Engaging Young Adults with Modern and Contemporary Art Museums: an Educational Perspective

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Abstract

The present dissertation lays between two field of studies, audience research and museum education. It takes into account those educational programs and activities developed by modern and contemporary art museums to attract an audience between the age of 19 and 35. The educational aspects of museum practice are recently undertaking profound changes. Therefore, the first part of this thesis analyses the literature regarding the changing role of museum education in the last decades. The progressive interaction between education and curatorial practice is discussed together with the appearance of innovative learning theories applied to educational programs. Moreover, the discussion of the diversities between formal and informal education underlines the fundamental role of museum in supporting lifelong learning. The second chapter focuses on the analysis of the audience. Through statistics and surveys the present thesis outlines the necessity of attracting young adults aged between 19 and 35 years old. The specificities of this target are discussed in order to understand their precise needs. Hence, it is stressed that a diverse approach towards this generation is necessary to support and enhance their potential interest in contemporary art museums. Customized activities and educational programs could possibly increase their presence in museological institutions. The third chapter examines three case studies, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, The Gemeentemuseum in The Hague and the van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. The comparative analysis of these institutions aims to comprehend whether the recent development of learning theories are implemented in the educational offer of museums. Their different approaches delineate whether there is a scarcity of programs especially developed for the target group in analysis. Eventually, possible appropriate strategies of engagement for young museum-goers are proposed as a valuable solutions for their lack of participation in contemporary art museums.

Introduction

Modern and contemporary art museums have the role to collect, preserve and promote the visibility of visual arts in society. However, recent social and cultural transformations affecting current society raised concerns about the actual possibilities of interaction between museological institutions and the public. Pedagogical theories and visitors studies became tools to positively face the renewed necessities of the audiences and to foster social inclusion. The culture of participation, brought about by the technological development and social media, changed the ways in which the public enjoys cultural offers completely. Audiences refuse to passively absorb the wisdom of museums; instead they want to be actively involved, to be able to express their background knowledge and their opinions. If cultural institutions do not strive to respond rapidly to these renewed public needs, then, museums might definitively lose importance within a couple of decades.[1] Measures to contrast this threat have to be developed and promoted to support the engagement between institutions and their users. Museum professionals have to consider the needs and the capabilities of the public as fundamental contributions for the improvement of their cultural offer. Nonetheless, not many cultural institutions are undertaking processes of considerable transformation, thus, the gap between users and museological institutions is still problematic.

Issues regarding audience engagement, visitor studies and museum education have been widely investigated since the Nineties.[2] However, even though the discipline of museum studies have grown significantly in the last decades, art galleries have not always been able to provide an immediate practical response to these developments. Certainly, it is not undemanding to renovate institutions that are notoriously resistant to change, such as museums. Nevertheless, there has been an escalation in the role and features of education in the field of museology. Today, display practice and exhibition development often respond to pedagogical modes. From a collateral museum facility, museum education became an intrinsic part of the internal features of the institutions. This growth is the consequence of the increasing relevance of the role of visitors in the study of museums. From a passive entity, that had to be guided and absorb the

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[1] Black (2012), p.7
[2] Falk and Dierking 1992; Hooper- Greenhill 1991; Hein 1998; Roberts 1997

information provided, the public became an active protagonist of the museum visit. In addition, the ever-increasing heterogeneity of museums' audience is forcing cultural institutions to work on educational propositions to respond positively to these transformations. A growing number of cultural centres are recognizing the importance of approaching their audience through customized programs such as specific activities for children, families and disabled people. Thus, together with exhibitions, significant importance is given to activities such as workshops, guided tours, laboratories, and lectures. However, these valuable alternative experiences are not offered to everybody, meaning that museums try to engage pupils, students or professionals while the learning experience for the adults, in many cases, is still confined to the traditional methodology of learning by looking. In fact, little documentation exists about adults in museums, and even less is about adult education in contemporary art museums. A considerable amount of literature has been written about the importance of lifelong learning and adult education but none focuses on the possibilities of engagement with contemporary art.[3]

A scarcity of methods of practical involvement for adults in contemporary art institutions might imply a low participation of this demographic group in museum activities. Art museums should facilitate learning opportunities and try to engage with this specific category, however, audience research continues to reveal a growing failure to attract participants under-35.[4] For the aim of this research, an investigation about how contemporary art museums try to attract young adult visitors (19-35 years old) will be undertaken. This specific field of research has not been fully explored yet, the peculiar characteristics of this demographic group require changes in the traditional ways of approaching visitors: engaging with a generation that has been profoundly affected by the impact of the new technologies demands different strategies and projects. Therefore, this research will investigate the educational strategies that museums professionals are developing to approach young museum-goers and, therefore, it will describe desirable methods to engage with the audience segmentations in analysis. The first chapter will describe the changing role of education in museology together with new learning theories and their possible application in the post-museum. The challenges disclosed by lifelong learning and the presence of adults learners in

[3] Jarvis 2004, Knowles 1978
[4] Black (2012), p.6

museums will be examined thanks to an ample analysis of the most relevant literature available. The second part of the theoretical section will also examine audience research as an attempt to comprehend the actual composition of museums' public, with special regard to modern and contemporary art museums. Different parameters in the study of visitors will be observed by means of surveys and statistics, that will underline a differentiation in the concept of traditional users and future museum-goers. The definition of the needs and characteristics of the specific age target 19-35 will permit the consideration of more reliable possibilities to attract them in cultural activities. With the support of recent literature that sustains collaborative methods as great engaging strategies for contemporary museums' public, this dissertation will stress the necessity to change the way of approaching young adult visitors, and transform the relationship between museums and audiences. Lastly, a comparative analysis of the educational programs for adults of three modern and contemporary art museums in the Netherlands will be undertaken in order to investigate whether this theoretical possibilities are in fact applied to museum practice.

First of all, the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague will be discussed. The institution gives particular importance to the method of presenting the collection in itself rather than focusing on the promotion of educational projects. Through a compelling display, the museum aims to engage and foster audience learning. This mode will be compared with the strategies of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. The museum is an important international institution that recognizes a wide range of different publics, and tries to engage with them by means of customized activities. Through the examination of the programs for young adults and teenagers, a consideration of the Stedelijk's methods of engaging with its public will be outlined. Finally, the van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven will be considered. Its experimental perception of the role of art in society brought its professionals to develop something more than an educational department: the mediation department. The choice of these museums has been pondered because of their leading position as art institutions in the Netherlands as well as their intrinsic diversities when approaching the cluster 19-35 years old. The differences in their programs and in their ways of presenting will be considered. The comparative analysis will examine the educational activities, the public programs and the curatorial strategy of the three museums. Through the study of these cases, I aim to get a deeper understanding of the actual state of the art in this specific educational field. Finally, the

comparison will permit a consideration of the potential opportunities of contemporary art museums in supporting diverse learning needs, but also in becoming institutions ready to support the needs of a young public.

1. New challenges for museum education

Education in museums is a fundamental principle and the core function of museum activities since their foundation, its importance has been recognized since the very beginning in the field of museum studies. Learning in the museum became a common practice during the time of the French revolution, when the democratic atmosphere of the republic transformed museums into apparatus for public consumption. The private and aristocratic character of the collections was replaced by the opening of museums to the general audience. The transmission of knowledge through collections emerged as the ultimate instrument to govern the population; eventually, the circulation of information was seen as a communal benefit.[5] As a consequence, educational practices were created in museum institutions. Labels started to appear beside the artworks displayed, catalogues for the visiting citizens were written and published, teaching sessions took place in the galleries. Progressively the museums became part of the state education system.[6] Certainly, a division between two different processes that previously were part of the same practice happened. "Viewing" and "collecting" used to be carried out by the same restricted group of people, but from the late eighteenth century a division between collectors and masses took place.[7] Therefore, a diverse conception of collections and display practice developed. The establishment of the public museum was a reflection of the spirit of the enlightenment and the excitement about equal possibilities of experiencing knowledge for everybody.[8] Thus, the museum slowly became what recent museology is trying to fight so passionately: that institution which imparts knowledge to a passive group of people willing to absorb it. However, despite that paternalistic approach, it can be said that the accumulation of objects and specimens have always been one of the options to understand the world. Therefore, the learning potential of these repositories of knowledge started to be studied and analysed as a proper characteristic of such institutions. The present chapter aims to give an overview of the main theoretical developments that accompanied the transformations in the field of museum education, giving particular attention to the role of lifelong learning and adult education in museological institutions.

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[5] Hooper-Greenhill (1992), p.174
[6] Ibidem, p.182
[7] Ibidem, p. 190
[8] Wittlin (1949), p. 133

One of the first significant studies on museum education is dated 1949, *The Museum: Its History and its Tasks in Education*, written by Alma S. Wittlin.[9] This book is still considered as a standard work when it comes to museum issues, it stresses the relevance of museological institutions in their social context; it discusses the communicative power of museums and therefore, it considers their potential as educational instruments. The author claims the significance of museums as tools for the transmission of knowledge, raising valuable issues about how to address the diversity of the audience. According to Wittlin, applying the same teaching methods to a broad range of people is meaningless and not effective. Adults, children and professional students have diverse needs and different ways of absorbing knowledge. "Just as a book is written for a certain group of readers and a lecture prepared for a certain audience, so an exhibition cannot adequately be set up without some knowledge of its potential visitors."[10] This statement acknowledges the necessity of paying attention to the public and its heterogeneity, in order to let the educational qualities of museums emerge through exhibitions and object display. However, it cannot be denied that the paternalistic approach towards the audience supported in the book is slightly outdated. Effectively, museum education is today experiencing changes and even an ever-increasing popularity that is reflected in the many innovative projects presented to foster collaborative relationships. Museums are facing the challenge of transforming their authoritative nature from bodies imparting pre-determined knowledge to sites of cultural exchanges between institutions and audiences. Indeed, this progressive process implies a more attentive consideration of the configuration of the public, a careful selection of the contents exhibited, but also a revaluation of the museums' educational departments. These are the trials that have to be taken into account and solved by contemporary art institutions.

The necessity of changes has been supported by the great production of literature on pedagogy, sociology and anthropology combined with museum studies.[11] The interdisciplinary approach towards museology indeed helped the development of a more conscious relationship with the audience. Since the nineties, several texts have been published on the role of education in museums. The field expanded significantly, and the educational character of the museum has been definitively recognized as one of

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[9] Wittlin (1949)
[10] Ibidem, p.185
[11] For interdisciplinary approaches to museum studies see : Macdonald (2006) and Carbonell (2004)

its fundamental duties. Considerable changes happened in the interaction between museums and the community they serve, thus, today the tasks of cultural institutions are highly related to its position in society. In one of those early treaties about education and museums, Hooper-Greenhill explains clearly how the itinerary of the educational task of museums changed over the time.[12] Until the Second World War, museums still prioritized the learning aspects and the educational possibilities for the general public. Over the post-war years the emphasis shifted from the outside to more internal features, such as curatorial aspects and collection enhancement.[13] Clearly, this modifications entailed a tangible division between curators and educational staff that also implied the creation of an unfavourable hierarchy diminishing in value the role of museums' pedagogues. However, since the seventies, the nature of museum education experienced relevant transformations which ended up with a renewed perception of the educators' profession. "Where many people who were working in museums and gallery education in the 1970s had originally been employed to work with schools, it soon became clear to them that the educational possibilities of museums extended both to formal groups other than schools, such as adults and university students, and to informal groups such as families and other museum visitors."[14] The expansion of the museums' educational possibilities goes together with the reconsideration of the museum educator's role, who from simple pedagogue/teacher becomes the unavoidable connection between the museum internal discourse and the society in which it is inserted. Therefore, the priority of serving a broad range of visitors is today pursued and implemented thanks to the renewed recognition of the educational department's potential to develop programs and strategies for visitors' engagement and learning possibilities.

An innovative perspective on visitors' museological experience was given by Falk and Dierking in 1992.[15] The authors describe the perspective of the visitors, pointing out those factors that could successfully influence the museum visit. They propose a contextual model of learning, which considers that the assimilation of knowledge has to be filtered through various contexts: "personal", "sociocultural" and "physical".[16]

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[12] Hooper- Greenhill (1991)
[13] Ibidem, p. 54
[14] Ibidem, p.56
[15] Falk, Dierking (1992)
[16] Ibdiem, pp.27-29

Recognizing the power of these three levels of interpretation allows the understanding of what the audience expects from a museum visit and how these expectations can change over time. Moreover, to better understand the needs of the audience, the authors stress the significance of visitor's identity research. In fact, they define diverse visitors' profiles shaped by behaviour and interests. These efforts in differentiating the audience are clear reflections of the rising of the visitors studies discipline within the broader field of museology. Another perspective on visitors' studies is given by the volume *From Knowledge To Narrative: Education And The Changing Museum* by Lisa Roberts.[17] The book reports the progressive change that museum education undertook over time. The author underlines the important role of museum educators. Their collaboration and interaction with the curatorial team is claimed as a possibility to improve the visitors' experience and enrich the exhibition narrative. As a consequence, the process of constructing the meaning would be enabled by the effective interaction between museum educators and exhibition team. By freeing the educators from the exclusive didactic activity, Roberts supports a museum where the exhibition experience is fully integrated with the educational purpose. George Hein's contribution to the debate is embodied by the book *Learning In The Museum*, which is focused on how museum-goers learn in cultural institutions.[18] The volume combines educational theories with visitors studies, after an analysis of the diverse theories of learning, the author draws the features of his own ideal museum experience. He supports the constructivist model of learning, that converts the museum visit into a comfortable intellectual activity; visitors are invited to recall their personal competences or experiences to comprehend and assimilate the knowledge proposed. "The constructivist museum will provide opportunities for learning using maximum possible modalities both for visitors' interaction with exhibitions and for processing information."[19] Therefore, the challenges of understanding the visitors learning experience resulted in the proposition of a museum attentive to the needs of the audience and to the possibilities of expanding the educational activities beyond the traditional methodologies.

The impact of these theoretical developments on museum practice positively influenced the position of education within the field of museum studies. Nowadays,

[17] Roberts (1997)
[18] Hein (1998)
[19] Ibidem, p.165

education is of primary importance in the accomplishment of museums' ethical standards set by the International Council of Museums (ICOM).[20] The voice of the public became increasingly relevant, thus, every museum tries to find the best way to interact, communicate and involve their respective audiences. Many institutions perceive the museum in itself as an instrument for learning. Its architectural configuration, the display and the whole visitor experience in itself have already an educational potential. In addition, extra-activities such as special events, laboratories and lectures are used as keys to disclose even more learning possibilities. Moreover, it seems that current museum practice is moving towards the fulfilment of the gap between educational activities and exhibition design. Recent developments concern the growing necessity of building a less incoherent relationship between curators and museum educators.[21] As stressed by Hooper-Greenhill, "the emphasis today, from all sides, is on the active use of collections, and on making available as many different forms of learning and enjoyment as possible with the resources available."[22] Thus, museums are seeking to conciliate the duty of preserving and collecting with the social responsibility of representing and engaging the public. The concept of *exhibition* is expanding beyond its usual boundaries in order to embrace opportunities for audience engagement and participation. This so called "Educational Turn" is recently emerging in contemporary curatorial strategies. Educational methods are largely pervading traditional curating as a reflection of the growing importance attributed to visitors' studies and learning theories in museums.[23]

1.1 The post-museum and new learning theories

Considering those modifications above mentioned, it is possible to define the twenty-first century as a time of transformations for museology. The complexity of the renewed importance of the educational department, the increasing concern about audience participation and the consequent educational turn in curating can be framed in the wider post-museum phenomenon. This concept, originally coined by Hooper-Greenhill, has become widely adopted in the field of museology. The post-museum recognizes the

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[20] ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums
http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Codes/code_ethics2013_eng.pdf (accessed on 25/02/2015)
[21] Hooper-Greenhill (1991), p.2
[22] Ibid.
[23] See: O'Neill, Wilson (2010), Smith (2012)

importance of the social and cultural context in which the institution is placed, rather than the inherent meaning of museological objects. It also considers external aspects of the museum such as entertainment and management and it reckons the transformations of the relationship between audience and institutions. Indeed, the creation of a more egalitarian interaction amongst public and institutions emerged from this new 'post-museological perspective', which fosters the integration of innovative theories and museum practice. In other words, "the post-museum will be shaped through a more sophisticated understanding of the complex relationships between culture, communication, learning and identity that will support a new approach to museum audiences."[24] Meaning that a more interdisciplinary approach to museology can contribute to accomplish with the necessity of understanding and serving audiences' diversity. Thus, the post-museum idea underlines the very importance of meeting the learning and cultural needs of the broad range of people that museums are representing, and at the same time it emphasizes the renewed responsibility of museums towards society.

In the last decades museums changed from being information providers to entities with the duty of stimulating the emergence of the public's knowledge. Exhibitions and educational activities in the post-museum have the task to recognize the audience cultural background and facilitate their engagement with culture. Even if the educational purpose has always been present in museum institutions since the nineteenth century, it cannot be denied that in the museum of the twenty-first century those traditional formats and principles must be revisited and reshaped according to the contemporary public's needs. However, as argued by Falk, Dierking and Adams, it is not simple to apply new theoretical concepts to museum practice, for this reason a great number of institutions still apply old-fashioned learning methods to their exhibition design. Learning facilities in museums often respond to the behaviourist educational model that used to characterize the museological institutions of the nineteenth century.[25] This method is based on the assumption that placing objects on view with correspondent labels is sufficient to ensure a satisfactory learning experience to the visitors. The behaviourist model presents knowledge in an authoritative and unambiguous way, avoiding the consideration of the specific learning needs of the

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[24] Hooper-Greenhill (2007), p.189
[25] Falk, Dierking and Adams in Macdonald (2006), p. 325

audience and their diversity. In this way, the learning experience becomes a main responsibility of the instructors, who have the duty to clearly present and transmit the information. Thus, the behaviourist approach is teacher-centred and mainly focused on the quantitative acquisition of knowledge. However, learning has been lately defined as a more complex and progressive procedure, in every aspect dissimilar to the behaviourist method of imparting information.

Nowadays, the awareness that each individual starts from a different background is fundamental to guarantee the construction of the meaning-making process. It is through the combination of personal experience and new information that the learners progressively build personal cognitive operations leading to the full comprehension of the narrative exhibited. Indeed, this procedure if supported by museological institutions could positively change the configuration of the relationship between museums and their visitors. Experimenting with new techniques of display, promoting special events and educational projects can encourage audience participation and learning. The new attention for the audience that is promoted in the post-museum emerges together with new theoretical developments in the educational field. The concept of "constructivist museum" theorized by Hein envisions a museum where innovative learning theories positively affect the nature of the museum practice.[26] The idea of 'knowledge' as independent and external from the learner is rejected and replaced with the promotion of the visitors' cultural background as unavoidable tool to construct personal meaning. The constructivist approach to museology is the result of an interdisciplinary attitude that aims to benefit not only educational strategies, but also the museum in its entirety, fostering a close collaboration amongst museums' departments. Hein claims that a "constructivist museum" should propose exhibitions without a mandatory route or predetermined path in order to let the museum-goers build their own connections and routes within the exhibitions.[27] The author suggests the elimination of the pre-set sequence, in favour of the enhancement of the visitors' spontaneity and he denounces the scarcity of institutions applying these methodologies to their displays.

Nonetheless, it would be inexact to make general statements, the implementation of innovative learning methods is ever-increasing and many museums incorporate collaborative projects that take into account the background knowledge of the audience.

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[26] Hein in Hooper-Greenhill (1998), pp.73-79
[27] Ibid.

Certainly, more than fifteen years passed since Hein's essay, thus the attempt to accommodate individual learning styles through curatorial strategies became almost a necessity for those museums committed in the engagement of a broader public. Increasing the museum-goers possibilities to customize their visit endorses the creation of a more accessible museum for the audiences. However, even if the display practice performs a great deal with audience involvement, a rather relevant role is embodied by extra-activities organized for visitors' engagement. In fact, it can be argued that an excessive openness of the exhibition sequence and narrative can confuse the inexperienced visitor, who might want to experience the visit with the aid of educational instruments and guidelines. Therefore, the conception of exhibition spaces has to be supported by educational activities and special events that can contribute to the creation of an enjoyable learning experience for a wide range of publics.

The importance given to the application of these learning theories to museum-based education led to the development of structures that are capable to engender learning. In this sense, the opening of an education department in almost every museum reflects the power of alternative educational activities in increasing the quality of the learning experience. A museum education department is a section where educators, teachers, volunteers and guides work to offer the best learning experience possible to the visitors. They provide lectures, workshops, tours, visitors' services and laboratories for schools. Moreover, museum educators create a language (labels, signs, paths) to interpret the exhibition. The effectiveness of these activities stands in the interaction between museum-goers and museum staff. Hence, the learning techniques endorsed in formal education (writing, speaking, listening) in the museum are complemented and reinforced by bodily action and real experience. The physical experience helps museum-goers to remember and therefore, to elaborate the learning process. The activities in the educational department overturn the top-down approach typical of the authoritative museum by proposing entertainment, contributions to the museum narrative and ideas for exhibitions or further activities. This collaborative manner of interacting with the public is highly desirable in a museum that is looking for a bottom-up relationship with its public, such as the twenty-first century museum. Learning through experience is effective throughout life, nevertheless, a great part of extra-museum activities are addressed to children, families and schools. Experimental and intuitive approaches can be more effective than traditional learning at every stage of life, for this reason the

immersive experience of the museum is equally important for learners of all ages. [28]

1.2 Lifelong Learning and the Museum

The provision of educational projects makes the museum a great place for those people who, already excluded from the formal education process, want to dedicate their time to intellectually stimulating activities. In addition, they also present engaging activities for professionals, art lovers and students. Therefore, museums are recognized as emblematic places for pursuing lifelong learning. Generally, the educational and learning processes are divided into three main groups: formal, non-formal and informal education. In order to understand the specificities of learning in the museum, it is necessary to briefly outline the characteristics of these groups.[29] Firstly, formal education is that educational process regulated by laws and specific teaching methodologies, it corresponds to the system normally adopted by primary schools, high schools and universities. It proposes learning objectives that students have to accomplish. It is based on the relationship between learners and teachers, where the latter group have to follow specific programs and evaluate the students by means of periodical assessments. Secondly, the notion of non-formal learning describes a form of assimilating knowledge which is endowed by less rigid methods than formal learning and it leaves more space to the necessity of the students. Non-formal learning is defined as such whenever one or more aspects characterizing formal learning are missing. It does not require the constant presence of the teacher or the connection to an institution, however it happens in structured situations, such as, for instance, the scouts' organization. Finally, informal learning does not correspond to any organized or systematic concept of education. Instead of being reserved for students or group members, it is open to anyone who is willing to elect certain activities which support a learning process. Certainly, museum visits are one of those activities that can be included in the informal learning (amongst others are reading, going to the theatre, concerts...). Participants are spontaneously seeking intellectual activities but are neither

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[28] Hooper- Greenhill (2007), p.172

[29] The differences between non-formal and informal learning are taken from the European Inventory for the validation of non-formal and informal learning http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory/european-inventory glossary#n (Accessed on 22/02/2015)

judged nor examined in their performances. Informal learning lacks of specific learning objectives and it is often unintentional from the learner's perspective.

Museum education does not necessarily respond only to the definition of informal learning. Indeed, museum visits offer a spontaneous and autonomous way of grasping information. Museums do not oblige visitors to participate in any predetermined educational activity; however, through the narrative of exhibitions they facilitate unconscious processes of learning in the participants. Even if these characteristics are certainly connected to informal learning, museological institutions supply and foster also diverse types of educational methods for the communities they serve. They attempt to provide interpretative tools and intellectual stimuli to the variety of their audiences. In fact, through the promotion of their cultural and educational offers, museums participate in supporting the challenge of lifelong learning which comprises the three categories of formal, non-formal and informal education.[30] The relevance of education and lifelong learning recently encouraged the displacement of the traditional places for art teaching to museums, generating the possibility to undertake formal educational programs and even Master Degrees within museological institutions.[31] In the book *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. Theory and Practice*, the scholar Peter Jarvis advocates and describes the importance of learning throughout lifespan for adult individuals, overturning the idea that education is an exclusive prerogative of subjects still inserted in formal education systems. According to the author "lifelong learning embraces the socially institutionalized learning that occurs in the educational system, that which occurs beyond it, and that individual learning throughout the lifespan, which is publicly recognized and accredited."[32] However, in the context of museums, the evident interest in developing educational strategies for children, schools and families is often not compensated with equivalent programs for independent adult visitors. Thus, if museums want to take advantage and exploit their potential as sites for lifelong learning, they should focus on the complexity and ambiguity of the adult learner's figure.

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[30]The concept of learning throughout life has been fully described in a report promoted by UNESCO. They define lifelong learning as the key concept of the twenty-first century, the tool that can give an opportunity of redemption, or the possibility to overcome someone's limits. The notion encompasses learning at all stages of life and comprises formal, non-formal and informal education. UNESCO Dolers Report (1996)

[31]Aguirre in O'Neill, Wilson (2010) pp.174-185

[32] Jarvis (2004), p.65

First of all, in order to understand the possibilities of engagement of adult learners in museums it is necessary to define the concept of adulthood. According to Jarvis, it is not just the moment when the others treat individuals as socially mature, but it also has to do with the perception of the body and the self. The body is in itself a subject of learning, individuals also process knowledge through their physicality; however, physiological changes can also influence the perception that learning is something that necessarily occurs early in life. In addition, self-consciousness represents a crucial factor in the formation of an adult individual; the self is that element that integrates the sociocultural environment with personal identity and gives the sense of one's location among other individuals and within society. These factors represent what Jarvis calls "the embodied self", namely, the conscious individual: the adult.[33] Therefore, each individual with these specific characteristics is considered an adult learner. It is not necessary to be enrolled in educational courses or to be a self-directed learner, everybody is considered an adult learner because of the renewed perception of the learning itself.[34] Effectively, the process of assimilating knowledge described in the three diverse modes of learning (formal, non-formal, informal) can potentially convert every life aspect into a learning experience. In other words, those adults that learn through courses promoted by educational institutions are just a small segment of the wider group of adult learners. The comprehension of the characteristics of independent adult learners outlined the reason why lifelong education covers a relevant role for museology. If one of the principal functions of museum institutions is educating, than they have the duty to foster knowledge and educational activities at all levels in order to satisfy the needs specific to the variety of audience segmentations they want to address.

The phenomenon of adult education – also called andragogy as opposite to pedagogy– in museological environments has not been widely studied. However, research has been done on the modes and formats of adult education. For instance, the American scholar Michael Knowles provides an interesting andragogical model for the adult learner; he reconsiders the concept of learner by defining the adults as self-directed and independent learners. Moreover, Knowles stresses the importance of background knowledge: previous experience has to be considered as a precious

[33]Ibidem, p. 68- 69
[34]Ibidem, p.72

resource for the accomplishment of the expected outcomes. In addition, the author assumes that adults want to learn when they feel the necessity to perform better in some aspects of their lives or in order to get new experiences. The author also says that even if many adults want to learn for the sake of performing a specific task, many others pursue other kinds of outcomes, such as self-esteem, personal gratification or better quality of life.[35] The failure in recognizing the motivations and needs of adult learners is comparable to reject them as capable individuals. Therefore, museums pursuing their educational task should provide specific strategies and activities to adequately engage with this demographic segmentation. However, in spite of the contemporary emphasis on museums as sites of learning, still little practical measures and research projects are available on adults' education in museums.

Relevant contributions to the topic include a text by Dufrene- Tassé about andragogy in the museum.[36] She proposes a new formulation of the traditional principles defining andragogy that should orient museums in addressing adult visitors. Specifically, she endorses the interaction between educators and exhibitions with the "visitor functioning dynamics", namely the expectations, the state of mind and the socio-cultural background which influence the visitor experience in the museum.[37] Learning in the museum becomes a consequence of those determinant factors. Therefore, where the learner benefits from the facilities provided by the museum educators, the museum constantly adapts its characteristics to the public who visit it. Gunther's text about museum-goers' learning characteristics divide the adults learners in different groups according to their diverse learning styles.[38] He also stresses the importance of accommodating the expectations and needs of the audience; however, he interestingly claims the importance of the interaction with the museum staff. The encounters with museum workers influence the perception of the visitors, "everyone on the museum staff is an educator."[39] This statement finally recognizes the importance of the personal interaction between visitors and the museum embodied by its professionals. While the literature examined often talked about the necessity of creating compelling exhibitions which meet the needs of the adult learners, the physical contact with knowledgeable

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[35] Knowles (1984), pp. 9-12
[36] Dufresne- Tassé in Hooper- Greenhill (1995), p. 245-255
[37] Ibidem, p. 253
[38] Gunther in Hooper-Greenhill (1999), pp. 118-130
[39] Ibidem, p. 127

professionals has often been forgotten. However, sometimes it is the practical application of knowledge that can truly support the learning process and engage the audience. For instance, Graham Black in his book *The Engaging Museum. Developing Museums For Visitors Involvement* dedicates a section to the importance of lifelong learning in museums.[40] Starting from the assumption that museums cannot simply provide an aesthetic experience, Black states that their task is to provide customized stimulating experiences for their broad range of audience. For the engagement of adults, Black proposes a museum experience involving critical thinking, problem-solving, social learning opportunities and also active participation. Basically, according to his point of view, museums should provide the tools to support lifelong learning knowing that the learning process depends mostly on the individuals' motivation. Therefore, he criticizes the mere application of learning theories to the exhibition conception, and fosters the great opportunities that hands-on activities could supply to adults learners. "The exhibitions must provide opportunities for all visitors, not just children, to participate – physically, intellectually, socially, and with their senses and emotions – and to begin to apply the new understanding and skills that they have gained."[41] This statement recognizes that often the adult museum-goer does not benefit from the same educational facilities that are provided to children or school pupils. However, if the educational purpose of museological institutions aims to be democratic, a development of more inclusive educational programs is highly necessary.

The texts analysed pointed out how the responsibilities of museums towards their public changed over time with the development of the post-museum concept. From repositories of knowledge, museums are today propagators of information and centres for lifelong learning. The role of education and pedagogical programmes within art structures gained increasingly more importance influenced by the development of new learning theories. Educational strategies are pervading many aspects of the museum's structure, including those areas always considered internal business. Nevertheless, where many treaties have been written about the educational role of museums and their duty to contribute in the training of children, a lack of studies about adults' engagement in museological institutions revealed a scarcity of educational propositions

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[40] Black (2005), pp.123-157
[41] Ibidem, p.150

for this specific demographic segmentation. The following section will describe and analyse the audience segmentation 19-35 years old, outlining a possible explanation for their low participation in museum activities. The scarcity of educational projects or activities specifically addressed to this targeted audience might be the main cause for their moderate engagement with cultural institutions. The study of audience diversification will permit to outline the characteristics and needs of this underrepresented category, this will possibly lead to outline desirable strategies of approach.

2. Defining Audiences. Expectations and Characteristics of Young Adults Visitors

Investigating cultural participation and audience engagement is a growing practice. The necessity of studying visitors became more urgent with the development of the post-museum concept and with the transformations affecting society in the last decades. Globalization, migration flows, the development and the impact of new technologies have altered the traditional dynamics between museums and their audiences, especially when it comes to audience's segmentations.[42] The challenges posed by these factors have to be faced by museums. The power of social media network in turning around the usual methods of communications, the rapid demographic changes and the growing alteration of ethnic and racial boundaries are all factors to be embraced by cultural institutions. An increasing number of people use the internet and social media networks for social contact. A survey commissioned by the European Union in 2013 reports that 30% of the Europeans use the internet also for cultural purposes.[43] Reading newspaper articles (56%), searching for cultural events (44%) and listening to music or radio (42%) are amongst the most popular activities. In addition, it is relevant the use of the internet for visiting museums or libraries' websites represented by 24% of the sample.[44] Additional significant factors influencing audience's diversification are the increasing cross-border mobility and migration. The flows registered in 2012 by the European Union show that 1.7 million people immigrated to Europe from countries outside the Union. Moreover, 1.7 million Europeans also immigrated to other countries within the borders of the EU. Therefore, traditional national communities are today changing, streams of people from other countries are progressively mingling with local groups.[45]

The complexity of these phenomena suggests societal modifications of the museums traditional audience, they reflect the urgency of developing tools that permit a broader comprehension of the museums' public. Researching the identity of both visitors and non-visitors allows the creation of programs and campaigns to attract the under-represented categories and to build a closer relationship with the visiting public.

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[42] Black (2012), pp.1-2
[43] Special Eurobarometer 399 (2013), 54-60
[44] Ibidem, p.57
[45] Eurostat (2015),
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistic s (accessed on 10/03/2015)

Therefore, to improve visitors' engagement and to be able to interest new generations, museums work to understand audience's diversity. Recognizing the existence of a multifaceted audience is today a pressing issue for all those institutions that want to foster cultural engagement. Audience analysis becomes a crucial tool for the realization of these objectives. Both individual museums and national/supranational organizations are trying to measure the possibilities of cultural institutions in engaging with the public. Nonetheless, due to the diversity of the surveys and parameters, universal outcomes are not available. In fact, depending on the organization sponsoring the investigations, the results can include diverse information, in both quantitative or qualitative data. The following section will examine inquires which can outline the demographic profiles of museums' visitors. Where possible, special attention will be given to art or contemporary art museum. However, the scarcity of material published will solely allow a general socio-demographic consideration on museum visitors. In addition, an examination of the peculiarities and characteristics of the target group 19-35 years old will admit a reflection on the possible practical methods of engagement.

2.1 Audience Analysis: Supranational Surveys

Measuring cultural participation is a practice supported by many national organizations, but also supranational. Because of the differences of parameters between national and supranational surveys it is difficult to get internationally comparable statistics on audience engagement.[46] Recently, UNESCO published a handbook outlining methods for the creation of surveys. As an international organization, they promote the importance of harmonising the ways of measuring cultural participation.[47] The relevance of measuring public's attitudes towards cultural activities has also been recognized by the European Union. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) commissioned in 2013 a survey called *Eurobarometer 399: Cultural Access and Participation* carried out in the then twenty-seven state members of the EU.[48] Interestingly, it considers the level of participation in diverse

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[46] ESSnet-CULTURE. European Statistical System Network on Culture (2012), p. 242-243
http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/reports/ess-net-report_en.pdf (accessed 13/03/2015)
[47] UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012). The hand book is a practical guide for those organizations that want to undertake audience research for cultural participation. It is a handbook designed for governing bodies and national structures.
[48] Eurobarometer 399. Summary (2013)

cultural activities, including watching TV, listening to the radio and reading books. The general outcome of the survey shows that if compared with a similar inquiry of 2007, the research records a decline in the participation in the same cultural activities, probably due to the hit of the economic crisis [Fig.1].[49] Specifically, this socio-demographic research includes parameters such as age, sex and level of education. This allows a general comprehension of the audience engaging with cultural activities. However, the examination of museums and galleries participation simply considers the educational level. It shows that those respondents who stayed in education longer are more disposed to visit museums. Nonetheless, only 12% of respondents who stayed in education beyond the age of 19 and 9% of those still studying visited a museum more than 5 times in 12 months.[50] Assiduous museum visitors represent the minority of the sample if compared with the respondents that never visited a museum in the same time span. For instance, 68% of individuals that stayed in education till the age of 19 have never visited a museum in a year, followed by 43% of respondents who left education at the age of 20-plus.[51] These numbers confirm the necessity of museums and galleries to broaden their audience, but they also suggest that visiting a museum is strongly connected with the level of education of the visitors. A higher educated public is more likely to visit museums and galleries on a regular basis.

However, *Eurobarometer 399* presents discrepancies of parameters within the survey itself.[52] The inquiry points out that each country, and almost each institution, has their own way of measuring audience, serving various purposes. Therefore, *Eurobarometer 399* neither allows for overall comparisons with generalized statements, nor can it be used by single institutions to improve their marketing and communication strategy. Effectively, the survey presents a lack of division amongst different types of museums and a limited audience segmentation. The exclusive consideration of the visitors' educational level does not permit the creation of measures to contrast the non-participation of certain target groups. For instance, the so-called group of non-users is often left behind when it comes to research about participation. Indeed, defining the group of regular visitors is less problematic than analysing the reasons behind the non-

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49 Ibidem, p.4
50 Eurobarometer 399. Complete (2013), p. 17
51 Ibid.
52 There are no comparable numbers available for visitors to galleries or museums, and other leisure activities such as cinema or concerts, since the same survey based some numbers on the actual age of the respondents and others on the age they left education.

participation of certain targets. Black defines non-users as those people with a highly negative stereotype about museums that influences their participation in cultural institutions.[53] Even if institutions changed dramatically in the last decades, the group of non-users still considers museums as those dusty repositories of antique artefacts, thus they are not stimulated to visit them. In order to overturn this conception and therefore attract a broader audience, museums should understand, track and analyse the characteristics and the reasons behind non-participation. However, single institutions do not often have the means and the resources to independently track non-users, the majority of museum-based inquiries are addressed to respondents that are already frequent museum-goers. Reaching potential audiences implies complex researches about the subjectivity of non-visitors that are essential for the development of effective strategies of engagement. For this reason, it is a common practice relying on external agencies or supranational bodies to carry out investigations and surveys about the engagement with culture. However, these measures are often insufficient to build a strong and captivating program to attract the cluster of non-participants. Socio-demographic and quantitative surveys do not reveal why people do not use museums. Nonetheless, *Eurobarometer 399* represents a first significant step from which it is possible to conduct further research. Taking as a starting point the outcomes of the European survey, single museums can conduct their own independent visitors' studies to understand the needs and the motivations of their user base. From these results they should make the attempt to outline the socio-demographic characteristics and the motivations of the non-users cluster.

2.1.2 Independent research and surveys

For an accurate analysis of audience segmentations, single museums often promote customized surveys. Numerous small and medium-size museums often rely on specialized agencies to carry out audience research. Unfortunately, many of those surveys are far too general, and several others are not public. The methods for breaking down the public into different target segmentations often differ from survey to survey. Researches do not always include all the possible criteria to fully comprehend visitors' divisions. Parameters such as demographics, geographical location, social class,

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[53] Black (2005), p.79

educational level and psychographic data are rarely included together in a single research. This does not always diminish the value of those surveys, but it rather makes them arduous to compare. In addition, the private nature of these independent statistics often prevents their publication. For these reasons, a thorough analysis of visitors' participation in contemporary art museums can be highly complex. Nonetheless, the combination of independent surveys' outcomes with insight provided by academic research is useful to draw reliable conclusions. On the hand, the increasing number of academics focusing on the museum as a field of research led to a considerable growth of studies concerned with the understanding of the phenomena related to visitors participation. On the other hand, museum-based research usually aims to develop customized management strategies to improve museum practice and it often avoids to examine motivations behind visitors participation. For this reason, analysing parameters and outcomes of both museum inquiries and academic research can provide a satisfactory overview about audience engagement with contemporary and modern art.

An example of museum-based inquiry is the Dutch project *MuseumMonitor*: a collaboration between cultural institutions and a private agency. The initiative is developed by the Netherlands Museum Association together with TNS-Nipo, an agency of market research which proposes professional investigation for those museums that do not have the means to track their audience independently.[54] It evaluates museum services, economic and educational values. The results serve as a starting point for the improvement of the museums facilities. In 2009 the general outcomes of the *MuseumMonitor* inquiry and its sociological analysis were published.[55] Despite the many efforts of institutions and governing bodies, the survey shows that museum consumption is still related to a selected social group, mainly well-educated/seniors citizens. The research details a majority of over-50 years old visitors as the best supporters and participants in museums activities. Although the presence of children in museums is considerably increased, museums remain attractive places mainly for seniors users. In fact, the presence of young adults is still very low. The respondents between 19 and 26 years old represent 7% of the sample; a very small percentage if

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[54] TNS- Nipo http://www.tns-nipo.com/ons-aanbod/marktonderzoek/multiclientonderzoek/museum-monitor/ (accessed 16/03/2015)

[55] MuseumMonitor 2009. http://www.lettyranshuysen.nl/pdf/2010_MM%202009.pdf (accessed 16/03/2015)

compared with 35% of the group 50- 64 years old.[56] The *MuseumMonitor* demonstrates the strong engagement of senior citizens with museological institutions. This research does not differentiate between types of museums. Therefore, to draw demographic profiles of contemporary art museum visitors it is necessary to support the outcomes of this inquiry with insight provided by scholarly research.

For this reason, the examination of a study published in 2013 is of great interest. The article *Visitors to modern and contemporary art museums: towards a new sociology of 'cultural profiles'* outlines different cultural profiles of visitors of six modern and contemporary art museums in Belgium.[57] Laurie Hanquinet, goes against the firm belief that cultural engagement is a prerogative of the educated middle class.[58] She claims that reducing contemporary art visitors to the societal elite is inattentive to the heterogeneity of interests and cultural backgrounds of the public. However, the socio-demographic results showed a majority of senior participants with a tendency to have high educational level. Participants between 55 and 64 years old represented 22% of the sample. In addition, 12% of the audience was older than 64 years. Although the author overcomes the socio-demographic parameters to construct alternative cultural profiles based on interests and lifestyles, it is interesting to consider that the outcome of her research supports the necessity of engaging with a younger audience. Respondents between 15 and 24 years old were 16,5%, while participants in the age target 25-34 represented only 17% of the sample. These data confirm the assumption that also contemporary art museums are mostly frequented by over- 50 years old citizens. In spite of the strategy proposed by Hanquinet to draw visitors' cultural profiles, the present research will focus solely on the demographic factors outlined. In fact, the consideration of psychographic segmentations (lifestyles, opinions, cultural background) is still infrequent in audience analysis and it is problematic to draw conclusions on visitors participation with these parameters.

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[56] Ibidem, p.3. The larger group (36%) is represented by the age segmentation 27-49 years old; citizens over 65 years old are 20% of the sample, teenagers between 13 and 18 years old are just 3% of the visitors.
[57] Hanquinet (2013)
[58] Ibidem, p.791

2.1.3 Survey Outcomes

By considering the data analysed, it becomes clear that museums –and specifically contemporary art institutions– have the responsibility to expand their user base. Museums visitations statistics across Europe and The Netherlands confirm that a 'traditional' museum audience still exists. In spite of the societal changes and the growing necessity of dismantling the preconceptions about visitors, the strongest core of the audience is still mainly represented by seniors and well-educated citizens. Although it is of great importance for museums to support the already existing visitors, it is urgent to work for the inclusion of new audiences.[59] Unfortunately, involving non-visitors is extremely complex because of the difficulties in tracking their motivations. The demographic analysis undertaken does not reveal why people do not visit museums and therefore, developing strategies to attract them is not easy. The statistics revealed that young adults (19-35) form an under-represented demographic profile in contemporary art museums. Therefore, an exploration of the needs and motivations of this target group is necessary in order to develop strategies for their engagement with cultural institutions. The comprehension of their specificities would allow the creation of possible measures to bridge the gap between youth and museums.

2.2 Participatory Generations

The suspicion that art museums constantly fail in catering young audience is also confirmed by the article *The Feeling of Exclusion: Young Peoples' Perceptions of Art Galleries* by Mason and McCarthy (2005).[60] The authors claim that younger generations are inhibited from visiting cultural institutions because of the ways museums display and collect art. Effectively, although art museums try to be democratic, they unintentionally exclude social groups. Mason and McCarthy consider young people as one of those excluded categories whose values, identity and objects are often unrepresented in art museums.[61] To comprehend the causes of non-participation amongst the young public, it is not enough to look into the museums' programs and exhibitions. Thus, an overview of the characteristics and social features of this target

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[59] Black (2012), p.33
[60] Mason, McCarthy (2005)
[61] Ibidem, p.22

group is also desirable. In fact, since it is much harder to examine the needs of non-visitors, it is necessary to outline the generational characteristics of possible young users. According to Black, the under-35 audience has been affected by the rise of new media and technology which changed the paradigms of contemporary society.[62] These new generations who grew up during the technological shift, have today a different way to filter the world around them. The American Centre for the Future of Museums together with the Smithsonian Institute drew a profile of the museums' visitors of the future. The study aims to anticipate the expectations of museum-goers until 2034. It predicts that museological institutions will embody a major role in reshaping civic involvement for citizens of all age, gender and race. In addition, it outlines the pressing need of appealing two younger generations such as the 'Generation Y' and the 'Generation M' (Millennials).[63]

The close connection with technology of these demographic groups differentiates them from older generations. 'Generation Y' includes those individuals born around 1979. They soon adapted to mobile phones and personal computers and nowadays, they use instant messages, chats and social media networks. The other group, the 'Millennials' or 'Generation M', refers to those people born around 1995. They are fully merged with technology, and they are able to gather and collect their information "in multiple devices and multiple places".[64] 'Generation M' grew up with interactive media, that made them able to share, manipulate and customize material (music, video, information) in an autonomous way. Both groups have experienced the participatory potential of technology, for this reason they are unwilling to go through a passive/top-down museological experience.[65] Thus, the approach to these targets requires different strategies, such as strong communication policies, or engaging activities which can help museums to broaden their user base. As claimed in the book *The Participatory Museum* by Nina Simon, the social function of the Internet provides powerful instruments of participation that can transform the passive museological experience into an active shared experience suitable for younger generations.[66] This means that if museums would take as an example the consumption model of social

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[62] Black (2012), p. 35
[63] Center for the Future of Museums (2008) http://www.aam-us.org/docs/center-for-the-future-of-museums/demotransaam2010.pdf?sfvrsn=0 (accessed on 20/03/2015)
[64] Ibidem, p.9
[65] Ibidem, p.10
[66] Simon (2010) http://www.participatorymuseum.org/chapter1/ (accessed on 15/03/2015)

media networks, they could become interactive places for the mutual exchange of information. Getting inspired from the social structure of the Internet does not necessarily diminish the value of the museum; instead it can transfer on a practical level the positive principles of participation typical of the social media. Namely, the open accessibility, the interactivity, the opportunity to create content or to rate it.

2.2.1 Motivations and Expectations

The characterisation of these generational profiles outlined some important issues. First of all, these demographic groups have a relevant and undeniable connection with technology. Secondly, young adults have developed a culture of participation that prevents them from being satisfied with passive museological experiences. Therefore, museums have to appraise these peculiarities and respond accordingly.

Socio-demographic surveys allowed these considerations; however, to get an insight into the motivations and needs of young audience when visiting museums, it is necessary to examine qualitative visitors surveys. A qualitative visitors survey relates not only to numbers but also to the motivations behind museum visits and it explores lifestyles, expectations and underlying reasons of museum-goers. These types of inquiries lead to a delineation of visitors' profiles based on those individual drives that bring audiences to cultural institutions. However, specific researches on young museum visitors motivations are not available. Hanquinet when investigating cultural profiles of modern and contemporary art museum outlines six clusters of visitors: "classically cultured visitors", "passive cultured visitors", "cultured progressists", "hedonists", "the distants" and "the art lovers".[67] Amongst these, there are two profiles comprehending mainly visitors under-35. First of all, the "cultured progressists", who primarily consists of highly educated people with an artistic background or formation. This category is attracted to high culture and their participation in contemporary art museums is framed within their interests for new experiences and self-construction. In addition, the following cluster is mainly represented by users between 25 and 44 years old. The author defines them as the "hedonists", who do not consider the art museum as an unavoidable part of their personal life. Nevertheless, the museum visit is for them still a significant social experience. They have less artistic background compared with the

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[67] Hanquinet (2013)

previous group, but yet they conceive the engagement with art as a valuable leisure activity.[68] Therefore, if for the "cultured progressists" the museum visit is seen as an intellectual enriching experience; for the "hedonists", visiting museums is an enjoyable event.

From these audience segmentations, it is possible to deduce that different social groups have variability in their expectations. Many scholars are reshaping the value of socio-demographic analysis in favour of different strategies sketching identities and expectations of visitors.[69] One of them is John Falk, who developed five visitor profiles based on users' personal identities.[70] This model differs both from the demographic segmentation and from Hanquinet's psychographic analysis. Specifically, it is based on identity-related needs that reflect what the public perceives as good motivations for visiting museums. The scholar claims that people visit museums to conform to their social roles. For instance, a father would visit a museum to accompany his children, and therefore, his expectations include the accomplishment of his tasks as a father and facilitator. These profiles, however, lack the socio-demographic divisions used so far by the majority of cultural institutions. It can be said that recognizing these "identity-related motivations" can enhance museums' approach towards their public. However, even if valuable segmentations, carrying out these types of researches is not financially viable for many institutions, above all for small and medium-size museums. Moreover, "identity-related motivations" need to be enriched with fundamental distinctions such as age and gender, that are still unavoidable considerations upon which museums construct their programs (events like 'Ladies Nights' or various children activities are still widely present in museums' agendas). For this reason, the segmentation 'young adults' is still a valuable audience cluster and a target that can be practically considered for the development of museums' programs.

As outlined in the research of Hanquinet, young museum-goers are attracted both by the social opportunities and the intellectual stimuli of the cultural visits. In addition, as revealed by the sociological analysis of the 'Y' and 'M' generations, museums are in front of a range of possible users which culture was shaped through the use of technology. Considering this proposed framework, the constructivist learning theories

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[68] Ibidem, pp. 806- 807
[69] Falk (2009), Hanquinet (2013), Black (2012) among others, are proposing new parameters to study the segmentations of the public which are based on paradigms avoiding the socio-demographic factors
[70] Falk (2009)

and the peculiarities of adults' learning, it is possible to list a number of expectations that the key target 19-35 is seeking in the art museum experience:

1. Leisure and social interaction;
2. Opportunity to learn;
3. Consideration of background knowledge, beliefs and values;
4. Active involvement (physical and virtual);
5. Independent learning/ guided experience;
6. Usage of Internet and technologies;
7. Programs and exhibitions in compliance with their identity (young artists, sub-culture).

The combination of learning possibilities and social interaction seems to be one of the most important characteristics for a satisfying museum experience. Future and current audiences will continue to demand high-quality services and compelling approaches both to activities and display models.[71] In addition, visitors demand a consideration of their previous knowledge, their culture and identity. The necessity of considering the cultural background of the public is also supported by constructivist learning theorists, who describe this process as a priority for the improvement of chances to engage people with culture.[72] Moreover, the target audience of 19-35 years old feels a lack of practical involvement in museological activities. This does not necessarily mean supervised activities, but rather the research of a good balance between guided and independent projects that can satisfy the needs of grown-up visitors. In fact, working with adults requires an approach that has to respect them as skilful individuals and at the same time, it has to provide the instruments for the comprehension/assimilation of the material exhibited. For this reason, the development of exhibitions in compliance with young people's identity is of great relevance for the improvement of museums' attractive potential.

In the volume written by Simon practical responses to reconnect the audience with museological institutions are to be found.[73] The author suggests the design of particular programs for the improvement of visitors' engagement: educational

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[71] Ibidem, p.39
[72] Hein (1998)
[73] Simon (2010) http://www.participatorymuseum.org/read/ (accessed on 15/03/2015)

activities, collaborative exhibitions and events are recommended to build a closer relationship between museums and audiences. Nonetheless, the proposed model considers the 'visitors' as a uniform group without socio-demographic or psychographic distinctions. The author develops feasible measures for visitors' engagement which can result in either an extreme or obsolete way unsuitable depending on the targeted audience; for instance, collaborative projects and active involvement might appear unattractive for seniors citizens or professionals. Hence, Simon's participatory model can be of even greater value if specifically applied to the cluster 19-35 years old. Effectively, the growing importance she attributes to the Web 2.0 in the development of museum programs can be highly appealing for those young adults raised in a world of increasing participatory possibilities.[74] Since the inclusion of the target group 19-35 years old depends on the grade of importance attributed to their opinions, practical contributions and interests; the author's propositions appear more valuable to specifically attract young adults rather than the 'general public'.

2.3 How to Bridge the Gap

Clearly, bridging the gap between museological practice and audience engagement theories is necessary. Art museums and cultural institutions have a certain range of possibilities that they could develop for the involvement of young visitors. In order to discover how the study of audience's motivations can support museological practice it is necessary to examine the instruments that art museums possess to meet with young adults' needs and learning expectations. Within the ample scope of opportunities that cultural institutions have, it is possible to outline three main areas of intervention: curatorial practice, public program and educational provision.

Firstly, the curatorial practice which aims to involve the visitors through the arrangements of objects in the galleries. Display is the oldest form of engagement with the public, it is the filter through which visitors experience art. Effectively, museums do not provide pure aesthetic experiences but they rather offer interpretative guidelines that influence the audience's perception of the objects exhibited. Traditionally, users were seen as blank pages to be filled with pre-constructed knowledge. Nowadays, the

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[74] Ibidem, http://www.participatorymuseum.org/chapter1/ (accessed on 15/03/2015)

creation of engaging displays supports a more even encounter between the collection and the audience both on a physical and a virtual level (with the usage of apps and social media networks). Visitors' engagement with the display increases learning opportunities and the chances to build a stronger cluster of frequent users. Staging a compelling exhibition enhances the meaning-making process and the learning experience. The construction of an environment in which visitors feel comfortable supports the exchange process between collection and users. However, even the most compelling exhibition display still provides a rather passive experience. For this reason the attempt to transform the curatorial practice into a collaborative process with the public is an increasing procedure.[75] For as much as the cluster '19-35 years old' seeks for active and practical involvement in the museum experience, this shift in the curatorial practice can significantly increase their participation. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, educational measures are pervading traditional museum' practices. The "Educational Turn" in curating witnesses a new collaboration between curators and educators.

With respect to this shift, Simon proposes the "co-creation" of exhibitions as a way to give voice to the audience needs and interests.[76] "Co-creative" projects are carried out between the institution and the community, they are often based on audience's choices and will. Therefore, the creation of exhibitions 'on demand' can result into a great participatory activity that can restore the balance between audience and institutions. A recent Dutch project 'The Mix Match Museum' (October 2014- April 2015) implemented this theoretical concept. The project included six Dutch museums that created a database of three-hundred objects from which the public was invited to select what they would like to exhibit. Therefore, every user was asked to create his/her own online exhibition with the preferred objects supported by an exhibition statement. The most inspiring proposals were implemented and exhibited in the six participating museums.[77] This innovative project is a practical response to the collaborative model stressed by Simon and even if not specifically addressed to young people, it has those appropriate requisites to appeal to them. The virtual nature of 'The Mix Match Museum'

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[75] Simon (2010) http://www.participatorymuseum.org/chapter7/ (accessed on 01/04/2015)
[76] Ibidem, http://www.participatorymuseum.org/chapter8/ (accessed on 20/03/2015)
[77] Mix Match Museum. The participating museums were the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo, Museum Boerhaave in Leiden, Museum TwentseWelle in Enschede and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven http://www.mixmatchmuseum.nl/over-dit-project (accessed on 20/03/2015)

made it mainly accessible to those people familiar with the use of the Internet. Moreover, the public was asked to make a personal choice driven by personal values and cultural backgrounds. The stories and beliefs of people were listened to and valued as relevant contributions to the cultural offer of the institutions. Studies about the socio-demographic features of the participants are not available; however, the intrinsic nature of the project itself suggests that it could be an attractive proposition for young participants.

The public program is an additional practical response for the involvement of the public. This comprehends all those extra-activities organized by the museum such as lectures, film projections, books presentations and concerts. It usually consists of multiple initiatives about diverse artistic disciplines that can interest a varied public. It is a sort of connection between the museum collection or exhibition and the social ground in which the institution is inserted. However, in many cases the public program is especially addressed to museum professionals, artists, curators or collectors.[78] Indeed, the nature of the public program often turns out to be highly elitist. The activities organized are aimed to discuss social issues, upcoming exhibitions, and cultural events. Therefore, even if they are open to everybody, they are not exactly programmed to attract a wider user base. In addition, these activities are not precisely addressed to young people, but they are rather indirectly staged for that high-educated target already interested in art. Thus, even if interesting for a certain group, public programs do not specifically aim to attract a young audience. To augment their relationship with young visitors, museums should develop tailored activities or special events to increase their participation. An interesting example is embodied by the events named under the label 'Museum Nights'. Especially developed for a young audience, 'Museum Nights' are evenings in which museums open their doors to the world inviting music bands, deejays and young participants to enjoy the environment of the museum and the collections. Indeed, also the article *Using Special Events to Motivate Visitors to Attend Art Galleries* by Axelesen stresses that events "outside the ordinary" can increase the access of a broader audience.[79] Effectively, special events can take many forms and have the possibility to be designed to respond to young adults' social and educational

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[78]Information retrieved from websites of different contemporary art museums and art foundations: http://www.getty.edu/museum/programs/; http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/education/public-programs; http://www.stedelijk.nl/en/public-program/visie;
[79] Axelsen (2006), p.206

needs. However, the public program does not always fulfil young visitors' requirements when it comes to active engagement. In fact, activities promoted in public programs are mainly top-down and do not require an active participation of the public. Nonetheless, the attractive potential of special events should be considered for the development of additional tailored activities aimed to attract a broader audience other than the frequent art lovers.

The last area to be examined is the educational provision. It is undoubtedly the most straightforward way to engage with the public. Educational programs are especially developed to interest people with art and to give the possibility to the audience to join free-choice learning activities. The opportunities provided by the educational offer overcome the traditional museum visit: the direct contact with the museum personnel, the hands-on experience with the material and the importance given to the voice of the participants make these sorts of activities highly recommended for those adult users looking for an extra-ordinary museological experience.[80] Nevertheless, learning activities in museums are often perceived as collateral functions of a formal education itinerary. For this reason, it is common to find educational initiatives mostly offered to families, schools or teenagers. Individuals outside the formal education system rarely find learning programs planned specifically for them.[81] The lack of educational offer for independent young visitors might be a consequence of the little attention paid to their specific expectations when visiting museums. In fact, as above mentioned this target group perceives 'direct participation' as a relevant aspect when partaking in cultural activities. Therefore, in order to attract a younger audience, museums should promote an active collaboration between the youth and the institutions. An improvement of the traditional programs with hands-on activities, tailored exhibitions or specific guided experiences could be a powerful way to achieve a fair mediation between the young public and the institutions. Nevertheless, the boundaries between a mere distribution of information and a shared experience are significantly subtle. The adult public wants to be considered knowledgeable and capable but at the same time they want to enjoy a learning opportunity. Thus, the creation of customized activities for young adults has to deal with the construction of a balance between the provision of information and the respect for the audience's previous

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[80] Gunther in Hopper-Greenhill (1999), pp.126-129
[81] Xanthoudaki (1998), p. 169

knowledge.[82] In any case, the traditional authoritative character of the museum has to leave space for a more collaborative and inclusive configuration of the educational offer. While recent museum literature supports the need of attracting a younger audience, museum practice still struggles to engage with young generations of public.

This chapter began with an overview of surveys regarding audience participation in museum activities. The analysis of the statistics outlined a lack of participation of young adults in cultural activities but also a lack of specific research regarding this issue. Considering the generational profile of the audience target 19-35, it has been possible to draw up a number of factors that could increase their participation. The list of young adults' expectations reinforced the assumption that hands-on experiences, active involvement and technology are the circumstances in which the young adult visitors learn the most. For this reason, despite the presence of different levels of engagement (curatorial practice, public program) the educational provision is considered the most compelling sector. However, a lack of tailored programs for young adults increases their non-participation in contemporary art museums. The following section aims to disentangle the threads concerning young adults' expectations and museums programs. The analysis of three case studies will contribute to measure the significance of this gap between young adults' needs and the museum educational offer and programs. Moreover, a careful investigation will determine whether the educational activity is truly the most adequate model to attract such a target.

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[82] Gunther in Hooper-Greenhill (1999), p. 121

3. Audience Engagement in Practice

The analysis of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven reflects the need to differentiate between methods of engagement with the audiences. Indeed, each of these institutions has developed a distinctive methodology for their public involvement that is worth investigating and examining. Therefore, the choice of studying these three museums has been inspired by their differences rather than their similarities. The comparative analysis will be used as an instrument to explore the extent to which these important museological institutions follow the recent developments in visitors' studies and audience engagement theories. Furthermore, the current chapter will contribute to define the grade of commitment of modern and contemporary art institutions when it comes to attract underrepresented audience segmentations, specifically individuals aged 19-35 years old.

The examination of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven pursues two main objectives. First of all, by means of an analysis of the museums' programs, the study aims to find out whether there is a lack of projects specifically developed for young adults. Secondly, the discussion of the case studies will assess whether educational provision is indeed the most effective method to attract the audience segmentation in analysis. In order to disentangle the first issue, it is necessary to differentiate between levels of involvement. For each case study, the categories of curatorial practice, public program and educational provision will be analysed to comprehend the actual amount of measures specifically developed for the selected target. The examination of special events, the display of the permanent collection and educational offer will outline the practical ways employed to interact with an audience category often forgotten by museological institutions. Probably, this will record a scarcity of activities, projects and curatorial strategies created for the young audience; moreover, the study will confirm the existence of a gap between theoretical developments about visitors studies and museum practice.

The hypothetical lack of tailored programs for the audience cluster 19-35 does not imply the absence of efficient approaches for their engagement. For this reason, the present chapter will attempt to define appropriate strategies to involve young people

with contemporary art museums. As a starting point, the examination of the diverse methods elaborated by the three institutions will be employed. Moreover, the museums' programs will be compared with the needs and expectations of the targeted audience. The intersection of these data will point out a desirable model for the engagement of the people aged between 19 and 35 years old. Nevertheless, defining the efficacy of certain educational projects and display strategies is complex. Effectively, even if it is possible to obtain reliable numbers about young adults' participation in museums and educational activities, it is rather intricate to define the level of engagement when participating. In fact, specific statistics recording the presence of the target group 19-35 in extra-museum activities are not available. For this reason, the present research adopts young adults' motivations and needs when visiting museums as accurate evaluation standards for the examination of the institutions' practical approaches to the target. In other words, the analysis of the case studies will be based on the grade of importance given to the target's requirements in the creation of projects or exhibitions. As stressed in the previous chapter, young adults seek in the museological experience learning opportunities, entertainment, active involvement, use of technology, identification with the content exhibited and valorisation of their own cultural background. These criteria will be used to estimate the effective potential of museums' programs when it comes to attract a younger audience.

3.1 Gemeentemuseum The Hague: Exploiting the Educational Potential of Display

The Gemeentemuseum in The Hague was built between 1931 and 1935. Today, it displays a wide collection of international modern art and it holds the largest collection in the world of paintings by Piet Mondriaan (1872-1944). Under the directorate of Benno Tempel (from 2009- present) the museum undertook a progressive reformation which ended-up with the refurbishment of specific exhibition areas. It seems that the museum focused intensively on the redevelopment of the permanent collection display in order to take advantage of its educational potential. Effectively, the educational programs on offer are exclusively addressed to primary and secondary schools, avoiding in this way the practical engagement with independent or older visitors.[83] For

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[83] Actually, there is a wide offer of tailored workshops for children and teenagers. However the programs are not developed to be taken independently, it is always necessary to subscribe the entire school class.

those individuals outside the formal education process, the museum offers family-oriented workshops and guided tours. These are classified under the definition of 'activities' to differentiate them from those projects created for primary and secondary schools labelled under the term 'education'. This classification underlines the need of the municipal museum to distinguish amongst the concepts of formal and informal learning within their educational and public offer. The 'activities' comprehend also conferences, lectures, guided tours and workshops open for children.[84] Thus, this group of projects is closer to what has been defined 'public program' because of its accessibility and individual usage. Considering the public program and educational provision of the institution, it is possible to point out that the museum is mainly oriented in developing programs for children, families, teenagers and professionals. Nonetheless, the recent renewal of some spaces dedicated to the permanent collection suggests that a great importance is attributed to the curatorial discourse as a tool for audience involvement. The analysis of the permanent exhibition *Wonderkamers* will stress the institution's ever-increasing inclination to involve the public by means of innovative displays. Moreover, the examination of the arrangement will serve as a tool to understand whether the lack of specific engagement measures for the cluster 19-35 years old has been compensated with the creation of curatorial solutions suitable for this audience segmentation.

From November 2013 on, the Gementeemuseum opened to the public the refurbished basement, which is now hosting a permanent show inspired by the *Wunderkammer* of the 16th and 17th centuries.[85] The brand-new interactive space was developed especially for children and teenagers between 10 and 18 years old. Nevertheless, this innovative exhibition proposes valuable alternative models to engage with a broader range of publics. The concept and the design of the exhibition was realized by the architect studio Kosmman.dejong which worked in close collaboration with a team of museum educators, film-makers, game designers and media specialists who created an exhibition that stimulates the visitors to unravel the space while exploring the objects displayed.[86] The result is an original exposition that consists of thirteen rooms and a central area called *Het Magische Midden* ('The Magic Middle'). At

http://www.gemeentemuseum.nl/onderwijs (accessed 21/04/2015)
[84] http://www.gemeentemuseum.nl/activiteiten (accessed 21/04/2015)
[85] http://www.gemeentemuseum.nl/en/exhibitions/wonderkamers-0 (accessed 22/04/2015)
[86] http://www.kossmanndejong.nl/projects/view/116 (accessed 22/04/2015)

the beginning of the exhibition, the visitors are asked by the director Benno Tempel to collaborate in the arrangement of the exhibition display. The video-message invites the audiences to create their own virtual exhibition in the structure standing at core of the show: 'The Miniature Museum'.[87] [Fig.2] In order to create a great exhibition, participants have to collect as many points as possible by participating in the activities organized in the rooms surrounding the centre of the floor plan. Thirteen themed rooms surrounding 'The Magic Middle' are to be explored as teams, or as individuals. The tablets activate the games: visitors are enabled to dance the *Boogie-Woogie* with Mondriaan, establish the value of authentic artworks, take part in a fashion show, have a virtual walk in Constant's utopian labyrinth and even design a museum building.[88]

Once the tour of the peripheral rooms has been completed, participants design their personal exhibitions with the scored points. Their creations will be officially inaugurated and uploaded in the *Wonderkamers*' website where visitors can 'like' and share their respective shows. As real curators, the participants of this 'museum game' plan, display, interpret and value the collection of the museum. The central area of the exhibition is surrounded by a perimeter of vitrines called *Het Depot.* 'The Depot' displays artworks with an arrangement based on concepts such as work, glamour, sport, love or house rather than based on chronological or stylistic criterion. The narrative of the exhibition is completely innovative, the visitors are invited to 'browse' in the gallery and construct their personal tour through the exploration of the objects displayed. By changing the paradigms of the traditional museum visit, this arrangement gives to the viewers the possibility to create their own pattern and model of interpretation. Therefore, the entire exhibition is developed as a huge virtual and physical board game in which the visitors themselves play protagonists.

The significance of this exhibition for the present discourse lays in its particular fresh approach. In fact, it represents the attempt to overcome the 'white cube' arrangement in favour of a space built explicitly to relate with the public. Visitors get an insight of the art exhibited by means of a clever balance between virtual and physical experience. Therefore, the curatorial narrative becomes a powerful tool for audience

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[87] The Miniature Museum (Miniatuur-Museum) consists of Ria & Lex Daniëls' collection of mini- artworks designed especially for their collection. Among others, the structure in the Gemeentemuseum hosts original works by Damien Hirst, Georg Baselitz, Yves Klein, Roy Lichtenstein, Marlene Dumas and Erwin Olaf.

[88] http://www.wonderkamers.nl/en/what-is-it (accessed 23/04/2015)

involvement. The versatility of this exhibition can be interpreted as the result of specific curatorial policies developed from the museum staff. Instead of promoting a wide range of extra-activities for independent visitors, the museum tries to engage with individual museum-goers by means of curatorial strategies. The exhibition *Wonderkamers* places the visitor as the focal point of the arrangement, it promotes a didactic approach based on a dynamic of dependence between the visitors and the museum (the exhibition needs to be *activated* from the public). Thus, the participatory arrangement almost loses its meaning without the operating presence of the audiences.

Furthermore, the creation of the *Wonderkamers* reflects the need to interact with teenagers by using their own language. The high usage of technology, the active involvement and the possibility of entertainment are factors strongly supported by this exhibition. However, the peculiarities characterizing this arrangement seem extremely attractive also for other targets – as stated in the advertising campaign of the museum.[89] If we consider the needs and motivations of young adults when visiting museums, it is easy to recognize that this exhibition accomplishes several of their requirements: the interactive approach, the learning experience attained through an enjoyable activity, the good balance between guided and independent museological experience and the consideration of the audience's decision-making skills. Nonetheless, the product is designed for younger generations and this is perceivable in the playful approach pursued by the exhibition developers. *Wonderkamers* is a game, and is 'sold' as such: publicity and advertisement present children and families enjoying the exhibition. [Fig.3] In addition, the jocose way in which the information is provided does not leave enough space for critical thinking or in-depth analysis of the material displayed. Artworks in 'The Miniature Museum', in 'The Depot' and in the surrounding rooms are presented in an overwhelming flow: it is difficult to focus and extrapolate the meaning of single items. The absence of labels emphasizes the idea that in *Wonderkamers* it is the exhibition itself that attracts the public, the single artworks lose their aura in order to become part of the show's atmosphere. The richness of the display almost subjugates the visitors' background knowledge and the possibility to critically analyse the objects exposed. Indeed, the exhibition recalls the characteristics of the ancient

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[89] "The Wonderkamers offer a totally different experience compared to a traditional museum. This is a fantastic outing for parents or grandparents with children and an extended learning environment for schools. The Wonderkamers are a challenge to anyone aged 10 and over. The only question is: Are *you* up for it?" http://www.gemeentemuseum.nl/en/exhibitions/wonderkamers-0 (accessed 23/04/2015)

Wunderkammer, where speechless spectators used to admire rooms saturated with wondrous objects.

The brief analysis of the public offer of the Gemeentemuseum pointed out that the institution differentiates between modes of learning. On the one hand they propose 'educational' projects for groups of individuals in formal learning environments. On the other hand, 'activities' are offered to those people outside the formal education system. Their public program is clearly not sufficient to attract the audience group 19-35, there is a scarcity of customized activities and participatory projects. Their offer is more oriented to professionals, families and schools. Nevertheless, to reinforce the participation of individuals pursuing informal learning opportunities, the museum creates versatile exhibitions with high educational potential that can be enjoyed from different audience segmentations. *Wonderkamers* presents many characteristics that comply with the needs and motivations of young adults. However, both the insufficient possibilities of critical analysis and the advertisement policies oriented mostly to families, schools and teenagers, make this exhibition not fully suitable for the target group 19-35 years old. Thus, even if the display offers a great deal of involvement for the segmentation in analysis, the awareness that the product is meant for a different targeted audience can discourage the participation of independent young adult visitors.

3.1.2 The Stedelijk Museum: Educational Programs and Special Events

The Stedelijk Museum was instituted in 1895 as a conjoint initiative between public and private enterprises, it started to grow as an institution promoting innovative exhibitions under the directorate of Willem Sandberg (1945-1962), who began to rebuild the image of the museum as an active centre for modern and contemporary art.[90] The policies undertook by Sandberg supported the idea of an 'intermediary museum' that could serve as a link between the general public and the art. His initiatives to connect contemporary art with the audience and with the society in general were strongly criticized, he was even accused of promoting a "communist agenda".[91] However, in spite of the critics, the social function of the Stedelijk Museum grew even stronger during the 1970s and nowadays, the museum is one of the most visited museological institutions in

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[90] Adrichem,van; Martis (2012), pp. 21-36
[91] Ibidem, p.30

the Netherlands.[92] The ever-increasing importance given to the public is also stated in the museum's mission, where alongside the leading role attributed to art and artists, the significance of embracing "a broad range of publics" is being stressed.[93] Indeed, the Stedelijk works today with a highly diversified user base, which comprehends a strong presence of tourists, international visitors and of course local participants, families and schools. Therefore, to reach out to the broadest possible audience, the institution carefully develops diverse programs to offer a suitable experience for everyone. An overview of the museum's website shows that the Stedelijk offers a broad selection of temporary and permanent exhibitions, but also a great number of extra-activities. The experimental nature of the Stedelijk as a "platform for contemporary visual art" coexists with its educational and societal role.[94] The museum's functions as public entity and platform for artistic research are cautiously separated when it comes to the curatorial practice. While the permanent collection represents a more traditional arrangement, temporary exhibitions often present innovative strategies of display and a captivating organization of the space.[95] The twofold character of the museum becomes comprehensible through the differentiation of the displays that are made easily accessible to the public by means of workshops, seminars, guided tours and other tailored activities.

The present examination of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam will focus solely on the presentation of the permanent collection and the strategies developed for the engagement of the public with it. This will stress how the curatorial strategies of the Stedelijk Museum are empowered when conjoined with educational tools. The traditional curatorial solutions that the Stedelijk employs for the display of its permanent collection are supported and enhanced by the numerous activities promoted by the educational department. Unlike the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, which tries to attract an underrepresented public segmentation with a participatory display, the Stedelijk Museum respects a classical exhibition arrangement and reinforces its appeal

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[92] In 2013, a record-attendance of 700.000 visitors has been recorded. http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2013/12/27/musea-doen-het-goed-aantal-bezoekers-in-2013-fors-gestegen/ (accessed 25/04/2015)

[93] http://www.stedelijk.nl/en/about-the-stedelijk/mission (accessed 29/04/2015)

[94] Adrichem,van; Martis (2012), p. 34

[95] Several exhibitions presented in recent years figured more involving displays than the present permanent show. Exhibitions such as *Touch and Tweet* (2013), *Marcel Wanders: Pinned Up at the Stedelijk* (2014), *Bad Thoughts- Collection Martijn and Jeannette Sanders* (2014-2015), *Ed Atkins- Recent Ouija* (2015) presented a more innovative and original use of light, sound, space and interactives. http://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/past (accessed 01/05/2015)

for the public by means of activities and special events. This didactic approach can appear top-down and not particularly participatory or collaborative, nonetheless, a careful examination of the types of activities proposed can reverse this assumption. In fact, the educational offer of the museum proposes a great variety of possibilities of active engagement. In total, it consists of more than eighteen activities for families, schools, teenagers and adults. A closer look at some of these projects will outline the Stedelijk's preferred strategies to attract the public and it will also clarify whether the museum puts forward specific engaging solutions for the target group 19-35 years old.

The presentation of the permanent collection changes regularly in order to give the visitors different perspectives. The top floor of the museum is currently dedicated to the exhibition *Art after 1950*.[96] This display reflects the history of contemporary art through the eyes of the Stedelijk Museum and its presentation also responds to traditional display criteria such as chronological order, extensive labelling and white walls. [Fig.4] The complete lack of interactive activities, technological tools and possibilities of active engagement make the Stedelijk's curatorial strategy highly standard. The 'white cube' display persists and dominates the permanent exhibition, remarking the distinction between the didactic function of the museum's collection opposed to the experimental nature of the temporary shows. Everything is clear, plain and linear. Indeed, this traditional approach can be extremely unsatisfactory for specific audience segmentations such as children, teenagers and young adults aged between 19 and 35 years old. The lack of communicative power embodied by this sequential presentation needs to be compensated with innovative activities that can provide instruments to create a more compelling experience. The educational provision and the special events serve as tools to enliven the exhibitions and to attract a broader audience, however the daily visitors rarely have the possibility to profit from these.

Families, schools, youth and adults are the demographic targets addressed with customized activities. The broad-spectrum of projects offered to primary and secondary schools is placed side by side with programs for independent visitors. The Stedelijk provides for adults different guided tours, audio-tours, self-directed group visit and a vast program of events. The public program of the museum is included in the educational offer for the adults, it is mostly addressed to the 'art-lovers' inasmuch as it

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[96] http://www.stedelijk.nl/en/collection/highlights/permanent-collection (accessed 30/04/2015)

proposes lectures, talks with artists, performances, gallery talks and film projections.[97] However, the special events are not necessarily connected to the permanent exhibition. They are usually extra-activities linked to the temporary exhibitions or with parallel projects of the museum. The 'Museum Night' is one of those extra-activities not connected with the permanent collection but developed especially to attract the audience segmentation 19-35 years old. The Stedelijk Museum, together with many other museological institutions participates to *Museumnacht Amsterdam* organized by the independent foundation N8 since 2003.[98] Every year for this occasion, the Stedelijk focuses on a program dedicated especially to young people. Concerts, deejay sets and drinks are offered together with special tours through the exhibitions and workshops.[99] The 'Museum Night' wants to encourage the participation of young adults in museological institutions by combining leisure activities with learning experiences. Indeed, as outlined in the previous chapter, the motivations of attendance of the young audience sensibly increase when institutions propose leisure opportunities, social interaction and programs in compliance with the youth's identity. Thus, by proposing an appealing program, the event does not only intend to entertain, but eventually aims to convert those participants into frequent museum-goers.

The idea of engaging independent visitors by means of events outside the ordinary has been studied by Axelsen. [100] The importance of the social experience, the possibility to learn, the 'novelty' factor and the opportunity to be involved in extra-ordinary activities are the main factors influencing the attendance. However, the extent to which the organization of special events, such as the 'Museum Night', improves the participation of young adult visitors in ordinary museum activities is still unclear. Therefore, even though *Museumnacht* represents a great step towards the engagement of this audience segmentation, a one-off event cannot be considered a sufficient measure to generate long-term attendance. Such events should be accompanied by recurring programs that are part of the ordinary museum educational offer. Indeed, the Stedelijk since 2008 is working on the lack of connection between young generations

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[97] http://www.stedelijk.nl/en/calendar/calendar (accessed 01/05/2015)
[98] http://www.n8.nl/ (accessed 1/05/2015)
[99] For the year 2014 the theme of the Stedelijk's 'Museum Night' was *Bad Thoughts,* the Stedelijk proposed tours based on the mood of the visitors, workshops where to share confessions, secrets and desires, a *Silent Disco* and a Deejay Set. http://www.stedelijk.nl/en/calendar/events/museum-night-bad-thoughts (accessed 1/05/2015)
[100] Axelsen (2006)

and museological institutions. However, their focus is mainly the target 15-18 years old. The project *Blikopeners* wants to encourage the participation of teenagers in the museum not simply as a target group, but as active participants in the construction of the museum public offer.[101] The *Blikopeners* are part-time employees of the museum aged between 15 and 19 years old. Their job is to give guided tours and organize activities not only for their peers, but for anyone who is interested in having a different museological experience. They use their personal background and critical opinions to engage a dialogue about art with the visitors and also with the museum staff. They collaborate with the institution by providing unusual perspectives on both temporary and permanent exhibitions. This initiative represents an exemplary way of building a long-term relationship with a specific age segmentation which differs from sporadic events and top-down educational programs. Therefore, in spite of the impersonal display of the collection, a collaborative project directly involving the audience can positively transform the perception of the museological experience from a passive activity into a participatory practice.

The Stedelijk's attention to younger generations and participatory projects is also demonstrated by the development of several mobile apps able to enhance the museum visit. Firstly, the *Mood App* launched in 2014 enables visitors to enjoy a customized audio tour through the museum in harmony with their mood. In fact, the app organizes the collection according to the emotion selected by the users (sad, spring fever, scared, enamoured, mysterious...). In addition, users themselves can build their own tour by selecting a number of artworks suitable for their current emotions and thus, creating visitors-curated tours. The app has a social, interactive and bottom-up dimension: users have the possibility to save the audio tours they liked the most and to create their own. Using such a tool reverses the assumption that the permanent collection of the Stedelijk Museum is a simple 'white cube', this app transforms the space of the museum into a 'virtual square' where every single visitor's opinion is positively valued and recorded. Secondly, the *ARtours* app enables the visitors to experience interactive itineraries through the museum and the city of Amsterdam. The app presents photos, videos and it uses augmented reality as a tool to connect the collection of the museum with the city itself. The technology allows artworks and

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[101] http://www.stedelijk.nl/upload/educatie/blikopeners/Blikoperners_symposium.pdf (accessed 30/04/2015)

photos to be virtually projected on the streets through the screen of a smartphone. Since the contents include historical pictures and reconstructions of urban spaces, the visitors have the possibility to experience a diverse types of tours through time and space.[102] Indeed, the possibility to download and use these mobile apps to customize the museum experience is a powerful way to engage with both the 'Generation Y' and the 'Millenials'. As described in the previous chapter, this audience cluster needs to be involved by means of captivating strategies that allow their participation as active users. The usage of technology with personal devices creates a balance between guided experience and independent visit.

The analysis of the Stedelijk Museum pointed out the relevance of educational provision and public program as tools to improve the collection's possibilities of engagement. The examination of the case study revealed that the Stedelijk aims to involve the public by means of educational activities and special events rather than with compelling exhibition strategies. Instead of exploiting the educational potential of the display, the museum prefers to create specific programs and tools to foster the enjoyment of the visitors. The traditional display of the permanent collection needs to be supported by audio-guides, guided tours, mobile apps, family trails and organized educational activities. Although the museum's education department does not provide tailored activities related to the collection for independent young adult visitors, the participation in the *Museumnacht,* the institution of the project *Blikopeners* and the development of specific mobile apps confirm the museum's ever-increasing attention to younger generations. However, where the program for teenagers intends to integrate this target group as a fundamental source of inspiration for museum and visitors, the solutions developed for the following age group (19-35) such as apps and 'Museum Night' seem insufficient to build with the target a long-term connection.

3.1.3 The Van Abbemuseum *Mediation* Program

The van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven was founded in 1936 by the cigar manufacturer and art collector Henri van Abbe. The current director of the museum, Charles Esche, joined the institution in 2004 and since his arrival the museum has been fully

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[102] Schavemaker (2011), http://conference.archimuse.com/mw2011/papers/augmented_reality_museum_experience (Accessed on 20/07/2015)

experimental. The importance of this case study lies in the museum's particular approach to the collection and in the interesting usage of educational measures and public events as methods to enhance the learning possibilities and the historical consciousness of the visitors.

The van Abbe's curatorial line avoids mainstream discourses in favour for a representation of those marginalized aspects of history and art history. The visual discourse of the van Abbemuseum presents an 'alternative canon' which is based on the conception that museological institutions have to be 'politicized entities' with the task of broadening the geographic and political approaches to art history. Therefore, the exhibitions comprise changing narratives and marginal stories instead of a sequential art historical discourse.[103] Furthermore, the museum prefers to exploit the possibilities of its collection rather than organizing loan-based exhibitions, the permanent display is used as a tool to reflect on the past with a critical look to the future. The exclusive usage of the museum's acquisitions does not only encourage critical thinking, but it also implies creative strategies of display and the development of a great communication plan. Temporary exhibitions are indeed more profitable and appealing than the permanent collection, for this reason it becomes essential to create compelling displays and possibilities of engagement within the collection itself. This section will explore how the van Abbemuseum approaches its permanent display in relation to its audiences and it will also analyse whether the museum developed tailored activities for the target group 19- 35 years old.

The van Abbemuseum's display practice emphasizes the role of the public as an active influencer of the narrative displayed. By creating exhibitions that stimulate the sensory and intellectual capabilities of the visitors, the museum's team aims to challenge the audience's perception about their position in the world. *Once Upon a Time…The Collection Now* (November 2013-November 2017) is the exhibition currently occupying the new building of the museum and it consists of more than six-hundred objects, among which artworks and archive material.[104] The works of art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are displayed in a sort of overlapping chronological order that respects not only the changes in art history, but also the modifications of society. During the five years in which the exhibition will be on display, variations and

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[103] Bishop (2013), pp. 29-35
[104] http://vanabbemuseum.nl/programma/detail/?tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bptype%5D=19&tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bproject%5D=1182 (accessed 04/05/2015)

different tools for audience engagement are progressively introduced. The show covers over a century of art history, contextualized by means of documents from the archive displayed side by side with the artworks. This *Context*-exhibition consists of archival documentation selected by museum professionals to construct the show, it gives transparency to the curatorial strategy and it provides a historical perspective to the works exhibited. This process aims to question and to reposition art history outside the conventional framework. By drawing on the historical circumstances in which the artworks have been created, the curators underline prominent moments of tensions and relevant links between art history and society. Another research project, *Storylines,* enriches with alternative interpretations the narrative of the exhibition.[105] The museum invites people and contributors with different background knowledge to create own routes to explore the exhibition. Everyone can participate and send his/her personal idea for 'mediation tools' through the website, the selected project will be implemented to enhance the narrative of *Once Upon a Time…The Collection Now.*

This co-creative procedure enables visitors to incorporate their perspective into the museum discourse. In this way, the museum improves its relationship with the audience by involving them in the creative process, and at the same time the public can enjoy different educational facilities. At the beginning of the exhibition the visitor can choose the preferred way to experience the museum; the *Toolshop* provides an audible architectural tour, an audio-guide to experience the visit with the eyes of a child, a performative self-directed tour and a smelling tour. [Fig.5] This strategy empower the visitors to independently define the character of their visit and simultaneously enjoy a guided experience. Furthermore, the museum offers other instruments such as the *Museum Index* and the exhibition *The View From Here.* While the first offers extra information about the value of artworks and details about the collection, the second one consists of video installations showing the complex course of history of the twentieth century through the eyes of the art theorist Joram Kraaijeveld. Finally, the first floor of the museum is occupied by the *Do It Yourself (DIY) Archive,* an open-access repository where visitors can play curators with original material and design their own personal exhibitions. The archive covers the period from 1965 to 1985 and its display is constantly renewed and rearranged by the choices of the visitors themselves, who are

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[105]http://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/programme/detail/?tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bptype%5D=24&tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bproject%5D=1242&cHash=401b57f9df42240ec0f8b8131fafb785 (accessed 04/05/2015)

enabled to roam amongst photographs, videos, posters and books with the assistance of the museum staff. [Fig.6]

Both the exhibition and the accessible archive represent concrete methods to integrate learning provision with curatorial practice. The stories exhibited mingle with the narratives proposed by the audience, establishing a participatory relationship between the public and the museum. The van Abbemuseum's approach to education wants to change the traditional paradigm of the mere transposition of knowledge and transforms it into a 'mediation process'. The institution empowers the visitors by giving access to the works and their appreciation, but at the same time values their points of view and perspectives. The practice of the exhibition in itself becomes a pedagogical endeavour. The fair collaboration between museum and users constructs a twofold learning process, which repays both the institution and the museum-goers. Thus, the pedagogical responsibility of the institution is shared between the curators and the educational department, giving place to what has been defined the "educational turn" in curating.[106] This turn refers to the attempt to connect the process of curating and the practice of education in order to fulfil the needs of the public. The usage of exhibitions as pedagogical tools turns the van Abbe into a museum where the audiences are considered protagonists of the exhibition narrative. Indeed, the re-imagination of the exhibition conception according to pedagogical standards implies the reconsideration of the concept of public, inasmuch as exhibitions cannot simply be addressed to a restricted group of people but have to include multiple subjects. As the curator and critic Simon Sheikh states, "today the pedagogy of exhibition-making must take the fragmentation of public into account. Contemporary exhibition-making, and its intrinsic pedagogies, must accept that there is no unified public, only a number of possible public formations [...]"[107]. The recognition of the public's diversity is distinguishable in the curatorial strategy of the van Abbemuseum that, with the proposition of multiple narratives and multiple possibilities of engagement, stresses its ever-increasing attention to the *audiences*. Unlike the museums previously analysed, the institution in Eindhoven does not simply propose extra-activities for audience involvement or special displays for specific targets, instead it exploits the educational potential of the display by using modes and narrations proposed by the public itself.

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[106] O'Neill, Wilson (2010)
[107] Sheikh in O'Neill, Wilson (2010), p.70

Alongside this participatory curatorial strategies, the museum also offers a lively public program and a different range of educational activities labelled under the section *Mediation*. Once more, educational strategies developed especially for the target audience 19-35 years old are reduced to the *Young Art Night,* similar in many aspects to the *Museumnacht Amsterdam,* and to the initiative *Young Art Crowd*, which consists of the possibility to become a friend/supporter of the institution and enjoy benefits such as tailored events, free entrances, discounts, invitation to lectures and openings. Indeed, this strategy can contribute to the creation of a strong cluster of young adults visitors, but yet again– considering the specificity of the activities– it is explicitly dedicated to the 'art-lovers'. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the museum works with the target analysed here not simply by means of these initiatives, but also with the creation of an attractive curatorial strategy that is able to combine the visitors' opinions with an attentive art historical discourse. The needs and motivations of young visitors when joining museum activities are reflected in the development of the show *Once Upon A Time... The Collection Now* and in the educational tools available. Active involvement, entertainment, balance between guided experience and independent learning, the possibility to contribute to the content and the opportunity of social interaction are all elements to be found in the display and in the facilities to explore it. Thus, it seems that the van Abbemuseum rather than developing specific educational instruments for a young audience prefers to work on the possibility to create a display enjoyable for a larger audience and, in parallel, developing audience clubs such as the *Young Art Crowd* to get closer to those that want to build an exclusive relationship with the museum. Defining whether the participatory educational model of the van Abbe, together with the alternative display of the art historical discourse, have a real efficiency when it comes to audience engagement turns out to be extremely complicated. Although inquires are not available, the conjoined educational and curatorial methodologies employed are theoretically efficient and make the museum a highly appealing institutions for young audience. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to further research the actual grade of engagement of the age group 19-35 years old with in order to prove these assumptions.

3.2 Investigation Findings

The analysis of these case studies illustrates the differences and the similarities of these three museums in the Netherlands when it comes to approaching the public and in particular the audience segmentation 19- 35 years old. A closer look to the museums' educational programs, their curatorial strategies and the public events highlighted a lack of specific educational projects developed exclusively for this target. Nonetheless, it also emerged a growing concern over the modes and possibilities of engagement with the youth: educational activities are being replaced with other projects. Institutions are progressively working on new strategies and projects to involve a younger audience. Educational programs such as workshops, laboratories or guided tours are not employed to attract the demographic group between 19 and 35 years old, but other methods to replace traditional modes of engagement have been developed. For instance, the creation of events such as the 'Museum Night' reflects the tendency of approaching young adults with events mainly concerned with leisure. Yet the sporadic nature of this initiative cannot guarantee the establishment of a long-term relationship with the audience, who might be solely attracted by the extra-ordinary quality of the event. Therefore, the pure entertaining character of the 'Museum Night' does not always facilitate learning opportunities but rather social interaction and active participation.

Together with the development of special events, this chapter analysed the usage of the display as an educational tool in itself. The pedagogical approach to the curatorial discourse seems to adequately incorporate the motivations and needs of the young audience. By means of 'educational exhibitions', museums construct the appropriate atmosphere for learning. The balance between independent visit and guided experience added to interactivities and co-creative processes can transform the curatorial practice into a participatory instrument for the involvement of young adults. However, these methods can result to be exclusively attractive for those people already interested in modern and contemporary art. For this reason, the development of a desirable model for the engagement of the audience segmentation 19-35 years old has to consider both levels of participation. On the one hand the importance of leisure and social interaction, and on the other hand the cultural background of the visitors and their necessity to virtually and physically participate in the creation of the museum offer. Eventually, these measures can result ineffective if not accompanied with a compelling

communication plan that advertises and promotes via social media networks (and other internet platforms) the activities of the museum. Yet, neither numbers nor statistics regarding the actual attendance of the targeted audience in museum activities above described are made available by the institutions, therefore drawing the real efficiency of these programs becomes an arduous task.

Conclusions

Educational strategies are pervading museums, learning theories and pedagogy are being used to develop programs and to enhance the communicative power of exhibitions. Educational departments are extending their competencies and the ever-increasing collaboration between curators and educators shows that educational activities in the traditional sense are becoming slightly outdated. Indeed, this is the reflection of those innovative educational theories proposing alternative methods of learning in the museum. However, even if scholarly research about educating in the museum was carried out till the nineties, museum practice responded slowly to these theoretical developments. For decades the emphasis has been given to the role of the educator as the only figure able to transfer knowledge to the public. Museums were focused on the unambiguous transposition of information between institutions and users. Nonetheless, with the progressive application of constructivist learning theories to museums, this approach changed completely. Constructivist learning theories support the construction of meaning as a process that has to be mediated by the viewers with their previous knowledge, beliefs and culture. Objects are exhibited to be examined and considered by an active audience rather than by the unique point of view of the museum's facilitator.

Nowadays, the implementation of techniques to attract public and to create with the audience a more equal relationship are being embraced and implemented by many art museums. Art curators and educators together give to the visitors opportunities to enjoy a learning experience with their rhythm and with their expertise. Unfortunately, many educational programs and events organized by cultural institutions aim to involve and attract the art-lovers public and the cluster of frequent-museum goers rather than new audiences and categories underrepresented in contemporary art museums such as the targeted audience 19-35 years old. Indeed, aiming to involve a public who is usually reticent to participate in museums activities is highly complex, but as stressed in the literature previously examined, a stronger attention to the needs and motivations of the different targets when participating in museums can increase their attendance. Hooper-Greenhill stressed the need to develop audience-centred exhibitions rather than programs focused on meta-discourses about art. In the post-museum context, cultural organizations became widely more attentive to the audiences they aim to represent,

therefore, she claims museums as places where heterogeneous social groups, multiple identities and different stories can find their place.[108] Simon later extended this way of thinking and proposed a "participatory museum" where even the exhibition-making process becomes a shared experience between audiences and museum professionals. She stresses the importance of trusting audiences' abilities when it comes to interventions in the museum's space and program planning.[109] Both scholars underline the significance of understanding museums' audiences in order to enhance the inclusive possibilities of art institutions. However, in spite of these innovative theories, the majority of art museums still offer the 'white cube experience' enriched solely by labels or guided tours. The proposition of classic top-down educational programs, audio-guide and guided tours seems not sufficient to attract the target audience 19-35 years old.

The analysis of the peculiarities of both the generations 'Y' and 'M' pointed out that more participatory methods of engagement are required to offer an appealing museum visit to the youth. The demographic group labelled as 'young adults' seeks in the museum experience the opportunity to learn through social interaction, leisure, programs in compliance with their identity and active involvement fostered both physically and virtually by the usage of the Internet and new technologies.

The analysis of the case studies revealed a growing interest in fulfilling these needs however, a lack of customized activities and programs specifically developed for this target still emerged. The examination of the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven showed that specific programs aimed to build a long-term relationship with this target do not exist, with the exception of initiatives aimed to involve directly young art-lovers.[110] Generally, what came forth is an attempt to reach individuals between 19 and 35 years old with one-off events rather than with educational programs in the traditional sense. Indeed, this attitude might be a consequence of the novelties introduced by constructivist learning theories, the lack of educational programs for young adults reflects the idea that attracting such a target with traditional workshops and top-down activities is ineffective. Of the three modes of engagement outlined (educational provision, curatorial strategies and special events) it seems that the museums in analysis prefer to involve young adults with exhibitions and activities more focused on entertainment and

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[108] Hooper- Greenhill (2000)
[109] Simon (2010)
[110] Such as the *Young Art Crowd* of the van Abbemuseum. See: Chapter 3.1.3

leisure. Museum Nights and special equipment to experience exhibitions seem to be the most employed strategies to appeal a young target. However, a scarcity of frequent and specific programs developed for individuals between 19 and 35 years old can result in a low-participation of the targeted audience in museum activities. The proposition of 'educational exhibitions' was recorded both in the Gemeentemuseum and in the Van Abbemuseum, even though with diverse modes and configurations, both institutions aim to involve the audiences with compelling displays and tools to enjoy the permanent collection from different perspectives. Instead, the Stedelijk prefers to maintain traditional exhibition spaces and thus, to engage young adults with special events such as the *Museumnacht*. The fact that none of the case studies propose activities within the educational department for this targeted audience suggests that educational provision in the museum is facing dramatic changes. The present dissertation outlined the museums' inevitable tendency to extend the area of intervention of education outside the educational department. Effectively, this led to avoid the exclusive usage of workshops and guided tours to attract, entertain and educate the audience. The ever-increasing collaboration between exhibition makers and museum educators seems to dismiss the well-established thought that educational programs were the only method to offer an entertaining learning experience. Nowadays, exhibition design and curatorial strategies became effective educational tools that if combined with interactives and participatory processes of creation result into theoretically effective strategies to appeal the target in analysis.

However, defining the efficiency of exhibitions and special events could be complex without specific researches and statistics. The programs, the technological tools, the events and the curatorial strategies examined in the case studies can hardly be defined completely incisive in attracting young adults because numeric confirmations are not available. Whereas it is possible to elaborate methods to measure the participation of young adults aged between 19 and 35 years old, measuring the effective learning process and the satisfaction of the public is usually rather difficult. For this reason, to prove whether more collaborative and participatory models might be effective, further research is still necessary. This could help to recognize if programs based on the needs and motivations of young adults when visiting museums would be effective not only on an educational level, but also when it comes to increase the

participation of this underrepresented category in modern and contemporary art museums.

Figures

QB1. How many times in the last twelve months have you…?
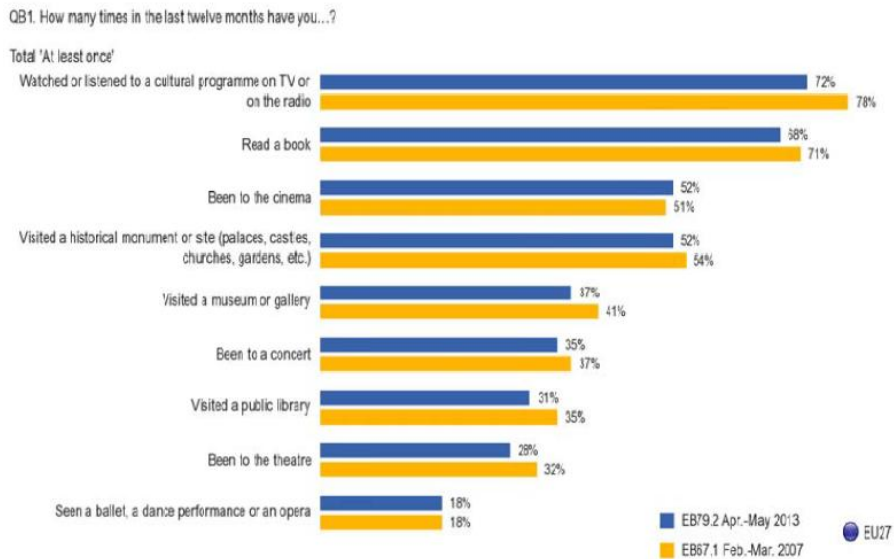
Total 'At least once'

Fig.1: Graphic illustrating the levels of participation in different cultural activities.
Source: Special Eurobarometer 399, *Cultural Access and Participation. Summary,* November 2013. <http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_399_sum_en.pdf> (Accessed on 09\04\2015)

Fig.2: Exhibition view *Wonderkamers* at the Gemeentemuseum
Details of the Miniature Museum
Photo: Gerrit Schreurs
Source: Gemeentemuseum website
<http://www.gemeentemuseum.nl/en/exhibitions/wonderkamers-0>
(Accessed02/06/2015)

Fig.3: Advertisement for the exhibition *Wonderkamers* at the Gemeentemuseum
Source: *Wonderkamers'* website <http://www.wonderkamers.nl/en> (Accessed 02/06/2015)

Fig.4: Exhibition view *Art after 1950* at the Stedelijk Museum
Photo: Hogers & Versluys
Source: Stedelijk Museum website
<http://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/collection-presentation> (Accessed 02/06/2015)

Fig.5: View of the *Tool Shop* at the van Abbemuseum
Details of the equipment to enjoy the visit: audio-tours, smelling tour and the self-guided tour *Punt. Point*

Fig. 6: Exhibition view *Once Upon A Time…The Collection Now* at the van Abbemuseum.
Overview of the DIY Archive room. Ph. Peter Cox
Source: van Abbemuseum website
<http://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/programme/detail/?tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Btype%5D=18&tx_v abdisplay_pi1%5Bproject%5D=1173> (Accessed on 02/06/2015)

Interview with Daniel Neugebauer Head of Marketing and Mediation at the Van Abbemuseum of Eindhoven with the author of this thesis, Eleonora Cantini. Held the 25th of November 2014 at the Van Abbemuseum.

1. Eleonora Cantini (EC): At the van Abbemuseum you do not refer at the educational department in the traditional way. You prefer a different term: *mediation office*. Does this alternative expression reflect a diverse approach towards the public?

Daniel Neugebauer (DN): Yes, indeed. The main reason why we use the term *mediation* is that since ten years ago there has been a critical look in the museum field towards the notions of 'education' and 'educator'. Usually the term 'education' triggers the concept of an expert the 'educator' who transfers knowledge to a group of non-experts, 'the public'. The van Abbemuseum tries to avoid this conception, we see our visitors as experts with personal background knowledge, so we try to support a mutual exchange between public and institution. *Mediation* means just that: having a different relationship with the visiting public. Nonetheless, it also has some negative effects. As an institution we have to be clear about the meaning and value of the term *mediation*, because in itself it is not really immediate for the public. We looked at it critically, but at the moment we still consider it more open and appropriate than the term 'education'.

2. (EC): Your mediation program offers many types of workshops and events for diverse kinds of public. What kind of activities do you propose and for what targets?

(DN): Actually, we organize diverse types of activities for as many targets as possible. There are workshops for our employees and volunteers to keep them up-dated with what we do, there are workshops for the business world through which we get in contact with companies that might be interested for sponsorship or specific agreements. Moreover, there are one-off workshops attached to specific exhibitions, or permanent courses for fixed groups that are more oriented to the general art public, mostly 50-plusser rather than young people. Of course, there are plenty of activities for schools and families and also for disabled people. We try to welcome everyone by taking

into account the different learning needs of our publics. For this reason at the beginning of the collection presentation we created a designated space where visitors can choose whether they prefer to enjoy the visit with a special audio-guide, a performance tour or a smell tour. We try to encourage a broad range of people to come again to be entertained more than once, we try to persuade visitors to go on a deeper relationship with the artworks and to repeat the independent visit with different tools according to their preferences. The tool box is a great possibility for many targets, but for those that prefer a more traditional visit we also offer the standard equipment such as free mini-tours and guided tours. For special exhibitions we organize talks in the collection given by artists, curators, archive's staff or even from the security. We generally try to experiment and to propose fresh activities, we want to avoid the boring stuff!

3. (EC): Does your curatorial program reveal the idea of *mediation* between museum and public?

(DN): Well, yes. Mediation it's something that is partly filled by the educational department and partly by the curators. For instance, we try to give the public a context for the art exhibited in the galleries. We have showcases all over the building with documentary material about the artworks displayed to give an historical and documentary context to the exhibition. We do not believe in *l'art pour l'art*, we believe in art within a context. The most apparent example of how curators and educators work together is our *DIYArchive*, an actual depot with original artworks from our collection that visitors are allowed to open, touch and explore. This project is really unique world-wide, a lot of colleagues from other museums are looking at it with envy because it represents an issue with security, with personnel and with management. There are many things to think of and to take care of for its functioning but the van Abbe's director Charles Esche firmly wants it.

4. (EC): Does the van Abbemuseum offer enough for a young adult target or do you perceive a lack of programs for the age group 19-35 years old?

(DN): No, I don't feel there is a lack because what adults mostly want is either to be alone, to get a guided tour or an audio-guide. These are the three core elements in use for adults without special needs. And we have all of them. Also, for young adults we developed the *Young Art Crowd* membership. By paying a reduced price per year these

young friends of the museum have the possibility to enter for free at the museum and to enjoy a broad range of cultural activities and special events like dinners and art talks. Every year we also propose the *Young Art Night* with concerts, drinks and art. We have the feeling that we have enough to offer – for some people even too much!

5. (EC): Do you apply any method to track your visitors? And if yes what kind of strategy do you use?

(DN): Yes, we have the *MuseumMonitor* that gives a detailed analysis of the structure of our visitors, our scores and their development. However, I am a bit critical about it because until now they do not allow museum-goers to fill in the questionnaires during their stay at the museum. Visitors get a form at home after their visits when they are not fresh anymore. Moreover, many people do not participate like, for instance international visitors. We have a strong network and reputation outside the Netherlands, those visitors from outside the country are not allowed to participate in the *MuseumMonitor*, thus statistics are not fully reliable. At the moment I am trying to contact *MuseumMonitor* to see whether visitors can fulfill the form here at the museum, this would be a step forward because we believe that is essential to understand who is coming to your museum.

6. (EC): You mentioned your renown reputation outside the Netherlands but how the inhabitants of Eindhoven see the van Abbemuseum? Do they consider it as a reference point for the city?

(DN): This is very difficult, Eindhoven is not a city with a real art culture like Amsterdam. Here it has always been a struggle. The museum was set up in 1936 by Henri van Abbe, he saw the industry and the population growing and he became aware of the necessity to build a cultural reference point for the people, to give them the chance to see the world from a different perspective. So the museum didn't grow organically, it was implanted here and we see the consequences in the everyday political discussions. There is still a big group of people that don't really like what we do. The way we do things is not unconditionally appreciated. The van Abbe hardly ever showed big names of art or 'nice' paintings to just enjoy. The fact that we are in a sense 'avant-garde' is often criticized but our museum's director doesn't want to earn money just to keep the business going. Esche wants to experiment and to make clear that art

has always been involved with the political and the social dimension. As a museum you cannot exclude these implications and simply focus on the material piece of art and that is just not very easy to digest for a lot of people. But in spite of the critics, we still represent more than 100.000 physical visitors per year plus all our network: museum colleagues in the Netherlands and abroad, our online visitors and our social media visitors. Within the next five years we want to make the digital van Abbe experience as interesting as the physical one and finally getting away from the out-dated thought that visitors have to be physically here. But of course we also need and want to survive, so we will keep attracting new visitors. We love the museum and the fact that art has such multiple possibilities to work with.

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