as a cultural, yet, leisure experience creates a win-win scenario in which the audience both learns and has fun during the visit (Falk, 2000). Additionally, the progresses related to the digital age increased the level of competition of the leisure time of the individuals. Before the advent of the new century, people received information through other people, today this is changed. People are now bombarded by the online and offline world, and they constantly receive many different stimuli everyday. The mass-communication system, we are living in now, calls the attention to the superstar, admires the consumer, and encourages the spectator instead of the participant (Laughton, 1993). The general public is now interested more on the consumption of information than critically reflecting and going beyond the actual literary meaning of things. There is less and less active participation from the people, but more a passive acceptance of doing things. People have more option now and museums, in order to survive, need to adapt to these social changes. Diversifying their audiences and revenue streams is fundamental to be sustainable on the market (European Commission, 2012).

Museums are facing multiple challenges and opportunities related to the increase of competition, which is connected to the rise of new leisure activities, and the innovative possibilities that the market offers. Kelly (2004) stated that museums are gradually becoming more market responsive, since they focus on the interest of their public reducing a curatorial-driven approach. As reported by Hood (1993), already in the 1930s, Edward S. Robinson was a pioneer in studying the audience of museums. As far as he could understand, people were not going to museums for a physiological discomfort. He stated that the museum and the curators should adapt their systems to match with the audience needs by advocating to the visitors' perspective.

We are now witnessing a shift from a gate-keeper organization, where the main focus and objective was to communicate national pride and values to the audience, to an interactive organization, that works on multiple levels and with the aid of new technologies is revolutionizing the way content is created and distributed. Cultural institutions are shifting from product-led organizations to audience-centred ones (Black, 2005). The public is not anymore only a spectator but an active participant to the content creation. The change of public's behavior enables museums to increase the level of engagement made possible by a program of activities. This new option can foster interactions and dialogues creating a tight connection with the public, and deepening the participation of the audience (Connolly & Cady, 2001). This approach allows institutions such as museums to achieve sustainability on the market in the modern world (Di Pietro, Guglielmetti Mugion, Renzi, & Toni, 2014; Villeneuve, 2012).

2.4.1 The Concept of Audience Development

Nowadays museums are highly influenced by their responsibility to appeal to varied segments of people - given also the reductions in museum budgets (Goulding, 2000). Multiple cultural institutions have difficulties in reaching an elevated number of visitors and, especially, diverse groups. Working on audience development integrating a humanistic approach - museology, education, sociology and psychology - and a strategic one - consumer behaviour and marketing -, represents a useful instrument to both develop a plan to interest new segments and to keep engaging the existing audience (European Museum Academy Bavarian Museum Academy, 2018).

The Arts Council of England (ACE) developed a definition of the term *audience development*, "audience development describes an activity which is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences and to help art organisations to develop on-going relationships with audiences. It can include aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, education, customer care and distribution". In a nutshell, audience development is a set of activities and processes that leads to expand and broaden audiences, making the arts accessible to a wide group of people.

According to the European Commission's point of view, audience development practices generate multiple positive outcomes on a cultural, social and economic level. On a cultural level, museums contribute to spread artistic knowledge educating the audience. On a social level, working on audience development contributes to our society since it fosters the diffusion of common values, opening up to new perspectives and creating dialogues between people with different cultures and ideas; resulting in an increase of the level of social inclusion and integration. On an economic level, it creates benefits since working on differentiating and widening the audiences can lead to new revenues streams (European Commission, 2012).

Audience development is approached differently depending on whose perspective it has been taken into account - educational workers, artists and marketers. The Arts Council of England studies that while educational workers tend to concentrate on the individual participation and the art itself, creating the "audience of tomorrow"; the artists put their efforts in making people understand their creations. Artists focus on engaging with a niche that can truly be appreciative. Marketers, instead, strive to find solutions to improve the performance of the art organization. Unlike the educational workers and the artists, the marketers have to monitor and evaluate the development of their plans, usually on a five/ten years basis. Even if these three different perspectives are equally valuable, they may cause obstacles in dealing with audience development. Hence, this aspect should be taken into account when

developing new strategic plans and evaluations (Maitland, 2000).

Taking into account the perspective of a cultural organization, the processes necessary to improve the current offer to the visitors, other than attracting and engaging new segments, have been described by multiple academics. Museums should focus on making the visit a valuable learning experience capable of both enriching and entertaining the audience, while combining the efforts of the curators, educators and marketers (Waltl, 2006).

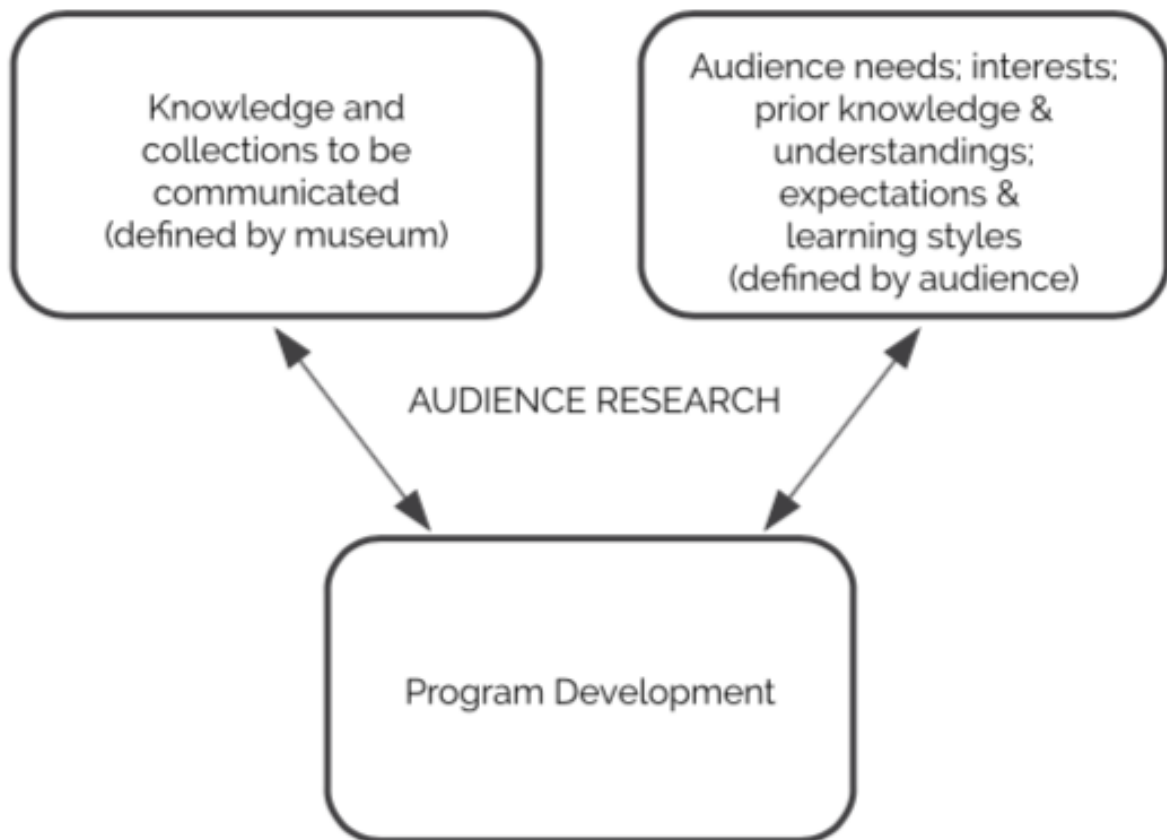
To create and implement a well-designed audience development plan, a perfect interaction between different museum functions is needed. The research and collection departments need to work together to conceive a program. Once the program is defined it should be communicated to attract visitors, through marketing, and to engage them, through interpretation (McLean, 2012). In this context, a hypothetical strategy can be developed on three levels (Waltl, 2006). First of all, the strategy could be created with the aim of growing audiences within the same socio-demographic profile of the current audience. Then, the strategy could focus on enhancing the quality of the relationship between the institution and its public, fostering loyalty and the number of returning clients. Lastly, the objective could relate to the idea of making art accessible to everybody and, therefore, focusing on attracting and engaging multiple segments.

Additionally, the institution could chose to involve the audiences at different stages of the value chain considering two opposite method of involvements: *upstream involvement* and *downstream involvement*. According to *upstream involvement*, the museum creates an *ad hoc* strategy for a specific segment of audience. There is not a pre-made package that works for everyone. The organization needs to re-invent itself and appear relevant for a specific audience. Going through a long term process composed of different stages - ideation, creation (and co-creation) and production. In this case, the segment could learn how to connect and engage with the institution. The critical point that would be faced in this scenario is related to the possibility of trivialising the artistic process. Even if it is clear that the interests of the public play a key role in defining the museum offering, it is essential to understand where to draw the line of their collaboration to not water down the artistic value of the museum offering. For a downstream engagement, instead, the museum puts its effort in fostering the creation of a dialogue between the audience and the artistic works, once they been exposed to the cultural experience. The exchange can happen both physically (e.g. meeting the artist), and virtually (e.g. social media). In this context, new technologies are playing an important role in increasing the chances of cultural exchange between the organization and its public, fostering the possibility of building communities (European Commission, 2012).

2.4.2 Literature Paths on Audience Development

Studying the literature related to the topic of audience development, published from the 1990s onward, two distinct research outlooks were detected. The first one focuses on the current and perspective audiences; while the second one concerns the strategies that can be developed to increase the level of the public engagement and interest in the museum (Cerquetti, 2016). As stated more than 20 years ago by Rick Rogers (1998), this discipline is related to the maintenance and growth of both the current and perspective audience by building an entertaining and interpretative art experience (Rogers, 1998). Concerning the audience research pathway, articles and books started to spread with a new conception on museums during 1990s. The collection were not considered anymore as the core offer of museums, but rather their services began to acquire a central role. Hood (1993) gave an explanation to this change stating that the visitors never complained about the exhibition, but he recognised that the services museums were offering were not that satisfying for the public's needs. Since museums are supposed not to only protect and preserve the value of their collection, but also to understand their public, offering high quality complementary services to deliver their products (Sanivar & Akmehmet, 2011), it is clear the importance of the new conception and of a powerful communication. Focusing on the audience means understanding the profile of your target segments, how to cater their needs, studying who potentially could be part of them, and figuring out the best processes to implement (Mintz, 1998). Werner, Hayward, and Larouche (2014) expressed the idea of moving from "audience to audiences", which means adopting the mindset of having audience diversity. The distinctive value that audience research provides to museums is related to its strategic role since it contributes in better understanding the audience (Kelly, 2004). Kelly (2004) developed a transnational model, as can be notice in the Figure 2.4. Here audience development works as a broker to help the museum perspective - which entails the mission, vision and primary objectives - to come together with the audience perspective, regulated by the market forces, in a program.

Figure 2.4: Transnational Approach To Audience Development



Source: Kelly (2004)

Moving forward, another main objective of the audience research was to delve into the barriers of participation (Miller, 2011). Different researchers, such as Mason and McCarthy (2006), expressed their concerns on the difficulties that institutions are having in attracting and satisfying the needs of teenagers and young adults ¹⁴. It is, especially for these segments, that a psychological barrier ¹⁵ makes them feel distant from the cultural institutions. To fight against the social stigma around museum participation, museums have to become places of exchange of knowledge and education, where active and diverse programs are offered (Hautio, 2011).

Concerning the strategies to increase audience engagement pathway, the concept of participation is crucial. The reasons of its importance are related to the conception of the cultural institution in terms of museum interaction between people and artworks (Coffee, 2007), and the museum accessibility

¹⁴Individuals between 18 and 30 years old.

¹⁵As a psychological barrier we mean a mental block that shows the lack of predisposition of going to museums.

on multiple dimensions (Hautio, 2011) - physically, cognitively, economically, and digitally (Solima, 2012). The phenomenon of *participatory art*, which acknowledges the importance of not only seeing but also experiencing and interacting with the artworks, grew consistently in the past few years. According to these perspective, it is the interaction with art that gives life to the artwork itself (European Commission, 2012). Therefore, the audience acquires a new role: from mere consumers to cultural producers (Stylianou-Lambert, 2010). This shift implies the possibility of co-producing the museum's offering together with the audience.

New technologies and digital tools are contributing to this shift. We are currently experiencing a new idea of participation, that involves a multi-sensory experience. AI, VR and new technological tools are contributing to make art accessible to the public in new ways. We are basically experiencing a concrete detachment between virtual and physical reality. Benjamin (1936), in the 1930s, was definitively ahead of his times highlighting one of the most relevant issues of the digital age: art reproducibility. Art has always been reproducible but doing it with technological means generates different implications. Technological reproduction allows to emphasises details of the piece of art that would not be visible to the naked-eye. It can also mobilise virtually the artwork by spreading its copy everywhere, eliminating the physical barrier and letting people that live far away, from where the painting is located, to still experience the painting (Benjamin, 1936). Thus, it is important to outline that the artwork itself has an "aura" that cannot be captured by its replicas (Benjamin, 1936). This means that a virtual experience does not replace the physical one. The latter will still play a key role in encouraging human interactions and cultural renewal (Laughton, 1993). Edutainment and immersive experiences are also part of this scenario and they could work as an instrument to stimulate people (Mencarelli, Marteaux, & Pulh, 2010). Balloffet, Courvoisier, and Lagier (2014) underlined the risks of technology that could *disneyfy* the art museum experience. At the same time, other academics, such as Macleod, Hanks, and Hale (2012) and Mencarelli et al. (2010), exposed one of the main strength of technologies and social media which is its narrative power. Storytelling, *thematization* and *scenarization* are excellent means to let people understand the value of the exhibition.

Nowadays, museums are challenged by the necessity of attracting new audiences. Both the practice and the academic community developed new conception of a) the role of the museum, b) how to carry out a new audience research, and c) the new strategies for audience engagement. The museum becomes an inclusive place of education rather than an exclusive place of teaching. Moreover, academics worked to turn practice into a theory of practice, trying to understand the barriers for museums' attendance and proposing innovative solutions to defeat them (Cerquetti, 2016). On a strategic level, the cultural

institution should take advantage of the new digital and technological opportunities to cater the needs of the audience, implementing new ideas of participation where education and entertainment go together.

2.5 Crisis Management

Crisis management is considered an organizational function, fundamental to deal with situations where significant threats to operations are experienced (Institute for Public relationship, 2007). Both the organization, its stakeholders and the industry may suffer because of this threat. The elements that may be affected are public safety, finances and organizational reputation. Such a condition needs to be managed sequentially, in three different stages: before, during and after the crisis (Institute for Public relationship, 2007). Since it is not always possible to predict global events, organizations need to be able to cope with pervasive changes that may affect the way they carry out their daily practices (Investopedia, 2019). The causes of the crisis may be connected to the behavior of the organization itself, or to external forces - like in the case of COVID-19 - (Investopedia, 2019).

A pre-crisis phase is needed to prepare the organization and to make sure that the staff is prepared to deal with a potential crisis. At this stage, a plan on how to deal with a potential crisis should be discussed, training employees on the off chance that their contribution might be needed (Barton, 2001; Coombs & Holladay, 2006). A spokesperson should also be identified. To be responsible for responding in case of such a critical situation, pre-draft communications should be prepared for press releases and website (Coombs, 2007). According to Investopedia (2019), the process of having a continuity plan in place in case of a crisis is known as crisis management. Contrary to risk management, which involves planning a possible response for the events which are more likely to happen, crisis management involves reacting to negative events during and after they have occurred (Investopedia, 2019). According to Sull (2007), using a well-defined strategy plan reflects a traditional way of dealing with the crisis. A more "agile" way of working might be more effective. Indeed, once the crisis hits, the organization should be quick, accurate and consistent in acting to counteract the negative effects caused by the crisis (Institute for Public relationship, 2007). Executing a prefabricated strategy may not be the most effective solution due to the chaotic nature of a crisis. Rather, a comprehensive flexible plan that allows institutions to adapt to rapid changes may be an effective solution (Sull, 2007). A pre-made strategy would need to be adapted to the ongoing situation. Decisions need to be made in a short time frame to show that the situation is under control (Carney & Jorden, 1993). A lack of communications may indicate a passive approach (Hearit, 1994). It has been studied that a quicker response generates an higher scope of credibility (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005), that together with accuracy is fundamental to make

people feel safe. We can see how this scenario applies in a situation like the one caused by the pandemic, where people are scared, and the way of dealing with services and business operations is different. Tools that the organizations may use to carry out communications, other than the more traditional media, are websites, intranet sites and social media. As soon as the organization manages to overcome the crisis, it should return to its ordinary practices and behavior (Institute for Public relationship, 2007). In order to proceed smoothly in this phase is fundamental that the organization managed to build trust with its stakeholders during the crisis. At this point, additional information should be provided, giving also updates on how they plan to recover. It is important to make sure that stakeholders and employees are informed about what is happening in order to enable a smoother reopening of the institution.

Dealing with a crisis involves an iterative process, that will most likely force the organization to go back and forth between the three phases presented in this paragraph in order to solve critical issues. Sull (2007) argues that an active revising of the strategy in light of new information is critical to an agile response to crisis. Therefore, in order to be able to overcome a crisis, an organization needs to have a strong leadership, capable of making decision in difficult times, and with the ability to change processes and structures depending on how the situation varies.

2.6 Our Take on Theory

In this last section, we explain in which way the literature presented in this chapter is fundamental for understanding our research.

The literature has been designed to guide the reader from a broad general setting to more specific topics, by narrowing down the theoretical framework. Since our research regards the phenomenon of art democracy, one of our priorities was to facilitate the understanding of this concept. Because of its complexity, we chose to provide an explanation of the art democracy, analysing first the two terms separately and then together. In this way, we were able to understand the reasons behind the combination of these two words. Once the nature of the phenomenon was clear, we analysed its effects on museum environment. When we explored art and democracy two paths were presented: pre-combination of the term "art and democracy", and post combination of the term "art and democracy". The first part is identified in the literature on *Creative and Cultural Industries*, in which we set the industry background where the phenomenon takes place. The literature on *Art Management* helped us understanding the meaning of the term "art" in connection with the business field. The theory on *Democracy of Art* made us discover why and how democracy can be linked to the concept of art. Through this first theoretical framework we were able to understand the connection between art, democracy and museums, which is

important for our main research question. The second part of our theory chapter discovered *Audience Development* as the practical response of museums to art democracy. Indeed, museum started placing at the centre of their strategy the audience, rather than the collection. Also, the phenomenon of art democracy found new routes of expansion because of the recent pandemic caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. Literature on *Crisis Management* was presented to understand what strategies and practices museum could adopt to deal with such an emergency. This second part of the literature was useful to research on our two sub-questions as the audience-centred approach has been outlined and strategic management for dealing in case of emergencies has been presented.

Elaborating our literature, two tensions with related questions emerged. The first tension we identified concerns the combination of art and business. These two worlds have sometimes different interests, one more profit-driven and the other more quality-driven. This tension creates a debate on which approach is best to be used by museums. The prevalence of one over the other has strong implications on museum management and it can lead to a more conservative or innovative way of managing art. Thus, two questions can be generated: which should be the best approach to use? and how can it be implemented?

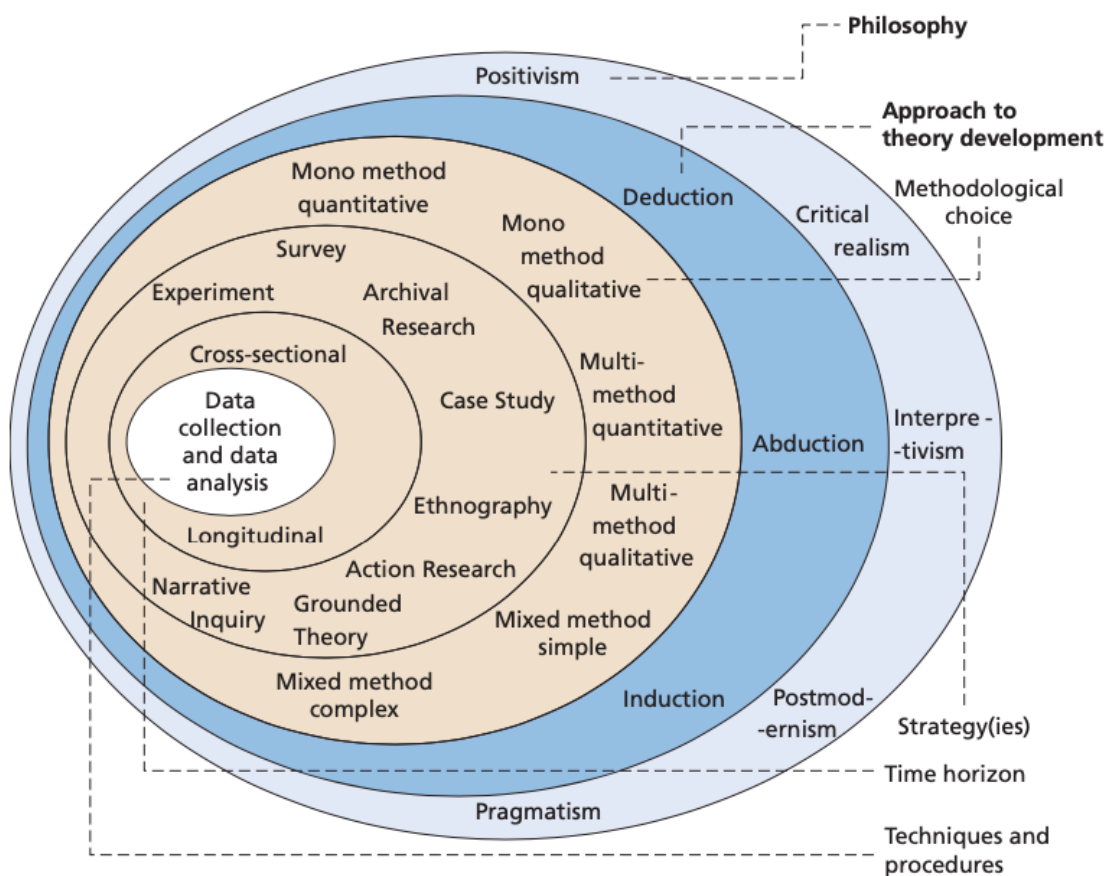
The second tension emerges from the phenomenon of art democracy itself since it can lead to commercialise the product till the artwork loses its full value. Concerning this debate, two other questions arise: how can the museum democratise art while keeping its full value? and is digitisation an enemy or a friend to spread art widely?

These tensions will be later explored and justified in the Discussion Chapter, where we will also interpret our findings considering our research questions and literature.

3 Methodology

The methodology process of this research is based on the "research onion" theory by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019). The chapter explains the process that guide us to select certain methods of data collection. To make sense of our research we will go through every single layer of the model in Figure 3.1, with the aim of outlining all the passages we took to develop our research.

Figure 3.1: The Research Onion



Source: Saunders et al. (2019)

3.1 Philosophy

To understand our process of data collection it is fundamental to start from the external layer of the "research onion" Saunders et al. (2019): the research philosophy. The concept of research philosophy is defined as, "... a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge" (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 130). In short, research philosophy is meant as the developing of knowledge by the

researchers on a specific topic.

Concerning the literature on the research philosophy in the business and management field, two currents of thought are prevailing on this matter. The two perspectives are called by scholars as pluralism and unificationism. The latter recommends a unification of management research using one and only philosophy, paradigm and methodology to do research (Pfeffer, 1993). The pluralism approach believes that the field of management is diverse; the philosophy, paradigm and methodology used for researching might be different and not a *unicum*. Since we believe that the business and management field have different branches following different practices and models, and the art management discipline on which our study is based on, is one example, we identify our beliefs with the pluralism current.

3.1.1 Assumptions & Beliefs

Every researcher has different opinions on how free they believe humans are able to change their lives and their environment, and which societal structures have an impact on individuals. These are recalled by the literature as structure and agency assumptions (Saunders et al., 2019). According to Saunders et al. (2019), three variables define our structure and agency assumptions: ontology, epistemology, axiology. Ontology is intended as the beliefs an individual has on the nature of reality. In this specific research, our ontology concerns how we perceive the world of business and management related to the art world with a focus on museum practice (What is the nature of reality? What is the world like? Figure 3.2 (Saunders et al., 2019)). Epistemology focuses more on the concept of knowledge (What is bearable, rational, legitimate and how this knowledge can be spread to others? (Burrell & Morgan, 2017)). Due to the multidisciplinary essence of business management, the tools used of gathering knowledge are very diverse: from quantitative data to non-numerical data, facts and opinions, narratives and stories, conferences, autobiographical accounts, narratives (Saunders et al., 2019), and fictional literature (De Cock & Land, 2006) (How can we know what we know? What is considered acceptable knowledge?, etc. Figure 3.2 (Saunders et al., 2019)). Finally, axiology alludes to the role of values and ethics, so how our values and beliefs impact and influence our research positively (What is the role of values in research? Should we try to be morally neutral when we do research or should we let our value shape research? Figure 3.2 (Saunders et al., 2019)).

Figure 3.2: Philosophical Assumptions as A Multidimensional Set of Continua

Assumption type	Questions	Continua with two sets of extremes		
		Objectivism	↔	Subjectivism
Ontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the nature of reality? • What is the world like? • For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What are organisations like? – What is it like being in organisations? – What is it like being a manager or being managed? 	Real External One true reality (universalism) Granular (things) Order	↔ ↔ ↔ ↔ ↔	Nominal/decided by convention Socially constructed Multiple realities (relativism) Flowing (processes) Chaos
Epistemology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we know what we know? • What is considered acceptable knowledge? • What constitutes good-quality data? • What kinds of contribution to knowledge can be made? 	Adopt assumptions of the natural scientist Facts Numbers Observable phenomena Law-like generalisations	↔ ↔ ↔ ↔	Adopt the assumptions of the arts and humanities Opinions Written, spoken and visual accounts Attributed meanings Individuals and contexts, specifics
Axiology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of values in research? Should we try to be morally-neutral when we do research, or should we let our values shape research? • How should we deal with the values of research participants? 	Value-free Detachment	↔ ↔	Value-bound Integral and reflexive

Source: Saunders et al. (2019)

These three assumptions can have a different result depending on the two extreme approaches the research is more keen to share between objectivism or subjectivism. Objectivism gathers the beliefs (ontological aspect) of natural sciences. The cause of social reality is external to the individuals and the true reality is just one, where individuals do not effect the existence of the social world, which is described by "... solid, granular, relatively unchanging "things"..." (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 135) such as religion, economy (Burrell & Morgan, 2017), and physical events. The objectivist researcher collects their knowledge as a natural scientist would do, basing their study on facts and numbers by observing a variety of phenomena (epistemological aspect) to draw generalisations, while staying as neutral as possible without their values interfering in the study (axiological aspect). Subjectivism is linked to the

assumptions of the arts and humanities, supporting that reality is put together by perceptions and actions of people. According to Burrell and Morgan (2017), as each individual perceives things and acts differently various realities exist (ontological aspect). To acknowledge different scenarios, the researcher has to consider and investigate situation in detail, taking into account historical, geographical and socio-cultural variables to understand different realities (epistemological aspect). This kind of approach sees the researcher being part of the process by reflecting and re-valuating their values and integrating them into the study itself (axiological approach).

In this research, the objectivism and subjectivism dimension we are using leans more towards subjectivism, without falling into the extremism. We think that the reality of museum experience and strategies use to democratise art is not universal, but every entity can react differently to this phenomenon. Also, we are building our knowledge by not only studying facts and observing different scenarios, but even integrating socio-cultural aspects and analysing different situations and entities. In creating and investigating our research study we are including even our values, which are reshaped in relation with the literature we use and the experts we interview.

Another dimension that has to be discussed for evaluating our assumptions and beliefs is the ideological dimension, identifying in sociology of regulation and sociology of radical change (Burrell & Morgan, 2017). The regulation perspective aims to regulate society and human behaviour, by suggesting how a situation might be improved from what was done in the past. While, radical change perspective wants to change present conditions, sometimes not only questioning and giving alternatives only regarding certain behaviours, but also societal systems in which these behaviours exist (Saunders et al., 2019). The perspective adopted for this research is the regulation one. Through our study we are aiming in contributing with new insights to help improving the realities of museums without denying the processes been used until today. In combining the objectivist and subjectivist dimension with the regulation and radical continuum, a set of paradigms¹⁶ are identified by Burrell and Morgan (2017). Since our research does not have a precise position among the subjectivism and objectivism dimension, but it leans more towards the subjectivism theory, our study appears as interpretive paradigm. These set of assumptions focus on how humans experience and understand the world; whereas finding out multiple subjectivity getting involved in daily activities of the organization studied. As a matter of fact, our research has the purpose of gathering multiple scenarios interviewing different people from diverse museums to understand how "...humans attempt to make sense of the world around us." (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 141) in this case the world of art and museums.

¹⁶"Set of basic and taken-for-granted assumptions which underwrite the frame of reference, mode of theorising and ways of working in which a group operates" (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 140).

3.1.2 Research Philosophy

After looking deeply into the assumptions and beliefs that move us to approach a certain way of interpreting and defining our thoughts, knowledge, and reacting regarding our project, we can now identify and describe the philosophy guiding our study. The research philosophy we adopt is what is known as pragmatism, where notions and theory are important just if they bear actions (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008). This current of thought combines both objectivism and subjectivism, hence facts, values and rational knowledge considering different scenarios and experiences Figure 3.3. To succeed in this combination, the theories, concepts, ideas, and findings, are not used in an abstract way to draw generalisations, but they are relevant in building the researcher's knowledge to take actions and apply it on particular realities. The pragmatist researcher starts their study and research by identifying an issue with the purpose to contribute theoretically and practically discovering solutions to improve the future practice (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, the process of researching starts from a reflexive process of wondering, moved by doubts and sensations that something is not in order. The researcher's belief is then reconstructed when the problem has been solved. The pragmatist philosophy believes that the world can be interpreted in a variety of ways and there is not just one true universal opinion, but multiple points of view (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008).

Figure 3.3: Research Philosophy: Pragmatism

Ontology (nature of reality or being)	Epistemology (what constitutes acceptable knowledge)	Axiology (role of values)	Typical methods
Pragmatism			
Complex, rich, external 'Reality' is the practical consequences of ideas Flux of processes, experiences and practices	Practical meaning of knowledge in specific contexts 'True' theories and knowledge are those that enable successful action Focus on problems, practices and relevance Problem solving and informed future practice as contribution	Value-driven research Research initiated and sustained by researcher's doubts and beliefs Researcher reflexive	Following research problem and research question Range of methods: mixed, multiple, qualitative, quantitative, action research Emphasis on practical solutions and outcomes

Source: Saunders et al. (2019)

We associate our research philosophy specifically with the pragmatism current among the other four ways of thinking ¹⁷ described by Saunders et al. (2019) because of the following reasons. Firstly, our research process began with our personal belief and wondering (axiology, Figure 3.3). To understand our way of thinking and formulating the main doubt that interested us in writing this research, it is needed to take into account the way we perceive the nature of reality (ontology Figure 3.3). We believe that the reality we are living in is complex, influenced by ideas, processes, experiences and practices of different entities. We are convinced that the fine arts are still considered as exclusive by the majority of people. Also, we then asked ourselves why people feel very detached from the visual art world. Finally, we identified a problem that the fine arts sphere is trying to deal with: reaching, fascinating and engaging a wider audience. The issue does not come from the nature of the field that is artistic and visual, but most likely because something is lacking or missing in the engagement of the public. In this regard, we asked ourselves if the museum institutions are recognizing and feeling this detachment and which practices are implementing to overcome this gap. To gather information and building our knowledge we looked for true theories and facts that could help us understand in which way the problem can be analysed theoretically. Also, we collected data from experts from multiple realities to compare different working experiences, so that we would be able to solve our wondering, reconstructing our belief and contributing in future practices (epistemology Figure 3.3).

3.2 Approach to Theory Development

To understand how we integrate the theory with the data collected, we now analyse three different methods that the literature suggested using: deductive, inductive, and abductive approach. The deductive reasoning is the way natural sciences deal with finding an explanation. This approach starts from a very general view and lands on a specific conclusion, informally it is even called "top-down" approach (Burney, 2008). In other words, the conclusion comes logically from a set of theoretical premises, and it becomes real when all those premises are demonstrated. The inductive approach, known informally even "bottom-up", works the opposite way of the deductive reasoning. It starts from specific observations moving to broader generalisations and theories (Burney, 2008). Therefore, the inductive reasoning follows data instead of theories, using premises to get to untested conclusions. The data collection of this way of thinking is useful to discover phenomenon, recognizing themes and patterns to build a theoretical framework. The last reasoning that can be applied to combine theory and data collection is the abductive approach. This type of approach integrates the inductive and deductive theory (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). According to (Brioschi, 2014, p. 171), abduction is "...

¹⁷Positivism, Critical realism, Interpretivism, Postmodernism.

the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea". It is a process that goes back and forth between empirical material and theory (Rasmussen, 2011) (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). The data collected are used to discover a phenomenon, spotting themes and explaining theories to generate new insights or modifying an existing theory, which will be evaluated later on.

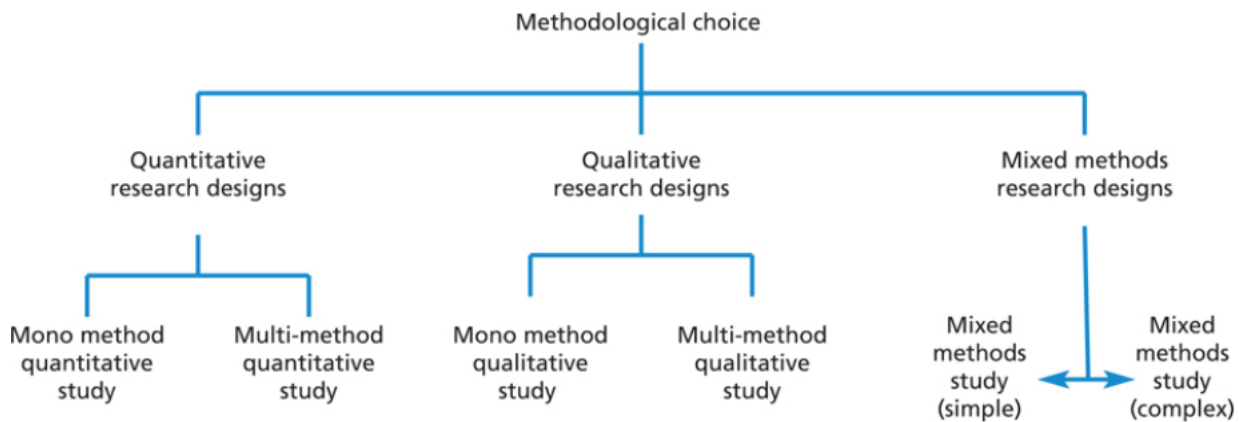
Concerning our study, we implemented an abductive reasoning. As explained in the previous paragraph, our research started as a personal wondering originated by observing the museum experiences and our peers, using an inductive approach at first. We then established our tentative hypothesis and went back to look into patterns that could justify our guessing (deductive reasoning). After checking the theories on the matter, we came back to revise our tentative hypothesis and changed it accordingly, designing a new pattern adopting an inductive approach. Through the new hypothesis, we shaped and organised our data collection and we started collecting data from different experts of museum field. Through the data collected, we gathered a certain response that brought us to observe a new aspect to add in our research, so we went back again to the theory through deductive reasoning. Finally, after comparing the literature and the data collected, we brought new insights and ideas to be generalised in the future. Therefore we have not reached neither a theoretical generalisation, nor a confirmation of our hypothesis like the inductive and deductive approach required.

3.3 Methodological Choice

To provide a coherent framework for our data collection and analysis methods, we decided to pursue a multi-methods qualitative approach. With the aim of providing an understanding of what this approach entails, the differences between quantitative, qualitative or mixed method approaches will be presented in the following section.

In the past, only a simplistic distinction between quantitative and qualitative was provided. Academics used to determine if a research was quantitative or qualitative based on the data collection technique - questionnaire, interviews - or data analysis procedures - statistics, coding -; in other words, depending on the use of numeric or non-numerical data. Yet, this distinction does not take in consideration two factors: a) the possibility of combining the two approaches, b) the need of aligning the philosophical assumption made with the methodological choice. In our case, we chose to adopt a multi-methods approach, rather than a mono-method one, since we used more than one data collection techniques to have a more comprehensive understanding of our findings (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: The Methodological Decision



Source: Saunders et al. (2019)

The reason of choosing a qualitative research are connected to our desire of carrying out a study to develop "a conceptual framework¹⁸ and theoretical contribution" (Saunders et al., 2019). We plan to use our empirical materials to generate knowledge, experiencing real life scenarios and understanding how complex the real world can be. In this context, whoever takes part of the research project has a great value and they are considered participants, not only a respondents. Our challenge is not only to involve a cultural institution to pursue our research, but also building a relationship with the participants, demonstrating professionalism and sympathy, to get a cognitive insight on their information.

3.4 Our Research Story

In this section we discuss and explain our choices in terms of research design and strategies, using the narrative of our research story. Our research interest originated mainly from our curiosity on art democratisation. During the past year, we often shared articles and social media posts about what museums were and are doing to increase their accessibility and transform the cultural experience to a more entertaining experience. We found ourselves discussing about new practices that institutions were carrying out to gather groups - such as the youngsters or people with disabilities - that they were not targeted before. We visited museums, together and on our own, to experience the innovative narratives they created to appeal a wider audience. We could see with our own eyes that cultural institutions were working both offline and online to express those narratives and get into people lives; yet these practices were not always successful and appreciated. Discussing about this issues got us thinking more deeply about the topic and led us to transform our personal interest into our research. Once we delimited our

¹⁸Conceptual framework represents the researcher's synthesis of the literature on how to explain a phenomenon.

topic and we received approval thanks to the contribution of our supervisor, Dr. Christian De Cock, we had the chance to talk to Lucia Calzona, an art history expert that is employed at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities in Italy. Her guidance was fundamental to choose the path of our research and to assess the validity of our research topic.

At this point, we were able to define our thesis as a qualitative research, based on meanings expressed through words or images (Saunders et al., 2019) by the participants, and as an exploratory study that aims to put the phenomenon of art democratisation in a new light (Robson, 2002). Once this was defined, we were ready to contact experts and cultural organizations. Firstly, we decided to take into account the perspective of the experts of the field. We were confident that, through their experience and unique viewpoint, we could gain a broad understanding on how democratisation is impacting the art industry. We contacted professionals with different areas of expertise - curators, museum directors, researchers - across Europe as we wanted to assess the phenomenon in a way that could be less biased as possible. Then, we reached out to museums with the aim of gaining access to a cultural organization and pursuing an in-depth case study. We contacted several institutions internationally, but as our research progressed, we decided to focus on museums in Italy. As stated in the introduction of this research, we chose Italy because we have a deeper understanding of cultural organizations panorama in our country and we were able to contact the museums and foundations that best fitted our research. Multiple institutions expressed a strong interest in collaborating with us, among which PAC - Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea -, Palazzo Merulana, Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Scuderie del Quirinale, and Triennale di Milano. However, their interest and availability diminished as soon as the Italian Government disposed the lock-down for the entire country due to COVID-19. Also, our plan was to go to Rome and Milan during the second week of March to conduct interviews and observations with the cultural organizations that showed interest in our project, but most of our meetings were cancelled or rescheduled when the government disposed the closure of all cultural institutions. Once it was clear that it was not possible to go to Italy anymore, we purchased two tickets to attend a two-day conference on "Curating the Contemporary in the Art Museum" that was supposed to take place at the University of Copenhagen and at the National Gallery of Denmark, respectively on March 12th and 13th 2020, however the event was cancelled as a measure to contain the spread of the virus in Copenhagen. It appears clear how much COVID-19 slowed down our data collection process and increased the level of difficulties in having contacts and connecting with cultural institutions. Yet, new insights on how to make art accessible to a wide audience occurred with the virus outbreak.

Because of the exploratory nature of our research, we adapted our research to the new circumstances.

We could observe that museums tried innovative strategies to retain their audiences and keep them engaged, focusing on their social media channels providing digital content. The activity of the Poldi Pezzoli museum stood out and we were very impressed by the pro-activeness of such a small cultural organization. Annalisa Zanni, the museum director, has shown great interest for our project and has demonstrated willingness in collaborating with us, regardless the difficulties of this period. She specifically selected members of her staff that would have been able to contribute to our research the most. In this real-life scenario, for the scope of our research, we specifically decided to take into account the perspectives of a group of employees in the museum which results representative of the museums functions -management, promotion, marketing communications, curatorial management and education. In case we needed to define our research strategy between the one indicated by Saunders et al. (2019), it would be identified as a case study research for two reasons. Firstly, we approached Poldi Pezzoli museum for conducting "an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Robson, 2002, p. 178). Information on how the museum is dealing with the democracy of art were provided gathering data through interviews, observation, and secondary data. Secondly, we chose to adopt a case study since it is a coherent strategy for our research. It complements our methodological choice (multi-methods qualitative study), our philosophy (pragmatism), our research design (exploratory), the data collection used (interview, observation, document analysis), and analysis methods chosen (coding).

3.5 Credibility of Research

The main issue on research design, reported by the literature, is credibility of research findings, which depends on two variables: reliability and validity.

According to Thornhill et al. (2009), "Reliability refers to the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings" (p. 156). Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, and Lowe (2008) suggests three questions to ensure the reliability of the findings. It could be asked if the measures would yield the same outcome in other situations, if similar observations could be gathered by different observers, if there is transparency in how the raw data is analysed. We believe that our findings can be considered reliable, as the same outcomes might be found studying different occasions or scenarios. In other words, if other researchers or even us as researchers would adopt a pragmatic philosophy using an abductive approach, and studying the same topic interviewing different people within the museum sector, the results would be very similar. Also, similar observations could be done by other researchers as our observations method is based on studying objectively the social

platforms and website of Poldi Pezzoli. Whoever has a computer, smartphone, or tablet could observe the same practices adopted. Finally, the transparency of data analysis can be assured by explaining the coding process used (Ch.3 § Coding Data collection) and then reporting and explaining the results of our data collected, which will be explained in Ch. 5.

Despite the questions posed by Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) can have positive responses, threats to reliability has to be examined. Robson (2002) suggests four main threats: subject or participant error, subject or participant bias, observer error, and observer bias. Concerning the subject or participant error, the findings might have been influenced by the different times of the day and week the interview has been done. To reduce the chance of this threat, the literature encourages to choose a neutral time to conduct the interviews. However in our case we could not really be that flexible as our respondents were very busy in organizing new exhibitions, and dealing with new projects and COVID-19 emergency. The subject or participant bias threat was probably decreased but not eliminated completely as every interview was conducted in their private office or at home, so they were less influenced by the authoritarian management and the employment insecurity. The observer error has been diminished by the present of both researchers when doing interviews, so that the questions could have been asked in more than one way, giving "... a high degree of structure to the interview schedule" (Thornhill et al., 2009, p. 157). The observer bias was less easy to eliminate, as it deals with the interpretation of the data collected. We tried to be as objective as possible by using the coding software NVivo, but obviously the analysis of the findings might have been a bit biased by our own interpretation and thoughts.

Diversely, validity "is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about" (Thornhill et al., 2009, p. 157). In our case, the validity of our findings is supported by the triangulation approach of data collection we used. We combined three different types of methods (interviews, observation, and secondary data) to collect data and then we compared the different findings to understand if the data collected were well-founded. As for reliability Robson (2002) identified threats even for validity of findings. In our case, the threats have been seen in: history, mortality, and maturation. History has been a real threat for our research as we started collecting data in the period prior to emergency of COVID-19, and we continued by gathering data during the pandemic emergency. Hence, this situation could have been misleading for our findings if we did not adapt our research to the emergency. Moreover, maturation, meant as some events that can effect the managing style of the organization, has been a reason as well of creating less proper results. Even in this case COVID-19 changed the managerial practices of cultural institutions. Consequently, if we did not reformulate the

research design, research questions, objectives, and data collection, our findings would have been less valid. Also, because of the emergency some participants dropped from our study, reducing the validity of our findings since validity is even directly proportional to the number of data collected.

3.6 Data Collection

In this last section we will deal with the core of the "onion" model (Saunders et al., 2019): our data collection process. We will provide information on which type of methods we used to collect data and why we chose those specifically. We combined primary data ¹⁹ and secondary data ²⁰ working with three different methods of data collection. The primary data we used are interviews and observation. While the secondary data we selected comes from documents freely available online. The use of three independent sources to gather data is identified by Saunders et al. (2019) as triangulation. This method is usually adopted to guarantee that the data collected are saying really what the researchers have interpreted by comparing one source with another on the same topic.

3.6.1 Interviews

The first primary and main method we used to collect data is the interviews. We believe that it would have been the best source to understand what museums think about the democratisation of art and how they are engaging with people. Between the three types of interviews ²¹ Saunders et al. (2019) outline, our interviews are classified as semi-structured. We outlined a standardized interview schedule (Appendix 1) with open-ended questions, which was varying depending on the job position of the interviewee or respondent (Saunders et al., 2019). Sometimes questions were asked not following the order of the schedule or even rarely omitted according to the flow and the logic of the conversation.

After agreeing with some of the museum's experts to conduct interviews, we designed a list of 10 questions. The interview schedule has been changed especially after the first few interviews for getting better to the point of our research. Also, additional questions were asked to the respondents to explore deeper certain topics or to get clarifications. This behaviour is justified by the interpretivist paradigm our research is based on.

The process of finding candidates for the interviews required a lot of time. To find the right cultural institutions, we narrowed down our geographical research focusing on the three cities we would have been able to have higher chances of getting contacts. The three cities we selected are: Copenhagen

¹⁹Data collected for the purpose of the research problem (Hox & Boeije, 2005).

²⁰Data already collected by other people for other purposes and already available to be consulted.

²¹Structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, unstructured or in-depth interviews.

in Denmark, because it is the city we are studying in; Rome and Milan in Italy, for our personal network in the cultural field. We then contacted museums we believed they were trying to wider their audiences. This selection has been made by reading museums' official documents and observing occurring and occurred events museums had or were planning to have. Fortunately, the three cities we selected gave us a positive feedback, allowing us to interview experts from different art museums and cultures. From Copenhagen we had the opportunity to interview two employees of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, who let us understand the different approaches used for the internal and external communication channels of a museum; three employees of SMK - Statens Museums for Kunst (National Gallery of Denmark), who gave us an overview on how a museum might integrate the digital world. Rome took us to one employee of the National Gallery of London, who let us explore how the role of curators is changing; to one employee of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, who gave us a general overview of the cultural Italian sector; and to the director of MACRO - Museum of Contemporary Art Rome, who let us explore how Italian museums can change. Finally, from Milan we had the chance to speak with the director and three employees of Poldi Pezzoli museum, who allowed us to understand the overall museum management needed to democratise art. In Figure 3.5 we present an overview of the interviews we had. Also, we would like to acknowledge that in the *Results Ch.* and *Discussion Ch.* the respondents' names will be indicated with their initials after their first citations.

Figure 3.5: Overview Interviews

Name	Museum	Position	Date	Duration	Setting
Letizia Treves	Nationa Gallery of London	Head of Curatorship	26/02/2020	50 min	Office of the interviewee
Jonas Heide Smith	SMK - Statens Museum for Kunst	Head of Digital	28/02/2020	Written	Email
Christina Jensen	SMK - Statens Museum for Kunst	Digital Project Manager	05/03/2020	42 min	Office of the interviewee
Jørgen Wadum	SMK - Statens Museum for Kunst	Director of CATS and Senior Researcher	18/03/2020	60 min	Video interview

3.6 Data Collection

Julie Lejsgaard Christensen	Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket	Head of Interpretation	05/03/2020	46 min	Office of the interviewee
Camilla Jensen	Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket	Head of Communication	05/03/2020	32 min	Café Glyptoteket
Annalisa Zanni	Museo Poldi Pezzoli	Museum Director	12/03/2020	60 min	Phone interview
Stefania Rossi	Museo Poldi Pezzoli	Promotion Office	12/03/2020	37 min	Phone interview
Ilaria Toniolo	Museo Poldi Pezzoli	Press Office	16/03/2020	38 min	Phone interview
Federica Manoli	Museo Poldi Pezzoli	Collection Manager & Educational Department	08/05/2020	45 min	Phone interview
Luca lo Pinto	MACRO - Museum of Contemporary Art Rome	Museum Director	27/04/2020	55 min	Phone interview
Daniela Porro	Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Tourism	Special Superintendent of Archeology, Fine Arts and Landscape in Rome	14/04/2020	Written	Email

Source: Personal Elaboration

Concerning the interviews outcomes, we encounter some limitations, which will be discussed as follows: COVID-19 limitations, and non-COVID-19 limitations. As reported in the figure above, some interviews have been conducted in different settings, as when we were collecting data the COVID-19 emergency situation exploded. Before the Italian lock-down became real, we were planning to travel to Italy to do the interviews, but at the end it was not possible, so we agreed to conduct the interviews by phone calls. Even though doing an interview by phone might have some advantages in term of access, speed and lower cost, this approach may bring different issues for the data collected. Having interviews by phone might guide to reliability problems, in a way of a less willingness in an exploratory dialogue

by the interviewee (Saunders et al., 2019). Besides, we could not witness the non-verbal behaviour of the respondent through a phone call, which limited us of how far we could keep discussing a particular question. Lastly, if the interview would have been done face-to-face, it would probably have been possible to continue our conversation even after the time we agreed to exploring better certain topics. The same arguments can be applied even for the written interviews we had via email. This approach of interviewing was chosen by the participants as they were unable to commit to any further collaboration.

The non-Covid-19 limitations concern every interview we have conducted. We believe we encountered primarily three restraints known as: audio-recording, the nature and impact of the interviewer's behaviour, and cultural difference (Saunders et al., 2019). The audio-recording aspect has brought both advantages and disadvantages in our research, since every interview we have taken has been recorded. From our point of view, as the interviewers, the audio-recording facilitates our concentration on asking questions and following the interviewee in their argument, providing us with accurate and unbiased record. On the other hand, the recordings may have had a negative impact on the participant. It might have been affected our relationship with the interviewee, who may have been very focused on the recordings, inhibiting some of their responses reducing reliability (Saunders et al., 2019).

Also the interviewer's behaviour has been a limitation for our data collection process due to the interviewer bias. In fact, the way in which questions were asked, comments made, tone or non-verbal behaviour might have created unconsciously bias in answering our questions. Even the interviewee behavior might have influenced and limited the results of our data collection, as the interview is an intrusive process and the participant may choose not to disclose much information on a certain topic, providing a partial picture (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.6.2 Observation

The second primary method of data collection used in this research is observation to understand how art democratisation actually work. The observation method is even suggested by Saunders et al. (2019) if the research question and the objectives regard what people do, as in our case.

As stated in § 3.5 Our Research Story, due to COVID-19 emergency we needed to change our research design and so even our data collection method and in particular the observation method. Instead of observing the strategies chosen for art democracy physically on the site, we needed to shift our observation to the virtual world, as Poldi Pezzoli museum has been closed since March 8th 2020 until further notice for disposition of the Italian Government because of COVID-19 situation, and our

visit to the museum was scheduled on March 12th 2020.

The virtual observation we did, known as indirect observation ²² by Thornhill et al. (2009), concerns Poldi Pezzoli Instagram and Facebook social media profiles, *Museo Poldi Pezzoli* and *Giovani Poldi Pezzoli* (in English Young Group Poldi Pezzoli). The data has been collected everyday from March 8th 2020 to April 27th 2020 and has been noted on a diary (Appendix 3), observing the digital platforms three times per day: morning, afternoon, and evening. From a participant observation, where the focus is centered on the meanings that people give to their behaviours and actions, we have to be flexible and adapt to the pandemic by shaping our observation as a structured type. In this case, we observed the frequency of actions occurred online by the museum, studying how often things happen instead than why they take place (Thornhill et al., 2009). Changing our observation strategies makes us avoid observation threats concerning validity and reliability such as time error ²³ and observer effect ²⁴.

3.6.3 Secondary Data

With the aim of triangulating our findings we decided to access also data that have previously been collected for other purposes. Documentary written materials and multiple-source secondary data were taken into account. The first written material we studied is the statute of Poldi Pezzoli Museum, since, for the scope of our research, we are interested in understanding the founding values of the organization. Also organisational communications such as informative email (e.g. newsletter) and thank-you emails sent to clients were considered to assess their communicative strategy. Transcripts of interviews that were held by other interviewers concerning topics that result relevant for our study were collected. Lastly, relevant articles and other web-pages helped us discussing our findings. With the aim of working with reliable data, we have endeavoured to only retrieve data from trustworthy sources and we tried to consider the possible biases of the researchers who collected those data. The use of the secondary data helped us to compare and provide a context to the data we gathered through interviews and observation (Thornhill et al., 2009). Verifying the content of the interviews with written documents, we were able to provide a more comprehensive approach to our data analysis (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2011).

3.7 Methodological Limitations

In this section the methodological limitations of our study will be explored.

²²"... observation of the traces of behaviour" (Thornhill et al., 2009).

²³Observation done during an untypical time of the total time the researchers are interested in (Thornhill et al., 2009, p. 303).

²⁴The presence of the observer might change the behavior of who is observed (Thornhill et al., 2009).

The first limitation concerns the definition of our research as a case study. It could be argued that the number of interviewees might not be sufficient to consider it a case study, since we were able to interview only four employees in the organization. However, we approached a small museum, with only nine people in the staff. We managed to approach the ones whose roles are relevant for our topic: Annalisa Zanni as the museum director, Federica Manoli, collection manager and the only responsible for the education department, Stefania Rossi, the only responsible for promotion and communication, and Ilaria Toniolo, the only responsible for the press office and social media channels.

The second limitation is connected to the language used during the interviews. While we carried out part of the interviews in our language, tearing down possible cultural barriers, we conducted interviews in English with our international interviewees. There are high chances that respondents might have misunderstood some questions and the flow of conversation was inhibited by not speaking their mother-tongue. Also, for the scope of our research, we had to translate the interviews we carried out in Italian in English. This might have caused some misinterpretation of the interviews because of the different nuances of meaning the two languages have.

The last and third limitation concerns the lock-down. As stated in the previous paragraphs, our research had to change drastically by reviewing our research strategy, questions, and objectives. Also the methods of collecting data had to be rethought to meet the deadline (see previous §3.7.1 Interviews, § 3.7.2 Observation). The way in which interviews and observation methods were planned to be carried out had to change adopting to the current reality.

3.7.1 Coding Data Collection

To understand the different data collected we had to define a way to code and analyse the information gathered. We first organised our data in a more logical and organic way, transcribing the interviews taken and gathering all the information of the observation we have done on Poldi Pezzoli's digital channels in a diary. Also, we had to go through all the secondary we selected for our research.

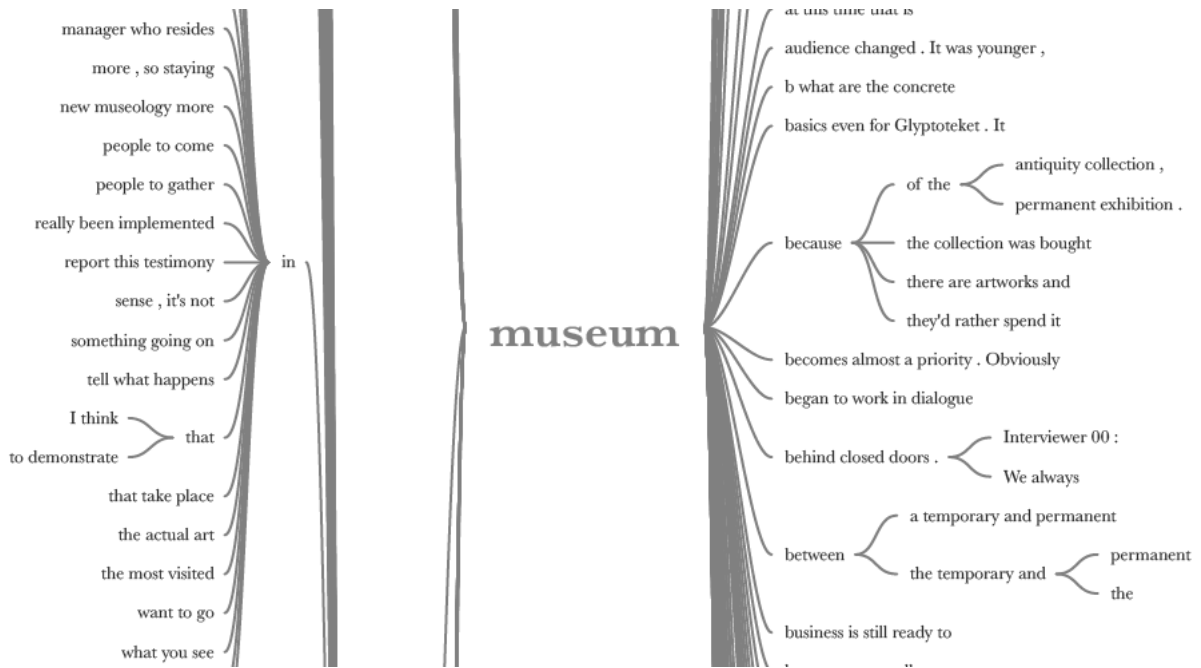
We based our coding process by starting from analysing the interviews done using the data analysis software NVivo. We believed that a data analysis software would have facilitated the process of categorising complex and relevant concepts, assessing the information in a less biased way. According to Lewins and Silver (2006) this kind of software fosters the identification of links within the data.

To study the data collected, the literature suggests two different approaches: inductive and deductive (Thornhill et al., 2009). The deductive approach uses the existing theory to support the research question and research objectives (Bryman, 1989). However, the individuation of a specific theory

in advance tends to be disadvantageous establishing an early closure on the topic to be investigated. On the other hand, starting from existing literature may be advantageous as it may help to link the research to the existing theoretical framework and body of knowledge (Thornhill et al., 2009). The inductive approach, indeed, firstly gathers data and then it analyses the data by looking for themes and issues to focus on. This approach is usually used when the research has an exploratory aim: the study does not start with a defined literature framework, but the data collected are used to develop and create questions to be tested and studied. Consequently, theory develops from the data collection process and analysis (Thornhill et al., 2009).

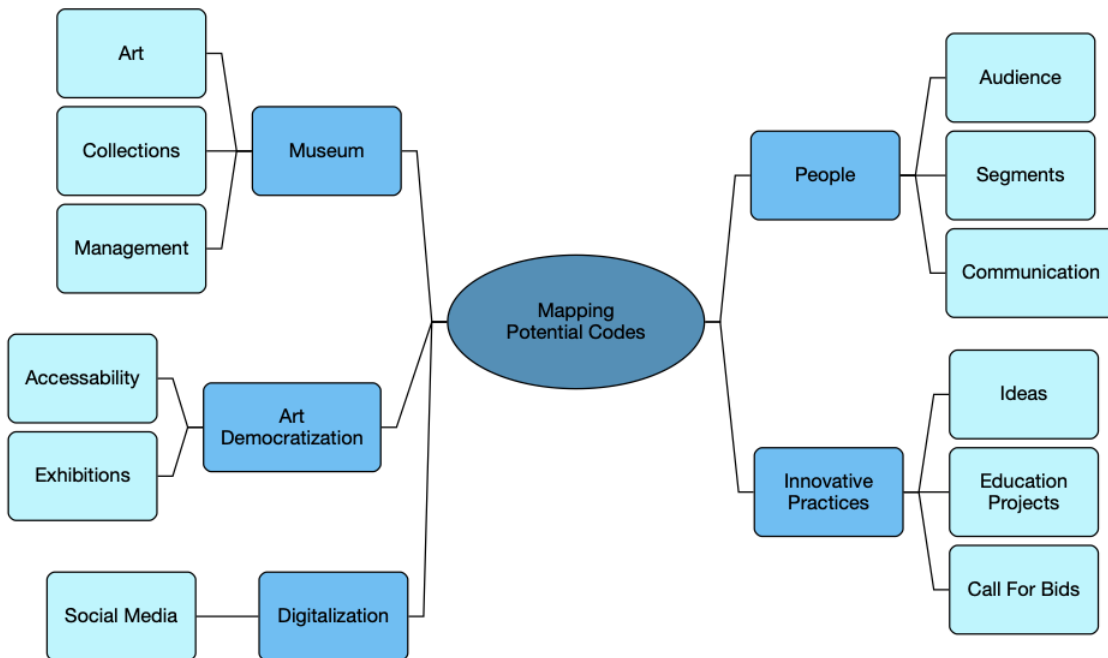
As the theory suggests, we integrated the two different approaches. In our case, we started adopting an inductive approach from the very first moment using NVivo software, grouping together all the interviews, secondary data and observation notes. At the beginning, we ran a query considering all the interviews, to understand which words were repeated the most by our respondents identifying possible themes. As shown in the picture below, the words with the highest frequency in the interviews were: museum, think, exhibits, people, collective.

Figure 3.7: Word Tree: Museum



Source: Personal elaboration

Figure 3.8: Deductive Coding: Mapping Potential Codes



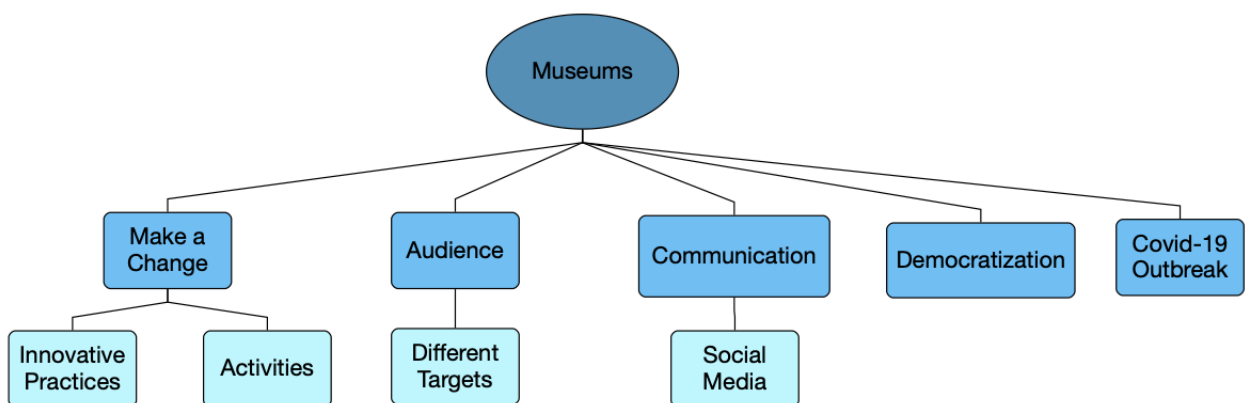
Source: Personal elaboration

We then started to follow the software and create nodes on a more inductive and objective level.

Primarily, we ran queries for all the 1000 words outlined from the first query we used to identify the words frequency. We then studied all the queries and selected the most relevant words we believed would have been the best fit for our research. From the selection of these queries the first nodes or categories were originated. From this step we started to categorise our data by attaching "... meaningful chunks of data" (Thornhill et al., 2009, p. 492). The main categories that we selected for this first step of coding were approximately 99. The names given to these nodes came from: actual terms or concepts used by the respondents, terms used by our theoretical framework, and terms we personally elaborated. In our second cycle of coding we identified logical relationships between categories and we regrouped them hierarchically.

Finally, we began to attach phrases, chunk of data, and entire paragraphs to each category and subcategory. In this step interviews, observation, and secondary data were considered at the same time. Analysing deeper every data collected we revised our categories many times rearranging the labels, their hierarchical position, and sometimes even regrouping the nodes in relation of the meanings we set in our data. The final cycle of coding ended in identifying a master category *Museum* under which a second level of codes were defined as *Make A Change*, *Audience*, *Communication*, *Democratization*, and *COVID-19 Outbreak*.

Figure 3.9: Final Codes



Source: Personal elaboration

4 Analysis

In this chapter, we will analyse the data we gathered. Since the main focus of this research is the Poldi Pezzoli museum, the experts' interviews will be used to compare different practices and to explore diverse scenarios. In the following text, we go back and forth between our case study and the context in which the museum operates. The data collected will be outlined in this chapter by studying each category and subcategories presented in our coding paragraph (Ch.3 § Coding Data Collection): Museums, Make a Change, Audience, Communication and Democratization. The category or node *Museum* has been chosen as a master node to explore the museum field and the role of such cultural institution within our society. Data concerning museum practices will be presented to further discuss the Poldi Pezzoli museum experience. To better organize this discussion of data, the master node has been divided in two sub-categories: place and strategy. The *Make a change* category explores the way processes change in the museum industry and the limitations of these changes. The data concerning this topic was divided in three sub-categories: activities, innovative practises, and the COVID-19 Outbreak. As for *Audience category*, we want to discover the human variable that influence and shape the museum activities, experiences, and management. The *Communication* category introduce the reader to the communication strategy of the museum, putting the spotlight on the social media strategy. Finally as for *Democratization* the social phenomenon of art democratization will be presented, outlining which path museums are taking.

4.1 Museums

The Poldi Pezzoli museum has been opened to the public since April 25th 1881 to narrate the story of Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli through the 30 rooms of his house-museum, which evokes the charm from the Middle Age to the 18th century, up to the reinterpretation of the Armoury room by the contemporary artist Arnaldo Pomodoro. The museum is the house of masterpieces "... Old Masters, sculptures, carpets, lace and embroidery, arms and armour, jewels, porcelain, glass, furniture, sundials and clocks... from Antiquity to the 19th century, suspended in a magical atmosphere" (Poldi Pezzoli Museum, 2020a). It consists of an extraordinary heritage of over 6 thousand works of the fine quality, which were enriched over time after the initial donation of Poldi Pezzoli. Annalisa Zanni, the Poldi Pezzoli museum director, stated that the peculiarity of the museum "...derives from being a house-museum, therefore in restoring a history of taste, of living and collecting..." (Interview A. Z.). Ilaria Toniolo, responsible of press office, remarks that the Poldi Pezzoli is an house-museum and being the home of a collector of another century is one of their strengths.

Comparing and contrasting the Poldi Pezzoli museum practices with other realities, we noticed that museums are moving from a more traditional way of museum management to a more modern vision of what the museum actually is by applying the new words contemplated by ICOM - International Council of Museums. Today museums are not only places of conservation, preservation and acquisition, but even of communication, enjoyment, education and above all for the public. Museums are shifting slowly into being more a social place (Interview Christina Jensen, project manager digital department SMK), and it is right that they open to the public, because a museum without an audience does not exist (Interview I. T.).

The cultural institution of Poldi Pezzoli is involved in changing its practices according to the museum definition approved by ICOM and recognized by Italy in 2014. In this regard, they have chosen to "... adopt the languages, the transformation, the change, the enrichment..." presenting "...a place that has a very specific mission, to study, preserve, but also to enhance its heritage, creating an ongoing dialogue with society" (Interview A. Z.). The museum is no longer a place that awaits its visitors, but it is a place that seeks its visitors and offers a range of services to meet their needs (Interview A. Z., I. T., Stefania Rossi, promotion Poldi Pezzoli, Federica Manoli, collection manager and education department Poldi Pezzoli).

4.1.1 Place

As stated by ICOM and shared by our respondents, first of all the museum is defined as a physical place. For Annalisa Zanni, the museum is a place of entertainment, of enjoyment, where to feel good; where people go very often and receive a series of opportunities to stay close to beauty and discover their story. It is also an active and lively place, where museum employees work a lot and work for the public (Interview A. Z.). According to Letizia Treves, curator of the later Italian, Spanish, and French 17th century paintings at National Gallery of London, the museum is a place where people might actually go to distract themselves from their daily routine and they find contemplation (Interview L. T.). Camilla Jensen, Head of Communication at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket, argued that people come sometimes even just to experience the place (Interview Camilla J.). Luca lo Pinto, museum director of MACRO - Museum of Contemporary Art Rome -, stated that the museum is a place of self reflection, where the people's knowledge is put in discussion (Interview L. I. P). Therefore, museums are places of art, collections, culture, experience, stories, and of and for society.

Regarding the Poldi Pezzoli museum, even its statute, reformulated in 2018, testifies the dedication of the house-museum to equally the collection and people. The Poldi Pezzoli museum depends on

the Artistic Foundation Poldi Pezzoli Onlus, requested by Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli at the time of his death. In his testament, the Milanese noble art collector, expressed explicitly his willing in leaving all the work of art in his possession "... for the public use and benefit in perpetuity..." (Poldi Pezzoli Museum, 2020a). Therefore, the museum has been in accordance with dedicating the collections to the public since its very beginning. As written in the statute, the foundation is a place with the purpose of protection, conservation, promotion and enhancement of the assets of artistic and historical interest, constituting its cultural heritage. Also, it carries out educational and research services and museum and cultural activities. The objective is to create knowledge for the society and contribute to its development promoting growth and enrichment of the local, national and international community (Guasti, 2018). At Poldi Pezzoli, through the art of the past and the present, people can recognize their stories by encountering and arising emotions, since culture is part of their DNA, their cultural history, their own history (Interview A. Z.). In this way, art is considered as a sort of language with which people can communicate without the need of using words (Interview Christina J.) For the head of Interpretation at Glyptoteket, Julie Lejsgaard Christensen, the cultural heritage is a safer arena for discussing problematic issues, as our society believes that arts, history and cultural heritage, have a great potential for us to share a common language discussing current themes. And more, the director of CATS ²⁵ at SMK, Jørgen Wadum, agrees that "Paintings are not only beautiful flowers or a dramatic story from the Bible. Paintings are also messages from the past about how society works" (Interview Jørgen Wadum). To be a place for and of people the museum has to implement a winning language to create a dialogue between the arts and the actual public. A dialogue that can be delivered taking into account three main activities preservation, conservation and communication. By creating a dialogue people can discover themselves and history, turning the role of museum to an identity maker for people's lives (Interview J. W.). According to Daniela Porro, Special Superintendent of Archeology, Fine Arts and Landscape in Rome, the museum becomes a meeting place where the story of the city and nation is told (Interview D. P.). To build and stimulate a dialogue with the visitor the museum can even become a more recreational space, where the public can go for studying, reading, drinking a coffee, having yoga classes to then discover its collections (Interview L. I. P.).

Nowadays, to create a dialogue the museums are changing in the way they present their cultural heritage (Interview F. M.). They are discovering and approaching new ways of communication to face one of the biggest challenges that is competition. The director of communication at Glyptoteket, Camilla Jensen, reminded that this type of competition does not identify just the other museums as competitors, but also Netflix, television, all sorts of social media, as people have an overload of

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possibilities that can be entertaining and are easily accessible (Interview Camilla J.). People are used to have a frenetic rhythm in their life, and when they enter a museum sometimes this vibe is not present with a consequent dissatisfaction sentiment (Interview L. I. P.). The Head of Digital at SMK, Jonas Heide Smith, shared that to win the fierce of competition for people's time and attention, SMK organizes a variety of events and activities to address a wide range of audiences. The language of museum is then modernized by involving the variables of entertainment and enjoyment; however not everyone agrees in introducing entertainment in the museum environment. For instance, Luca lo Pinto believes museums must be careful in shaping a new language. It is important to be able to convey high contents without creating too much entertainment (Interview L. I. P.). Moreover, the way of conveying information is changed by using not only the traditional tools like tour guides, lectures on a specific historical period, painting, or artist, but integrating new technologies facilitating the curating department to reach their public. Letizia Treves believes that the role of curator has changed a lot in the last 10 years. When she started working for The National Gallery of London there were still curators who had been there for 20 years and near retirement not used to do exhibitions but just to write catalogs (Interview L. T.). Now, the curator is more active and present in the life and experience of the public, bridging the gap between the object and the general public by telling stories and opening people's eyes. Stories fascinate people who can suddenly look at the object in different ways (Interview J. W.). In particular, Poldi Pezzoli is completely in line with this new vision and it presented a new initiative called *Poldi Pezzoli Stories*. This cultural campaign concerns curators and conservators presenting some of the museum's artworks by explaining in detail many aspects of an artist, the techniques used, the meaning of the work. These stories are videos published on the Facebook and Instagram page of the museum. For instance, on Easter day April 12th 2020, the museum Director Annalisa Zanni told to the social media audience the story of *Imago Pietatis* by the Venetian artist Giovanni Bellini in a 6 minutes video. On April 13th 2020 the story of the *Hunting Tapestry* was presented by the collection manager and registrar Federica Manoli. Through initiative not only artworks are introduced, but even restoration practices are explained like the video published on April 16th 2020 about the artistic techniques used by Giovanni Bellini in *Imago Pietatis* and its restoration process; or the video presented on April 23th 2020 explaining the Restoration of *The Christ With The Child* by Marco d'Oggiono. Regarding *Poldi Pezzoli Stories*, the responsible of press office reminded us that these videos not only explain the artworks of the collection, but even what happens in the museum, as in the video posted on Facebook on April 20th 2020 explained the lighting system of the museum. There is a willing on behalf of the museum to be known as whole and not only for its collection by the public.

4.1.2 Strategy

By moving from a more collection-centred approach to a more visitor-centred one, museums' strategies needed to change to meet a modern vision and to better engage the public. For this purpose we analyzed the strategic plans of each cultural institutions addressed in this research, so to better understand if the Poldi Pezzoli practices are in line with a more international market.

The National Gallery of London states in its strategic plan as an opening sentence, "The National Gallery exists so that people can engage with art" (National Gallery of London, 2018, p. 1). The National Gallery has a unique important collection, which is wanted to be shared with the "...widest possible audience" (National Gallery of London, 2018), while being a place of enjoyment and learning. One of the first points of the Gallery strategic plan is "... to foster engagement with the public" (National Gallery of London, 2018, p. 4). They also want to keep up with the digital world, building a "...National Gallery with digital as its heart" (National Gallery of London, 2018, p. 4). As a matter of fact, Letizia Treves reported that one of their biggest challenges is to get a wide variety of audience and involve them (Interview L. T.). In this case, what is lacking is the creation of a dialogue between the collections and people, that can be overcome by getting closer to audiences' needs introducing new displays for the collection, special activities and events (National Gallery of London, 2018).

The Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket, indeed, is recognizing that the European society is changing. Therefore, the museum decided to leave their more classical and elitist position to involve and welcome every public around the world (Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket, 2018). The cultural institution wants to get back to the founder Carl Jacobsen's goal "living art for the living people" (Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket, 2018, p. 3). In this regard, the Head of Interpretation stated that museum is moving toward a more social profile, by experimenting and trying new things and evaluating them for a future application (Interview J. L. C.). She then added that the museum still needs to implement the new museology: "...the user oriented way of thinking, not being monologues but dialogues, there's a lot of things that we still need to do and we need to go a long way to actually be that way and not just talking about it" (Interview J. L. C.). In a nutshell, the Head of Communication, Camilla Jensen, reported that Glyptoteket wants to make history relevant by connecting it to the present, by using many different paths to attract people (Interview Camilla J.).

On the other hand, SMK - Statens Museum for Kunst speaks about being a meeting place for conversations, discussions, reflections, and as a platform for introducing and exchange stories and opinions (SMK - Statens Museum Kunst, 2018b). SMK "wants to build a more creative and reflective

society that values its history and cherishes difference" (SMK - Statens Museum Kunst, 2018b). The museum is pointing a lot in doing events and having partnership as stated by the Head of Digital Jonas Heide Smith, and also they are betting on digitization.

Finally, the Poldi Pezzoli museum is in line with the concept of creating a dialogue by building a social sense opening up the museum to a variety of audiences offering tailored guide tours, audio-guides options, events, and combining art of the past with the contemporary one. Also, they hold special happy hours some Thursdays of the month for mainly young university students (Interview S. R.) and workshops. The director told us that they once organized a workshop dedicated to painting porcelain, so that people could understand the difficulties of drafting and choosing colors by enhancing individual skills (Interview A. Z.). Ilaria Toniolo, indeed, talked about an activity organized for the exhibition on the Ladies of Pollaiuolo, where the museum created a photographic campaign in which women could also be portrayed as in the famous paintings of the ladies of Pollaiuolo by famous photographers. In this way, the museum is building new languages to bring the collections closer to the public, by explaining and discussing their matters.

4.1.3 Wrap Up: Museums

The *Museums* category presented the change that the museum sector is having in relation to the definition provided by ICOM. The changes regard: shifting the relative attention from the collections to the public, the identification of the artistic language as a universal tool to convey a story, and the need of improving the museums' strategy in this direction.

4.2 Make a Change

The museum industry changed consistently during the past twenty years. Museums became places of entertainment and enjoyment that seeks their visitors and offer a range of services. The effort of going toward the public is the "fundamental change that cultural institutions have been making for many years" (Interview A. Z.). In 2013 the Museums Association (2013) stated that "every museum should have the ambition to change people lives". This shows the efforts of the community in addressing the public's needs. As a matter of fact, "museums that cling to traditional, authoritative models will lose audiences on a dramatic scale to new types of experience-driven, guest-centred organizations that we cannot even imagine today" (Mitroff Silvers, 2018). The continuous nature of this changes has been acknowledged by many of our interviewees, together with the implications in term of social role of the institution. Letizia Treves clearly states that she would be curious to see how the role of the

museum could evolve. Stefania Rossi hopes “that the museum will open up more and more to become an institution at the service of society as indicated by its founder, Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli” (Interview S. R.). She dreams to have a museum visited by young people, with initiative that are aimed at making them understand the value of protecting the artistic heritage. She wants the museum “to become a training center for the younger generations” (Interview S. R.). At the same time, Jonas Heide Smith expects the museum to become a more inclusive arena. After all, as Weil (2012) said, “if lacking in social value, museums will be useless”. However, it takes a long time to create a change in a museum because “it’s an old organization and people have been here for many years” (Interview Christina J.). Since the cultural sector seems to be resilient to exponential changes (Vicars-Harris, 2018), it is quite complex to develop a whole new mindset toward museum management (Interview Christina J.). According to Camilla Jensen, even though museums are actually changing, the change happens at a really slow pace. Julie perceive that something is new it is on its way, but she has a hard time in thinking what is coming next. Camilla Jensen strives to preserve the traditional conception of the institution, proposing to develop a strategy on “how to keep structures of the past instead of changing into new structures of society” (Interview Camilla J.).

One of the key activities of the museum, which consists of making connections between different objects across time and space, using storytelling to connect with their audiences, does not have to change. Probably, the museum of the future will add layers of meaning, bridging the gap between the experts and the people, and it will be “valued both as a preserver of memory and instigator for ideas, that will empower people to seek answers and foster action” (Vicars-Harris, 2018).

4.2.1 Activities

“The museum is not only a place of study and conservation, but it is also an active, living place” (Interview Annalisa Zanni). The cultural organization, therefore, offers a many activities to address the needs of the public (Interview A. Z.). With a program of activities, the Poldi Pezzoli Museum is fulfilling the desire of its founder, Gian Giacomo, to create a cultural institution close to its local community (Interview S. R.). The program may consist of talks, concerts, performances or events always starting from the collections (Interview A. Z.). Each initiative should be targeted to a specific segment (Interview I. T.). Julie believes that, in order to understand the needs of different target groups, it could be beneficial to be brave and experiment with the activity program, testing out new initiatives (Interview J. L. C.). The result of this strategy may entail an increase in people’s level of engagement with the museum (Interview J. L. C.). For example thematic talks and informal lectures can foster revisits since they help to present the collection in a new light, allowing the visitors to gain

more awareness about the artworks and the museum (Interview J. L. C.). So the staff at the Poldi Pezzoli Museum “somehow tries to delight the visitors with in-depth conferences, happy hours and other activities to invite people to come back” (Interview I. T.). It has not been always like this clearly, “now it’s much more public facing, more activities, many more exhibitions, much more interaction with the public, much more online things as well” said Letizia Treves. This is part of an evolution process that characterizes this industry and that leads toward a tighter relationship with its audience. Analysing our interviews, we identified three different types of activities that can be carried out by the museum: educational activities, events and exhibitions. In the following paragraphs we will go through each of them.

Educational Activities

"It is your responsibility as a museum to make the objects accessible and to educate people in what is theirs effectively" (Interview L. T.). The museum should create the right tools to help people understanding the value of the artworks. This entails a challenge that the Poldi Pezzoli museum is currently tackling: being able to insert new, educational, innovative methodologies (Interview S. R., F. M.). Ilaria Toniolo argues that “teaching has always been a flagship of the museum”. Since the educational activities were launched, the offering changed a lot to adapt to the new way children learn (Interview L. T.). Federica Manoli argues that the educational function of museums shifted from being didactic focused, where the museum is a knowledge center that teaches people notions on art, to learning focus, which entails a more interactive approach. Education is a must for the Poldi Pezzoli museum since they want to make art available to the public giving people the chance to deepen their understanding of the artworks and the museum itself (Interview A. Z.). People generally feel distant from art, since they think it has nothing to do with them (Interview Christina J.). This mindset can be reversed if you teach your potential audience that art is something they could actually understand (Interview Christina J.). We could argue that education is nothing but a way to close the gap between culture and individuals. For these reasons, Letizia Treves is a great advocate of “having an extensive program ranging from the academic lecture to the practical workshop”. She emphasizes the importance of educating the youngsters because they are going to be the audience of tomorrow. At the National Gallery of London, they “have someone in education who is dedicated on working with schools specifically. However, educational activities do not only target children, but even university students, people with difficulties, elderly or just adults. The more the museum feels like reaching a specific segment, the more efforts and resources are going to be used to meet that goal. Stefania informed us that, at the Poldi Pezzoli museum, they have a talented educator, Barbara, that takes care of the activities that concern the youngsters. She

designs workshops to create and share knowledge while having fun. These educational activities are not planned just for children. For instance, in partnership with the Cologni Foundation, they developed a workshop for adults with a master craftsman. This activity was designed for people passionate about art, to get them a deeper understanding on the collection. All in all, the mission of museums is to educate, creating also entertainment (Interview I. T.).

Events

The museum should not only be a place where you go to see something, it should be a place where you feel good (Interview I. T.) and the event format is one of the instruments to use to facilitate a pleasant experience at the museum.

The Poldi Pezzoli museum offers a variety of events. They managed to capture the attention of the youngsters with a happy hour, every Thursday, at the museum. This initiative, which started in 2017, was positively received by the community and the context in which the museum lives in. We noticed that even one the most important Italian newspaper, *il Corriere della Sera*, dedicated an article about the success of this event. Even if “10 years ago it was unthinkable to go to a museum to have an happy hour” said Ilaria Toniolo. With the cost of a regular ticket, the museum extends the opening hours until 9.00 PM and offers guided tours (Interview A. Z., I. T.). The event could probably be defined as a moment of edutainment. Stefania Rossi was the one in charge of making this event possible. She worked on this project because she wanted to cater the needs of a few university students. Since she strongly believes in young people, she decided to support them in developing their ideas in the museum spaces. “From the beginning, these events proved to be very popular. The first guided tour of the museum with a convivial moment, like an aperitif scheduled, saw the participation of 200 young people” (Interview S. R.). Stefania truly thinks she won a tough challenge engaging with young people in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum. She explains that “being a small house-museum in Milan, usually visited by an audience of old age, seeing all these youngsters wandering around the museum and admiring the collections, with the desire of coming back, was really a positive response” (Interview S. R.). In fact, with the formula of the happy hour, they managed “to get closer to the public who never entered in the museum before” (Interview I. T.). Also “private events such as dinners” are offered by the Poldi Pezzoli Museum (Interview I. T.) with complementary guided tours in the exhibition spaces to emphasize the exclusivity of the experience and its value.

An evening event formula seems to be quite popular among museums, both in Italy and internationally. At the National Gallery of London, they are popular for their Friday night fundraising events (Interview L. T.). At the National Gallery of Denmark, they organize the so-called SMK Friday,

an event designed explicitly for young people, just like the one offered by the Poldi Pezzoli museum. Once a month the museum is open till late to welcome whoever wants to join. They offer free admission, a convivial moment with a concert, drinks, food and then the chance to visit the exhibition. Often researchers and curators are there to provide information about the art pieces. Their participation definitely gives an extra value to the experience (Interview J. W.). Also the Glyptoteket offers a similar experience. On Thursday they close at nine o'clock instead of five, to host an evening of tours and talks and music. Camilla Jensen defined it as "a mini festival inside the museum". These evenings are thematic, and they are based either on the special exhibition open in that period or any other topic of their choice. Our experts walked us throughout the role of events in the museums. They represent a smart strategy to attract and engage with the audiences (Interview J. H. S.) and they represent an "investment for the future" (Interview J.W.).

Exhibitions

"The special exhibitions are extremely important because they create a reason to go to the museum" (Interview Camilla J.). Since exhibitions explore different themes, they help the museum "to attract a very different kind of audience" (Interview L. T.). Not only they are developed "to create a new perspective on the permanent collections" (Interview Camilla J.), but they also provide a lot of information about how a museum does research (Interview Christina J.). The Poldi Pezzoli museum organizes three temporary exhibitions throughout the year: "one of them always takes place in the autumn and then later in the year we always have an exhibition in occasion of the design week" (Interview S. R.). They also have "a contemporary art exhibition in May" (Interview S. R.). Offering exhibitions focused on contemporary art helps them to reach a more variegated audience. As stated by Ilaria Toniolo, "when we did the first design exhibition, we noticed that the museum audience changed. It was younger and the environment was mainly composed of creatives and designers. Recently, we lunched this beautiful exhibition dedicated to the fashion world, so there was mainly an audience of fashion enthusiasts. Clearly also the exhibition activity in some way changes the type of audience" (Interview I. T.). Exhibitions represent an opportunity to move forward and tell a new story, being careful to not jeopardize your identity (Interview A. Z.). To increase the level of interaction with the museum, also activities, tailored to specific targets, are organized, in correspondence of the exhibition. For instance, last year, for the exhibition of Romanticism they "organized watercolor courses, inspired by the grand tour" (Interview S. R.). Another example is related to the exhibition of the Madonna Litta. Several initiatives were organized during this exhibition among which they created an activity book, for children and families, entitled "become a student of Leonardo" with a series of activities

(Interview S. R.). Through this album, children could exercise their creative abilities, practicing the lessons the Leonardo himself would teach them. Also an innovative promotional campaign was carried out. To attract different segments and increase the awareness concerning the exhibition, the poster of the Madonna Litta exhibition was presented “on the maxi screens of 70 Italian airports” (Interview A. Z.). There was an excellent response. It was really an example of a very large turnout at the museum as it was the second most visited exhibition in the recent story of the museum (Interview A. Z.). The success was certainly given by the fact that it was an exhibition of great value since they had on loan a work attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, but at the same time this created a challenge in managing a greater amount of visitors than usual coming to the museum. Another exemplary exhibition was the one “dedicated to the icon of the museum, the female portrait of Piero del Pollaiuolo” (Interview A. Z.). For the occasion the four versions of the painting, preserved in various parts of the world, were reunited. Because of unique nature of the exhibition it turned out to be “the most visited exhibition created between 2014 and 2015 and the most visited in the museum’s history” (Interview A. Z.).

4.2.2 Innovative Practices

Thinking outside the box enables the creation of new ideas and processes. Innovative practices usually involve activities that generate direct and positive externalities in the society. Letizia Treves told us about a new pilot scheme was launched by the National Gallery of London last year, with the aim of doing something meaningful for the society. The museum did something very unusual with the Artemisia Gentileschi painting, when it was bought in 2018. They used the picture in a new way, instead of hanging it on the walls once it was restored they brought the painting to places where people who probably never went in a museum could experience such a painting (for instance in a school a deprived area of New Castle) (Interview L. T.).

The Poldi Pezzoli Museum also worked on multiple innovative projects. For instance, Stefania Rossi worked on organizing meetings, called *hard bites*, with professionals of the art field to increase the awareness of the job possibilities related to the cultural sector. These represent a occasion to share experiences and the creation of connections between the people working within the creative field.

Additionally, museums are able to create innovation thanks to collaborations and projects that involve digitization. Laura Wilkinson, Programme Director at the New Museum, believes that technological change is “transforming the way people access, enjoy and create culture”. In order to not become obsolete, it is important to keep up with the developments of the market (Wilkinson, 2018). Specifically, the Poldi Pezzoli Museum activated multiple digital initiatives that allow the

organization to foster innovative practices. Two year ago, they “participated in a call for bids for digital innovation by proposing a visit with a Chat bot game”. The Chat bot, developed by InvisibleStudio, is a fictional character that helped the participants to find unexpected details in the museum (Demuro, n.d.). It was particularly successful since it was designed to increase the level of engagement and interaction during the visit. The project was fresh and innovative given the fact that nobody ever used the software for teaching purposes before. (Interview S. R.). More recently, they started working on a project involving a new digital audio system (Interview S. R.). This shows their ability to think ahead. It is worth noticing that already in 2015 the museum was recognized to be as a pioneer for technological innovation. At the time, they launched an innovative interactive art installation regarding the watches conserved in the museum spaces. The installation allowed "visitors to move along a digital timeline with information on the main pieces of the room, to view high-resolution photos to discover details, and to watch videos of the clocks in action" (Artribune, 2015). The critical situation caused by COVID-19, generated a tighter necessity to further change the current museum practices. As Stefania Rossi said, “these moments of difficulty are ultimately useful for renewing and innovating your organization even more” (Interview S. R.). The virtual tours, managed by university students under Stefania supervision, were one of the innovation brought with the emergency thanks to the technology of Google Arts and Culture and presented on Zoom. Stefania saw the potential of the virtual tour and she thought it could be used also once this emergency period is over, especially to cater the needs of the elderly and the ones that for reasons of different nature cannot visit the museum spaces.

At the National Gallery of Denmark, they can definitely see the value of digitization. In their strategy for 2018-2021, they set the goal of “improving accessibility to the museum collections by means of grater digitization”. The objective seems to be quite clear: they want to have the 247,000 artworks available online. Jørgen Wadum, as an passionate senior research with the ability of looking beyond, has a peculiar perception on digital means. Being an experienced expert in the field, he could dare to say that there always been a closure of the industry regarding the use of digital instruments. He argues that nowadays, we could “make a digital exhibition, a virtual exhibition, like we do these days when museums are closed” (Interview J. W.). On one hand, digitization creates a positive outcome because it helps increasing the level of accessibility of art. You would be able to make visits available anytime, everywhere and technological tools can also show specific details that human eyes could not. On the other hand, you lose contact with the object. These practices could also end up being misleading since they might generate an unrealistic expectation on the artwork (Interview J. W.). "Let’s imagine a scenario in which someone studies a painting with digital tool, he or she might know a lot about the art piece but he or she knows nothing about its dimension and the feeling the artwork can generate.

You end up seeing something that does not represent the reality" (Interview J. W.). Although the limits of using technological tools needs to be addressed, the use of macro-images could help experts to discover new paths of research, like it happened to Annalisa Zanni when she was studying the pictures of a necklace collected in the museum. Even though she has been familiar with the object for many years, she never realized that that object had such a story to tell (Interview F. M.).

Not always the digital initiatives are well received by the public. For example, at the National Gallery of London, the so-called "Leonardo Experience" was considered quite poor, even though it was one of the most expensive exhibitions to design. Letizia Treves told us that "the whole exhibition focused on the Virgin of the rocks and it was basically a digital project". Each room had a different focus to create an understanding of specific themes. "One room was a kind of reconstruction of Leonardo studio with infra-reds and x-rays and lots of technical images. One room explored the use of light and the visitor could play with different lighting effects. Another one was showing a virtual reconstruction of the church in which the painting used to be. And then the final room, there was a kind of digital projection around the altarpiece with all the different configurations of how the altarpiece was". Despite the project seems engaging and exciting on paper, it was not successful, according to Letizia, also because they charged money to visit the exhibition. The price of the ticket was high -approximately 20 £-, therefore, people criticized the museum because they could not believe at the end there was the reproduction of the painting and not even the real painting. In the last room "the visitors just wanted to be with the painting", instead "the picture was projected all around until they could not really experience it". Jørgen Wadum and Letizia Treves observations pushed us to identify some key problems that concerns digitization. This issues, also presented in the past by academics such as Benjamin (2008), are related to the loss of contact with the art works and the concept of authenticity that are going to be discussed in the Discussion Chapter.

4.2.3 Wrap Up: Make A Change

The *Make A Change* category presented the way changes unfold in the museum industry. With the aim of investigating how this changes took place, the activities and the innovative practices carried out by cultural organizations were described.

4.3 Democratisation

Annalisa Zanni stated that the Poldi Pezzoli museum has always been considered and is still often considered to be a niche museum (Interview A. Z.). Its history of being seen as elitist started long time

ago, since the museum was a place for the good Milanese bourgeoisie (Interview I. T.).

Other than Poldi Pezzoli, this elitist vision is shared by the other experts of the sector we encountered. For instance, Christina Jensen thinks that there is an idea that only an elite goes in museum and knows something about art. On the same wave, the director of CATS at SMK said, "I'm afraid that our gallery still has the reputation of being very old fashioned and dusty and that we have very elitist art in the gallery" (Interview J. W.). Jørgen believes that art history is very often considered a kind of a closed world, and it can be intimidating. Sometimes art historians state that a picture is great, without giving an explanation (Interview J. W.). Even Julie Lejsgaard Christensen confessed that the Glyptoteket was a project for democratizing art at the beginning, but it became a place more elitist along the way, not renovating the narratives and the themes presented to the public. Despite the fact that the collections of museums were firstly gathered by a niche of collectors of privileged people (Interview L. I. P.), history teaches that art is addressed to everybody (Interview D. P.).

Even though, a large part of our respondents believes that the general public is still detached from the museum experience, the cultural world is implementing new visions, missions and practices to let people feel that the cultural heritage is for everyone and it is relevant for their lives. A major example of this new approach can be seen in the Poldi Pezzoli museum. The museum's will of being an opened museum, addressing different public, started from the wishes of its founder, Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli in 1871. Stefania Rossi reported, "in his will, he left his patrimony, his home and his collection for a use and benefit of the city of Milan. He wanted everyone to be able to access his place, especially young people and artisans; certainly with this desire for civic commitment and openness". Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli was very sensitive to the collective access of his house, "... he wanted art to be patrimony for everyone" (Interview A. Z.). In this direction the museum has made great efforts in these past few years to change the idea of the public of being an elitist organization. By using social networks, different ways of communicating towards the public, their heritage and collection have become more accessible (Interview I. T.). Today, the museum wants to reach everyone, the largest possible audience possible, maintaining a high quality of the cultural product (Interview I. T.). Now the museum has a duty to speak "to the whole public", regardless age and cultural backgrounds (Interview A. Z.). This new vision has been translated in investing into initiatives with the aim of bringing the public closer to the objects. The objective is to create an emotional connection between the artwork and the public (Russo, 2019). Having a diverse staff allowed the museum to adopt such an innovative approach. Each person can contribute differently in terms of knowledge, understanding and communication skills (Interview A. Z.). Diversity also fosters creativity and innovation in organizing activities, initiatives, workshops, events,

digital experiences to involve a variety of targets.

Similarly to Poldi Pezzoli museum, the Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket conserves the artworks donated by the Danish collector Carl Jacobsen, with the willing to make art accessible to the people of Copenhagen. As reported before, the museum started with a vision of democratisation and ended in creating an elitist environment. However, in the last few years, the cultural institution tried to move back to its founder's original vision (Interview J. L. C.). The point of getting back to a wide experience of the museum is really important for Glyptoteket as its today's vision is "Living art for living people" (Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket, 2018, p. 5).

Therefore to make art accessible to a wide public, providing the right tools and having a great communication strategy are fundamental. For example, Jørgen Wadum and Letizia Treves, as conservator and curator, share their knowledge with the public hosting lectures, small talks during events. Art can also be conveyed using technologies, and this could be a way of creating interest even in people that would not normally be interested in museums.

In short, democratisation is a matter of languages and methodologies as Jørgen Wadum remarked with a metaphor, " ...the public loves to see a dramatic surgery on television... and how you put on a new leg or how you do fancy operations. We can do the same, and we have the same equipment but no blood of course. But we get exciting new discoveries when we examine, and I think we should be more outgoing with that kind of information, because that is democratizing also the artworks themselves".

4.3.1 Wrap up: Democratisation

The *Democratisation* category confirmed to us that the public sees museums as for a small group, having sometimes difficulties in understanding a piece of art and considering museums places very intimidating. However, the museum sector is now trying to reverse the situation by engaging with "everyone".

4.4 Audience

Museums are cultural poles dedicated to people, where the collections are means to communicate the past and make people realize the future. Since museums are places for people and of people, it is important to discover and realize the audience of a cultural institution. Audience is meant as not only people who actually come to the museum, but even those individuals who have not entered yet, and who can be reached with promotion and communication.

For Poldi Pezzoli museum, the audience is very relevant and it is treated as an equal variable

as the collection is as reported by the director "... it is not only us who decide, but the public who must also give us an orientation" (Interview A. Z.). In general, Poldi Pezzoli museum's audience is heterogeneous (Interview S. R.) with a willing to reach an audience range from 3 to 99 years old, "The audience is the child who comes to visit with the parents, the student who comes with the class, the 40 years old who comes after work for happy hour, the retired gentlemen who come with the university of the third age" (I. T.). Naturally, there is a target of audience that they manage to involve better like school groups, with their educational activities, and other targets who they have difficulty to reach and engage.

Even though the aim of the museum is to reach as many people as possible, delivering a product of high quality, last year Politecnico di Milano university studied Poldi Pezzoli's public and it emerged that their audience is of medium age, particularly female. However, the average age of the audience is decreasing with the boost of engagement with young people (Interview S. R.). As Annalisa Zanni recalled, the new audience that the museum wants to reach is the young audience from 18 to 30 years old, since the audience until 18 has always been intercepted through educational programs. Concerning this, Stefania Rossi is taking care of this group of people called "Giovani del Poldi Pezzoli" (The Youth Group of Poldi Pezzoli). This group of young students is having a great success in organizing activities and initiatives, like the happy hours at the museum, for the young adults target since 2017. Even The National Gallery of London is struggling to reach the segment of young adults, as it seems they are more interested in contemporary art preferring to go to Tate Modern instead (Interview L. T.). Another segment that Poldi Pezzoli museum is having difficulties to reach is people between 30 and 40 years old, young professionals who are building a career and they are not used to go to museums. Ilaria Toniolo confessed that is a generational problem, which is probably connected to the museum opening hours, as the majority of these people are workers, finishing their day around 6.30- 7.00 PM or even later, and the museum is closing at 6.00 PM. Late openings could represent a tactic to deal with this issue but they could not be enough to break this barrier of participation.

As Poldi Pezzoli, SMK has a various audience who is divided in two groups: primary and secondary. The primary group consists of people who are interested in culture and are 40+ and 65+; while the secondary group is represented by younger people -40 and -60 (SMK - Statens Museum Kunst, 2018a). Tourists are also present and are part of the primary group, while families and kids are part of the secondary one. The younger group is now increasing as a target in Copenhagen, as today families with kids tend to stay in the city instead of moving out the capital like in the old days (Interview Christina J.). Therefore, the population in Copenhagen is becoming younger and the museum is trying to engage

that segment too, for example by organizing special activities and events (Interview J. H. S.) like SMK Fridays.

Also, Glyptoteket is aiming to have a wide audience saying that "we want everybody to come here and we think we got something for everybody" (Interview Camilla J.). As SMK, Poldi Pezzoli, and The National Gallery of London, they are focusing a lot on targeting younger audience and families with children as they are the audience of the future. In this case, with young people they do not mean young adults - so people between 18 and 30 years old - but young children and teenagers (Interview Camilla J.). Young adults, indeed, are actually present in the museum and Julie Lejsgaard Christensen thinks that probably one of the reasons are the temporary exhibitions, as they go "quite fast and also displaying artists and subjects that are interesting for the younger audience" (Interview J. L. C.).

4.4.1 Different targets

The Poldi Pezzoli museum is an organization that strives to be close to the people, not discriminating between nationality, race, gender or age. Stefania Rossi is the one in charge of working with the initiatives focusing on audiences with difficulties. First of all, she led the participation of the Poldi Pezzoli museum to several call for bids to develop an *ad hoc* offering for fragile categories. Not only, they worked on a project for adolescents subject to criminal proceedings for restorative justice of the Municipality of Milan, they have even a project dedicated to Alzheimer's patients, in partnership with Intesa San Paolo and the Manuli Foundation. The initiative focuses on using art therapy with them (Interview S. R.). They organized laboratories based on creative processes where people affected by Alzheimer can rebuild a connection between themselves and the environment (Fondazione Manuli, 2020). That turned out to be a really successful experiment with great human and social value (Invernizzi & Romenti, 2014).

The Poldi Pezzoli museum have also activated, "a project for children and families of the Municipality of Baranzate" (Interview S. R.). Baranzate is a multi-ethnic municipality located near Milan. The museum organized courses for children and their families once a month, developing a whole itinerary that allows families to create a relationship and integrate better within their new country (Interview S. R., I. T.).

The Poldi Pezzoli museum has a variegated audience also in terms of nationality. Their efforts can be immediately noticed by the variety of languages in which the audio guides are recorded, such as Russian, Chinese, Japanese, English, French, German, Italian. Annalisa Zanni argues that they worked hard to create multiple approaches to provide information to their audiences. It is fundamental to

develop *ad hoc* explanations that help visitors from a specific target groups to understand our culture (Interview F. M.). Stefania Rossi was ready to launch a project aimed at foreign tourism, with a focus on the Chinese public, that was stopped because of COVID-19. The museum joined the WeChat platform, which is largely used by the Chinese population, to carry out the project and break down the barriers of cultural differences.

4.4.2 Wrap Up: Audience

The *Audience* category describes the current and perspective audience of the museums, identifying the young adults as a great potential target group. The necessity of tailoring the needs of minorities and fragile audiences was also discussed, in light of the social value museums have.

4.5 Communication

Cultural communication is the exchange of information, news and dialogues about the arts via the practice of marketing, public relations, and social media (Mitchell, 2017). To make sure that the Poldi Pezzoli museum does not end up being the best secret ever kept, communication strategies are carried out by Stefania Rossi, responsible for the promotion, and Ilaria Toniolo, responsible for press and communication. The latter, Ilaria Toniolo, strives to adapt the communications depending on the target. Different terminologies and channels are needed, depending on whether you are talking to a child or to an adult, an expert or an amateur. Concerning university students, communications on social media would probably work better than communications by email. On the contrary, a middle aged woman would most likely be more familiar with the newsletter. Ilaria also works with more traditional offline communications, using posters around the city and newspaper articles, since part of their audience expects it. It is not always easy to hook people in, and storytelling could be a useful tool to raise interest in the potential audience. As Letizia Treves said, pictures and antique objects tell stories "and everyone enjoys to hear a good story". Using a common language between the museum and visitor allows the creation of a narrative that works to engage the audience. It is fundamental to renew and continuously adapt those narratives because people need to perceive that you are relevant to them (Interview J. L. C.).

4.5.1 Social Media

Communications have changed considerably in these fifteen years, and especially with the Covid-19 emergency (Interview I. T.). To be able to keep up with changes, museums need to have an established

"digital practice consisting of uploading images and telling stories on social medias" (Interview J. W.). Even though some art historians are sceptical about the implementation of these practices, social medias have a great potential when used thoughtfully. The Poldi Pezzoli Museum strives to create an effective and coherent communication on multiple platforms: Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Together with one of the curators, and an IT expert, Ilaria Toniolo develop a social media plan every 15 days. The objective is to create posts with a common thread (Interview A. Z.). Social networks are a way of bringing people together, involving also the ones that perhaps were more hesitant to visit the museum's collections (Interview I. T.). They can trigger a spark of interest towards potential visitors, bridging the gap between people and culture (Interview S. R.). It should be clear to everyone that the virtual experience does not replace the physical one. They need to be used for different purposes. For instance, knowledge and passion can be enhanced online, in a way that could lead to a deeper appreciation of the artworks offline.

Once the lock-down started, the need of being more spontaneous, proactive and reactive arose to cater the needs of an entire nation in quarantine. Observing the main social media platforms used by the museums, Museo Poldi Pezzoli and Giovanni Poldi Pezzoli, we could understand the strategies they are carrying out online, from March 8th until April 25th. On Instagram, on the official museum profile, there are 25 post. During the observation period the content is not really differentiated: they have 18 posts on #PoldiPezzoliStories; 1 informative IGTV (Instagram TV); 1 post about the 139 birthday of the museum; 2 challenges were launched names, things, flower, cities, that was also re-posted by the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, and the vase challenge, where they created a story with different names of Italian museums and they challenged the public to re-post the story and circle in which museums they have been already during their life. Moreover, they participated to 1 challenge that consisted in suggesting, throughout paintings, activities to do at home, while in quarantine. There was also 1 post about an educational activities for art amateurs: "the coffee at the Poldi Pezzoli", where they organized lessons of art history starting from their collections. Concerning the "young" profile of the Poldi Pezzoli museum, the first post after the temporal closure of the museum goes back to March 22nd, when the initiative of virtual tour at the museum was launched. This activity is managed by the young group of the Poldi Pezzoli museum. From the beginning of the quarantine, they shared 7 posts about the virtual tours; 3 posts on "and I would love to..." challenge that consists in expressing what you would do if you were not in quarantine, 3 posts on challenges launched by the Italian Minister of Culture where they had to find a painting from the collection of the museum that matched a specific theme. Lastly, they shared a post to celebrate the international book day. On Poldi Pezzoli official Instagram account, it seems like that the level of interaction decreased. The views of the #PoldiPezzoliStories ranged

compared to the ones on the Instagram page, as they introduce even some educational contents for different targets such as children, teenagers and adults. The level of interaction is quite consistent, some posts are more successful than other but, contrary to Instagram, there is not a general decline in the interest. On the Facebook page of the young group of Poldi Pezzoli, the same content as on Instagram is shared but there are less interactions.

4.5.2 Wrap up: Communication

The *Communication* category presents the communication strategy of the Poldi Pezzoli museum. The cultural institution carries out both an offline and online strategy, building a balanced communication. A key takeaway of this section is the necessity of tailoring content and channel of the communication to the segment targeted.

4.6 COVID-19 Outbreak

The pandemic COVID-19 emergency exploded unexpectedly, and the cultural world had to face the reduction of their services with a consequent closure of their activities from one day to another. The cultural world found itself on the knees - as many other sectors. Opinions, possible solutions, and discussions started to rise among the experts of the field. On April 17th 2020 we had the chance to follow a webinar on COVID-19 impact on cultural and creative sectors managed by OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development -, in collaboration with ECBN - European Creative Business Network -. During the webinar nine themes emerged related to the advent of the virus:

1. Data capture – Everyone wants to predict the economic impact of COVID-19 on the cultural industries.
2. Rush to digital – Culture is moving online aiming to share content with its audiences. This entails both new opportunities and challenges that might lead to rethink the digital strategy of many organizations.
3. Culture at the center of policy discussions - Mitigation strategies are needed to let cultural organization survive.
4. Culture and mental health - The spread of art therapy treatments.
5. Fragility of the labour market - Artists, practitioners, freelancers are lacking of job security.
6. Opportunity to re-position culture at the heart of our social system

7. Unlocking culture and reopening post lock-down - Experts discussed about the possibility of maintaining social distancing?
8. Behavioural change and public confidence – Experts discussed about how people will feel going back into museums, once it will be possible again.
9. Equity and inclusion – Museums will need to work even harder to attract those who were traditionally excluded and marginalised.

On April 10th 2020 we took part to another webinar organized again by OECD in collaboration with ICOM - International Council of Museums. In this webinar multiple interesting points arose. Two statistical data have been provided in this webinar, important to understand the economical and financial difficulties the museums are currently facing due to the pandemic. From South Korea, Inkyung Chang, Founding Director of Iron Museum, reported that the Korean Museums Association took a quick survey on the status of damage of the private museums and art galleries during 1 month of closure period in Korea, when 30% of the museums were still operating. A severe decrease in income along with partners, artists, hospitality sector, service providers, and exhibits developers has been registered. Specifically, the income loss is more than 1 million US \$. Antonio Lampis, General Director of Museums at the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, reported that 400 museums, over the 5000 museums Italy has, are incurring a damage of 20 million € every month since the closure. In this sense, the Joan Roca, Director MUHBA - Barcelona History Museum, spoke about the need of creating a Marshall plan for museums and he also recognizes five revolutions that COVID-19 is bringing to this sector:

1. Digital revolution - Digitization is becoming from a complementary offer to the only offer, but it should be use with a narrative purpose.
2. Heritage revolution - Despite the introduction of digitization, it is important to make the public and the museums understand that a virtual visit does not replace the experience visitors can have with a real face-to-face visit to the collections.
3. Organizational revolution - There is a need of re-organizing internally the tasks of museum workers as new things need to be created.
4. Citizen revolution - Mobilizing knowledge and heritage using digital tools can be crucial for cultural democracy combining culture and education together to reach even those segments not familiar with museums. In this sense, COVID-19 is an opportunity.

5. Tourism revolution - Tourism will probably be more local, hence the online world should be taken into account for reaching a more diverse and international public.

Acknowledging these major issues and changes, it is clear that the sector has to reevaluate and restructure the relationship that the museum has with economy and society by adding digital content and changing attitudes in terms of cultural professionals and in terms of engagement (OECD, 2020).

Also our case study has been hit by the COVID-19 outbreak and the Poldi Pezzoli museum proved to be proactive in trying to deal with a global emergency. Milan, where the museum is located, was one of the places more affected by the virus with 20893 positive cases confirmed on May 7th 2020 (Il sole 24 ore, 2020). Stefania Rossi hopes that "after this critical period, it will be an opportunity for a relaunch of Milan". With confidence Annalisa Zanni states that "there will be no going back" since this experience changed them. All the projects they were about to launch and that they were carrying out had to stop, but new ones emerged. For example the *MEMOS* exhibition they organized during this period, managed to reach the public with a virtual visit (Interview F. M.). Ilaria Toniolo and Federica Manoli strongly believe in the power of creativity to overcome the challenges brought by the pandemic. To face an emergency in the best possible way the staff worked and is working on finding creative solutions.

4.6.1 Wrap up: Covid-19 Outbreak

The COVID-19 pandemic emergency came unexpectedly and it hit profoundly many sectors. The cultural and creative industries had to close their businesses and services from one day to another. In this period, many issues have been risen by the experts trying to reach immediate short-term solutions. Museums are acknowledging that their practices have to change.

5 Discussion

In this chapter we will discuss and interpret our findings, integrating them with the theoretical framework that we presented at the beginning of our research. This section aims to facilitate the understanding of our research, guiding the reader through the topics relevant to answer our research questions:

How does the phenomenon of art democratisation affect the concept of museum?

1. **How does the use of an audience-centred approach shape the Poldi Pezzoli museum practices?**
2. **How does the Poldi Pezzoli museum deal with COVID-19 emergency to keep making art widely accessible?**

5.1 Concept of Museum

In this section, we interpret our findings related to the categories of *Museums* and *Democratisation*, complementing it with relevant literature concerning *Art Management* and *Democratisation of Art*, with the aim of breaking down the themes that we need to answer our main research question:

How does the phenomenon of art democratisation affect the concept of museum?

The concept of museum has changed a lot over time. The first definition applied by ICOM - International Council of Museums - goes back to 1946 and it speaks about museums as "... all collections open to the public, of artistic, technical, scientific, historical or archaeological material, including zoos and botanical gardens, but excluding libraries, except in so far as they maintain permanent exhibition rooms" (ICOM - International Council of Museums, 2009). The definition has evolved and museums are now considered non-profit institutions, open to the public and at the service of society. Developing this new definition, ICOM considered both the traditional practices of museums, such as acquisition, conservation, preservation and research, and other key features concerning education and enjoyment (ICOM - International Council of Museums Italia, 2020). From the identification of the subjects of the collections (artistic, technical, scientific, etc.) and the ultimate aim of museum of being open to the public, museums have now acquired a more extensive role: serving the society for its development through the performance of conservation, curatorial, and managerial operations. As shown in our results chapter, the cultural institutions we contacted are aware of this shift, and they demonstrate it in their practices. Museums are now focusing on establishing a continuous dialogue with society (Interview A. Z., F. M., J. W., L. T., J. L. C.).

This new way of perceiving museums derives from the urgency of the industry to be closer to the public, producing positive externalities, as they increase cultural knowledge in society. Stating that one of their purpose is to reach people. Museums are reversing the old conception of places for an elitist public, where only the art connoisseurs were truthfully welcomed in this environment. From our findings it emerged that the Poldi Pezzoli museum, the SMK, and the Glyptoteket museum share the same thoughts and experiences on this matter: being institutions for an elite (Interview A. Z., Christina J., J. L. C., I. T.), and being sometimes old fashioned and dusty places (J.W.). Concerning this matter, the blame of this preconception should not be addressed to the public, but to museums and art galleries. They were never institutions of homogenization, but of differentiation preferring to welcome in their spaces a selected and educated group of people (Booth, 2014). To win this people's old preconception, museums are now opening to a broader cultural participation offering informal educational options ((Ioanna & George, 2019), improving their cultural products and services, enhancing exhibits, and making facilities more accessible and comfortable (Kotler & Kotler, 2000). Art is not anymore self-explanatory since the majority of visitors are not just experts of the sector. Therefore, the museum is a place that needs explanations as its product do not contemplate a fixed interpretation (T. Jackson & Meecham, 1999), but they hide "...messages from the past about how society works" (Interview J. W.). However, not all museums are placing the audience at the centre of their strategy. For instance, Luca lo Pinto believes that collections should be always considered as the first main variable on which the museum strategy should be based. Also, he confessed that the museum should not be a place of entertainment for the public, but of enrichment in terms of knowledge. Even though, he is one of the youngest between our interviewees age wise, his opinion remains quite conservative.

5.1.1 Democracy

Nowadays, not only does the museum's practices are focused on the audience, but the overall art market started giving more importance to the general public opinion (Evard & Colbert, 2000). However, many people are convinced that art is detached from reality and it does not affect their daily lives (Hutchinson, 1916). Art often appears as a cultural authority (McCall & Gray, 2014a). Cultural institution still appear intimidating because of the closed nature of art history (Interview J. W.).

Museums are willing to abandon the conception of being a place for a niche, approaching "everyone" without discrimination. Democratisation of art is the state in which arts become available to a variety of audiences, even to those not familiar with going to museums (Bailey et al., 2004). The cultural institutions we interviewed, are acting in this direction. The Poldi Pezzoli museum and the Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket are investing to bring back to life their original purpose: benefit their populations. The

Poldi Pezzoli is making an effort in changing the public's mind, and to implement the real will of its founder Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli presenting a "...patrimony for everyone..." (Interview A. Z.), with no regard for age and cultural background (Interview A. Z.). Not only the museum with its mission, vision, and objectives has changed, but even the staff's role evolved. In particular, this phenomenon of democratisation has brought curators and conservators to adapt to this new environment. They are not anymore figures standing in the background closed in their offices, but now they actively participate to the museum initiatives with the aim of engaging with the public, facilitating the interpretation of artworks' messages through talks, lectures and contents on social media (Interview J. W., L. T.). Museums are not offering anymore just a traditional visit of their collections, they have developed online and offline educational services, events, and talks from the art field experts. The majority of these cultural organizations have an official account on social media. This change is a direct consequence of a change in the demand. Therefore, if museums want to reach a wide audience, they have to implement customized experiences for each target to be able to engage them and build a relationship.

However, the phenomenon of democratisation can lead also to a potential threat for the industry . Opening up the museum to a large and wide audience, from the very little kid to the very old man, from the connoisseurs to the very inexpert, might lead to distort the nature of the cultural experience in the attempt of pleasing them. The value and meaning of art may diminish since, as state by Henry James, a conservative critic of art democracy, "... the new, the simple, the cheap, the common, the commercial, the immediate, and all too often, the ugly" (Hersch, 2000) could be misinterpreted as art. There is a common fear that arts, specifically cultural products of high symbolic contents, will be treated by the multitude in a different way, since most of people are unable to understand them. Therefore, making art widely accessible would lead to mediocrity and mass culture (M. Arnold, 2018) with, consequently, a rejection of the metaphysical meaning of the artworks (Hersch, 2000). To counteract this obvious tendency that the phenomenon could cause, cultural institutions might need to find a balance between the value of the cultural heritage they are showing and the ways they convey their products and services to a wide audience. From our findings, the Poldi Pezzoli museum is aware of this double challenge, as Ilaria Toniolo stated that they want to reach everyone still preserving a high quality of the cultural product without distorting or minimizing the value of the collection. Also, the Poldi Pezzoli museum statute underlines that both the collection and people are equally important for the museum.

In short, museums are moving from a collection-oriented approach to a more audience-oriented approach, trying to put the public at the center of their strategy. However, even though one of the main purposes of museums may be reaching and engaging with a more culturally diverse public, it

remains important to not forget the value of the collections. As a matter of fact, the creation of a mass culture would lead to an impoverishment not only of the cultural product offered, but also the museum imagine in the art world.

5.1.2 New Language

Museums are not just places where to study, preserve and enhance the cultural heritage, but they are places where to enjoy (Interview A. Z.), where to find stories (Interview J. W.), and to distract from the daily life (Interview L. T.). To maintain their identity and integrate a more democratic philosophy, museums are creating a new language for the new audiences. They are focusing on telling stories with a broad meaning (Pencarelli, Cerquetti, & Splendiani, 2016) using art to raise discussions, and letting the public finding their history (Interview A. Z., Christina J., J. L. C.). In this direction, museums are now considering the "new museology", a new theoretical and critical thought around the museum field (Mairesse & Desvallées, 2010). This new practice of managing museums sees an emphasis on innovation, creativity and dynamism, in a period where in the cultural sector is facing an increase in competition. Thus, it is important to create an appealing environment, more in line with contemporary society's needs. Try to no longer act as a "monolithic institution" (Pencarelli et al., 2016, p. 34) blocked in the past should also be a priority for the museum.

Therefore, museums are now shifting from using monologues to communicate with the external environment, to embrace dialogues as a way of behaving (Interview J. L. C.). This is why museums are investing a lot in temporary exhibitions, educational programs, social medias, and digitization so that a variety of people will be able to access the museum (K. Arnold, 2013). As shown from our findings, all the museums we studied are proceeding in this direction; using sometimes the same or similar tools to apply a new museum strategy to foster the creation of dialogues. For example, the SMK, is very active in organizing events to reach a wide range of audiences (Interview J. H. S.) like the famous SMK Fridays where music, art talks, and free tours of the collections are combined. The same style of events can be found at the National Gallery of London - "Fridays Late" - or at the Glyptoteket on Thursdays. Even the Poldi Pezzoli organizes events where people gathered around art for a moment of conviviality, by organizing happy hours followed by a guided tour of the collections.

To provide services that, not only take in account the conservation and preservation aspect of the cultural product, but also a more managerial mindset is needed to apply the visitor-centred approach. However, it is important to keep a balance between the art field and the business sector, otherwise if the art perspective had to prevailed, the museum would fall again into an elitist industry. If the business

side had to predominate, artworks would lose their cultural value as the institutions would be more keen in analyzing the success, for example considering how many tickets have been sold in a certain period, and the contents would be left on the background of the museum objectives. Therefore, the concept of art management becomes relevant as it is a discipline that plans, supervises, and controls the production and presentation of the cultural product (Martin, 1998). In this sense, the museum needs to work for bridging the gap between the public and the artworks by creating a new language functioning as community assets economically, culturally, and educationally (Fogarty, 2016). In short, it is evident from our results that a conscious language is being built by museums to reach a wider audience. By proposing such diverse services, art can be perceived as a very commercial product, reducing its real high symbolic value.

5.1.3 Wrap up

In this section we outlined major changes that re-shape the concept of museum. Museums are shifting their approach, giving importance not only to collections but even to the public. The museum experience is now considered enriching even in terms of learning and enjoyment. Applying this new vision, the museum is approaching a diverse audience and accomplishing its objective of serving the society. However, opening to everyone, museums should strive to not reduce the quality of the cultural experience. To limit the chance of this negative outcome, museums need to find a balance between preserving the cultural value of the artworks presented and pleasing the public. Targeting a relative "everyone" rather than an absolute one could represent a smart tactic to open their horizons, remaining still true to their identity.

5.2 Adopting an Audience-Centred Approach

In this section, we interpret our findings related to the categories of *Make a change* and *Audience*, complementing it with relevant literature concerning *Audience development*, with the aim of breaking down the themes that we need in order to respond to our Sub-RQ1:

How does the use of an audience-centred approach shape the Poldi Pezzoli museum practices?

The data analysed in the previous chapter, suggests that museums shifted from being places that await visitors, to places that seek visitors and offer a range of services. Therefore, the way museums approached their audiences evolved over time, in order to achieve sustainability on the market in the modern world (Di Pietro et al., 2014; Villeneuve, 2012). Indeed, opening up to a wider audience was a

necessity to survive, given the cuts to cultural sector that the industry experienced. As it was possible to acknowledge in our Theory Chapter, the results are in line with what has been discussed from 2000s onward by multiple scholars²⁶. There has been a shift that led museum to become places of learning rather than places of education (Kelly, 2004). Cultural institutions that do not want to abandon their traditional silos authoritative models, in favour of multi-disciplinary teams working toward shared objectives, will most likely become less attractive for their potential visitors (Mitroff Silvers, 2018; Vicars-Harris, 2018). However, from the interviews, it emerged that it is not always easy to create such a change in an old institution that is reluctant to innovate (Interview Christina J.) (Vicars-Harris, 2018). The challenge, acknowledged both by the academics presented in our Theory Chapter and our interviewees, is keeping the cultural value central while making the viewing pleasant (Interview Daniela Porro). The desire to maintain this balance should always be a priority for museums. At the same time Falk (2000) believes that redesigning the museums visit as a cultural, yet, leisure experience creates a win-win scenario in which the audience both learns and has fun during the visit. This approach is valuable since it helps the museums to offer a visit able to generate meaning for the visitor.

5.2.1 The Poldi Pezzoli Museum Audience Development Strategy

The Poldi Pezzoli museum demonstrated to be a small but rather innovative organization. The staff works well together, they are a cohesive group able to complement their contrasting skills (Interview S. R.). Since they have a diverse background - for instance Stefania Rossi studied law, while Annalisa Zanni art history - they can contribute to the team in different ways, being able to bring on the table different perspectives. Even though diversity in the team can be positive, since it allows the organization to adopt a more comprehensive approach when dealing with problems, it can also lead to arguments and major misunderstandings, if all the parties do not enter the discussion with an open mind. The importance of building trust and cohesiveness is significant, in this context, to enhance the positive aspects of working in a diverse environment. The Poldi Pezzoli museum was able to find this balance and managed to foster the creation of positive synergies within the staff. The team is able to carry out all the operations needed and to design innovative activities, with the aim of generating interest in the public. There seems to be an underlying strategy behind the museum actions, however we could not find a document attesting their overall strategy and such a document was not even mentioned in the interviews. Normally, if a strategic document was created, it should have been accessible from their website, however, in this specific case it is not available for public use. In lack of a strategic

²⁶The academics we refer to are Adams (1999), Briggs (2000), Hooper-Greenhill (2000), Kelly (2004) Coffee (2008) and they are described in paragraph 2.5 of the Theory Chapter.

document, we will discuss their strategy for audience development considering what stated during the interviews. As far as we could understand from the interviews, the institution tends to involve its audience at different stages of the value chain, with both upstream involvement and downstream engagement (European Commission, 2012). Starting with upstream involvement, the data suggests that they create *ad hoc* strategies for specific segments. They worked to cater the needs of some fragile audiences such as adolescents subjected to criminal proceedings for restorative justice, children and families of a degraded municipality of Milan and international audiences, in particular the Chinese community. The Poldi Pezzoli team designed, created and produced an offering specifically for them. The reason that pushed them to pursue these practices concerns the social role of the museum. They claim to have a strong desire of becoming a more inclusive arena (Coffee, 2008), being at the service of the society, as indicated by the founder of the cultural institution, Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli (Interview S. R.). The organization should be aware of the motivations that push people to go and visit the exhibition spaces, breaking the barriers of their participation without jeopardizing the interests of their core audience. In term of downstream engagement, the museum puts its efforts in creating a common language to facilitate a connection between the audience and the artworks. In the interviews, Annalisa Zanni based many of her statements on the idea of fostering the development of a dialogue between these two actors. As stated by European Commission (2012), this dialogue can be facilitated either physically, being in contact with the piece of art or the artist, or virtually, through social media or a virtual tour.

Furthermore, the museum can be accessed on multiple dimensions: digitally, physically and cognitively (Hautio, 2011; Solima, 2012). In the following paragraphs these dimensions will be analysed in respect of the Poldi Pezzoli museum practices.

5.2.2 Digital Dimension

Cultural institutions, such as the Poldi Pezzoli museum, should take advantage of the new digital and technological opportunities available to cater the ever changing needs of the audience, by implementing new ideas of participation. As Ilaria Toniolo said, the museum should not only be a place where you go to see something, it should be a place where you feel good. Therefore, cultural institutions should do everything in their power to facilitate such a positive experience. In this context, the relevance of new technologies appears crucial to increase the chance of connecting with the audience and building an engaged community. Given what has been said, the division between digital and physical channels will eventually disappear to foster the creation of a universal language and common dialogue (Vicars-Harris, 2018). The digital will be considered a tool able to complement *ex ante*, during and *ex post* the

real-world experience (Vicars-Harris, 2018). During the physical visit, digital tools could enable a more active participation, like in the case of the Chatbot Game, presented in the Analysis Chapter, where an automatic respondent guided the visitors through the Poldi Pezzoli museum spaces. Besides the implementation of digital tools onsite, also a new concept of participation can be explored. New technological options can be explored to make art accessible even in their own homes, being introduced to virtual tours. The Poldi Pezzoli museum explored this option recently, when the closure of all the Italian museums was disposed by the Government, because of COVID-19. Not being able to host their guest anymore, they had to come up with innovative ideas to still make art accessible to their audience. They leveraged on art *reproducibility*, which implies the possibility of creating copies of artworks. Art has always been reproducible but doing it with technological means generates different implications. This concept has been explored by Benjamin (1936) already in 1930s and it appears relevant even nowadays. Technological reproduction allows to emphasises some details of the piece of art, like we could experience using Google Arts & Culture. We could see this software in action during the virtual tours organized by the Poldi Pezzoli museum, where it was possible to zoom and analyse some specific aspects of the painting that would have not been visible otherwise. Using more extensively this tool, the Poldi Pezzoli staff realized that macro-images are useful also to study part of artworks that were never studied before (Interview F. M.). Indeed, while making a PoldiPezzoliStories on a old necklace they found out that this art piece had details that were never noticed (Interview F. M.). A critical point that concerns the use of replicas allows to spread a copy of the painting basically everywhere, eliminating the physical barrier and letting people that live far away from where the painting is located, to still experience the piece of art (Benjamin, 1936). Yet, the artwork has an "aura" that cannot be captured by its replicas (Benjamin, 1936) and this is the reason why real-life experiences are valued now more than ever (Laughton, 1993). Also with technology, there is the risk of watering down the value of the artworks or *disneyfying* the museum experience (Balloffet et al., 2014). To counteract this risk, we are convinced that it is always necessary to adopt balanced actions and behaviours. Any tool or practice, used with the wrong intentions, could alter the mission of the museum. Anyways, it does not seem like the Poldi Pezzoli museum truly risks to incur in a similar scenario since all the members of the staff interviewed operates in respect of the museum identity.

5.2.3 Physical Dimension

In this paragraph two types of initiatives will be analysed: events and exhibitions. Concerning events, three types of events are offered in museums. First of all, curatorial events are planned as a mean to support the museum's central mission. Then, audience development events are used as a tool to reach

beyond the core audience and to engage specific demographics. Lastly, revenue-generating events are organized to develop funds for the museum such as fundraising events or space rentals to third-party organizations (Artifax, 2018). The Poldi Pezzoli museum demonstrated to be able to engage with its audience also with this type of offering. A representative example will be analysed to discuss this theme. The results shows that, since 2017, the Poldi Pezzoli museum has been hosting an happy hour at the museum during the evenings (Interview I. T., S. R., A. R.). The idea is to offer a moment of pure edutainment to the audience (Mencarelli et al., 2010), renewing the experience at the museum. During the event, the participants are not only invited to enjoy themselves, but they have also access to free guided tours (Interview A. Z.). Therefore, the experience figures as both fun and enriching for the audience. Clearly, it was not the first time such an activity was implemented in a museum. However, it was quite impressive for us to acknowledge that they were one of the first museum in Milan to offer this visiting format (Interview I. T.), considering the fact that a) the institution is located in Italy, a quite conservative country that tends to promote a more traditional cultural consumption, b) the museum is quite small and "the resources are limited" (Interview S. R.), to such an extent that often they need to activate themselves "in a home-made way" (Interview S. R.). This events are particularly valuable because they enable the museum to approach segments that would not normally visit the museum spaces, like the youngsters, therefore they are useful to bridge the gap between particular audiences and the museum. According to Mason and McCarthy (2006), it is actually harder to attract teenagers and young adults to the museum, rather than adults. Our results confirm this perspective: the usual Poldi Pezzoli visitor is a middle-aged woman (Interview S. R.). Nonetheless, the happy-hour at the museum attracted a consistent number of university students that were able to bring the average visitor age slightly down. As stated by Federica Manoli, young people enjoy living a cultural experience where the self feels emotions and this is the reason why this format works. The interaction with the artworks promotes the implementation of the "participatory art" phenomenon. At this point the visitors shifts from being mere consumers to cultural producers (Stylianou-Lambert, 2010) and the concept of co-creation comes in the game. It does not seem like the Poldi Pezzoli museum is at such advanced stage where the audience is involved to the extent of co-creating. Thus, they always consider people's opinion and they try to improve their services considering the feedback received from their audience, but they usually do not include them during the ideation process.

Concerning exhibitions, their function is to create a motivation to go to the museum (Interview Camilla J.). The data suggests that the Poldi Pezzoli museum analyzes different themes when organizing temporary exhibitions throughout the year, creating a link between contemporary art, design, fashion, decorative art and their permanent collection (Interview A. Z.). They end up attracting different

segments, even the ones that would not normally visit the museum spaces. When the exhibition is ongoing, the staff works to develop engaging activities for the public (Waltl, 2006). Even though exhibitions represent a great opportunity for the museum and its audience, there are some problems and limitations that concern our experts. Being an experienced curator, Letizia Treves was able to clearly present the problems that concern their implementation. Some issues are internal the museum and one of them is the cost of the exhibitions. Even though they are expensive, they are not necessarily successful. Therefore, “exhibitions do not make money, not consistently at least” (Interview L. T.). Then, other issues refer to the cultural industry in general. Since the number of exhibitions programmed worldwide is huge, “...you end up competing for the same art pieces, like it was this year for the Rafael exhibition, since there were four of them just in Europe”. Lastly, the carbon footprint of moving artworks is significant. As Letizia said “these objects are flying around the world with couriers, so a person is flying with the object and flying out with the object”. Therefore, such excessive number of exhibitions around the world is not sustainable, on the long term, for both the organization and the environment. For these reasons she believes that “the future of exhibitions is one to decide” (Interview L. T.).

5.2.4 Cognitive Dimension

Whoever wants to approach the museum, needs to be able to understand the meaning of the institution and the artworks. According to Solima (2012), this enables the enjoyment of the cultural product. When people are able to comprehend the value of what they are experiencing, their level of satisfaction increases. Therefore, it is more likely that they would come back to the museum. For these reasons, investing on educational activities represents a valuable resource for the museum (Solima, 2012). During the interviews, Letizia Treves stated that it is part of the responsibilities of museums to make the objects understandable to the public and to educate people in what it is theirs effectively. Ultimately, museums are an essential service for the community and they have an irreplaceable social function, needed to facilitate the well-being of all (Interview D. P.).

The Poldi Pezzoli museum is currently working on developing new, didactic, innovative methodologies (Interview S. R.). After all, “teaching has always been a flagship of the museum” (Interview I. T.) and the cultural institution has always been a pioneer in developing an innovative offering. Education is a great tool to break down the barrier of ignorance and to foster a more engaged participation in the museum. The Poldi Pezzoli museum created differentiated educational offers dedicated to specific targets. Indeed, not only children need to be educated concerning the value of the heritage they could experience, but people of every age need to be aware of what is the cultural worth

of the artworks in the museum. Until now, the educational activities were carried out mainly onsite. During this time, since museums are closed, the Poldi Pezzoli decided not to stop creating informative content for its audience. We could observe that they are currently creating *ad hoc* content for different target segments, on their social media channels. However, despite their "Coffee At The Museum", an online art history class on specific artworks or artists available every Tuesdays, we think that a more systematic approach could be developed. For instance they could design a set of online courses, available on their website, that could be a valuable resource for various groups of people, instead of just creating educational contents of 5-6 minutes long on social media. This could represent a methodical way to create differentiated content for experts, amateurs and more uncultured individuals, that could be exploited to educate the educator, create interest and enthusiasm around the museum and generate positive externalities in the community.

5.2.5 Wrap up

Nowadays, museum are shifting from being a representation of the national pride and values to interactive organizations, ready to provide different layers of understanding of the cultural product. Indeed, people with different backgrounds will not have the same level of awareness of the art pieces. The cultural institution needs to be aware of this differences when creating an offering for them. Digitization and new technologies definitely facilitated this shift, revolutionizing the way content is created and distributed. Digital tools started acquiring an increasing important role in this scenario, but we need to be always aware that visiting a museum is not like reading a post on Facebook or being able to visit thousands of museums with a simple click. Gaining a deep understanding on art requires a learning process. Digital experiences can be part of this process but the process itself cannot be exhausted in just one phase. Virtual experiences make cultural consumption easier (Interview F. M.). Therefore, we need to use digital activities as a complementary tool to enrich the learning process, but not as an alternative. As argued by Federica Manoli, they can be used to prepare the visitos and deepen their understanding of the artworks, increasing the chances of having an impact on the individual. Creating an integrated offering with both offline and online experiences, might produce an added value to the experience increasing the average level of awareness concerning cultural products.

5.3 The Effects of the COVID-19 Outbreak

In this section, we interpret our findings related to the categories of *The COVID-19 Outbreak* and *Communication*, complementing it with relevant literature concerning *Crisis Communication* and *Creativity* with the aim of breaking down the themes that we need in order to respond to our Sub-RQ3:

How does the Poldi Pozzoli museum deal with COVID-19 emergency to keep making art accessible?

In this section, we first present an overview of the innovative practices that emerged in the cultural industries, because of the arrival of this pandemic. The aim of this section is to discuss what the challenges and opportunities are currently caused by COVID-19, in particular in Italy, and how cultural institutions are tackling them. Then, we will focus on our case, the Poldi Pezzoli museum, to interpret our findings in light of the changes that characterized their activities.

5.3.1 Industry Implications

The cultural industries have been highly affected by the recent Corona virus outbreak. Many countries damaged by the virus had to dispose the closure of cultural institutions to prevent the spread of the disease. In this context, innovative measures were taken to make cultural consumption possible. We argue that this situation caused, and it is currently causing, a crisis which represents a threat to the ordinary operations carried out by the museum (Institute for Public relationship, 2007). Potentially this crisis, like any crisis, could harm a specific organization, its stakeholders and the industry in general. Because of the pervasive implication of COVID-19, we have reasons to believe that the crisis have already impacted, and will continue to impact, the whole cultural industry - as other sectors. The COVID-19 crisis may cause issues concerning public safety, financial and reputation loss. To deal with these problems, museums should implement a strategy with a response before, during and after the crisis (Institute for Public relationship, 2007). Even though it would have not been possible to predict a crisis like the one caused by COVID-19, organizations should always be prepare for a possibility. Quickly counteracting to the crisis should be the priority (Investopedia, 2019; Sull, 2007). Regarding our case, they were able to manage decently this crisis, compared to other museums, because they were prone to innovate and adapt their practices to the situation they started experiencing (Interview F. M.). Our findings show that several themes emerged in the last few months, while trying to deal with the crisis (*WEBINAR | Coronavirus (COVID-19) and museums: impact, innovations and planning for post-crisis*, 2020). As a response of the crisis, museums rushed to digital. The online shift was motivated by the desire of keeping making art accessible and communicating with this public. A lot of museums demonstrated themselves to be innovative in creating *ad hoc* contents to keep their audience engaged, with challenges, informative videos, podcasts, online courses. It has to be said that, in Italy, museums are not really engaged with digital tools: only 10% of the structures have a digital scientific catalogue of their heritage (Cella, 2019). Therefore, it was not easy for the Italian museums to shift to digital practice during this period. For example, the Uffizi, one the most iconic Italian museums,

which is situated in Florence, opened its social media accounts during the quarantine period, in order to be present in people's lives during the pandemic. It seems unbelievable that such an institution never considered opening social media accounts before; however, this change of direction shows that even a traditional museum can retrace his steps and implement innovative practices. The Italian government started taking seriously the lack of digitization in cultural institutions before the crisis started. Last August, the General Italian Museum Direction tried to foster the implementation of digital tools in museums adopting a Triennial Plan for the Digitization and Innovation of Museums. The objective was to create an organic, reliable and framework shared between museums, to adopt digital tools and processes that contribute to protect and enhance the cultural heritage, in a short and medium term horizon. Hence, they suggested museums to improve their ability to manage their heritage, both adopting standard catalogs and adopting digital models capable of facilitating the access to cultural goods (Orsini & Lampis, n.d.). Moreover, another advice regarded the use of narrative descriptions of the artworks (Orsini & Lampis, n.d.). The Italian Museum Direction wanted museums to be open spaces for visitors and scholars, places where also other national and international museums can collaborate and communicate. The interaction between these parties generates the possibility of sharing experiences and information on the initiatives they carry out, enabling growth and development of museums in our society. Additionally, the plan aims to increase the level of accessibility of the cultural institutions (Orsini & Lampis, n.d.). Technological solutions will enable new forms of access and consumption of the cultural product. After all, making sure that art does not stop being enjoyed, even when museum are closed, is important, especially in this period of isolation, to facilitate well-being in our society. Indeed, we are all aware of how cultural activities can help people overcome tough periods during our lifetime, and how much they can positively contribute to mental health. Culture was also at the center of multiple policy discussions. Within the European Union, a debate arose about whether culture should be considered an essential good and how many resources should be given to this sector. Everyone working in a cultural institution feels very strongly about its value, however governments might chose to prioritize other sectors that they may consider more important for the country's wealth. After all, everyone is trying to predict what is going to happen next, given the fact that an unprecedented economic crisis is on its way. Everybody is wondering which sectors are going to suffer the most and which industries will be supported by the governments. Not only institutions such as museums are suffering, but especially artists that are lacking of job security. Andrea Cancellato, president of Federculture ²⁷, recently asked for the support of Dario Franceschini, the Italian Minister of Culture, to help cultural organizations deal with this issue (Il Sole 24 ore, 2020). Measures to contain

²⁷Federculture is an Italian association of public and private cultural organizations

the damages of the crisis are needed now, since already millions of euros were lost from the beginning of the quarantine. Because of the social impact culture has in our society, this could be an occasion to re-position art at the center of our social system. Indeed, in Italy there are "4,908 among museums, archaeological areas, monuments and eco-museums open to the public" and "over 128 million visitors visited the Italian cultural heritage in 2018" (Cella, 2019, 26–27). It should appear clear how central culture can be in a country like Italy.

In the post-crisis phase, museums should go back to their normal practices. However, due to the huge scope of this crisis, we might need to reconsider what is normal. In line with both the opinions of our interviewees Letizia Treves and Jørgen Wadum, and what stated in the OECD (2020), it is necessary to go back to the object. The physical experience cannot be substituted by the virtual one: one can complement the other. Therefore, as soon it will be possible, museum should re-open and focus again on the offline experience, never forgetting what they have learned during the past few months in lock-down. There is no going back because the situation will not be as it used to, and museum will have new skills, that they should not forget to exploit tackling new challenges.

A new discussion arose about how unlocking culture and reopening is going to work in the near future. Many experts argues that museums will have to limit access to museums and that people will have to maintain social distancing (*WEBINAR | Coronavirus (COVID-19) and museums: impact, innovations and planning for post-crisis*, 2020). Also, it will be even harder now for museums to attract the non-traditional museum audience, and regular museum visitors might also change their behavior because they could feel unsafe in the exhibition spaces. To prevent this from happening, the museum should always keep the audience informed, in order to build a trustworthy relationship. Coombs and Holladay (2006) argues that every crisis represents a possibility to explore new paths. The crisis will enlighten the weaknesses of the organization and, consequently, it will push museums to improve their offerings.

5.3.2 The Poldi Pezzoli Museum Implications

To win this cultural sector crisis, museums need to think "outside of the box" and implement innovations even changing their organizational paradigm²⁸ if needed. In this direction museums are now acting creatively and our case is a relevant example for the museum field.

Based on our theoretical framework, creativity can be applied in different contexts, acquiring different meanings in every single situation (Runco, 2007). On a more general level, creativity is usually

²⁸Changes in the underlying mental models which frame what the organization does (Bessant & Tidd, 2013).

liked to something leading to novelty and originality (Amabile, 1996; Runco, 2007; Runco, Pritzker, and Pritzker, 1999). Within an organizational context, as museum are, creativity is the development of an idea, object, behavior, which has the characteristics of being unique and useful for the organization (Amabile, 1982). It has a strong social value as it has consequences on both individual and collective competences (de Esteban Curiel et al., 2012). The outcome of creative thinking is innovation defined as a set of processes for creating value in the context of scaling up and marketing new products, services, business models or management methods (Samson & Gloet, 2016) to introduce something new and useful.

In this sense, the Poldi Pezzoli museum has implemented an intrapreneurial ²⁹ way of approaching the crisis by creating new contents and remaining present in the market for the public (Interview F. M.). The COVID-19 situation has been approached almost from the beginning with an optimistic vision (Interview s. R.) as an occasion to present their online offering. During the lock-down, accessibility shifted online and using different methods to communicate allowed the museum to be in contact with their public even in this period (Interview F. M.). Since, from the beginning, the museum was very active on social media platforms, like Facebook and Instagram, on both the Poldi Pezzoli official page and the *Giovani Poldi Pezzoli* page, which is the profile of the Young Group of Poldi Pezzoli museum. Our findings show that the museum has two profiles to reach different audiences. Many museums, like our case organization, used this systems; however, not all of them were able to produce novel content like the Poldi Pezzoli (Interview F.M.). They strove to identify new interesting insight on their collection that the public would want to know about. Consequently, the Facebook page of the museum was revolutionized since the emergency started, turning into a reliable source of information. As a matter of fact, before the lock-down, the page was not really engaging. Only descriptions of their events and pictures of their collection were posted. Now the official Facebook page includes also educational posts selected for different targets. As already indicated in the Results Chapter, the organization presents videos targeting specifically elementary schools, middle schools, and high school children. Moreover, they activated the *PoldiPezzoliStories* campaign, where they present and narrate, on a weekly basis, some of the artworks they have in their collection. On the other hand, the "young profile" is more active in organizing virtual tours, creating and accepting challenges such as the vase challenge or the one launched by the Italian Ministry of Culture (Results Ch. § 4.5.1 Social Media). Activating online contents, the museum tried to be part of its audience's every day life to support them in this difficult time. We are currently experiencing a situation in which people need to feel part of a community, and

²⁹Expression coming from the combination between intracorporate and entrepreneur to identify a person or process who is "closely resemble entrepreneurs [...] who turn ideas into realities inside an organisation" (Pinchot & Pellman, 1999, p. 16).

the Poldi Pezzoli museum is trying to cater this need. They are aware that this tendency will continue and they cannot stop using social media after the reopening. Using innovative narratives in a digital form they are facilitating cultural democracy, reaching a wider audience (OECD, 2020).

5.3.3 Wrap up

Analysing what were the premises pre-crisis, what is currently happening during the crisis, and what problems may arise post-crisis, we re-defined the way culture can be accessed. The Poldi Pezzoli is an interesting case to understand how museums can overcome the COVID-19 situation by implementing new projects, and to remind that terrible conditions can lead to unique opportunities. In this case, social media platforms turned out to have a great potential to let the museum be an engaging - physical or virtual - place, capable of narrating stories and building communities. The use of digital tools is now engraved in museums practices and it will not be abandoned once this lock-down will be over. However museums should be aware that they need a strategy to incorporate this tools effectively (Interview F. M.).

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to study the effects art democracy has on museums. Museums differ from other organizations in the sense that they have a high cultural value where people can explore the depths of humanity. They contribute to the development of the social environment being places where people can learn and feel comforted. They generate positive externalities in the society, not only by conserving a rich cultural heritage, but also contributing to the development of a well-being within the community. It appears obvious that museums should be places open to everyone, because of their intrinsic social value, despite the fact they were considered elitist for centuries. This brought us to our research question:

How does the phenomenon of art democratization affect the concept of museum?.

This study reveals how the phenomenon of art democracy changed the concept of a museum in various ways. Since these new aspects have been introduced, the museum is now considered to be a place of education, enjoyment and study. Museums are shifting from a strategy focused on the quality of the collection to a strategy focused on the public. A balance between these two components is needed to eradicate the elitist stigma and accomplish the major objective of museums: to be at the service of society. When trying to reach a broader audience a museum must develop new channels of communication to better satisfy the needs of the audience. They must adapt to the language of the public focusing on storytelling as the new strategy.

Breaking down our main research question, we were able to identify two issues concerning the museum practices: the use of a museum paradigm that position the audience at the centre of the museum strategy, and the way museums continue to operate even during COVID-19 emergency. Therefore, two sub-questions were developed, considering the Poldi Pezzoli museum as the main subject:

1. **How does the use of an audience-centred approach shape the Poldi Pezzoli museum practices?**
2. **How does the Poldi Pezzoli museum deal with COVID-19 emergency to keep making art accessible?**

Our thesis reveals that the Poldi Pezzoli museum started focusing on the necessity of creating an offering for its audiences, using a more audience-centred approach. The museum strategies implement both upstream involvement and downstream engagement. It follows that they, not only, try to create *ad hoc* initiatives for specific targets, but they also work toward the development of a common language

to let the visitors connect with the artworks. In order to make the cultural product widely accessible they used multiple dimensions: physical, digital and cognitive. First, to facilitate art consumption physically, they organise exhibitions and events. Then, to enable participation digitally, they created online initiatives before, during, and after the pandemic. Finally, working on a cognitive dimension, they organised innovative learning opportunities, with the aim of increasing awareness on cultural products, raising the level of appreciation of the museum. The integration of these three dimensions enables the museum to provide different layers of understanding of art to the audience.

Regarding the COVID-19 issue, we focused on the innovative practices Poldi Pezzoli used to overcome the different situation of lock-down. To further cultural consumption during the lock-down, museums from all over the world rushed to offer an online experience, and the Poldi Pezzoli museum was not an exception. New ways of interacting with the public on social media and through virtual experiences were explored. Our case study museum presented challenges, online art classes, experts and amateurs were able to partake in online events such as virtual tours. To survive this unexpected scenario, the Poldi Pezzoli museum had to change its paradigm, becoming more creative and generating a closer connection with its audience without losing its identity. Hence, the COVID-19 outbreak, allowed the Poldi Pezzoli to demonstrate its community that the museum is always there to support people, share information and foster learning. Once again, the importance of culture society was highlighted. The pandemic is leaving a mark and museums will be re-opened with these new practices integrated with the old ones.

6.1 Strategic Advice & Further Discussion

To contribute strategically to the future development of the museum we wondered:

How could museums keep democratizing art post COVID-19 lock-down?

Despite this situation, museums should remain proactive and keep pursuing their goals. In this particular moment, museums need to provide and inform the public on the safety measures they plan to adopt for the reopening. It should be a priority to make the public feel secure going back to the museum spaces. Prior to the physical visit, an option could be to be posting an online demonstration of their sanitising operations. On site, they will give the possibility to the public to receive masks and gloves for those who do not have their own. The sale of customized masks with the museum logo would generate public interest making visitors ambassadors of the museum once they leave the collections. Digitisation represents a great instrument to increase the level of engagement with the public. Providing a museum experience outside the building. Content creation is critical in creating an online presence

and museums should be looking for any reason to post and interact with the community. A Weekly online schedule of events are a solution that creates both an engagement with the public and a strategic schedule for the organization.

In these directions, further research can be studied. Collecting data about the audience on how comfortable they feel returning to an active lifestyle will help museums determine a schedule for activities to implement. Preventative measures museums are adopting may be good topics to analyse. The struggles museums have to face in implementing digitisation and which possible tactics could be adopted to overcome these difficulties are some things to address. Creating a model to achieve art democracy could be further developed.

The problem analysed in this research belongs to a growing literature on art accessibility. Academics and experts of the field recognise how much this concept has changed over time. From breaking the physical barriers of participation, enabling everyone to access the museum physically, they started bringing down the psychological barriers of cultural consumption. Given also the recent implications caused by COVID-19, this path can be further explored by future researches. In doing so, also the contrasting perspectives of the artist, the marketer and the educational workers that tend to approach differently the audience depending on their interests, should be taken into account.

6.2 Limitations

To better understand our research it is important to address the limitations of this project. In this section we will speak about limits and difficulties that our research has been exposed to.

The first limitation is linked to a time matter. Even though the literature analysed and the data collection retrieved were substantial, we could have developed a more comprehensive research if we would have not been limited in time. We should acknowledge that we are analysing a snapshot of the democratisation of art in this particular historical time. Therefore, because of time constraints, our project would be defined as a cross-sectional study. Given an opportunity to continue our research we would include more participants, and carried out a traditional observation, getting access to other than the digital channels even touring of museums.

Our second limitation addressing this research concerns the opinions of experts coming from different institutions, and not just focusing interviews on a in-depth case. Introducing different opinions may be misleading for the reader. However, we are convinced that framing the external voices as a source of expertise helped us providing a context of analysis for our case. We were able to have a

comprehensive and deep understanding on the topic, being able to identify some major common themes and differences in the way museums are acting.

Lastly, the third limitation we address regards the pandemic emergency of COVID-19. The spread of the virus forced us to re-frame our research to stay within the deadline. We had to shift from onsite to online interviews and observations. We also had to adjust the objectives and the nature of our research. A shift to a less optimal set of data collection methods had to be made and it was not easy to get access to a organization in this particular moment.

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Appendix

A1 Appendix 1: Standardised Interview Schedule

The following questions represent the standardised questionnaire administered to our interviewees.

1. Can you briefly describe what you do in your organisation?
2. Do you consider art as a good that should be accessed to all or as a reality that can be appreciated only by few?
3. What is the social role of your museum today? What makes it vital in our society?
4. What are the challenges of making cultural heritage relevant for today's public that your museum is currently facing? How are you tackling them?
5. What are your current and perspective target audiences?
6. Which are the most effective strategies, processes, and tools used by your organisation to attract and engage your audiences?
7. Which are your audiences' main interests that push them to visit your museum? And how is the museum stimulating an active participation?
8. How do digitisation and social media influence your museum experience? In which cases do they add or remove value to cultural products?
9. In your museum, between the temporary and permanent collection which one represents your core offer? Why?
 - How can a permanent collection still be appealing for your visitors who have visited your collection already once?
 - How do you use the temporary collection to engage new audiences?
10. Do you think there is a gap between how the cultural value is perceived and its actual value? How to counteract the increase in the distance between citizens and cultural heritage?
11. In which way are social phenomena such as democratisation and globalisation changing the museum? How do you expect the museum of the future to be?
12. Given the emergency situation caused by COVID-19, how is your organisation facing this crisis?

A2 Appendix 2: Excerpt of Transcription of Interview with Annalisa Zanni

Interviewer: What is the social role of your museum and what makes it relevant in the society in which we live?

Annalisa Zanni: I believe that the uniqueness of this museum, as well as others, is: being a house museum, therefore in restoring a history of taste, of living and collecting from the third / fourth of the nineteenth century, which was later revisited. It is important precisely because whoever enters is suddenly immersed in a building that has been inhabited and which tries to maintain precisely this identity. I would like to point out that the Poldi Pezzoli museum artistic foundation has been a reference model for all the other museum houses in the world. It was the second house museum open to the public in 1881. The Jacquemart-André, the Frick Collection and Stewart Gardner, all museums, even the museum houses in the world have referred to Poldi Pezzoli. So the museum has a social role that returns above all a model of collecting I would say. Since the museum was destroyed in '43 many of the rooms have been restored having lost the original decorations. They have therefore been reconstructed, thanks also to a whole series of previous documentations. First of all, the notary inventory that returned the placement of the works room by room, we tried to find a part of the museum, the one that remained more intact, to recompose that history of taste, that history of collecting. And therefore its role of maintaining that taste becomes relevant and therefore the possibility of accessing that history and at the same time the possibility of continuing to update himself because in Poldi Pezzoli's will, he himself said that he left this annuity to continue buying both ancient and modern art.

Interviewer: What are the challenges that Poldi Pezzoli is currently facing in order to make your cultural product current? And how are these challenges addressed?

Annalisa Zanni: This is a question that Stefania Rossi will answer in detail. Let's say that more generally the museum, just for the spirit of the founder, is immersed in the contemporary world and therefore has chosen to adopt the languages, the transformation, the change, the enrichment that the very concept of museum endorsed by ICOM, in the latter decades, the museum acquired. That is, a place that has a very specific mission, to study, preserve, but also to enhance its heritage. Hence an ongoing dialogue with society. The museum is no longer a place that awaits its visitors, but is a place that seeks its visitors and offers a range of services. It is also a place of entertainment, of enjoyment, where to feel good. It is a place where one does not go as in the past, once with the father and then once with the son and with this I close the visit of everyone's life story; but where you go very often

and you receive a series of opportunities to stay close to beauty and give back your story by recognizing it, also to be able to plan the future for all young people. To do this one of the first big changes was to use the language of the posters. We were among the first museums in Italy, thanks to Italo Luppi, to use this advertising tool in the subways and in that period, at the beginning of the 90s, we quadrupled the public. Now instead the contemporary language of social media. These challenges are faced at 360 degrees, i.e. for all ages from 3 to over 90 with different languages, with different paths, and above all taking into account a continuity of relationships that the internet, our website and social networks and everything allow us.

Interviewer: Who represents your current audience and which audience would you rather reach?

Annalisa Zanni: Then the cultural policy of the museum has chosen to remain firm on an identity, that of the history of collecting and the enhancement of its heritage. So all the cultural activities we carry out start from our heritage. Extraordinary heritage consisting of over 6 thousand works of the highest quality, which were enriched over time after the initial donation of Poldi Pezzoli to the foundation of all his heritage, which was enriched thanks to donations. We turn to an audience that until a decade ago was basically represented by the 30-60 years old, as demonstrated also by our various interviews, by adox and also by a series of tests on the public. In addition, the Poldi Pezzoli museum is known above all or very much also by the foreign public and for this reason we have been adopting audio guides not only in Italian not only in English, but for more than ten years for example in Japanese because it was the most present audience, but also Russian, French. Now we are preparing the German and Chinese ones just to offer tools for knowledge. Knowledge that must also take account of the origin, because it is clear that the European public knows the meanings and symbols, while the Japanese or Chinese public must be approached differently. Which audience do we want to reach? We are working, and here will be very precise Dr. Rossi, on increasing of the Youngs. She takes care of the group "Giovani del Poldi Pezzoli", therefore from 18 to 30. The audience until 18 we have always intercepted through our didactic activity, which was the second to be formed in Italy after those of the Uffizi and from the first experiments of Pala della Pergola of Galleria Borghese, but already from '74 a didactic offer of compulsory schools was active and therefore up to 13 years, and then with subsequent extension to high school substantially.

A3 Appendix 3: Excerpt of Lists of Observations

In this section of the Appendix, we present an excerpt of the observation we carried out.

Figure A3.1: Excerpt of Lists of Observations on Instagram

#	Date	Observation setting	Action observed
1	08/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Informative post on closure of the museum, disposed by the Italia goverment, to contain the spread of the desease
2	11/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	First #PoldiPezzoliStories
3	12/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Second #PoldiPezzoliStories
4	13/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Third #PoldiPezzoliStories
5	15/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Fourth #PoldiPezzoliStories
6	19/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Fifth #PoldiPezzoliStories
7	22/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	And #IStayHome Challenge
8	23/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Sixth #PoldiPezzoliStories
9	25/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Seventh #PoldiPezzoliStories
10	25/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Eighth #PoldiPezzoliStories
11	27/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Ninth #PoldiPezzoliStories
12	28/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Tenth #PoldiPezzoliStories
13	30/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Name-things-flowers-cities Challenge adapted to museums
14	31/03/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Promotional post on a Poldi Pezzoli online activity: the Coffee at the museum.
15	02/04/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Eleventh #PoldiPezzoliStories
16	04/04/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Twelfth #PoldiPezzoliStories
17	05/04/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Informative video on MEMOS, which is the ongoing exhibition
18	07/04/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Thirteenth #PoldiPezzoliStories
19	11/04/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Fourteenth #PoldiPezzoliStories
20	12/04/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Fifteenth #PoldiPezzoliStories
21	13/04/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Sixteenth #PoldiPezzoliStories
22	16/04/20	Instagram: Official Poldi Pezzoli Account	Seventeenth #PoldiPezzoliStories

Source: Personal elaboration