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MA Arts & Culture Thesis

Title:

**The Social Role of the Museum in Humanitarian Crisis:  
Learning from NGOs about the effective management of the Syrian  
Refugee Crisis**

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## Abstract

*Museums are institutions whose roles have been changing constantly throughout the history of their existence. Nowadays, their social role receives an increased importance, as museums are officially recognised as institutions of social service by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). The purpose of the present thesis is to examine the museum's social role in the case of the Syrian refugee crisis by identifying ways that museums as institutions can contribute to its relief. In order to approach this topic, a correlation is drawn between museums and Development NGOs, as the latter have a well-established presence in the provision of social work. Therefore, as a secondary purpose, this thesis compares and contrasts these two types of organizations, identifies similarities and seeks aspects of NGOs that museums can learn from in order to enhance their efficiency in assisting in times of humanitarian crisis, like the in Syrian refugee one.*

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# Introduction: The Social Role of the Museum and the NGOs in theory

## Syrian Refugees: Undergoing a new humanitarian crisis

*“ This extended conflict has long since crossed the limits of humanity.”<sup>1</sup>*

The second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century could be considered as a period of World Risk where wars, ecological threats and different political interests have forced many people to live under dangerous conditions.<sup>2</sup> In the last few years, one more global challenge has emerged; the Syrian War. This new humanitarian crisis, apart from the sobering number of casualties (approx. 400,000), has resulted to millions of displaced people to the neighbouring countries and around the world.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) there are around 4.8 million of registered Syrian Refugees, a figure that represents more than 50% of the country's total population. Globally, around 160.000 Syrian refugees have found a new a permanent home, resettled in a hosting country; this only covers a very small percentage of those in need, in comparison to the refugees that have migrated to Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey.<sup>3</sup> Greece is one of the main points of refugee arrivals coming from Turkey in an attempt to enter the EU. According to UNHCR statistics, the country so far has received more than 165.000 refugees by sea in 2016, an addition to the 856.000 of 2015.<sup>4</sup> In central Europe, Germany is one of the countries that has welcomed Syrian refugees, accepting around 40.000. The resettlement places Germany offered make up 54% of the total number of resettlement places offered across the EU.<sup>5</sup> These refugees come from various cultural and

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<sup>1</sup>Finish Red Cross about the situation in Syria, <https://www.redcross.fi/news/20150317/finnish-red-cross-situation-syria-has-crossed-limits-humanity>, access 10/09/2016.

<sup>2</sup> Silverman 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Last Updated 16 Aug 2016 , source UNHCR Government of Turkey, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, access 31/08/2016

<sup>4</sup> More details about the refugees in Greece are presented in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter. <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=83>, access 18/09/2016.

<sup>5</sup> Excluding Germany and Sweden, the remaining 26 EU countries have pledged around 30.903 resettlement places, or around 0.7% of the Syrian refugee population in the main host countries. Source: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/02/syrias-refugee-crisis-in-numbers/>, access 15/09/2016, that

religious backgrounds and, as journalist Dough Saunders described, many of them are “urban, educated and determined to travel towards a safer life”, breaking many stereotypes that portray immigrants in a negative light.<sup>6</sup> In this challenging landscape, this thesis will explore the possible ways that museums may be able to assist in this humanitarian crisis, and how they may be able to contribute towards a more effective strategy in managing it.

Museums have valuable assets that can target specific elements of refugee management. But most importantly perhaps, apart from having the means to help, they carry the obligation, as institutions of culture that belong to the field of humanities, to actively get involved with humanitarian crises such as this one. The need for help is quite real; as UNHCR states, the refugee needs are enormous whereas the sources are limited.<sup>7</sup>

The ways in which museums can contribute are numerous. First, they can contribute towards the acceptance of the phenomenon by raising awareness of it and by establishing programs that aim towards enhancing immigrants’ (mainly cultural) integration as well as trigger a societal response to their condition.<sup>8</sup> Museums can also offer relief work by acting as coordination hubs for volunteers and charity organisations, therefore facilitating a wider outreach in the affected areas with the aim of providing immediate humanitarian assistance through distribution of essential goods and services.

In terms of how museums can enhance their social role, this paper examines the commonality of capabilities between the museums and the NGOs, identifying points of improvement and lessons for museums that can be learned from the way NGOs handle situations such as the Syrian Refugee crisis. Therefore this paper additionally aims to open up the discourse of the ways the museums can assist in a refugee crisis and highlight their significant potential. Under these circumstances, museums are best seen as independent organizations, and therefore it is important to classify them according to size and type, to

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got the data from *UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)*, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), International Organization of Migration (IOM), access: 31/08/2016.

<sup>6</sup> [http://citiesofmigration.ca/ezone\\_stories/good-ideas-in-refugee-integration/](http://citiesofmigration.ca/ezone_stories/good-ideas-in-refugee-integration/), access 15/09/2016

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/partners/41c162d04/ngo-partnerships-refugee-protection-questions-answers-2007-edition.html>, access 04/08/2016.

<sup>8</sup> Sociologist Richard Alba advises that “we” should rather start accepting immigration and start finding ways of managing it because it is pointless to try to stop it. Alba 2015.

more effectively assess their ability and potential to contribute. Museum types can be, for example, art, historical, science, folklore, ethnographic, etc.<sup>9</sup> The contribution ability of each museum is dependent on the effectiveness of the sustainable use of the museum's resources. These include key aspects that underline the museum's social role, as suggested by Dr. Lois Silverman, the museum environment, objects, exhibits, collections-based activities and programs, creative arts activities, exhibit making and/or contributions, museum making and/or museum work and lastly special events and initiatives, where relief work could be included.<sup>10</sup>

Before examining the above topics in detail, we should first understand the development and the state of the art of the social role of museums.

### **The Social Role of Museums**

Museums are institutions recognized for their commitment to serve the society, undertaking a strong societal role that can include different aspects, such as the museum as contact zone, the integrated museum, roles that are mentioned throughout the thesis.<sup>11</sup> Should, therefore, humanitarian crises like the Syrian Refugee one be issues that museums should even attempt to deal with, according to that role? As Silverman wrote: “[In order to] survive and thrive in the next age, we must evolve new strategies of beneficial coexistence, using every suitable means to do so.”<sup>12</sup> Following this position, each professional field should have the moral responsibility to contribute to global issues with any means that are available to it. Thus, it should be especially important for museums, with their non-profitable character and mission that benefits the society and protects its cultural treasures, to set humanity as a priority.

Furthermore, according to Alf Hatton, historical and cultural anthropologist, it is thoroughly healthy for professional, including those in museums, to be in a constant debate

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<sup>9</sup> Migration museums are also included, even though it is recognized that they have an advantage upon the approach of migration crisis and therefore it was intended not to be used as an example, in an effort to highlight the possibilities of museums who are not specializing on relevant topics.

<sup>10</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 144.

<sup>11</sup> According to ICOM definition which is going to be discussed below. (The integrated museum concept was introduced by Mario Teruggi.)

<sup>12</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 139.

about the purpose of their institutions, utility and their relevance.<sup>13</sup> Based on the statistics and figures presented earlier in this paper, the Syrian Refugee Crisis is indeed a desperate situation that requires the use of every suitable means the society has to offer (including museums). Without doubt, each type of social organization has different capabilities and museums might not singlehandedly be able to solve crucial societal issues or humanitarian crises. They can, though, work on those on an institutional level.<sup>14</sup>

Having a look at the history of museums, it is consistent that they have always been connected to social service, either intentionally or not.<sup>15</sup> Through the study of their collections the visitors gained the knowledge they sought and in this respect, museums can be considered to be institutes for scholarship, even though they were accessible to a limited high-class audience. As time went by, private collections got catalogued and presented in a way that could enhance meaning-making, culminating to the modern public museums.<sup>16</sup>

New developments in the humanity studies during the 1970's, inspired museums to focus on the so-called "common people" and members of marginalized social groups.<sup>17</sup> Since approximately the middle of the 1990's, under the influence of new ideas about society and culture, the museums rethought their identity, the information they pass on to their audiences and in general their ethical and social responsibility.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, they gradually turned from being sites of worship into "public services and social agents"<sup>19</sup> that among their primary goals is their service to society.<sup>20</sup>

These changes in museum practices have opened up the era of the "*post museum*", an institution that as museum professor Janet Marstine has written "[...] has completely reinvented itself" by being "no longer a 'museum' but something new, yet related to the

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<sup>13</sup> Hatton 2012, p. 130.

<sup>14</sup> Argument based on Michelle Obama's speech about museums, as discussed on "The Inluseum" online platform about "inclusion and justice in museums". Source: <https://inluseum.com/2015/05/12/michelle-obama-activism-and-museum-employment-part-i/> access: 08/09/2016.

<sup>15</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Hatton 2012, p. 134.

<sup>17</sup> Johansson 2015, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Hooper-Greenhill 2007, quoted in Johansson 2015, p. 16 & Crooke, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Lanz 2016, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Hooper-Greenhill 2007, p. 1.



'museum'. [...] the *post museum* can promote social understanding"<sup>21</sup>, highlighting its renewed connection to society. Key elements of this new type of museum are: discourse, critical understanding and sensitivity to different cultural and historical interpretations diverging from the perception of the museum as a place of adoration and awe.<sup>22</sup> In the post museum era, according to Silverman, the communication between the museum and the people can address social problems, promote social justice and equality, while strengthening social relationships: "Through museum communication, people [...] alter key elements of culture that shape the very operation, quality and experience of social life".<sup>23</sup>

Yet, despite the noticeable efforts from museums worldwide to engage with social work, many are not considered institutions of social service by the general public, even in the 2000's, by funding agencies.<sup>24</sup> Hence, museums have still a long way to go in terms of explicitly demonstrating their engagement with society and its development.

Hatton explains, that in order to deconstruct museums' social role, certain questions need to be asked. One of those is about whether museums have a monopoly in this service to the society or whether they have "competitors" and in that case how well they are competing with them.<sup>25</sup> Another question is regarding whether different purposes exist for museums in different societies and whether those need to be re-examined through the passage of time. Considering as "competitors" the long-established in social work NGOs and recognizing the Syrian Refugee crisis as a new societal need, this paper introduces the work of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), in parallel to museums rather than as competitors, and analyses their actions, as they benefit society, as examples to be set by museums, especially in the context of the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

This officially recognized social role of the museum, could not leave unexamined the global societal diversity. Abandoning its former "monolithic" status, the museum began sharing

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<sup>21</sup> Marstine 2006, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Marstine 2006, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 147 & Hein 2005, p. 357.

<sup>25</sup> Hatton 2012, p. 130-131.

stories with a wider meaning trying to reflect people that have been alienated by mainstream society, such as the migrants.<sup>26</sup>

More specifically, the museums today, based on their social role, are attempting apart from tourists to engage also with the local people (including relocated immigrants and refugees), constantly in search of new ways to attract them as visitors.<sup>27</sup> Migration is a massive societal phenomenon, present throughout human history, which sociologists, such as Richard Alba, claim that it has multiple beneficial outcomes for the society.<sup>28</sup>

Contrary to the late 19th century, where the museums' goal was to create "national unity and foster citizens"<sup>29</sup> by shaping a homogenized national identity, nowadays it is expected from them to expose and exhibit people's different backgrounds, this time without neglecting their cultural plurality and the impact of migrant cultures to the dominant one.<sup>30</sup> Museums, according to James Clifford, an interdisciplinary scholar (including fields such as history and anthropology) who applied to them languages' professor Luise Pratt's idea of "contact zones", have the capability to act as places of collaboration where different cultures meet, exchange opinions and influence the museum's narrative.<sup>31</sup> More specifically Pratt defines contact zones as "[...] the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations", a concept that has been adapted to contemporary museums through their inclusionist and collaborative programmes as well as through the use of source communities, the latter being mostly applicable to anthropological, historical and archaeological museums.<sup>32</sup> Concisely, 'Contact Zones' are places where a dominant culture would provide a negotiated space for certain cultural exchange, an exchange that is of concern in the chapters to follow. Similarly, the

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<sup>26</sup> Janes, *Museums Without Borders*, 2016, p. 211-212.

<sup>27</sup> Hatton, 2012, p. 132.

<sup>28</sup> Alba 2015. Alba referring to the 2nd World War, points out the fact that the immigrants enabled the hosting societies to re-build their economies and enrich their culture. He also makes clear that the professional background of them is not of importance, as working force is always valuable. Living again under a financially unstable period, this could be a useful lesson to take under consideration justifying the need of museums' involvement in that topic.

<sup>29</sup> Johansson 2015, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Lleras 2011 & Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl 2009, p. 18.

<sup>31</sup> Clifford 1997 & Pinna, 2012 & Bennett 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Pratt 1992, p. 6. & Boast 2011, p. 56.

contemporary museum's social role is connected to another concept, the one of the "integrated museum", mainly adopted by museum professional and author Mario Teruggi, that perceives the museum as an organization integrated with its surrounding society and environment as well as with other organizations that serve the same purposes; in this case the NGOs.<sup>33</sup> The integrated museum highlights the role of museums in the society and its development and encourages the cooperation of the museum with other fields in humanities, such as the social sciences.<sup>34</sup>

During the recent years a small, but important, number of museums have made valuable attempts to represent migration, including the establishment of museums wholly dedicated to the topic.<sup>35</sup> These museums intend to raise awareness about the immigrants and the causes of their relocation.<sup>36</sup> Though, there are also cases where the migrants' memories and those of other groups of the population have been ignored by the established historical accounts, especially in Europe in order to avoid the stigma of "countries of immigration"<sup>37</sup>. The museums in those cases seem to be positioned in the middle of two opposite forces: the urge to represent a multicultural population and reflect the actual needs of the society and at the same time to remain loyal to the nationalistic past that wants them to represent a certain national identity.<sup>38</sup> Referring to the National Museum of Colombia, Museum professor and curator Cristina Lleras believes that museums should take action in reflecting migration topics, independently of any government's efforts to simplify cultural complexity for the sake of a

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<sup>33</sup> Davis 2011, p. 60.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, despite some valuable contributions, it is not very common yet, at least for European museums, to include activities related to migration, although the research on this topic is not in depth. Johansson 2015, p. 21.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Hoerder, D. 2005. "Europe's many worlds and their global interconnections". In Konig, M. & Ohliger, R. (eds.) *Enlarging European Memory: Migration Movements in Historical Perspective*, Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, quoted in Johansson 2015, p. 14.

<sup>38</sup> The museums depending on their location can be "implicated politically" and contribute to the shaping people's identities. Christopher Whitehead, Susannah Eckersley, Rhiannon Mason 2012.

“harmonious nation”.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, many museums are not inspired or motivated to renew their functions and deal with current societal issues, possibly due to a lack of strategic vision, resources and staff trained accordingly. One can get a glimpse of how these issues can be addressed through establishing links to, and a comparing with, NGOs.

Merging the discussion about the social role of museums and their connection to migration, an important reason why museums should deal with the Syrian Refugees is their social relevancy.<sup>40</sup> As Hatton explains, museums should be investing in constant efforts to make appropriate choices regarding their social purpose, at the risk of becoming irrelevant in the context of this generation’s communications and social media advances.<sup>41</sup> According to Hatton, a well-justified purpose could also extend the budgets available and thus contribute to the preservation of the museum’s collection as well. For some authors, like professor and museum professional Robert R. Janes, the museums have already increasingly lost their social relevance, focusing on visitor numbers (with the implication that counting numbers with the sole purpose of obtaining more funding has monopolised their interest tactically, distracting them from seeking strategic ways to become more relevant to the society).<sup>42</sup> Silverman believes that apart from their relevance, it is a general responsibility of museums to humankind to take part in social action, as they can help in fostering “cultures of caring”<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, since museums are in the service of society, they should not remain indifferent to the current societal issues, especially when these are directly and materially connected to cultural perspectives, such as an immigration phenomenon or a refugee crisis.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Lleras, X. 2011. “Facing up to diversity: Conversations at the National Museum of Colombia”. In Knell, S., Aronsson, P. & Bugge Amundsen, A. (eds.) *National Museums: New studies from around the world*. London: Routledge, quoted in Johansson 2015, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> Hatton 2012, p. 137.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>42</sup> Janes 2016, p. 256.

<sup>43</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 139.

<sup>44</sup> Janes 2016, p. 193-194.

## Correlating museums to NGOs

The paper discusses the importance of museums contributing to the exposure and action towards constructive resolution of societal issues, and how the Syrian refugee crisis is such an issue. It will now be discussed in more detail how museums can contribute to this constructive relief of the crisis, and how a comparison with the NGOs could assist them and enhance their efficiency in undertaking this key role.

It is a fact that museums have embraced the practice to borrow ideas and perspectives from other fields. They have adopted the structure and management principles of companies, being more efficient while handling funds and organizing their human resources; concepts and techniques from the fields of education and communication, and approaches and guidance from the social sciences.<sup>45</sup> Museums indeed need to get non-museum perspectives and use them as a source of “untapped knowledge” according to Janes.<sup>46</sup> One such source on the topic of handling humanitarian crises could be the NGOs. We begin by first introducing the definitions of what a museum is and what an NGO is in the context of this paper.

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has provided evolving definitions of what a museum is throughout the years so that it accurately reflects the contemporary museological drifts.<sup>47</sup> The latest update was in 2007:

*“Section 1. Museum. 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.”<sup>48</sup>*

It is important to note that the definition of a museum as an organisation serving society was introduced in 1974. It is also noticeable that the present definition has evolved,

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<sup>45</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 23.

<sup>46</sup> Janes, *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance Or Collapse?* 2009, p. 258.

<sup>47</sup> [http://archives.icom.museum/hist\\_def\\_eng.html](http://archives.icom.museum/hist_def_eng.html), access 10/09/2016.

<sup>48</sup> ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly (Vienna, Austria, 24 August 2007), *Ibid.*, access 10/09/2016.

so that it offers prominence to the people, instead of the exhibits, clarifying also its connection to development.

The ICOM definition of a museum is generally accepted by museums globally.<sup>49</sup> NGOs, however, as far as this thesis has researched, have several definitions based on the numerous types of NGOs, without evidence of a leading one. In an attempt to sum up the definitions available, NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) is an organization independent of any government which are by their vast majority also “non-profitable organizations”. The great diversity of NGO types introduces the necessity of classifying them according to type, which will then make it possible to compare them to museums.

In general, all organisations can be initially divided into 3 sectors: government, for-profit, and all others. All NGOs belong to the third sector, which includes some certain characteristics according to Professor of Social Policy and Development David Lewis and social policy specialist Nazneen Kanji: they have a legal status, carry a certain organizational structure and permanence, are private and independent from the government, without excluding possible cooperation with that and even though they can have income and possibly profits, they are not profit-driven, nor do these profits accrue to its owners.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, they are self-governing, meaning that they are responsible of managing their affairs and a voluntary participation of the staff should be present, either wholly or partially. This classification still encompasses a large and broad category of organizations, which can include organizations such as education establishments, themed clubs and religious organizations. Museums are also included in the third sector organizations which, among its other characteristics, is a very important sector upon which the social capital of a society is dependent.<sup>51</sup>

Comparing the definitions for NGOs and museums, we see that they are both non-profitable organizations that strive for social goals detached from personal interests and from

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<sup>49</sup> Members of ICOM are more than 20.000 museums and 35.000 museum professionals world-widely, according to its official website. Source: <http://icom.museum/icom-network/35000-experts/>, access 06/12/2016.

<sup>50</sup> David Lewis, Nazneen Kanji 2009, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Janes 2009, p. 102.

the goal to make profit.<sup>52</sup> Apart from a general responsibility to society each museum, just as an NGO, has different specified goals, area of focus and activity plan. The size, structure and resources can also differ from case to case in both types of organizations concluding that they can both be autonomous and self-efficient. Another similarity they share is that they are both present in a global scale, in both developed and underdeveloped societies, in urban and rural environments. This diversity highlights how seemingly different organizations, that can be included under the same category of either museums or NGOs, can find different kinds of solutions for the same problems; whether these problems are solely about the preservation and exhibition of a collection, or striving to distribute food and shelter to endangered areas.

One of the many definitions available, describes NGOs as organizations that are working towards a “social, political or economical change”.<sup>53</sup> This focuses on a characteristic of some NGOs that are engaging with development work, which characterises the majority of them.<sup>54</sup> In this thesis we will use this qualification, which refers to the “Non-Governmental Development Organisations”, as the organisations to be used as a comparison to museums. We will therefore be using the term NGO to denote these organisations.

Development is a difficult concept to be defined under one generally accepted definition, according to Lewis.<sup>55</sup> In brief, it means an effort towards a positive change or progress, connected to growth and evolution. The term firstly appeared in literature around the end of the twentieth century and since then has been used widely. It is, though, considered to be a problematic term to be accurately defined. It describes a positive change in

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<sup>52</sup> Though, according to scholars, such as Frey and Meier, organizations with profitable character can also be recognized as museums: “Museums can be private for-profit organizations, private non-profit organizations, or public organizations run in a non-profitable way.” Bruno S. Frey, Stephan Meier 2006, p.400. The present thesis, though, is using ICOM’s definition and therefore approaches the museum as a non-profitable organization.

<sup>53</sup> David Lewis, Nazneen Kanji 2009, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Other definitions of NGOs mention clearly the development work as one of their characteristics. For instance an NGO can be described as: [...] *a citizen-based association that operates independently of government, usually to deliver resources or serve some social or political purpose. [...]The World Bank classifies NGOs as either operational NGOs, which are primarily concerned with development projects, or advocacy NGOs, which are primarily concerned with promoting a cause.*” Source: <http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/NGO-non-governmental-organization>, access 10/09/2016.

<sup>55</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 17.

economical, political or social terms upon the lives of the people. It is the work of these non-profit organisations, alongside museums, which have as an underlying principle to support and encourage development that this paper considers. People working in development organizations are typically characterized by an outward sense of altruism and an ability to think independently of dominant societal, cultural and humanitarian ideologies. Development work is frequently connected to Relief and Emergency Work, a sector of NGOs' actions that is going to be discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, in connection to museums' work. The main difference between development and Relief and Emergency work is that the former strives for a long term beneficial change whereas the latter is associated with tactical interventions that aim to reinstate any disrupted stability. Relief and Emergency work in other words, is the immediate, and many times urgent, response to man-made or natural disasters/crises. Such response includes providing assistance to war victims, like the Syrian refugees. In general, both development and Relief and Emergency work are connected to poverty and people in need usually due to a violation of their human rights. Further actions of these type of NGOs include legal advocacy and defence of vulnerable people in addition to research on ways to prevent similar violations in the future.<sup>56</sup> According to Lewis, NGOs that deal with development work have 3 main ways to function: as catalysts, implementers and partners; roles that are going to be further explained later in paper.<sup>57</sup> An organization can be involved in more than one of those functions which frequently overlap. The museums, similarly, also set development as a goal (as per the ICOM definition and also as part of the "integrated museum" concept). Their role in development is strongly connected to their educational purpose with the potential, to be further explored and extended to other areas beyond education (such as actively contributing to the relief of a refugee crisis), following in NGOs' footsteps.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, development is strongly linked to museums' social role since according to Lewis, development work includes the building of appropriate social systems, systems that museums are able to contribute towards.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> <http://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/human-rights-activism-and-the-role-of-ngos>, access 11/09/2016.

<sup>57</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 68.

<sup>58</sup> Education is contributing to the concept of development, as discussed in the text, of the society. King 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 67.



NGOs can be highly active in working towards ways to secure social and economic stability for marginalized populations and are included in the “aid industry” agencies which are searching for alternative interventions to poverty reduction and a general improvement of life quality. The aid industry works through service delivery, advocacy and campaigning.<sup>60</sup> The chapters to follow are going to refer to Development NGOs that do also Relief and Emergency work. This is important as it offers suggestions of how museums may not only be able to participate in development work, but also contribute significantly in Relief and Emergency efforts.

There are many reasons supporting a comparison of museums to NGOs. For starters, NGOs can reach and encourage in active participation a strata of usually poor population demographics that is either ignored or impossible to reach by the public social services let alone museums.<sup>61</sup> The reasons behind the inability of government organisations to achieve the same results, is as Lewis highlights, financial shortage, general social and cultural access problems, as well as the influence in decision making by elite interests.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, NGOs are able to provide services more cost efficiently than other organizations as their limited budget has urged them to look for low-cost, yet practical solutions in order to ensure the realisation of their goals, without the burden of government bureaucracy. Another positive aspect of NGOs’ work is that they give the opportunity to citizens to include themselves in addressing and contributing to the abolition of poverty and of other social issues by working as supporters or volunteers in multiple projects and campaigns. According to Lewis, NGOs are more connected to the local culture than governmental agencies, recognizing more effectively the social and cultural needs of the population.<sup>63</sup> This paper will expand on the above points in the following chapters.

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<sup>60</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> The issue of access difficulties by the official social services has been mentioned by both Lewis (Lewis 2001) and Silverman (Silverman 2010).

<sup>62</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 76.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

The correlation between Museums and NGOs is focused on basic similarities that the two types of organizations already share, and it will form the starting point in a search to identify more similarities in the following chapters. Apart from both being engaged in development work, NGOs are also keen on borrowing perspectives and ideas from other fields, as part of an ongoing effort of improving their organizations with the ultimate objective of enhancing their impact onto the society, just as is the case with museums.<sup>64</sup>

Another similarity among the two is that NGOs and museums contribute (at a different level) to the Social Capital. Social Capital is the maintaining of healthy relationships between community members/groups. The involvement with Social Capital, as Janes states, has the potential to increase funding options, since the organizations will start getting paid according to the value they add to society and its individuals. Social Capital consists of trust, empathy and meaning, which are also characteristics of several museums and NGOs with the latter exchanging funding for social services.<sup>65</sup> It is assumed that both governmental and private museums are interested in finding new ways of receiving funds in order to maintain their daily operations and therefore should explore further their role in increasing Social Capital. Such funding options could occur from the government, programmes funded by the EU and other sponsors, or from donations. NGOs, as it is demonstrated later on, are very effective fund-raisers and therefore could be a source of knowledge and innovation for museums wanting to explore financing in that way.

NGOs have both advocates and critics. This is to be expected given the wide remit of NGOs, and also the marked differences in types, sizes, and sectors of operation. Therefore, it is important to focus on an appropriate classification prior to making general comments about the NGOs. Further, due to the sheer number of NGOs, it's expected that some will not function effectively, and they will attract disproportionate amounts of criticism. Therefore this thesis refers only to exemplar NGOs that as far as I am aware contribute positively to society.

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<sup>64</sup> NGOs are learning from companies how to improve a variety of skills, such as product design, quality control, marketing and any other area that can enhance their impact to the society. Lewis 2001, p. 4-5.

<sup>65</sup> Janes 2016, p. 213-214.

Unfortunately, there are no consistent measurements of NGOs performance in terms of their contribution to the Social Capital and that is acknowledged as a limitation of the research.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, there are many advocates of the importance of NGOs and their contribution to society, with accolades coming from prestigious international organisations such as the United Nations and the European Commission. These accolades praise NGO for their assistance towards the effective response and resolution of humanitarian crises. More specifically, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has recognized the importance of NGOs believing that they have special skills and resources to help in the refugee crisis, mentioning that partnerships with NGOs are providing life-saving assistance.<sup>67</sup>

### Thesis' Structure

The present thesis is divided into three main chapters that represent the three main areas that the museums can assist in the Syrian Refugee crisis:

1. Cultural Integration I: The acceptance of the refugees in the Hosting Society
2. Cultural Integration II<sup>68</sup>: Raising awareness in the Hosting Society
3. Reaching out to the affected areas: Relief and Emergency Work

In order to relate, compare and contrast museums with the NGOs, the three main dimensions in development work that characterize the NGOs, according to Lewis, are used: working as partners, catalysts and implementers.<sup>69</sup> A brief description of these dimensions follows:

The NGOs in their roles as partners typically work towards inclusion of disadvantaged people, or people in need in the hosting society. There is a strong link here with Chapter 1 in this thesis. When an NGO works as a catalyst, it inspires, facilitates and promotes actions that aim to bring a positive change in society. An example could be organising campaigns to raise

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<sup>66</sup> Lewis 2001.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/partners/41c162d04/ngo-partnerships-refugee-protection-questions-answers-2007-edition.html>, access 04/08/2016.

<sup>68</sup> The numbering of Cultural Integration in I & II reflects the double sides of integration, as a process that influences both the incoming and local population. Further details are going to be presented in the relevant chapters.

<sup>69</sup> Lewis 2001 & David Lewis, Nazneen Kanji 2009.

awareness, an activity that is connected to Chapter 2 in this thesis. As implementers, the NGOs are responsible for mobilising goods and services to cater to people in need, and this is connected to Chapter 3 in this thesis. The NGOs using their effective partnerships are able to implement a wide range of objectives, one of which is the inclusion of the refugees in the Hosting Society. These partnerships are usually between the NGOs and government agencies established for the purpose of maximising the likelihood for a successful delivery of an initiative or project. It is therefore not a significant departure from this practice that NGOs could start cooperating more closely with museums as well, with the objective of enhancing the cultural integration and social inclusion of refugees.

This thesis also sets boundaries on its scope, and therefore there are a number of areas that will be considered outside the scope of the work presented here.

Firstly it does not consider the political sensitivities and international “macro” dynamics that play a role in the global landscape. Instead the focus regarding the Syrian War is on the refugees, who are approached as human beings in need and also as essential contributors, among all other human beings, to the world culture. Therefore cultural institutions, including museums, should have a vested interest on their well-being (in this case societal and cultural).

In addition, while this thesis acknowledges that in cases of war, and war-driven humanitarian crises, there is a high risk of artefacts being lost, stolen or destroyed, this thesis will deal solely with the human capital of the disaster/crisis that have elected to escape to other countries as refugees and their need for emergency, societal and cultural relief.

The thesis demonstrates how museums can respond effectively by tactically responding to a humanitarian crisis. In particular, this thesis examines the case of the Syrian Refugee crisis and introduces a discussion around the social role of museums and their position in the society in the future.

The above topics are going to be approached through a variety of case studies, both from museums and NGOs. The relatively large number of available case studies, especially

from NGOs provided a rich landscape for the underlying research, and the breadth of them made the selection for inclusion in this work even more difficult. In the case of the museum case studies, the inclusion of dissimilar organizations was attempted in order to demonstrate that a variety of museums types are able to contribute effectively. All museums are on purpose located in areas outside the footprints of the affected zones, so that it could be possible to examine museums in an environment that their functions and capabilities can be effectively deployed. The case studies selected include museums both from areas that have received refugees and from others that have not.<sup>70</sup> These museums are approached as sources of inspiration, innovation and provision of guidelines for other museums to adopt similar practices indicating that assisting in the refugee crisis can be done effectively and coherently. As the case studies are presented across the three chapters, there are instances that a case study applies to the discussion taking place in more than one chapter. In these instances, the case study will only be discussed in the chapter that it seems to offer better intellectual value.

The paper also includes examples of a variety of NGO structures and sizes, to minimise unconscious bias in drawing conclusions. The objective of the paper is to demonstrate that some practices the NGOs follow can be beneficial for museums as novel ways to discharge their social role. Further, this paper identifies that some museums are already using similar practices.

To conclude, this thesis based upon the confrontation of the Syrian Refugee crisis, examines the elements that museums could possibly adopt from NGOs, identify potential areas of cooperation between the two, compare them side by side in the three main focus areas of the chapters in order to identify further similarities and differences and ask whether the future functions of museums are converging towards the direction of NGOs work.

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<sup>70</sup> Since the 10% of the Syrian Refugees searches for a shelter in Europe (with most popular countries being Germany, Serbia, Sweden, Hungary, Austria, Netherlands and Denmark) the focus is mainly western European Museums, though there are actions that can be adopted by museums in other countries, including one case study from USA and international NGOs. Source: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, access 12/09/2016.

## Cultural Integration I: The inclusion of refugees in the Hosting

### Society

*"[...] people need more than three meals a day and a roof over their heads. In addition to humanitarian aid, they also needed cultural aid."<sup>71</sup>*

#### **Cultural integration and inclusion initiatives by museums and NGOs**

When people immigrate they are expected to face a new environment including different people, locations, rules and culture. From the way people dress, the architecture of the buildings and the language being spoken to traditions and local celebrations, culture has a big impact on the new life of any immigrant. When this transition is forced, like in the case of the Syrian refugees and other population groups displaced by war, typically there has been no prior preparation time for those people regarding the new society and therefore their adaptation to it is more challenging.

The refugees though, are not the only ones having to deal with a different culture; the hosting society must also find a way to handle a new cultural element that may (depending on volumes) influence the dominant culture.<sup>72</sup> As Rima Berns McGown, a diaspora studies professor, defines it, "this process of immigrants' adjustment to the new society without the loss of what they consider essential as identity and the accommodation of the adoptive society on them" is called cultural integration.<sup>73</sup> Contrary to other models, integration is the appreciation of the impact of the new arrivals on the local population and supports the exchange of cultural elements from both sides and respect for both backgrounds. For Policy Analyst Samson Ramona, cultural integration is an open-ended transformation that has the

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<sup>71</sup> From: "Action for Hope evolved from the 2012 visit by a group of Arabic cultural professionals in the camps for Syrian refugees in Kilis, Turkey. During their encounters with the people there, the Action for Hope activists came to realize that the people need more than three meals a day and a roof over their heads. In addition to humanitarian aid, they also needed cultural aid." Source: <http://www.goethe.de/lhr/prj/daz/pfv/aar/en14889570.htm>, access 13/09/2016.

<sup>72</sup> Yann Algan, Alberto Bisin, Alan Manning 2012.

<sup>73</sup> McGown 1999.

capability to reconstruct a society and its societal identities while avoiding to form a unified culture or reproduce a nation-state model.<sup>74</sup>

Proper cultural integration is very important for any immigrant. Learning for instance the language of a hosting society is an essential stepping stone towards achieving self-sufficiency and confidence to communicate and therefore find a job with more possibilities to reflect someone's skills. The ability to communicate with the locals in verbal or other cultural ways (such as knowing specific behavioural practices) can boost the refugees' confidence, morale and dignity.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, through cultural integration the possibilities of the refugees to experience cultural racism are limited.

A lot of factors can affect the cultural integration of an individual such as their educational background, age, gender, family, financial situation, relationships and networks in the new country and experiences of past traumas or tortures such as in the case of the Syrian Refugees.<sup>76</sup> The relevance their culture has to the new one also plays a role, making the refugees able to adapt more easily to the environment of neighbouring countries that share similar cultural norms.<sup>77</sup> The success of cultural integration depends also on the response of the hosting country referring to the resources it invests in it, usually by organizing introductory workshops, sessions, trainings and events and whether those can be applied to the individual needs that the refugees have. Another important factor apart from the person's access to the hosting society without ethnicity restrictions, is their own choices about the cultural types they want to follow.<sup>78</sup> An individual is at a position to decide the elements of their culture (or other cultures) they want to adopt, meaning that each person is a unique combination of cultural elements and should be approached as such. Furthermore, special focus needs to be given to children, who as mentioned in Alba's book, are more easily affected by culture and institutions that surround them as they are at a position of forming their cultural identity, meaning that the museums could play an important role in their integration.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Samson 2006.

<sup>75</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 27 & UNHCR, UNHCR Note on Refugee Integration in Central Europe, 2009, p. 28.

<sup>76</sup> Hein 2005, p. 359 & EuroCities 2016

<sup>77</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Note on Refugee Integration in Central Europe 2009, p. 28.

<sup>78</sup> Yann Algan, Alberto Bisin, Alan Manning 2012.

<sup>79</sup> Alba 2015.

The integration of the refugees is beneficial not only to them, but also to the economy of the hosting society. In this case, teaching a refugee the local language could be a useful tool for introducing them to the local trade market. From this point of view, integration can create a significant medium to long term economic value for the hosting society in return for its upfront investment towards cultural integration.<sup>80</sup>

Museums as cultural organizations preserving cultural heritage, and as social institutions are expected to deal with migration, being able also to address cultural integration as well.<sup>81</sup> Depending on their type and location though, some museums are more capable of dealing with these topics than others.<sup>82</sup> Since the beginning of human history, migration has been shaping cultures and societies. Especially, today with the increased mobility and frequent migration waves, there is a constant change of the socio-cultural strata. Museums have to face challenges like questions and concerns about migration, ways of holding intercultural dialogue and portraying cultural differences.<sup>83</sup> There are already examples of museums attempting to design specific programmes for people from different cultural backgrounds, such as workshops, exhibitions and other kinds of events in order to be inclusive. In that way the target groups, including newly arrived immigrants, can have a meaningful museum experience while familiarizing themselves with the culture of the hosting society and the way this society is approaching other cultures, art and history. At this point, one of the questions raised is how could museums improve their programmes that aim to enhance the cultural integration of immigrants.

An important area in refugee management is the design of effective introductory programmes. In this field, NGOs in order to foster cultural integration organized multiple kinds of introductory programmes. Such programmes are initiated either by the NGOs themselves

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<sup>80</sup> Yann Algan, Alberto Bisin, Alan Manning 2012.

<sup>81</sup> Network of European Museum Organisations 2016, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> For example, ethnographic and historical museums that own a collection related to specific cultures are offering more opportunities for intercultural dialogue than a transportation museum or any other museum with a very specific type of collection.

<sup>83</sup> Lanz 2016.



or by the government that often collaboratively delivers these programmes. The European Council also supports introductory programmes agreeing upon the importance of integration. Particularly, in 2004 it adopted the Common Basic Principles (CBP) on integration that one year later developed into action points that can be held at national and at European level. According to CBP, it is of great significance that the immigrants gain basic knowledge of the language and history of the hosting society, emphasizing the importance of cultural institutions to the integration process.<sup>84</sup> The European Council is recognizing the NGOs' contribution to those programmes and highlights other factors that are able to contribute towards their implementation: educational institutions, private organisations, and museums. The European Council of Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) states that such programmes are an important tool of integration and it is a common benefit of both the immigrants and the hosting society that they are designed and held effectively.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, in the same report there are suggestions about the nature of those programmes that interested organizations can follow. For instance, they should be free of charge, without preconditions regarding any already existing knowledge about the hosting culture and the participation should be encouraged by positive means of persuasion instead of any kind of sanctions. Lastly, in the same report, several examples of European countries and their methods of integration are presented, focusing on specific cases. More precisely, guidelines and successful examples for introductory programmes do exist; museums need to be proactive and increase their participation in integration practices.

These programmes can have a positive impact on the museum number of visitors as well. The immigrants are part of the local population that the museums should have as one of their main goals to attract as actual visitors, according to Hatton.<sup>86</sup> The programmes can also enhance the museum's relevance as it contributes via them to one of the most urgent social

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<sup>84</sup> See Council Conclusions, Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union, 14615/04 of 19 November 2004 and the Communication from the European Commission on A Common Agenda for Integration – Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union, September 2005, COM (2005) 389.

<sup>85</sup> Caritas Europa. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) 2006.

<sup>86</sup> Hatton 2012, p. 132.

issues faced by its society's inhabitants. Through such programmes the museum is directly linked to the community by being actively involved with its issues. This "integrated museum" as Teruggi names it, can also use the problems faced by the local community as a stepping stone in the curating of exhibitions of relative themes that can contribute to the general public's awareness, as it is being examined in the next chapter.<sup>87</sup>

The benefits of the introductory programmes are not unknown to museums. For example, the Hull-House Labor Museum in the States has proved at the beginning of the previous century that through its programme where immigrants from a variety of countries were demonstrating their craft skills, their self-esteem was increased and their family relationships got improved.<sup>88</sup> Last of all, the museums have the power through selection choices about their exhibits to include or exclude different cultures. An interaction with refugees could perhaps teach them about their culture and ways to ensure their inclusion (refugees as source community).<sup>89</sup>

### **The culture(s) of the refugees and the challenges of cultural integration introductory programmes**

The introductory programmes must consider the culture of the immigrants before they are designed. This culture is closely connected to the culture of the place they were raised and the fact that one place of origin can include different cultures should be taken into consideration. In large countries like Syria, there can be several cultural elements that are not being shared by all of its citizens, from different religions to different language. Mistakenly, in many hosting societies there is the common belief that there is one homogenous culture of immigrants, bearing in mind solely the superficial, or phenomenological/normative differences between them, such as their diet, clothing and social practises. In reality, though, there are different types of culture that the immigrants adapt.<sup>90</sup> As a result of such

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<sup>87</sup> As quoted in Silverman 2010, p. 12 & Peter 2011, p. 60.

<sup>88</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 9.

<sup>89</sup> This statement is based on the new museology that states that the community can act as a source of knowledge for the museum, in an exchange of knowledge and information.

<sup>90</sup> Cuche 1996, p. 190-195.

misconceptions, many introduction programmes hold activities that people from different intellectual, educational and other backgrounds are fit in the stereotype approximation of the “typical refugee”. The ECRE report advises and already mentioned above, the introduction programmes are more effective when applied to individual needs of the people.<sup>91</sup>

The Syrian Refugees whose cultural integration is at the centre of this chapter come from a particularly different background in comparison to the western hosting countries. Their official language is Arabic and it is spoken by over 90% of the population. Other spoken languages in Syria are Circassian, Armenian and in the northeast Kurdish. Moreover, many Syrians have knowledge of English and French mostly for the purposes of communication with the tourists.<sup>92</sup> This cultural variation also coincides with the country’s religious segmentation. As falsely adopted by the media, not all Syrians are Muslims and not all Muslims follow the same religious practices or are involved at the same degree with them. The Kurd Muslims have a different culture and language, influenced by the Middle East, whereas the Circassian Muslims are of Russian origin and the Beduoin are separated by the urban society, living a more rural lifestyle. Other religious groups are the Alawite Muslims, the Druze, the Ismailis, Yezidi and there are also Christians who are Armenians originating from Turkey. These religious differences should be taken seriously under consideration when placing the refugees into the same programmes. For example, in the refugee camp of Katsika in Ioannina, Greece, Yezidi people were in a tense situation with the Muslim population, causing internal conflicts even to the point that the former decided to leave the camp.<sup>93</sup> Lastly, there is also a number of Palestinian population who tend to be excluded from the Syrian society politically and socially.<sup>94</sup> The challenge of the museums to represent all those different kinds of refugees is significant. They try to foster a unity inside an apparently irreconcilable diversity and that

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<sup>91</sup> Caritas Europa. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) 2006, p. 7.

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Syria.html#ixzz4Iuj3jLGk>, access 14/09/2016.

<sup>93</sup> <https://typos-i.gr/article/foboyntai-gia-th-zwh-toys-kai-feygoyn>, in Greek language, access 14/09/2016

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Syria.html#ixzz4KEPnWhRI>, access 14/09/2016.

could be achieved by presenting the common experiences of the refugees, focusing for instance on storytelling.<sup>95</sup>

Other challenges for museums and in general for the public social services is the accessibility of those programmes by the people that they create their services for.<sup>96</sup> Questions such as: whether and when the people will attend, how they are going to be informed about the programmes and how they will be motivated to take part, are only some of those being raised when designing them. Museums are already finding outreach to marginalised populations challenging, as demonstrated in “The Dream of a Better Life and Crossing Borders” exhibition in Museum of Work where the curator admitted that the immigrant associations were not motivated enough in order to participate.<sup>97</sup> NGOs, as mentioned above, are believed to find better ways of reaching out to those people, as it is shown in the case studies below.

### **NGOs and partnership**

This chapter examines the ways museums can contribute towards the successful delivery of cultural integration programmes following practices similar to NGOs, in the context of one of the three NGO dimensions: partnership with other organizations.

Looking into the NGO theory there are many elements that apply to museum partnership as well. For NGOs, a partner is “working together with another and share[s] the risk or benefit from a joint venture”.<sup>98</sup> Partnerships are an emerging trend among the NGOs and they strive for the development and enhancement of their capabilities as organizations (capacity-building). Potential partners could be the government, the private sector or other NGOs and local communities with the aim that those partnerships are “effective, responsive and non-dependent”<sup>99</sup>. Particularly, the interest in partnerships between governmental agencies and NGOs can be spotted since the 1990s where the mutual purpose was already the efficiency of the resources’ use, as well as the increase of the organizations’ sustainability and

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<sup>95</sup> Lanz 2016, p. 184.

<sup>96</sup> As observed and discussed during the European Social Services Conference in The Hague, June 2016.

<sup>97</sup> Johansson 2015, p. 81.

<sup>98</sup> David Lewis, Nazneen Kanji 2009, p. 13.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

the improvement of meaningful participation.<sup>100</sup> The partnership involves a division of roles and a clear description on each partner's responsibilities usually including involvement of the partners at different stages of the programme.<sup>101</sup> To the question why such partnerships are important, Lewis replies that when organizations are co-operating they are able to achieve certain goals that otherwise would not be possible to be achieved.

Returning to the introduction programmes, there is a general concern about use of such museological tools by governmental or other agencies in order to promote specific interests and points of view.<sup>102</sup> The limitation of such a risk of disproportionate and inequitable efforts could be one of the benefits of a cooperation between museums and NGOs. Management theory identifies that the closer an organization is to its official donors, the less autonomous it becomes and therefore both NGOs and museums as non-profitable organizations are vulnerable to their donor's intentions. Though, an important influence to an organization's intentions is the ethical decisions of the individuals involved. NGOs' staff are usually volunteers with high values and experience in providing unconditional assistance, without any financial motivation. According to Lewis, NGOs are seemingly more honest than other governmental organizations and detached by political agendas and sudden political upheavals.<sup>103</sup> Also, the more partners involved the less likely that the ultimate objective may be influenced by political or other agendas.

Museums may from time to time form limited types of partnerships but they do not explore the option to its fullest potential. Janes advises them to select their own partners and develop specific criteria for this process, such as to define what is the desired objective based on the organization's mission.<sup>104</sup> This thesis, intends to encourage not only the partnership between

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<sup>100</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 75.

<sup>101</sup> David Lewis, Nazneen Kanji 2009, p. 113.

<sup>102</sup> This is an issue that has been brought up in discussions about the thesis' topic.

<sup>103</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 76-77.

<sup>104</sup> Janes 2016, p. 260.

museums and other organizations, such as the NGOs, but also the partnership among museums themselves.

Multiple examples of partnership between NGOs and other organizations on the refugee topic, including museums, can be found under the coordination of UNHCR.<sup>105</sup> UNHCR is a programme sponsored by the UN that aims to protect and support refugees in their repatriation, integration and resettlement to a hosting country.<sup>106</sup> Member of the United Nations Development group and twice a Peace Nobel Prize winner UNHCR should be a desirable partner for museums addressing the refugee challenges. Moreover, it gives 40% of its income to partner organizations in order for them to undertake projects; an excellent opportunity for museums, to overcome the funding issue that seems to discourage them from taking new initiatives.<sup>107</sup> Two such examples of museums that cooperated with UNHCR are discussed in the third chapter, as they are connected to Relief and Emergency work.<sup>108</sup> The programmes being held under the umbrella of UNHCR can vary, from legal assistance and education (included in the integration area), to immediate relief actions, providing food water and shelter (that are related to the third chapter).

NGOs are highly capable of fostering strong partnerships that can inspire museums. One example demonstrating their efficiency on the topic, is the NGO Network of Integration Focal Points, coordinated by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). This group of NGOs, based on the implementation skills they have developed due to their experience in policies of refugee integration, decided to share their knowledge and publish a booklet. This booklet consists of national reports from 15 European countries on the recognition of skills and qualifications for the refugees and other immigrants, including many interesting insights

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<sup>105</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/partnerlist.php>, access 14/09/2016 & <http://www.unhcr.org/turkey/home.php?lang=en&content=469> 14/09/2016.

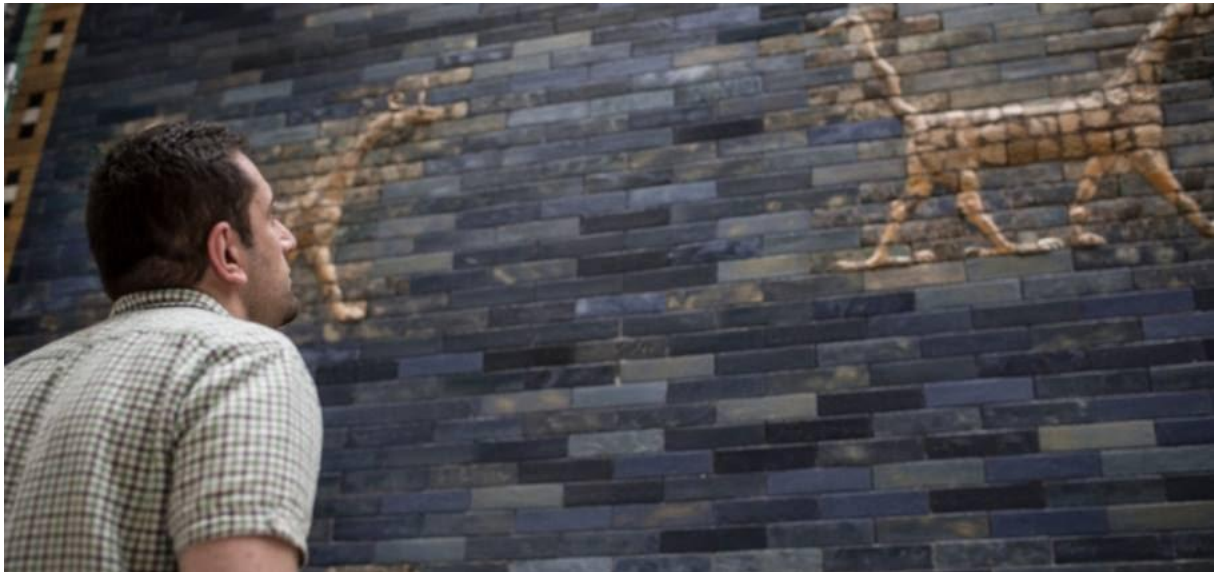
<sup>106</sup> UNHCR, Resettlement Handbook: Division of International Protection 2011.

<sup>107</sup> UNHCR in 2010 had announce plans to create a living museum in the refugee camp, an initiative that started from a project in Mozambique's Maratane camp in order to promote inter-generational dialogue and cultural exchanges. For such initiatives the museums could be useful providers for resources. Unfortunately, no further updates were found about the project. Source: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2010/5/4c03d7b56/unhcr-unesco-help-create-living-museum-mozambique-camp.html>, access 14/09/2016.

<sup>108</sup> Referring to Salaam Cultural Museum (SCM) in Seattle and Branly Museum in Paris.

into NGO work.<sup>109</sup> Among the goals of the Network is to better advocate integration policies for the refugees, as well as to formulate integration action points based on NGOs and refugee's experiences. There is no doubt that after the museums gain the necessary experience on the refugee topic, they could publish similar reports based on a museological perspective.

### Looking into museums and NGO cases for cultural integration projects



*Figure 1: Syrian refugee admires the ancient Babylonian Ishtar Gate at Berlin's Museum of the Ancient Near East.*

Nowadays, many museums initiate or take part in integration programmes, as a result of their active social role which has a more direct impact on their local society.<sup>110</sup> One example, is the partnership between Berlin museums for the Multaka project. As Hatton has written, a

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<sup>109</sup> It is part of a series of six on the integration of refugees and migrants in Europe addressing the following topics: Housing, introductory programmes and language courses, assessment of skills and recognition of qualifications, vocational training and (higher) education, employment and employment support and civic and political participation.

<sup>110</sup> Edmund Rice Heritage Center, a museum in Ireland, Museum Magnet and Arts Program that cooperates with museums and cultural organizations in order to foster integration in school children in Washington, Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A)'s integration programme in London during the Refugee Week almost 10 years ago, are only some of the numerous examples of museums' initiatives towards the assistance upon the cultural integration of immigrants. Sources: [http://citiesofmigration.ca/good\\_idea/london-making-museums-a-hub-for-integration/](http://citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/london-making-museums-a-hub-for-integration/), <http://www.capitolhillclusterschool.org/our-schools/stuart-hobson-middle-school/museum-magnet-arts-program>, <http://edmundrice.ie/community-centre/integration-support-unit/>, access 07/12/2016.

museum should operate more as a service, instead of a destination.<sup>111</sup> He imagines a museum that will design its services and products particularly for the needs of specific audiences, being exactly the case of the Multaka project in Berlin. Multaka means in Arabic “meeting point”, using the museum as a “contact zone” connecting the German and Syrian culture. As a contact zone, the museum is open to intercultural dialogue with the civil society, in order to discuss issues regarding migration, diversity and human rights. In doing so, the museum invites different communities to take part in the collection’s interpretation by sharing their own experiences.<sup>112</sup>

The main part of the Multaka project consists of Syrian and Iraqi refugees and immigrants being trained as museum guides for Syrian refugees in Arabic language. The full title of the project “Multaka: Museum as Meeting point” is inspired by its mission to not only offer museum tours, but also a meeting place for people with similar experiences. It was launched in the end of 2015 and is still active until the present date with more than 1600 refugees from Syria and Iraq to have attended it.<sup>113</sup> Even though these numbers are small in comparison to the total number of refugees received by Germany, it still shows a significant initiative with potentials of improvement. The Berlin museums that are taking part are: the Museum of Islamic Art and the Middle East Museum at the Pergamon Museum, the Bode Museum that includes a sculpture collection, the Museum of Byzantine Art and the Deutsches Historisches Museum.<sup>114</sup> Through the above museums, the participants get to see exhibits from both their own place of origin and Germany.

Using the museological objects as a starting point, the guides try to connect the past with the present and discuss the issues that concern the refugees nowadays. Furthermore, the participants get to observe and interpret the exhibits and through dialogue share their

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<sup>111</sup> Hatton 2012, p.132.

<sup>112</sup> Johansson 2015, p. 29.

<sup>113</sup> Present date mentioned in the text: 15/09/2016, source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/berlin-islamic-museum-refugees/3263139.html>, access 15/09/2016.

<sup>114</sup> The German Historical Museum, is recognizing European mobility and attempts to reflect the different cultures out of which Germany is consisted. (Haan, 2006) & <http://www.freunde-islamische-kunst-pergamonmuseum.de/index.php?multaka-treffpunkt-museum-gefluechtete-als-guides-in-berliner-museen>, access 15/09/2016.



own story, becoming active participants. In that way, they can spot historical and cultural connections between their country and Germany, with the view to adapt more easily to the culture of their new society.<sup>115</sup>

The total number of guides is around 25 and the tours take place twice per week for 20-50 participants, free of charge. The target group is teenagers and young adults, but all age groups are welcome.<sup>116</sup> Apart from the success and of this award-winning project, usually in such initiatives the question of “who are the people that actually participate” is raised.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, since the Syrian Refugees are such a diverse group, it would be interesting to know some statistics of the tour groups as well, in order to improve on any lack of participation of specific refugee groups. According to The Guardian website the tours are advertised through social media and via word of mouth. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find any additional listings of the event on other media channels.<sup>118</sup>

In projects like this, where its content is set by governmental agencies and is funded mainly by them, there is a risk that specific perspectives may be strongly imprinted on the refugees.<sup>119</sup> As observed in the sources published for this quite recent project, during the tours of the

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<sup>115</sup> <http://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/collection-research/research-coopeation/multaka.html>, access 15/09/2016.

<sup>116</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/27/berlin-museums-refugee-guides-scheme-fosters-meeting-of-minds>, access 15/09/2016.

<sup>117</sup> The Multaka project has been awarded with the “Special Award for Projects Promoting Cultural Integration of Refugees” and has won the annual competition “Landmarks in the Land of Ideas”, as well as been nominated for the 2016 “Deutscher Engagementpreis. Source: <http://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/collection-research/research-coopeation/multaka.html>, access 15/09/2016.

<sup>118</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/27/berlin-museums-refugee-guides-scheme-fosters-meeting-of-minds>, access 15/09/2016.

<sup>119</sup> The guides are being trained through a training programme around the themes of the museums and the didactics and methodology of museum guiding, designed by the department of “Education, Outreach and Visitor Services” of the Staatliche Museen (Berlin State Museums) and the “Education and Outreach” of the Deutsches Historisches Museum. Source: <http://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/collection-research/research-coopeation/multaka.html>, access 15/09/2016 & Supporters of the project are: “the federal program “Demokratie Leben” by the German Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth, representative of the federal government for Culture and Media (BKM), Schering Stiftung, Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum, Freunde des Museums für Islamische Kunst im Pergamonmuseum e.V., in addition to many private donors.” Source: <http://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-islamische-kunst/collection-research/research-coopeation/multaka.html>, access 15/09/2016.

Deutsches Historisches Museum (German History Museum) the guides included in their tours the narrative of Germany being a country that despite the devastated wars that occurred, it has survived and managed to develop, in an attempt to relate this story to the one of Syria.<sup>120</sup> Even though clearly the purpose was to boost the morale of the refugees by giving them hope that their country will one day overcome the war, one should also not ignore the propagandistic perspective that shows Germany as a victim of the previous wars and as a positive example of a country to be followed. This could be misconstrued and taken to imply that Germany is indirectly projecting elements of national narrative to the refugees. In cases like this the European Governments should take additional care to ensure that any conscious or unconscious bias is addressed.

It is also important to state though, the multiple benefits of this initiative by the Berlin Museums. Firstly, involving the refugees in an interactive way, makes them engage with the collection and according to Johansson, appreciate the museum.<sup>121</sup> Some of the visitors claimed that they were proud to see artefacts from their country being kept safe from the war's threat and are thankful for participating in the project.<sup>122</sup> Other participants wonder why their cultural heritage ended up in Germany whereas others felt sad and angry seeing those objects away from their country.<sup>123</sup> Clearly the feelings are mixed when the refugees come face to face with their valued heritage that is kept safe, yet far from its place of origin.

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<sup>120</sup> <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2016/05/11/germanys-art-community-innovates-to-integrate-refugees/>, access 15/09/2016 & Example of such comments: "German schoolkids fall asleep when it comes to the history of the 30 years' war," said Stefan Weber, the museum director "But we found that Syrians were often gripped. German history shows them that destruction is not the end of history – new life can come out of the rubble." Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/27/berlin-museums-refugee-guides-scheme-fosters-meeting-of-minds>, access 15/09/2016.

<sup>121</sup> Johansson 2015, p. 29.

<sup>122</sup> "Museum director Stefan Weber, who speaks perfect Arabic, said refugees often said after visits that the impressive collection makes them 'hold our heads high'." <http://www.voanews.com/content/berlin-islamic-museum-refugees/3263139.html>, access 15/09/2016 According to the same source, "one of the goals of the project is to tell people who lost their homes that there is still something to be proud of". & <http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2016/6/576d29884/berlin-refugee-guides-show-cultural-riches-home.html>, access 15/09/2016.

<sup>123</sup> <http://www.voanews.com/content/berlin-islamic-museum-refugees/3263139.html>, access 15/09/2016 & <http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2016/6/576d29884/berlin-refugee-guides-show-cultural-riches-home.html>, access 15/09/2016.

This shows the variety of emotions and debate topics that cultural integration can arouse. At the same time, giving the refugees the chance to talk about those issues could contribute to an emotional relief and an opportunity to meet new people inside a more pleasant environment. Furthermore, nowadays many people still do not feel welcome to enter places like museums and specifically the refugees that tend to feel socially unwanted or marginalised.<sup>124</sup> Currently the project includes a variety of workshops that aim to bring together refugees and the local population in order to promote intercultural dialogue. The personal stories of the refugees can raise awareness using story-telling as a practice and avoid cultural generalizations. Lastly, the interpersonal dialogue throughout the tour assists in the adaptation of the project to individual needs and expectations, as expressed through conversation. The nationality of the guides also contributes to the accessibility of the transferred knowledge towards the participants, based on their cultural background.<sup>125</sup>

Introductory projects are very similar to work carried out by the social services. There is a question about whether in principle the Multaka project could be considered social work - there is no clear answer, and the closest point of consensus would be that it enables better delivery of social work, but may not be social work in terms of the strict sense of the term. The work of the museums may share work goals around cultural integration, and at times use social work methods, but according to Silverman, they lack the formal commitment to the tangible deliverables and outcomes of the social worker.<sup>126</sup> Additionally, there are no established metrics that evaluate the effectiveness of introductory projects delivered by museums in terms of the overall contribution to the overarching objectives of addressing the refugee integration and inclusion problems. This reinforces the views that museums, through

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<sup>124</sup> For instance a guide admits that she was impressed by the chance to work at a museums as she thought about them as places of forbidden entrance. <http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2016/6/576d29884/berlin-refugee-guides-show-cultural-riches-home.html>, access 15/09/2016.

<sup>125</sup> According to Hofstede, for the participants who have the role of the “student” is easier to learn when they come from the same “social positions” as the facilitator of the tour that has the role of the “teacher”. Hofstede 1986.

<sup>126</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 147.

their capabilities, can enhance and facilitate the work of social workers, but their work is not considered social work.

This ability for the museums to enable social work through their capabilities can also be used to enable the work that NGOs do, and could be used as “delivery” partners for a set of capabilities allowing NGOs to increase the likelihood of delivering their objectives.

Lastly, the Multaka project is an example of inter-museum collaboration, similar to NGO cross-organisational collaboration. As this case study demonstrates, this collaboration demonstrated the value of the project, and aroused interest across other museums across the world -ideally more museums will pursue similar endeavours.

Germany, though, among other northern European countries has the advantage of time when it comes to the planning of their integration initiatives. In countries which constitute the first stop of a refugee’s journey, like Greece, the urge to develop a plan for the new (and unforeseen) arrival of refugees is a significant challenge for local and national organisations. Yet, despite the limited resources in a country that is currently under a financial severity measures, NGOs, like the Greek Forum of Migrants (GFM) have developed a variety of measures to foster refugee integration.<sup>127</sup>

One of the introduction programmes for Syrian refugees to the Greek society that was conducted by GFM in partnership with the Greek Forum of Refugees and Melissa Network is “ALEF: An integration Initiative” and was about free Greek preparatory courses during the summer of 2016. In the programme participated young refugees that are in Greece for less than 8 months, aged 16-28 years old. Those lessons taught the refugees the basic skills of

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<sup>127</sup> GFM’s mission is to improve the immigrant policies in the Greek society as well as to strengthen the relationships between the Greek immigrant communities. In order to do so, it works with other NGOs and different kinds of institutions, striving for the inclusion of the immigrants in the Greek society. Additionally, it takes part in trainings and in the development of proposals as well as participates in researches and other initiatives by the host country either individually or as a member of partnerships. Source: [https://www.facebook.com/Greek-Forum-of-Migrants-521756824551521/about/?entry\\_point=page\\_nav\\_about\\_item&tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/Greek-Forum-of-Migrants-521756824551521/about/?entry_point=page_nav_about_item&tab=page_info), access 18/09/2016.

verbal communication in Greek.<sup>128</sup> The lessons were also a way to keep the refugees occupied and focused and make them feel that they spend their time there in a productive way that will positively contribute to their well-being.



*Figure 2: Capture from Greek language courses of ALEF program.*

Other actions of the GFM included intercultural excursions in cultural attractions of Greece, like visits of the Greek national garden and Zappeio, both famous locations in Athens. Such initiatives give the opportunity to the refugees to appreciate the hosting country, instead of viewing it as a detention centre and an obstacle for them to get to their intended final destination (countries in Northern Europe). Similar visits could include also museums and museological programmes, in a way to follow more academic curriculums.

Another action of GFM in cooperation with the Athens American University, called Think Differently, initiated a cultural integration plan located at the refugee camp, in order to maximise participation.<sup>129</sup> There, the students could interact with the refugees in an environment of cultural respect. Apart from the collection of goods that were brought to the

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<sup>128</sup> The majority of the Syrian refugees are temporary placed in Greece, but since there is no fixed date of their departure to other countries, it is essential that they integrate into the Greek society and thus, learning the Greek language is one of the first steps towards this achievement.

<sup>129</sup> The Athens American University is a private institution of post high-school education; in Greece private universities are not recognized as official universities by the Ministry of Education according to the law 3696. Therefore, the above written cooperation, it is not considered a partnership with a governmental institution.

camp, the programme held events in Eleonas refugee camp, where the participants enjoyed live music, played card and group games, did arts & crafts and even played a soccer game. Such simple activities lifted the spirits of the refugees, promoting the message that they are not marginalised by the local community, but instead they are welcome to interact with the local people, who would be keen to teach them their cultural habits and also learn more about their home countries. In this case, the local museums through travel-exhibitions could also reach the refugees and teach them about the Greek heritage and the similarities it has to the Syrian one. Without doubt, an involvement of the social services would also be beneficial, either to initiate or to advocate similar programmes.



Figure 3: Eleonas Refugee Camp, Greece, Think Differently event.

In an attempt to identify a high level structure underpinning the above cases, according to UNHCR, a cultural orientation/integration programme should have the following characteristics: at the early stages the newcomers should be offered materials accessible in a language understood by them and have an interactive way of learning through discussions, (like in the case of the Multaka project). Also they should involve learning through active participation and aim to improve the refugee’s skills in order to perform daily tasks, such as through the Greek language lessons. In addition, they may consider involving a range of media

and channels of communication and interaction, similarly to the different activities held at the refugee camp by GFM.<sup>130</sup> The programmes should correspond to the refugee's specific stage of integration, like the Greek language and culture lessons and the Multaka project (all three understanding the lack of basic cultural elements in the newly arrived refugees). Lastly the refugee's experiences and country of origin should play a key role in formulating the orientation/integration plan, and efforts should be made to include established refugee community members into the delivery of the programmes; for instance Multaka uses Syrian and Iraqi guides that are of the same origin as the participants of the tours and the GFM's members are established immigrants living in Greece.<sup>131</sup>

As noted, each case has its own strengths and weaknesses. In an ideal world, cultural integration programmes would include as part of their design: the innovative approaches of NGOs and their ability to reach out to marginalized communities (like in GFM event), the cultural background of museums' staff and their collection as starting points of discussion (like in the Multaka project) and lastly the social service practices in order to enhance the uptake of the information provided and manage the process and measure its outcomes using official guidance.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, such initiatives could seek funding and guidance from UNHCR or other similar organizations.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Note on Refugee Integration in Central Europe, 2009, p. 30.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> For further reading, the connection between museums and social services is researched by Lois Silverman (Silverman 2010). "Its [Social Work] principles have filtered into museum literature, and its practitioners, clients, and agencies have frequently served as partners, collaborators, and leaders in socially oriented museum initiatives." (Silverman, 2010), p. 26 & " NGOs may be seen as vehicles for progressive change. [...] A key point to note is that NGOs can now almost be seen as a kind of *tabula rasa*, a 'blank slate', onto which a range of current ideas, expectations and anxieties about development are now projected". David Lewis, Nazneen Kanji 2009, p. 4-5.

<sup>133</sup> It is a positive fact that already similar initiatives have been developed, showing museums willing to contribute to the smooth adaptation of the Syrian refugees. One example is Toronto's Aga Khan Museum that opened its doors to Syrian refugees exhibiting art from their place of origin. Source: <http://qz.com/852307/canada-is-using-art-to-build-bridges-with-syrian-refugees-while-the-rest-of-the-world-builds-walls-to-keep-them-out/>, access 06/12/2016.

## Cultural Integration II: Raising Awareness in the Hosting Society

*“This situation, already difficult to live for people who have not chosen to leave their homes, has now worsened by the rejection of a part of society which accuses the refugees to be ‘fraudsters’, who came in France to enjoy a more favourable economic and social situation.”<sup>134</sup>*

### **Museums raising awareness about the Refugees**

As mentioned in the first chapter, when people are immigrating to a new country, they are not the only ones facing a new way of living; the hosting society is also influenced by the new arrivals. Similarly to the fear of a new lifestyle that the refugees are exposed to, the locals might also raise concerns about the new people who are seeking to settle within their community. Heritage related museums particularly, try to include those different cultural voices and give them the chance to participate in the meaning-making of their collection, as already explained. Additionally, the museums apart from exhibitions, are committed to expanding their activities, including different kinds of events where the community can participate and get to know each other. Such initiatives lead to the discourse of the capability of museums to engage with the local community and the potential to use their collection as a medium to transmit a message that could (and ought to) reflect the current society and its needs, as stated in the ICOM museum definition.

According to some museum professionals, like Silverman, museums can indeed bring people together. As she mentions, museums through their resources can reconcile disparate people with the purpose to learn from each other and bridge their differences.<sup>135</sup> Additionally, professor of cultural studies, Tony Bennett, believes that the museums are valuable tools of educating the locals in topics such as tolerance and multiculturalism.<sup>136</sup> Other scholars, like Janes, who consider themselves idealists, believe that the museums can actually change the world.<sup>137</sup> This chapter is based on his arguments examining how museums can actually

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<sup>134</sup> Translation from French website of Singa organization, <https://singa.fr/>, access 27/12/2016.

<sup>135</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 9.

<sup>136</sup> Bennett, T., 1995. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. Oxon: Routledge, as quoted in Johansson 2015, p. 106.

<sup>137</sup> <http://futureofmuseums.blogspot.nl/2014/06/museums-in-dangerous-time.html>, access 20/09/2016.



contribute to the formation of people's ideas about human rights and whether they carry the responsibility to do so.

Janes challenges the museums to become activists and address social and environmental threats. Even though he mostly refers to ecological awareness, many of his statements can have a wider application. He believes that museums should commit to public engagement and use their status as cultural institutes enjoying the trust of the public in order to assist in socio-environmental change. For him, museums that refuse to adapt to the modern societal demands are at risk, as they are unable to lead "courageous actions" and be "problem solvers" and therefore bound to be left behind.<sup>138</sup> Statements like this, though, have both supporters and opponents.

The main oppositional argument is that museums should be intellectually neutral and try not align with specific ideas or values, as there are better services to deal with those.<sup>139</sup> This opinion stems from the belief that the museum should not appear as a source of the one and only truth, but as a place that lets the visitors form their own opinion. That is indeed a valuable point to be considered here, if in the case of the Syrian refugees it was suggested that the museums should take part in political debates, as for instance, what caused the Syrian war, which in turn resulted in the Syrian humanitarian crisis. In this thesis, the key premise is that when it comes to fundamental human rights (such as the right of people to leave their country, have access to food, clothing, housing, medical care, necessary social services, and the right to security), museums should demonstrate a clear position as their advocates and defenders and try to influence the local community accordingly.<sup>140</sup>

Janes replies to his opponents' opinion, saying that museums are untapped sources of knowledge and ideas and therefore ideal for social participation with the aim to raise

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> The above debate was taking place in the blog 'Center for Future of Museums' under a thread posted by R. Janes titled 'Museums in a Dangerous Time'. Source: <http://futureofmuseums.blogspot.nl/2014/06/museums-in-dangerous-time.html>, access 20/09/2016.

<sup>140</sup> Human rights mentioned: Article 13+25, Declaration of Human rights, UN: United Nations General Assembly 1948.

awareness and search for solutions to global problems.<sup>141</sup> He also adds that “this isn’t about taking sides; it’s about being [socially] responsible”<sup>142</sup>. In the case of the Syrian refugees, therefore, the museums can play an important role in raising public awareness about the situation of those people and enhance their empathy.

In order to understand the link between museums and activism it is essential to define what the term means. Activism in general describes efforts that strive to accomplish a social change. In other words it is concerned with finding ways to “change the world” in a social, political, economic or environmental way.<sup>143</sup> Those changes are being characterized by a positive and peaceful hue and any person can participate in such actions. The term also includes a wide range of activities and is usually connected with the work of NGOs and their campaigns.<sup>144</sup> Museums engaging in activist endeavours is not a new phenomenon with more and more museum professionals focusing on it. Museum professional Kylie Message, for instance, who writes about museums and activism has said: “Museums can contribute to political, economic and legal change.”<sup>145</sup> It is a fact, though, that there is still a long way before the majority of museums include activism in their practices. Connecting this fact with the previous topic about museums and NGOs working together, according to Lewis and Kanji, NGOs can be beneficial to their donors, in terms of contributing to the transfer of new ideas and practices to them. Museums can also be considered as potential donors to NGOs, donating -or more accurately- lending their resources.<sup>146</sup> These resources could be a physical space, a part of their collection, their staff or their team of volunteers. In that way, through a less active arrangement than a partnership (where the partners are of equal involvement) the museums could observe, get motivated and learn by carefully selected NGO practises how to

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<sup>141</sup> <http://futureofmuseums.blogspot.nl/2014/06/museums-in-dangerous-time.html>, access 20/09/2016 & Janes 2016, p. 189.

<sup>142</sup> <http://futureofmuseums.blogspot.nl/2014/06/museums-in-dangerous-time.html>, access 20/09/2016.

<sup>143</sup> <http://www.permanentculturenow.com/what-is-activism/>, access 20/09/2016.

<sup>144</sup> <http://www.activistrights.org.au/handbook/ch01s02.php>, access 20/09/2016, access 20/09/2016.

<sup>145</sup> Message 2014, p. 8.

<sup>146</sup> David Lewis, Nazneen Kanji 2009, p. 179.

enhance their involvement with activism. To illustrate this point, specific case studies of organizations that have been involved with activism are presented.

Returning to the Syrian Refugee case, it is important to clarify that not all societies are capable of welcoming refugee relocation and integration. Therefore, the references in the chapter above on museums being able to assist in the integration of refugees in the hosting society only applies to those societies that are capable of refugee integration.<sup>147</sup> However, when considering raising awareness, museums across the world can assist their communities to learn, understand and sympathise with the refugees, contributing to the formation of a more tolerant society. Undeniably, the capability of a museum to raise awareness depends highly on its type and size: big and art related museums, located in cosmopolitan cities can develop a more public profile and thus promote more easily certain messages and objectives, like the case of the Belvedere museum that is discussed below. This does not exclude smaller and rural museums, as they tend to have a closer relationship to the local society. Thus, every museum can contribute towards raising community awareness, but they have to select the methods that fit best their individual characteristics, means and capabilities. The museums are in the privileged position to empower their visitors to examine the causes of social issues, such as prejudice and ignorance, terms where their understanding is key in effectively addressing the Syrian refugee humanitarian crisis.<sup>148</sup> This is often not an easy task for museums to achieve, as it is always challenging to inform and rally people around a specific cause.

Another challenging subject, is how war is depicted in museums. War is a big chapter of the Syrian Refugees' lives and for most of them the reason why they chose to leave their country. It is a phenomenon that the majority of the contemporary Western citizens have only been familiarized with through stories, films, books and other media in an indirect way. Understanding the tragedy of a war could not only enhance their feelings of empathy towards

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<sup>147</sup> Meaning that under obligation the first chapter was concerning only specific museums located in societies of refugee arrivals.

<sup>148</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 149.

the relocation of the refugees but also excuse possible meta-traumatic behaviour that those people might adopt. Historian John Haymond, talks about the issues of representing war at the museum, as it comes along with a number of limitations.<sup>149</sup> The museum is limited in itself as a medium to recreate such a hostile environment; this does not mean that it should not attempt to portray it, but that it has to be “more mindful” in order to overcome this consideration.<sup>150</sup> Additionally, the history surrounding a war is always too complicated and large to be simply represented in a museum: a lot of different perspectives give multiple interpretations. Lastly, in a war there is a number of different people involved, from soldiers and nurses to victims and refugees;<sup>151</sup> it would seem impossible for each category to find its voice sufficiently represented simultaneously in a museum. Haymond suggested a way for museums to deal with the topic of war, and that is to focus on the journey of the refugees, like the following example of Belvedere Museum, instead of going into detail about the Syrian war.

### **Museums & NGOs as catalysts and the case of Belvedere Museum**

The museum’s ability to raise awareness, is connected with the second of the three actions of NGOs, namely their role as catalysts. The term refers to NGO’s ability to “inspire, facilitate or contribute to improved thinking and action to promote change”.<sup>152</sup> This change can be directed to individuals, local communities, governmental agencies, businesses etc. and the actions to achieve it can vary, from empowerment and advocacy to research and campaign work.<sup>153</sup> In general, the NGOs as catalysts motivate people to take action and change specific norms or perceptions. For social researcher John Friedmann, NGOs can connect local action with national and structural change. This function is connected to advocacy actions, meaning the attempt to influence institutions and authorities on behalf of the collective interest.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Haymond 2015.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 464.

<sup>151</sup> The above, are categories of people for whom the museums could raise people’s awareness.

<sup>152</sup> David Lewis, Nazneen Kanji 2009.

<sup>153</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 68.

<sup>154</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 73 & Friedmann, J. (1992) *Empowerment: the Politics of Alternative Development*, Oxford: Blackwell, as quoted in Lewis 2001, p. 73.

Museums can be considered catalysts as well, when functioning in ways as the ones just described. They can also be connected to community activism, which according to Silverman, is the modern type of social work, where the museum's activities aim to foster a specific kind of change in its visitors.<sup>155</sup> One case where a museum is adopting the above roles, is the Belvedere Museum in Vienna, Austria, through the artwork of Ai Weiwei, F-Lotus.

Ai Weiwei is a Chinese artist and activist as well as an example of the power of the cultural world to raise awareness of humanitarian issues through art. Apart from his well-known career, he became particularly famous through his actions to help the Syrian Refugees, mostly by raising awareness about them. In the past he was exiled from China, having to live under difficult conditions, which enhanced his empathy towards situations such as the Syrian crisis and currently he teaches about the refugee crisis at Berlin University of Arts.<sup>156</sup> After the breakthrough of the Syrian refugee crisis, the artist has repeatedly visited Lesbos<sup>157</sup>, where he documented the journey of the Syrians and set up a studio to produce projects related to the topic.<sup>158</sup>

Even though there have been many other influential artworks striving to raise awareness about the Syrian Refugees, in the case of F-Lotus there is an immediate cooperation with a museum, as the artwork occupies its entrance and therefore alters its "public face".

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<sup>155</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 31.

<sup>156</sup> <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-ai-weiwei-speaks-about-his-divisive-responses-to-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-lego-and-his-new-life-in-berlin>, access 21/09/2016.

<sup>157</sup> Lesbos is a Greek island in the Aegean sea, arrival point of refugees coming by boats from Turkey.

<sup>158</sup> <http://www.dezeen.com/2016/07/20/f-lotus-ai-weiwei-installation-belvedere-museum-vienna-syrian-refugees-life-jackets/>, access 21/09/2016 & <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/02/14/arts/ai-weiwei-berlin-life-jackets/>, access 21/09/2016.



Figure 4: *F-Lotus*, Artwork by Ai Weiwei, Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Austria.

The artwork is an installation that consists of 1005 Syrian refugees' life jackets floating on the pond, at the entrance of the Belvedere Museum, where Weiwei held a solo exhibition, titled *Translocation-Transformation*, from the 14<sup>th</sup> of July until the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2016. Even though the whole exhibition aimed to raise awareness about the same topic, the attention here is focused on the *F-Lotus* as it is the central piece of it and therefore the artwork that captures the attention not only of the museum's audience but also of the general public and media. The artwork aims to address the refugee crisis by putting a spotlight on the unsafe journey of the Syrians through the sea trying to reach EU, inspired by a similar piece from the same artist at the Konzerthaus in Berlin, where 14.000 lifejackets were wrapped around the building's entrance columns.<sup>159</sup>

The life jackets of *F-Lotus* are composed of 201 rings of five jackets each, shaping the letter 'F' and as the artists said they "float like lotus blossoms"<sup>160</sup>. Exhibition designer Francesca Lanz states, that the journey of immigrants, is often represented in exhibitions through a series of "iconic objects", referring to typical personal belongings such as travel documents, luggage,

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<sup>159</sup> The Berlin's installation was rather successful on reaching a wider audience as it was the focal point of the media for a great amount of time. Sources: <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/02/14/arts/ai-weiwei-berlin-life-jackets/index.html>, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/ai-weiwei-covers-berlin-venue-14000-life-jackets-160213190435403.html>, access 21/09/2016.

<sup>160</sup> <http://www.itsnicethat.com/news/ai-wei-wei-flotus-lifejackets-180716>, access 21/09/2016.

letters, clothes and toys.<sup>161</sup> Similarly in this case, the lifejackets could be considered iconic objects representing the voyage of the refugees. As the same author explains, these objects have a strong visual impact and it is easy to be connected to the exhibition's theme, without necessarily carrying any artistic or material value. Moreover, they are usually being displayed in accumulation, like in the case of F-Lotus where the letter 'F' materialises out of a pile of almost identical objects. Those life jackets, though, do not only function as parts of this construction, but they also carry a strong ideological content as they were used by the refugees themselves, as well carrying added artistic value from the moment the artist used them to compose an artwork.

The topic of voyage, is also considered a "master-theme" that represents border crossing. Such representations aim to reflect the experiences of the immigrants and often are offered for wider discussion; travel symbolises a process of transformation and change.<sup>162</sup> Such discourses can be considered a desirable outcome since the intention is to highlight the people's struggle and not to bring up political or other conflicting topics. Besides, people can sympathise more when there is emotional arousal; an outcome of reverse analogy to the distance they feel that separates them from the incidence. Therefore, bringing the actual life jackets in front of the citizens and tourists, emphasizes the humane aspect of the refugee crisis, contributing to the recognition of those people as vulnerable humans. Overall, this artwork shows the impact of a specific artist that used his fame in order to draw attention upon a crucial societal issue, as well as the applauded decision of the museum to host this piece and the rest of Ai Weiwei's exhibition. In summary, this case study based on the principles outlined above, can be assessed as a successful demonstration of a museum attempting to raise awareness for a specific issue; its practices could be adopted by other museums of the same type.

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<sup>161</sup> Lanz 2016, p. 181.

<sup>162</sup> Baur, J. (2009) 'Five Thoughts on a Migration Museum that I Wish for', in Rainer Ohliger (ed.) Migration in Museums: Narratives of Diversity in Europe, 18–20, Essays of the Conference "Migration in Museums: Narratives of Diversity in Europe" Berlin, October 23–25, 2008 (unpublished document) as quoted in Lanz, 2016, p. 180.

## NGOs raising awareness about the Syrians

Two NGO examples of raising awareness about the Syrian crisis are introduced below: UNITED, an NGO focusing exclusively on raising awareness against racism, including the one towards the refugees and AEGEE that is a youth NGO with several general goals but has recently included the one of raising awareness towards the refugees, keeping up with its impact on society.

UNITED for Intercultural Action is a European activist network that consists of 560 organisations from all over Europe cooperating to fight nationalism, racism, fascism and xenophobia, while supporting immigration and the Syrian refugees.<sup>163</sup> Their actions are focusing on raising awareness through campaigns, international conferences and maintaining a strong network structure. The organisation is a committed advocate of peace, and has a strong social role as it is standing for “unity and hope”, including respect for cultural diversity. It envisions a Europe of tolerance and solidarity where different cultures will not only coexist but also cooperate with each other; a concept that links to the idea of museums as “contact zones”. UNITED is based in Budapest and Amsterdam, has participatory status at the Council of Europe and a membership at its Advisory Council on Youth and since 1997 is a consultancy organization at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.<sup>164</sup>

Their awareness initiatives are distributed around three main focus areas, each one linked to a day of significance: Against racism (21/3), in Support of Refugees (20/6) and Against Fascism and Antisemitism (9/11). Their campaigns often carry a political hue, turning against governments, but as this paper is not focusing on political issues, UNITED’s actions are going to be approached through their ability to motivate people towards social change, in favour of the refugees. More specifically, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2016, the international refugee day, UNITED launched the social media hashtag “#LifeSeekers” representing their European level campaign that aimed to challenge the immigration’s narrative, emphasizing that as the refugees, everyone else is a life seeker while requesting from the policy-makers to be more

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<sup>163</sup> <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/about-united/>, access 27/09/2016.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.



efficient in their role.<sup>165</sup> A big number of museums is also active on social media and therefore could easily join in on such initiatives. In UNITED's campaigns the participation can be either at the individual level or representing an NGO and UNITED is providing them with guidance and campaign material free of charge; an important fact since NGOs like museums have limited budget. After each campaign, reports are compiled that provide a knowledge base for further actions, an account of the activity to authorities and sponsors and motivate for new organizations to join. The organization is using memorable slogans and other marketing techniques to approach a wider audience, helping its members to be more efficient towards the achieving of their objectives.



Figure 5: Headlines of articles in UNITED's official website, entitled with clever slogans.

Through UNITED, a coordination of raising awareness campaigns and a knowledge transfer from those who have experience in this area to the newer organizations are achieved. The participant organizations reciprocate their support for UNITED, by sharing their experiences and contributing a nominal annual fee. Furthermore UNITED has a number of other supporters including the European Commission, the Council of Europe and several ministries and European institutions, many of those being already supporters (or potential ones) of cultural organizations like museums. Lastly, UNITED aims to bring the NGOs together by providing contact information about close-by organizations in the form of "suggestions"

<sup>165</sup> <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/campaigns/annual-campaigns/international-refugee-day-20-june/lifeseekers/>, access 27/09/2016.

during the enrolment process in their website.<sup>166</sup> Museums, especially smaller ones, might not have the proper material sources and experience to organize awareness actions. Therefore they could join organizations like UNITED, or ideally form their own museum committees to coordinate common initiatives about raising awareness.

AEGEE Europe is a volunteer European Youth NGO that consists of around 13.000 members from all over Europe, and strives for a “democratic, diverse and borderless Europe”.<sup>167</sup> It is often the case that NGOs have missions that align at times with museum strategies in terms of democratization (of knowledge in museums’ case) and (cultural, for museums) diversity: for instance, the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s (MET) mission strives “to connect people to [...] knowledge, and ideas” whereas the Asia-Europe Museum Network wants to “respect, cherish and celebrate cultural diversity”.<sup>168</sup>

AEGEE was founded in 1985 and has its central offices in Brussels. The organization has around 200 independent branches (“antennae”) in different cities in 40 European countries. Statistics show that the majority of AEGEE’s members have higher levels of education from a variety of scientific fields, giving the organization an interdisciplinary nature, again similar to the interdisciplinary nature of museum operations.<sup>169</sup> AEGEE’s governance consists of multiple levels of boards and since the organization’s goals are quite broad, there are specific - thematically categorised- working groups, projects and events taking place.<sup>170</sup> Those

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<sup>166</sup>List of supporters of UNITED: <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/about-united/supported-by/>, access 27/09/2016 & Recommendations about similar NGOs in the same country (Greece as an example): <https://lifeseekers.org/thank-you-for-joining/?country=Greece>, access 27/09/2016.

<sup>167</sup> AEGEE’s name stands for: (Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l’Europe), source about the organization: <http://www.aegge.org/>, access 27/09/2016.

<sup>168</sup> Sources: MET: <http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met>, access 08/12/2016 & Asia-Europe Museum Network (a cross-cultural network of museums in over 50 countries): <http://asemus.museum/about-us/>, access 08/12/2016.

<sup>169</sup> The AEGEE members, according to reports, are students or graduates with the following statistics: Bachelor 51%, Master 24%, PhD 22%, Other 3%, Statistics of 2014-2015, source all AEGEE related statistics: [https://issuu.com/aegge-europe/docs/key\\_to\\_europe\\_2014\\_-\\_2015\\_pdf](https://issuu.com/aegge-europe/docs/key_to_europe_2014_-_2015_pdf), access 27/09/2016, p.23.

<sup>170</sup> For further details visit: <https://www.aegge.org/about-aegge/the-structure-of-aegge/>, access 27/09/2016

governance meetings and events take place in different European locations, where the members meet and discuss about their actions either in local or international level.<sup>171</sup>

AEGEE deals in general with mobility issues and therefore has focused significant attention on the Syrian Refugees and the EU policies towards them, organizing a number of relevant initiatives.<sup>172</sup> One of projects that AEGEE offers annually is the Summer University (SU).<sup>173</sup> It is a series of summer events that lasts approximately two weeks and take place in different places all over Europe. The organizing team is one (or more in partnership) local AEGEE branch and the participants for each event are around 30 international AEGEE members. It is an opportunity for young people from different countries to meet each other in a European destination and learn about the place's culture, history and other AEGEE thematic categories. The participatory fee is nominal since the organizing team usually is subsidised by local authorities and sponsors. During the summer of 2016, the branch of "Peiraias", in Greece, organized a Summer University focused on the Syrian refugee crisis, titled 'Sailors of the AEGEEan Sea in the Service of Refugees'.<sup>174</sup> Having as a starting point Athens and Piraeus, the participants travelled to Lesbos and Chios, to see in person the places of arrivals of the refugees. The programme, apart from lessons of Greek history and culture, included workshops by trained volunteers regarding the refugee topic based on volunteering and civic education, as well visits to Kara Tepe and Moria camps in Lesbos. There, the participants met the refugees, were familiarized with their problems and after returning back to their home countries initiated several actions to spread awareness about what they experienced.<sup>175</sup> In a similar way, many other NGOs succeed knowledge transfer in a horizontal structure, where specific members get trained about specific topics in order to transfer this

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<sup>171</sup> The biggest AEGEE event is called "Agora" and is the general assembly, gathering around 1000 participants that represent the local branches, meeting twice per year in different cities in Europe.

<sup>172</sup> For instance, in February 2016, AEGEE organized a conference with around 300 participants in Leiden, in February 2016, under the topic: Refugees in Europe – Europe vs. the Rest: Change of Perspective?, source: <http://www.zeus.aegEE.org/magazine/2015/12/16/epm-leiden-2016-a-meeting-filled-with-aegEE-spirit/>, access 27/09/2016.

<sup>173</sup> <http://www.projects.aegEE.org/suct/su2016/>, access 03/10/2016.

<sup>174</sup> Full description of the programme: [http://www.projects.aegEE.org/suct/su2016/show.php?su\\_id=PE11](http://www.projects.aegEE.org/suct/su2016/show.php?su_id=PE11), access 03/10/2016.

<sup>175</sup> Comments of the participants regarding their experience: <https://migraegEE.wordpress.com/>, access 03/10/2016.

knowledge to delegates from different locations, expected that those delegates take action in local level. Through such initiatives, people from northern European countries who are less connected to the actual refugee arrival front lines get to experience the actual conditions and form their own opinion, which they will then share with their local branch, communities, organisations and governments. Lastly, bringing the participants to the camp, ensured that different refugees were approached, avoiding any exclusions, in contradiction to similar programmes, like the Mutlaka one, where only a relatively small number of refugees participated.



*Figure 6: Celebration at the Open Theatre of Kara Tepe where SU AEGEE participants also joined.*

Through programmes like this, the capabilities of motivated young people towards a humanitarian goal are developed, while bringing together people from several different countries.<sup>176</sup> As Johansson explains, museums have faced difficulties in implementing migration related projects due to the lack of local contacts.<sup>177</sup> This is a divergence in this example between museums and the NGO, where local contacts, either governmental, institutional or business ones, is one of AEGEE's strengths, thanks to the dedicated work of its

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<sup>176</sup> Each Summer University event has participants of different European countries and in the present case the Syrian participants of the event added to the amount of nations included in the programme.

<sup>177</sup> Johansson 2015, p. 114.

volunteers. AEGEE offers to its sponsors promotion in social media and through its events contributes towards the local municipalities' aspiration for the increase of tourism and cultural projects. To conclude, while there is no such phenomenon as the "perfect example", nevertheless a partnership with organizations like AEGEE can offer valuable lessons to museums, such as: how to maximise their fundraising efforts (AEGEE depends almost solely on fundraising and has developed many techniques to do so effectively), make their workshops more appealing to younger audiences, work with limited resources, develop connections with the locals community, organisations and government, train and motivate volunteers while promoting local culture and raise awareness for the refugees.

## **Reaching out to the affected areas: Relief and Emergency Work**

*“The refugees arrive on inflatable boats, packed in dangerously big numbers. There are families with young children, people with disabilities, elderly people and children travelling unaccompanied. During their long and dangerous journeys, children and women are facing violence and exploitation. Those who arrive in Europe are traumatised, and have no information in a language that they understand. They can end up in wretched conditions, without access to water, toilets or showers.”<sup>178</sup>*

### **Museums contributing to relief and emergency work using volunteers**

As discussed in the previous chapter, museums have indeed the potential to raise awareness about humanitarian crises, including the Syrian refugee crisis, when implementing carefully designed initiatives. These initiatives can improve the tolerance and inclusivity of communities, and can encourage them to participate and instigate local initiatives to improve the management of the refugee issues. Museums are typically sufficiently equipped to promote social change and they have the capability to influence and even alter the visitors’ attitudes, values and most importantly, behaviour.<sup>179</sup> The present chapter deals with the ways museums, similarly to NGOs can use those motivated people as volunteers in relief and emergency work.

As explained in the introduction relief and emergency work is reaching out to the affected areas of a natural or human-caused disasters and offering immediate assistance to the people in need. Therefore, this means the involvement of museums in initiatives may have to take place outside the museum’s physical and geographical footprint. The topic of relevance and effectiveness of those initiatives, and what role the museum assets can play (namely its collections) are examined below.

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<sup>178</sup> [http://www.actionaid.ie/refugee-appeal?gclid=Cj0KEQjw8pC9BRCqrq37zZil4a0BEiQAZO\\_zrF3RHL-ahF65mj5sZbpoHq7-jxDdZwwZfDygy0qRdTkaAkGQ8P8HAQ](http://www.actionaid.ie/refugee-appeal?gclid=Cj0KEQjw8pC9BRCqrq37zZil4a0BEiQAZO_zrF3RHL-ahF65mj5sZbpoHq7-jxDdZwwZfDygy0qRdTkaAkGQ8P8HAQ), access 04/10/2016.

<sup>179</sup> Silverman 2010, p. 19.

The extension of the museum's initiatives beyond its traditional physical or geographical boundaries appears to be one of the emerging notions in museology. Hein talks about the reconsideration of museum practices, referring to the American Association of Museums that is urging museums to improve their relationships with their local communities by sharing governance with them outside of the museum.<sup>180</sup> Johansson, similarly states that the concept of museum space is evolving and it may need to be viewed as an experience that can move out of the museum building. This new shift of thinking, virtualizing in effect museum presence, emphasizes their correlation to NGOs, as these tend to be virtual organizations not typically associated with a specific location or building, but rather with their ability to reach out to the communities that are involved. Relief and emergency work is heavily reliant on local community outreach. This might not be directly linked to the long term plan of development that is connected to museums' goals, but may need to be a response to an emergency situation that interrupts the development process in a specific part of the world.

Many discussions are currently occurring in literature focusing on how museum primary resources (collections) can be used to improve the effectiveness of the emerging social role of museums. Earlier this year museum professionals Rebecca Herz and Andrea Jones had a constructive dialogue in the former's website [museumquestions.com](http://museumquestions.com) about the topic, where Jones placed the following questions: "Do you really even need a proper museum to execute real community engagement? [...] Are we [museums] more like community centers?" Herz, in her reply, rephrased them by asking: "How much should a collection drive decisions about [the museum's] programs?"<sup>181</sup> To approach this question I refer to Silverman's categorization of museum resources stating that the collection is only one resource between the plethora of resources that a museum owns. Moreover, when a museum implements an initiative, like an exhibition, it does not necessarily use all of its resources, but it rather selects the ones that are needed for that specific purpose. Similarly, it can also use a combination of its resources

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<sup>180</sup> Hein 2005, p. 362.

<sup>181</sup> <https://museumquestions.com/2016/04/18/what-is-the-relationship-between-community-need-and-museums/>, access 09/10/2016.

that does not include the collection at all, as for instance when organizing a thematic talk, or in this case when it is involved in relief and emergency work.<sup>182</sup>

The shift of approach in this case, therefore, is in considering the collection of a museum as nothing more than one of many tangible and intangible resources the museum has in its disposal to meet its objectives. The museum's strategy should not be limited to only initiatives showcasing its collection, as this will significantly compromise the social offering of the museum and will also be detrimental to its ability to support/contribute to relief and emergency work initiatives.

### **Museums and NGOs working as implementers**

The third dimension of NGOs is their ability to work as implementers. By focusing on this dimension, this chapter draws links to the ability of museums to attract, coordinate and motivate staff and volunteers, to assist in the Syrian refugee crisis.

NGOs as implementers are “concerned with the mobilization of resources to provide goods and services to people who need them”, either as being the initiators of such actions or working alongside a governmental or donor/sponsor agency.<sup>183</sup> The goods provided usually include clothing, food and services such as healthcare, legal advice and emergency relief. Additionally, the NGOs train and guide other NGOs, governmental bodies and businesses in order to perform accordingly as implementers. It is possible that NGOs can train and guide museums. Among the positive aspects of NGOs as implementers is once more their access to “unreachable” areas when compared to governmental agencies, an outcome partly achieved by the establishment of contacts with the locals at the affected zones.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, they are more cost-effective than other organizations while generating “self-sufficient and sustainable interventions”<sup>185</sup>; elements that could constitute valuable lessons to museums.

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<sup>182</sup> In a museum talk the museum usually offers its building, staff and other kind of resources without necessarily any utilization of its collection.

<sup>183</sup> David Lewis, Nazneen Kanji 2009, p. 13 & Lewis 2001, p. 68.

<sup>184</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 69.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 76.



## Salaam Cultural Museum- A combination between a museum and an NGO

Even though museums working as implementers in isolation is still uncommon, an example of a museum that established an initiative to assist in relief and emergency work is described below: the case of Salaam Cultural Museum (SCM).<sup>186</sup> Established in 1996, SCM has the double function of both a museum and a registered NGO.<sup>187</sup> Initially its purpose was to gather and publish material regarding the Middle East and North Africa regions contributing to the understanding of their people, religions and culture. For the last several years, however, its focus is on the collection and distribution of humanitarian aid to people from areas of conflict who are in need.<sup>188</sup> Nowadays, represented by the motto “Compassion, Culture, Education”, SCM is assisting the alleviation of the Syrian refugee crisis through relief and emergency work.



Figure 7: Salaam Cultural Museum's part of the collection.

<sup>186</sup> SCM was a challenging case to be examined due to the limited published material about it and the unavailability of its staff to cooperate because of their demanding schedule.

<sup>187</sup> The status of the organization as an NGO was confirmed by its representatives in private communication.

<http://muslimobserver.com/salaam-cultural-museum-assists-syrian-refugees/> &

<http://www.scmmedicalmissions.org/about-scm/>, access 09/10/2016.

<sup>188</sup> <https://salaamculturalmuseum.wordpress.com/projects/>, access 09/10/2016.

SCM is based in Seattle and is considered a travelling museum, having its own collection (focused on Middle East and North Africa regions) and with the aspiration to have ultimately a permanent location.<sup>189</sup> A representative of the museum described the museum's status: "We are moving and showcasing history and culture where a war is taking place."<sup>190</sup> Its staff consists of a team of volunteers with the exception of an office assistant. The existence of an almost entirely volunteer staff is a significantly cost-reducing, yet challenging characteristic of SCM. The organization is strongly depending on the labour people dedicate on their spare time, ensuring that their motivation towards the museum's goals remains high, and reminding them the importance of their contributions. It keeps an active online blog and Facebook pages where their followers can get updated on the organization's actions, events, initiatives and relevant news.<sup>191</sup> Similarly to SCM, the majority of the NGOs are also volunteering based.

Currently many museums are interested in including volunteers among their staff in order to reduce their expenditures and give the opportunity to certain groups of people to get a meaningful experience. According to Janes, budget limitations is the main reason why museums do not have the ability to focus on research and development of their organizations, underlining the importance of cost reductions, with volunteering staff being one way to do so.<sup>192</sup> Another reason why organizations should focus on volunteers like NGOs do is that NGOs are less likely to be influenced by political or other agendas, with this risk decreasing the more independent the organization becomes from a single (or small number of) donors.<sup>193</sup>

Frequently, NGO volunteers are professionals in another field who choose to apply the same professional skills to support the NGO on a part time basis - they are the "professionals as volunteers".<sup>194</sup> Museums should aim to include in their staff professionals as volunteers

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<sup>189</sup> <https://salaamculturalmuseum.wordpress.com/about-us/photo-gallery/>, access 09/10/2016.

<sup>190</sup> Part of a private communication with a representative of SCM's official Facebook page for their medical missions: <https://www.facebook.com/salaamculturalmuseum/?fref=ts>, access 09/10/2016.

<sup>191</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Salaam-Cultural-Museum-Helping-Syrian-Refugees-1528654587408598/?fref=ts> & <https://www.facebook.com/salaamculturalmuseum/> & <https://salaamculturalmuseum.wordpress.com/blog/>, access 09/10/2016.

<sup>192</sup> Janes 2016, p. 287.

<sup>193</sup> David Lewis, Nazneen Kanji 2009, p. 176.

<sup>194</sup> Lewis 2001, p. 5.

when they want to undertake interdisciplinary initiatives, where external volunteering staff can assist with knowledge and experience on a specific field/topic. For example, if a museum wants to organize a relief and emergency work mission, NGO or social services staff could offer volunteering assistance, including staff training.

SCM is registered as an NGO under its “Medical Missions” which are staffed by doctors, nurses and other professionals who provide volunteer work in refugee camps via a mobile clinic.<sup>195</sup> Further actions of SCM include, food and goods distribution, such as clothes, medicine, inflatable solar lanterns, toys, wheelchairs, blankets and infant kits. Many items, like quilts, knitted baby clothes and blankets are hand made by volunteers in the US and Canada, offering the option for someone to donate their time and crafting skills instead of money.<sup>196</sup> The goods SCM collects are distributed to refugees in Greece and Jordan where it cooperates with local authorities and NGOs. So far, they have donated over 136.000 kg of goods’ packages.<sup>197</sup> Additionally, SCM in partnership with UNHCR organizes special training classes for women in order to obtain necessary skills, including sewing, weaving and recycling textiles to assist them to become financially independent and able to support their families, underlying the importance of partnerships with influential organizations. Furthermore, while children refugees were not accepted in Greek schools, SCM was conducting classes to help them get back to the educational environment, teaching them grammar, arithmetic and English. For adults similarly, German and Greek language lessons were offered, assisting in their integration.<sup>198</sup> The involvement of immigrant students in educational programmes is of great importance, as according to Alba, they have increased possibilities of dropping out of school, resulting to less labour opportunities.<sup>199</sup> Moreover, it is advised that the children’s preparation in language, culture and readiness starts at an early educational stage in order to resolve any inequalities while there is not yet academic pressure. Lastly, SCM supports refugee women in

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<sup>195</sup> <http://muslimobserver.com/salaam-cultural-museum-assists-syrian-refugees/>, access 10/10/2016.

<sup>196</sup> <http://www.scmmedicalmissions.org/women-children-programs>, access 10/10/2016.

<sup>197</sup> <http://www.scmmedicalmissions.org/about-scm/>, access 10/10/2016.

<sup>198</sup> <http://www.scmmedicalmissions.org/women-children-programs/>, access 10/10/2016.

<sup>199</sup> Alba 2015, chapter 10.

labour by renting condominium units in Polykastro (Greece) for their own and their family's temporary housing. It also provides visits by a nurse and a doctor to deliver the baby, securing for the whole family a safe and clean environment.<sup>200</sup>



Figure 8: Knitted pieces of clothing by Canadian donors for SCM refugee missions.

Each museum can contribute to relief and emergency work at any level it suits better to its type of organization. As described by Levin, in Milano in 2015, Binario 21- Memoriale della Shoah museum set an example of the beneficial use of its resources for relief and emergency work, as it provides its coatroom during the night hours as a shelter for homeless North African migrants.<sup>201</sup> In Paris, Quai Branly Museum collected toys from local children and sent them to Syrian refugee ones located in Turkey, under the cooperation with UNHCR.<sup>202</sup> So, the museums can indeed function as implementers, without losing their significance as museums.

<sup>200</sup> <http://www.scmmedicalmissions.org/women-children-programs/>, access 10/10/2016.

<sup>201</sup> (Levin, 2015), p. 545. The museum is based on a memorial of the W.W.II and is named Binario 21- Memoriale della Shoah. Even though in Levin's article it is stated that it is a small museum, it is possible that it operates also as an NGO, according to its website: <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/italiano/chisiamo.html>, access 10/10/2016. Unfortunately, further information was difficult to be collected.

<sup>202</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/turkey/home.php?lang=en&content=469>, access 10/10/2016.

This prioritisation of activities/fundraising during emergency situations should be seen as a healthy phenomenon in social institutions like museums, bridging together the societies in need and the ones in a position to help.

SCM is following the footsteps of many accomplished international and local NGOs that provide relief and emergency work. Among those is Actionaid that sends humanitarian teams in Lesbos to supply with food, water and information to the refugees upon their arrival to the island. Their team builds also “safe places” for women where they can breastfeed and have some privacy. Another NGO, called Action for Hope is providing the affected areas with cultural relief and development programs in order to assist in a social and psychological way the displaced communities. The NGO evolved from an initiative of some cultural professionals after their visit at Syrian refugee camps in Turkey in 2012. Three years later they officially established the NGO that strives to celebrate the art of different cultures by organizing a variety of workshops that help displaced people release their creativity and imagination and obtain the tools to communicate, document and share their experiences.<sup>203</sup> The organization envisions a tolerant and compassionate world where victims of displacement and extreme poverty survive these conditions while becoming more creative and productive individuals.<sup>204</sup> Their workshops include a variety of themes such as: theatre, music, visual arts, creative writing and film, reminding the content of typical museum themes. They also offer basic education for younger children and a number of sport activities along with psychological counselling.<sup>205</sup> Action for Hope binds the positive outcomes of art therapy with a provision of psychological and educational support in order to enrich people’s lives beyond their vital needs.

Similar initiatives from NGOs have realized art sessions and exhibitions (including online exhibitions) of the refugees’ artworks where the local community had the chance to

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<sup>203</sup> <http://www.goethe.de/lhr/prj/daz/pfv/aar/en14889570.htm> & <http://daleel-madani.org/profile/action-hope>, access 10/10/2016.

<sup>204</sup> <http://www.goethe.de/lhr/prj/daz/pfv/aar/en14889570.htm>, access 10/10/2016.

<sup>205</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/act4hope/about/?entry\\_point=page\\_nav\\_about\\_item&tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/act4hope/about/?entry_point=page_nav_about_item&tab=page_info), access 10/10/2016.

visit them and familiarize with the refugees' lives, as expressed through their art. One example is the small Greek NGO called: Network of the Child's Rights (Δίκτυο για τα Δικαιώματα του Παιδιού) that in cooperation with Unicef has organized creative workshops at Greek refugee camps where children aged 5-15 years old took part in artistic activities and expressed themselves in a creative way. One aspect that could be explored, is the probable involvement of art museums in particular, in such actions that aim to motivate the creative freedom of the refugees, based upon the positive outcomes of art and cultural education on people with traumatic post-war experiences.<sup>206</sup>

Concluding, the above cases demonstrate that each NGO has its own focus area of assisting in a humanitarian crisis, fulfilling different needs while functioning as implementers. Museums have the capabilities to organize similar actions or participate collaboratively in existing ones as part of an emergency response to crises situations.

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<sup>206</sup> <http://www.ant1news.gr/news/Society/article/455980/ta-prosfygopoyla-zografizoyn-ta-synaisthimata-toys-kai-sygklonizoyn-foto-> & <http://ddp.gr/%CF%80%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%B9%CE%AE%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%82/>, access 13/01/2017.

## Conclusion

*“Museums may not be able to contribute to the resolution of many of our global problems [...]. [They] could at least help create an image of a desirable future – the essential first step in its realization.”<sup>207</sup>*

The Syrian Refugee case is one of the many humanitarian crises that have appeared throughout history and one of the many which are yet to come. Considering, therefore, ways to adapt an organization, let alone one with strong social purpose and non-profitable character, like the museums, to function in a meaningful way towards such new and urgent societal needs, is important.

The social role of museums justifies their involvement with societal issues, including the Syrian Refugee humanitarian crisis. Following this principle, the thesis demonstrated which specific museum tangible and intangible resources can assist in a refugee crisis and how could the museums, through innovative use of these resources become even more effective. To provide different perspectives on how museums can increase the effectiveness of their capabilities and potential towards contributing in the Social Capital, and also to the alleviation of the severity of humanitarian crisis, a comparison with Development NGOs was undertaken.

Based on Lewis’ theory stating that NGOs function in 3 main dimensions: as partners, catalysts and implementers, it was demonstrated that museums can also function similarly to NGOs in those three areas, opening up the discourse about the similarities that these two types of organizations share.

More precisely, in a complementary and interdependent way with those three NGOs actions, it was claimed that museums can assist in the response to the refugee crisis by organizing cultural integration programmes, raising public awareness and contributing to the provision of relief and emergency work. In order for this claim to be proven a variety of contemporary case studies of both museums and NGOs were used which have been implemented or are currently being implemented to support the Syrian Refugees.

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<sup>207</sup> Janes 2016, p. 379.

The comparison between museums and NGOs identified a number of similarities that these two organizational types share. A closer look at some examples raised additional common points of function, as well as elements that the museums can adopt in order to enhance their efficiency towards their social goal, with specific reference to the assistance upon the refugee crisis.

The similarities between the two organisation types are varied. For starters, many NGOs, for instance Action for Hope and Greek Forum of Migrants, similarly to museums, appreciate the impact of culture in people's lives and thus try to include culturally relevant activities in their initiatives. NGOs also strive for social inclusion and respect towards different cultural backgrounds, similar to many museums' aspirations.

Furthermore, both organizations are characterized by strong educational and knowledge transfer purposes: from the tours of the Multaka project that aimed to introduce the refugees to a new culture, to language lessons by GFM and AEGEE's workshops, knowledge was transmitted across a variety of topics. This knowledge sharing was accomplished by using similar interactive educational tools, such as workshops, discussions and hands-on experiences.

As discussed in the cases of the Belvedere museum, UNITED and AEGEE, both museums and NGOs can get launch initiatives with elements of activism, by organizing campaigns, exhibitions or other type of events in order to spread a message and influence the general public. Furthermore, they both have the potential to create partnerships with leading organizations seeking to provide humanitarian aid, such as the UNHCR.

Last but not least, both NGOs and museums share similar ways of realising their goals, usually working on projects whose main characteristic is temporality; giving them the opportunity to renew their practices according to the contemporary needs and trends. Attempting to draw similarities between NGOs and museums in the past would have likely attracted derogatory remarks as the purpose of the museum was clear, and focused on the collection and its physical boundaries. However, the definition of what a museum is continuously evolves, and today we would have good grounds to query whether museums are beginning to follow the operating model of NGOs.



This thesis identified some areas where the museums could look towards NGOs in terms of improvement, and efficiency.

To begin with, AEGEE and UNITED, among other NGOs, have achieved significant results in maximising their funding opportunities, demonstrating that a strong social purpose can convince donors to contribute. These donors come usually from the so-called “aid-industry”. Could museums after enhancing their social role have access to such funding as well? Furthermore, since many NGOs have limited financial resources, they have great experience in delivering their projects with the least possible amount of money and number of resources, using a variety of methods that the museums could assess and use if appropriate.

Moreover, NGOs, like AEGEE, Actionaid and SCM (that is considered to be both a museum and an NGO) have established their ability to maintain and regularly expand their team of volunteers. Considering many museums’ aspirations to be more and more volunteer based, NGOs could constitute a valuable source of learning in terms of organisational transformation. Based upon the tight links they created with their volunteers, large NGOs such as AEGEE, can achieve significant knowledge transfer among their thousands of members, with reference to a variety of topics that specific members are specialists on. Similarly, museums could innovate themselves, perhaps through the formation of local committees initiated by museum professionals, to train their staff in a cost-efficient and practical way in order to meet the demands from emerging priorities, issues and challenges. Additionally, the NGOs are able to develop relatively easily compared to other organizations connections with the local population, including people in need.

Lastly, museums can learn from NGOs how to effectively collaborate with each other, form partnerships and strive together for common goals. These partnerships can include museums, NGOs or other kinds of organizations, creating the ideal circumstances for organizing interdisciplinary projects.

These beneficial elements of NGOs require without doubt further research in order to be sufficiently explored; the same applies to the opportunities for cooperation between the museums and NGOs and it is advised that each case should be examined in an individual level.

Apart from academic research, it is highly advised that the museums themselves start cooperating with NGOs in order to learn particular aspects of those that can be beneficial to them. The selection of the NGOs that they will cooperate or form partnerships with, needs to be made through a careful consideration in terms of principles and goals alignment, given the very large number of NGOs.

Another aspect that could be further developed, is the evaluation methods that can be used to receive more quantitative metrics on the outcomes about their actions' impact. It is a fact that since the case studies presented are rather recent, no official reports were identified where the performance of these initiatives was assessed, with perhaps the sole exception being the SCM. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate the reasons why there are not many recorded cases of museums cooperating with NGOs, as it is possible that there may be limitations and constraints that this thesis has not covered.

Lastly, since the Syrian Refugee crisis is a very contemporary phenomenon, it would be interesting to examine the initiatives that have been delivered by museums at another point in the future, having an overall view of the situation and how it has been handled - as a retrospective analysis. It is a positive fact, that while the thesis was being written, more and more museums have organized relevant initiatives, proving their dedication to their social role. The reason why this topic was chosen to be approached at this relatively early stage for evaluation is its idealistic goal to motivate the museums to take action as soon as possible.

This thesis seeks to demonstrate that museums in 2016 are already evolving their operating model in a manner that looks increasingly similar to the operating model Development NGOs typically use. This is because both organisations have an increasing priority to address social issues. Lastly, even though both museums and NGOs are distinct organization types, their collaboration could significantly increase the effectiveness of assistance provision in humanitarian crises, such as the Syrian Refugee crisis.

In conclusion, rephrasing Janes' words, the author, having worked on the evidence contributing to this thesis, passionately believes that: "museums might not be able to change the world, but they can contribute to it."<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Janes 2009.

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