“You just have to do it!”: Two case studies on the introduction of collaborative methodologies in museums: investigating the perspective and experience of the museum professional.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Museums are going through a phase of tremendous change and are searching for ways to remain relevant, connected and needed. One of the ways museums are fighting for their right to exist and reconfigure *why* they exist is through collaboration with "others" – their gaze and question turn outward, and they ask: why do YOU think that we are here? What should we do with the collections we try to safe keep, and what stories should we tell, or how should we tell them? In the Netherlands, collaborative practices have become part of the museum sector. Collaboration questions assumptions, reveals previously marginalised narratives and questions the position of authority that museums have over this narrative (Ouédraogo et al: 2019). As a beginning museum professional, I have been following and experiencing these changes with great interest. Working within these institutions made me keenly aware of the diversity of individuals that make "The Museum". Van der Vaart and Cruickshanks (2019) argue that who we are as individual museum professionals and people influences how this new way of museum practice is understood and implemented within different institutional contexts. They ask: does every museum professional understand these "participatory practices" the same way? They note that little research has so far been dedicated to the positionality of individual staff members concerning the development of a "participatory work culture" as a way to integrate collaborative practices in the museum. I hope to add a perspective to this question through this thesis. My research targets the challenges that arise within an institution when museum professionals respond to this challenge of change. In order to investigate this process, I approached two institutions that had recently committed to integrating collaborative practices in their practice: the Zeeuws Museum and the Rembrandthuis. Both museums were relatively new to collaborative practices with extra-museal partners. These two museums had chosen to work with the methodology and program OF BY FOR ALL designed based on Nina Simon's perspectives on sustainable participatory museum practices. Two implications of collaboration were central to their explorations at the time of this research: the sharing of authority and the challenging of existing and development of new expertise. Before authority over the museum's presentations, practices and approaches remained safely within the museum's walls, these two museums now move towards a practice where "others" from "outside" get a seat at their table – and everyone responds to this change differently.

I intended to collect the individual perspectives on what this change in approach asks of museum professionals and how it changes how they view their expertise. Central to this exploration is the research question: *In what way does the introduction of collaborative approaches influence the understanding of museum expertise and expert identity held by museum professionals?* The answering of this question requires the investigation of different perspectives on how museum professionals learn to share their platform and reconstruct ideas of expertise by sharing this

"platform" with others. In order to answer this question, I explore the meaning and definition of museum expertise through the question: *of what does museum expertise consist according to the museum professional?* I investigate how this understanding of expertise relates to the understanding of collaborative methodologies by answering the question: *How are "collaborative approaches" defined by museum professionals, and how are they defined by their collaborators?* To understand how and why different boundaries are constructed and to what extent the different actors influence them in the relationship by investigating how these different actors relate to each other, I ask: *How are different forms of authority negotiated during (the exploration of) collaborative projects?*

I situate my argument within existing theories and understandings of *collaboration* and *expertise*. I use conceptualisations of social, cultural and institutional boundaries to illustrate the complexity of the effect of collaboration on museum teams. First, I situate my research in current theoretical discussions and introduce my communicative contexts, methods and ethical reflections. After that, I present my empirical material and analysis. The structure of these chapters reflects the importance and the relevance of (social) boundaries in collaborative museum practice. My ethnographic account moves from the "inside" to the "outside". The "inside" represents both the specific individuals or teams that engage with the OBFA-program or otherwise collaborative practices. At the same time, I position the museum itself as an "inside" that authorises specific ways of knowing and valuing. My second chapter discusses the "outside", representing those not part of a specific collaboration or change teams. The last chapter pays attention to the moving between "inside" and "outside" and presents the idea of "outside" experts and ways of knowing that are not part of the institutionalised museum narrative. The movement between these two spaces reflects the most important finding of this project, the fact that museum collaboration requires, challenges and motivates both museum professionals, the museum public and extra-museal partners and experts to move in between different "insides" and "outside". By doing this, they reshape the way we view museum practice. Instead of a solidified single narrative, museum collaboration forces us to work with and embrace contingency, friction and multiplicity in understanding.

Conceptual Framework

The following chapter discusses the theoretical foundation that is relevant for my reseach. I discuss reflections upon four closely linked concepts central to my research. I first connect museum expertise to museum authority. After that, I discuss museum collaboration and its impact on museum boundaries.

Museum expertise & museum authority

Traditionally museum expertise is centred around curating, collection management, conservation, exhibition, and research (Boylan: 2006; Tlili: 2016). This form of expertise is communicated through interpreting the meaning of objects, which is authorised by institutionalised academic certification, and communicating this interpretation through display (Boylan 2006: 879; O'Neill 2008: 293). Concepts of museum expertise and museum authority are therefore closely intertwined. The current understanding of museum expertise is still rooted in western epistemology, ideology, and systems linked to colonial perspectives of expansion of (political) power and domination (Chipungaru 2020: 434-435). "The museum," essentialised as curatorial expertise, holds the position of authority in educating the public and providing 'the right' interpretation of collections. However, this view of the museum is challenged by social-political developments between 1960-90. These developments give rise to the necessity of different forms of expertise in the museum, next to curatorial and scholarly expertise (Kundu et al. 2015). Chipungaru (2020) situates this increased awareness of the museum as a social actor in the 1960s, when 'radical politics' and changes in governmental policy fuelled the development of a 'new museology' (Chipungaru 2020: 144) which invited museums to look outward and consciously engage with society. This connection is important in validating, organising, and authorising expert positions (Boyer 2008: 39; Carr 2010: 23). Expertise is created through a relationship between 'laypeople,' 'experts,' their object of expertise, and in some cases, the institutions that authorise, validate, and naturalise their expertise (Carr 2010). Therefore, identifying oneself as an expert involves self-identification and “othering” (Carr 2010; van der Vaart and Cruickshanks 2019). Identifying oneself as an expert often means defining another as non-expert and less knowledgeable (Boyer 2008).

Tlili (2016) argues that during the 1960-70s, the museum began to question its identity and place in society as an institution. Museums questioned their 'elitist' modus operandi, which is still dominant in many museums. This highly self-critical gaze was turned on collecting, interpreting, and managing themselves as an institution (Tlili 2016: 1104). Karp and Lavine (1991) argue that while the focus is often on ‘external bodies or individuals’ that challenge the role of the museum, the same tensions

exist within the museum between different individuals, despite the unified front that a museum (has to) present(s) (Karp and Lavine 1991: 4).

This self-critical stance can be seen as reflected in and fuelled by new neo-liberal social policies. A museum is a public institution and is expected to fulfil a 'use' for the 'tax-paying citizen,' while at the same time, governmental funding is cut. This has put extra stress on museums, which are now expected to focus on performativity and commercial and practical use (Kundu et al. 2015: 40). This development involves the 'democratising' of museum practices, in which the museum introduces opportunities for the public to 'participate' in meaning-making and knowledge creation within museum exhibitions or activities.

The consequences of repositioning the museum as a social entity include changes in its expected function. Museum activities are expected to broaden not only caring for collections but also finding ways in which the act of interpretation of the collection can be shared and making the museum accessible to a non-elitist public by, not unimportantly, creating relationships with people (Lynch 2020: 32). Museum professionals seem to be expected to become their very own sort of 'social professional', with the ability to reach, engage and connect with public – skills and know-how in communication and empathy move to the forefront (Gokcigdem 2016; Lynch 2020). The necessity of funding and the expectation to generate a large part of your income to survive put extra pressure on the museum as a social service and require new networking skills and expertise. This causes the conceptualisation of museum expertise becomes more diverse. Tlili (2016) argues that museum expertise is no longer limited to the scholar-curator but includes those who design, create exhibitions, educate and facilitate (Tlili 2016: 1110). This changed dynamic can create tensions between curators, collection professionals, and publicity departments because different areas of expertise now have to 1) work together more closely while at the same time 2) compete for funding and space for the activities valued as core jobs of the museum. – such as exhibition makers and communication departments (Lynch 2020: 35). Curatorial authority as connected to curatorial expertise is widely discussed concerning collaborative practices and the development of more different 'kinds' of expertise. Van der Vaart and Cruickshanks (2019) identify that the reluctance of curatorial personnel to share authority is one of the critical points of tensions that cause participatory and collaborative practices to remain project-based and tokenistic (Van der Vaart and Cruickshanks 2019: 8). Through Karp and Lavine (1991) the influence of curatorial authority can be understood as multi-layered. Curatorial authority is the power to decide how cultures, people, and things should be represented. Curatorial authority gives the power to make claims on what something 'ought to be and how people should relate to each other, thus exceeding the museum's walls. Karp and Lavine also note that pressure to change the idea of the museum as the single owner

of this form of authority comes from both inside and outside of the museum. This form of authority was, and often still is, framed as a timeless, objective perspective challenged by the introduction of collaborative policies. It is important to consider that how curatorial authority is understood and enacted in modern-day museums depends on the conceptualisation and model applied to the museum. Either the museum is seen as a 'temple,' where curatorial authority has a very dominant role, or the museum is a 'forum,' where the curatorial authority has a less dominant role (Karp and Lavine 1991: 3-4; Sitzia 2019: 73-74). This is not necessarily a dichotomy and can also be seen as a spectrum.This change in approach to museum work also means that ideas of curatorial, exhibition, and social expertise no longer rest upon academic achievements (only). This creates a different dynamic between the kinds of expertise in the museum, referring back to Karp and Lavine's conclusions on curatorial authority. While previously scholarly expertise was presented as the authoritative expertise, the changing expectations and position of the museum not solely as a knowledge institute but as an actor that is part of the market-industry changes how it is managed. Social museums focus on a collaborative outlook and shared decision-making between different 'experts' in the museum (Jung 2016: 167-170).

On a critical note regarding the introduction of participatory and collaborative practices, knowledge production and control of museum activities remained centred at the museum until the 1990s (Kundu et al. 2015: 41). The museum is still positioned as a place for knowledge diffusion. However, learners are no longer "passive" but become co-creators of knowledge (Lynch 2020: 33). Lynch (2021) argues that despite these developments and focus on inclusivity, "voice," and sharing, there was no 'substantive shift in the museum's approach to the other.' Intellectual control remains in the hands of the museum – as an expert (Lynch: 2021). It is argued that collaborative approaches allow the expert position to be criticised by bringing in 'external experts .'This expertise can be scholarly but often involves the expertise of 'lived experience,' which became a more common practice after the anti-colonial critiques in the 1990s—the 'external expertise' attempts to move away from the single expert perspective presented in exhibitions. Ouédraogo et al. (2019) invite external expertise to confront the blind spots of the museum curator. Listening to others inside and outside the museum becomes a new skill required of the museum expert – curator, educator, or exhibition designer. However, this idea is also criticised. Decisions are said to be shared but are often coerced and rushed. Based on their institutional agenda and strategic plan, museums remain in control of narrative and knowledge production (Lynch: 2021). Theories on museum boundaries and an exploration of how collaboration is understood can help us understand why decentring the museum professional as a sole expert through collaboration is still seen as unsuccessful, or at least a practice worth developing.

Museum collaboration & museum boundaries

This section discusses the introduction of collaboration in museum practises, the goals and intentions of collaboration and the pitfalls and tensions that are part of the process of museum collaboration. The cultural constructions of museums have been represented as the only 'true' perspective, essentialising dominant western narratives and knowledge as universal fact. To counter that, many museums today try to become sites of decolonisation by addressing colonial injustices, knowledge production, and ownership (Treier 2021: 88-89). Collaboration is used as a powerful tool to address these injustices and include perspectives that fall outside of this colonial, white western perspective.

Collaboration differs from the introduction of participatory processes in the 1970s because it challenges the authority of hegemonic expertise held by the museum as an institution and offers an anti-colonialist critique of museum practice. Ouédraogo et al. (2019) introduce collaboration as a way to engage with the 'push for more inclusive practices': collaboration is employed to approach issues of 'positionality, authority, voice, and perspectives by working together with 'others' towards a common goal. They provide a perspective on the meaning of collaboration as 'labouring together towards shared ends' (Ouédraogo 2019: 208).

Ouédraogo et al. (2019) employ collaboration in order to 'rethink the museum's practices in representing and addressing difficult histories' (Ouédraogo et al. 2019: 209), accompanied by the need to introduce other voices, next to the narrative of the institution within the historical narrative of the (colonial) past. Looking at collaboration as an anti-colonial critique in art (history), museums confront the underlying systems of authentication of knowledge, perspective, and ideology that are part of the museum practice and shape the museum's (authoritative) position and interactions with others. Elffers and Sitizia define an essential point to discuss concerning these practices; the many different and contradictory definitions of museum participation practices because they are studied by scholars with different backgrounds and practised by different professions within museum practice (Elffers and Sitzia 2019: 4)

The complexity and importance of collaboration in the context of museums can partly be explained by arguments made by Pratt (1991) and Clifford (1998). They introduced collaboration as a part of anti-colonial practice. Pratt introduces the idea of a 'contact zone' as a space where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power[…] (Pratt 1991: 34)' which applies to the museum in multiple dimensions, as is argued by Clifford (1998). Pratt's argument on the 'contact zone' is formulated as a response against thinking in essentialised, homogenous ''communities'' with fixed boundaries. Instead, Pratt argues for heterogeneous

connections that are in contact with each other (Pratt 1991: 37). Clifford imagines museums as contact zones that invite (colonial) encounters and exchanges of perspective. This exchange of perspective can be broadened to work with any feeling of difference or division in 'cultural relations' (Clifford 1998: 206).

Not thinking in closed 'communities' or contexts but in connected networks brings attention to the illusion that the museum is located outside of history and society and that the objects inside a museum hold intrinsic (universal) value. It exposes the way museum practices have been narrated as a binary of "inside" (the museum), which is not (or only when the “inside” chooses) connected to the “outside” (“society” or all those who are not-museum) (Naidoo: 2016). It invites us to look at the asymmetrical power relationships that are part of the museum context but exceed museum contexts and are influenced by what happens outside the museum.

Collaborative projects are often presented as striving towards ‘decentring authority’ in which collaboration is used as ‘an important strategy for sharing power’ (Ouédraogo et al. 2019: 211). In their project, *Afterlives of Slavery*, Ouédraogo et al. (2019) stress the importance of combining the perspectives of different kinds of stakeholders. However, working with different stakeholders does not immediately imply equality; and by acknowledging inequality and boundaries of power, you can work across them. However, Ouédraogo et al. (2019) note that collaborative projects are often tainted and remembered by the bad aftertaste of unfulfilled promises. They cite Sennet (2012) and assign these 'unfulfilled promises' to the expectation of, and the belief in, mutual and equal pleasure in collaboration. Unclear roles and expectations can take away the feeling of a 'valuable' collaboration. If expectations of both institutional partners and external collaborators are not clearly stated, both can become overwhelmed with too much or too little responsibility. This can lead to dissatisfaction in the collaboration process (Simon 2010: 230-240).

We can also question what form of authority the general public possesses in collaborative projects. Often collaboration with the general public remains in the domain of participation. The public is asked to share their perspective on the exhibition and exchange knowledge, meanings, and positionality with each other and the museum, often in the form of short messages on boards or walls. In some ways, this participatory practice in which the visitor is only asked to 'give' can be changed into a more reciprocal relationship. The exhibition *Afterlives of Slavery* (Ouédraogo et al. 2019) collected views, questions, and criticism on the exhibition and used these as a point of departure for a future exhibition. However, Hutchinson (2019) still argues that this form of collaboration does not engage with the idea of sharing authority, the ability to share authority is located in agency. In the approach where the museum invites 'community engagement' to give

feedback or share a thought, the visitor and the museum professional are unable to enact agency to the extent where there is an exchange of perspective. This approach does not create an egalitarian relationship between the visitor, the general public, the museum, and other collaborators. She argues that using a participatory approach in isolation is more of a marketing strategy than truly a democratic process.

Ouédraogo et al. (2019) argue for contingent collaboration, in which there is no false promise of equality, but where different goals and needs are addressed, dissonant voices are brought together. The expectation of responding to each other and acting as one obscures the different aims, desires, and considerations of partners within the collaboration (Ouédraogo 2019 et al.: 211-215), adding to this feeling of dissatisfaction. This notion of 'unfulfilled promises' caused by belief in mutual pleasure can be connected to Tsing's (2015, 2005) view on collaboration. Collaboration is understood as a meeting concerning a common problem or goal without having to adhere to the same agenda, which brings the expectation of friction and contingency.

This 'false equality' can be explored through the perspectives of different stakeholders in collaboration. Van der Vaart and Cruickshanks (2019) discuss the idea of sharing authority from the perspective of museum professionals and identify multiple factors that possibly contribute to the 'unfulfilled promises' of democratising museum practice. The positioning of a curator as "the" expert attributes power and thus authority over decision-making processes. This limits the ability to share this authority and truly collaborate on equal ground. By engaging in collaborative methods, expert staff may feel that their role in the museum is being threatened and their knowledge devalued (Chipungaru 2020; Sitzia 2019). Some expert staff is 'critical about the way in which being an expert is portrayed in these activities.' This can result in feeling that their knowledge and expertise are 'trivialised' (Chipungaru 2020: 438). The need to maintain (some) control over the decision-making process remains a challenge for the museal partner within a collaboration. This need is often tied to the expectation of a certain quality of museum exhibitions – this aesthetical judgment of quality and expectations are formulated by both visitors because they have certain expectations of what a museum 'should look like' (Hutchinson 2019).

The idea of ‘giving away’ power as an institution and how to engage with this process has been discussed by various authors. Sherry Armstrong (first introduced a "Ladder of Citizen Participation," which has been used in governmental social policy. The idea of increasingly giving away more power to your collaborator is central to this understanding of "participation." The "Ladder of Participation” serves as a basis for models employed in museum practice: such as the “Matrix of Participation," which describes the degrees of control from the point of view of the museum. This Matrix was

developed by FARO Belgium and the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency and used as an advisory tool for museums who want to engage in collaboration, often aimed at collecting and curating. In general, the middle three options of the model are viewed as the most fruitful ways of collaborating in the museum sector.[1]

control	**Role of Museum**	**Approach**
Community/Group	Supporting (also called "hosting")	Facilitate
Shared, the community/group has end vote	Supporting	Facilitate
Shared	Working together	Co-create
Shared, the museum has end vote	Working together	Collaborate
Museum	In the lead	Consult

An increasingly familiar approach in the Netherlands is the model proposed by Nina Simon, which played a prominent role during this research. In 2010 Nina Simon published her book The Participatory Museum, which takes an active, practice-oriented approach to the use of collaborative methodologies in cultural institutions. Simon argues on her website: "The Participatory Museum is a practical guide to working with community members and visitors to make cultural institutions more dynamic, relevant, essential places." (Simon 2010). She stresses the importance of including your entire organisation in the process of change through shared 'imagination' exercises, meetings for discussions, and another kind of activities. She argues for the creation of a more inclusive and diverse museum space through systematic collaboration. However, in order to do this, you have to get your entire organisation on board. The OF BY FOR ALL method offers an online coaching platform that guides you through the process of becoming a more collaborative institution within the boundaries of your possibilities (place, money, and available time/people to set this 'process' in motion). This method argues very much from the perspective of one's collaborator and stresses the importance of trust, the creation of time, listening skills and discussion, and fulfilling your collaborators' expectations (Simon 2010). In order to introduce institutions to this methodology, Simon set up a non-profit organisation that offers an 'online Change Program.' This program invites institutions to choose a Community of Interest (COI). The community of interest can be based upon geography, affiliation and identity. The institution's goal is to get to know this COI and, through this process of

[1] This model was shown during a presentation of the work-groups that I attended. A similar, more extensive version can be found here on the FARO Belgium website.
https://faro.be/sites/default/files/bijlagen/pagina/0.%20Participatieladder.pdf

connection, write a Change Plan, which will guide the museum in becoming more OF-BY and FOR this specific community. The OF implies representation within the museum, BY is about collaboration and co-creation and FOR focuses on being welcome, such as policies and facilities within the museum. The progress of internal preparation, getting to know your community, and writing a Change Plan is spread out over a year. The following year is meant to implement the change plan, which is written based on your relationship with the COI. As part of this process, the museum team has weekly meetings in which goals, actions, and questions surrounding the program are discussed.[2]

Collaborative ways of working take a step away from a hierarchical way of communicating and elevate the idea of inclusivity to an egalitarian engagement. However, as can be read above, not every form of collaboration does this in the same way. By situating the different authorities as equal, you also move away from the dualistic either/or relationship between "community" (or "them)" and "scholarship" (or "us) (Hutchinson 2019: 143-145). Instead, what characterises this relationship is a recognition of the agency of both parties within the relationship (Hutchinson 2019: 145). This means, however, that while engaging in collaborative projects, one has to be careful not to omit the perspectives of the museum professionals or the external collaborators. Only by doing so does the museum recognise its own impact on the relationship. Truly including both perspectives also implies moving away from seeing your "collaborators" and yourself as a representative of specific communities.

Naidoo (2016) and Lynch (2011; 2017) elaborate on why exactly this idea of "including" the "outside" on the "inside" makes well-meaning attempts at egalitarian inclusion and equity through collaboration unsuccessful, despite and even more because of increased policy attention. The inside, which is tacitly understood as the established heritage field or museum, has been neutralised and is not recognised as an "inside" and is therefore presented as a timeless, non-connected entity. This makes the conceptualisation of the "outside" – as 'communities', 'society' something that is "new" and "different" and therefore reinforces the neutrality of the "inside" space. Through this forced neutrality, the "outside" also becomes and remains unchanged and essentialised. While actually, this relationship is shaped through social-political processes of colonialism and white hegemony and thus reinforced through policy. The discussions on slavery, and women in art, are seen as "new" while the "country house" is seen as the 'real', 'proper' and established heritage (Naidoo 2011: 4). The presence of “the other” or “the outside” is understood as an *addition* while it was actually already always “inside”, just rendered invisible through processes of hegemony and wilful forgetting.

[2] This information is taken from the online environment of the Change Network, which is not accessible to those outside of the participating organisations.

The inside-outside paradigm, therefore, takes away the critical reflection on these positionalities. Investigating these boundaries shows that the organisational categories used by the "inside" are forced upon the "outside" because the museum itself still decides when and how to interact with the perceived "outside'. The museum can still decide the amount of space the "outsiders" get on the "inside". By limiting physical space, or simply not listening to communities' suggestions on activities or displays. The control of the museum in interactions with "outsiders" is also identified as a challenge by Lynch. Interactions are still shaped by institutional policy and goals; for true structural change, they should not be overshadowed by "institutional ego's" – these institutional egos decide what 'kind' of diversity is welcome in the interaction with the inside. These "egos" are controlled by fear but also by the need to communicate anti-racism, tolerance, dignity etc., which pressures museums to want to brush over the uncomfortable difficulties that come with such complex meetings: both Naidoo and Lynch encourage this uncomfortableness as the first step towards actual change. My research pays specific attention to the confronting of these institutional ego's and investigates how museum professionals try to manage these changes.

Communicative contexts

This section discusses the *who*, *where*, *what* and *how* that have shaped this research. I first introduce my own positionality and how this positionality influenced the way I gained access to the different fields of this study and whose perspectives became part of the material. Lastly, I discuss how the contexts of this research influenced the methods that were used in the gathering of empirical material. In order to investigate how Dutch museum practitioners engaged with collaborative practices and how this does (or does not) become a standard part of their practice, I worked together with several institutions and initiatives engaging with these questions. These will be introduced in the following paragraphs.

My interest in researching the ways in which working collaboratively in museum contexts influences the ideas and positions regarding museum expertise of museum professionals is closely connected to my own experiences in the museum sector. During internships, where I worked with collaborative methodologies, I experienced first-hand how this way of working influences museum professionals. You are no longer the sole decision maker and owner of the project or narrative that is presented, whether this results in an exhibition or a public program**.** Tate (2020) writes about the challenges ethnographers face in gaining access to institutional (policy) fields and argues that access is often limited by the institutional interlocutor out of concern for critique and protection of one's institutional privacy (Tate 2020: 89-90). One way to gain access to institutional (policy) contexts is to conduct research among previous employers (Fassin 2013; Mosse 2008). These experiences in the field can be understood as a kind of "embeddedness" in which I am already familiar with the 'rules' of my field of research. My previous experiences in collaborative methodologies also gave me leverage; I had knowledge and experience to offer my interlocutors in return for access to their processes. This was especially true for the two institutions that gave me access to vulnerable internal processes, the Rembrandthuis and the Zeeuws Museum.

The Rembrandthuis Amsterdam

This museum can be classified as a small to a mid-size institution. The house was opened as a museum in 1911, it focuses on the work and life of Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn. The museum is located in Central Amsterdam and is easy to miss in the busy streets because of its small appearance in comparison to its surroundings. The historical house is connected to a built-on modernised entrance. The museum consists of the historic house, which has kept its historical period-style look. The historical house is accompanied by a "modernised" museum wing, which houses temporary exhibitions—the top floors of the museum wing host educational spaces and a conference room. The offices are located across the street and host different museum departments, which have their own

floor and are only accessible by steep stairs. Currently, the museum has 33 employees, which is a recent change as a consequence of budget cuts as an effect of the covid-19 pandemic. During my research, the museum had just lost its director and was under the leadership of an interim director. I was able to conduct in-depth interviews with 12 of the 33 employees of the museum.

The office building in which I spent most of my time is located across the street (at the Waterlooplein) and similarly inconspicuous. The office building is organised per department, which all have their own doorbell. Each department has its own floor, which is closed off by doors without any indication of which department is where. These spatial contexts can greatly influence how museum professionals and museum departments work together, which is why a description of this context is of importance (Jung: 2016).

The main contact person and first gatekeeper at this institution were Hester, who at the time of research fulfilled the function of Head of Exhibitions. During the research period, access to certain meetings or activities was discussed with her, and she helped me connect with other employees in the museum, which was vital because a lot of the interactions took place online. The main reason for approaching this museum was twofold. Firstly because the museum participated in the OF BY FOR ALL change program that was mentioned in the introduction, their participation in this program signalled that they were actively engaging with themes of inclusion, diversity and, most importantly, collaboration as a method. Secondly, their exhibition Black in Rembrandt's Time stirred many reactions and was perceived as a change in the attitude and work methods of the museum.

"This valuable approach adds to its actuality in light of the current necessity of multivocality in Dutch museums. Hopefully, the work of Archangel [3]and her colleagues inspire further research into the imaging of Black Dutch people in past and present." (Boon: 2020)”

Collecting reflections on how this exhibition came about would hopefully grant me insight into different kinds of experiences from different kinds of positions. Currently, the museum's actions are guided by its 2020-2024 policy. This policy document shows that the museum aims for an increased impact on societal, museal and art-historical areas. They specifically mention the goal to "have their gaze turned outward" and to "show interest in their surroundings" (Stichting Museum het Rembrandthuis 2020a). At the time this research was conducted (January 2022 – March/April 2022), the OBFA-team had chosen a COI: Maroccan-Dutch families from New-West (Amsterdam) with children of elementary school age. Upcoming challenges were defined as: getting to know this COI and sharing this decision with the rest of the museum team.

[3] Stephanie Archangel was one of the guest curators for this exhibition.

The Zeeuws Museum Middelburg

In order to enrich the research material, a second institution was part of this research. The Zeeuws Museum Middelburg can also be classified as a small to mid-size museum. This museum is located in Middelburg, Zeeland. It was the first museum in Zeeland, dating back to the late 18th century, during which upper-class society became interested in science, theology, medicine and applied science. Later, the two museums of Middelburg merged into the Zeeuwse Museumstichting (Zeeuws Museum Foundation). In 1972 the museum moved to its current location, Middelburg Abbey because the previous building conditions did not meet 'modern museum' standards. Nowadays, the merging of these different societies means that the museum has a broad and rich collection focused on the life and history of Zeeland.

The current museum consists of multiple buildings around a square. The Abbey building is very large and hard to overlook when walking the streets of central Middelburg. The museum offices are accessible at the side of this complex and are separated from the museum building. Small winding stairs lead up to the main office space, which consists of multiple rooms. The office space is shared, which means there is little organisation based on departments, and oftentimes people shuttle between the museum building and the office building. My main contact person and first gatekeeper at this institution was Ivo, curator and exhibition maker. Currently, the museum has 23 **employees. I** was able to conduct in-depth interviews with 12 out of the 23 museum professionals currently working at the museum.

The Zeeuws Museum was going through a similar development as the Rembrandthuis. They had also joined the OF BY FOR ALL change plan cohort in the same period as the Rembrandthuis (April 2021) in order to learn more about inclusive, diverse and collaborative museum practices as an institution. In 2021 the museum published its new policy (Zeeuws Museum: 2020), which expressed similar goals and wishes regarding inclusion, diversity and social relevance as the Rembrandthuis. Their focus was slightly different and targeted a direct practical societal problem – loneliness. The museum joined the OF BY FOR ALL initiative as a part of their new explorations into the social role of the museum. Several goals and formulations in their policy stand out. The museum is interested in the idea of a museum as a Useful Museum: meaning that the museum is a place that can be regularly used to 'replenish and enrich daily life. The museum aims to be socially innovative, which, in light of this policy, is aimed at social programming in connection to health care (in order to combat the causes and consequences of loneliness). They specifically argue to do this together and in co-creation with a specific target audience. What returns in this policy, and is also mentioned in the Rembrandthuis policy, is that the museum does strive for a solid connection between this social function and the collection of the museum.

The museum was already experimenting with ways to engage with these questions in their exhibition *From the Depths*, which centred around experiences of the covid-19 pandemic, and how these experiences altered our meanings and perceptions of current artworks that form part of the collection. This exhibition was relevant to my research in several ways: 1) the process of exhibition making was ongoing and is still. Over time a new work was added to the exhibition, which could be proposed and chosen by anyone. 2) social gatherings were organised as part of this exhibition. Their goal was to stimulate conversation that connected the artworks of the exhibition with personal experiences and broader societal questions, which were chosen by the conversation group at hand. The OBFA-team chose a COI: People identifying with the LGTBQ+ community interested in the concept of chosen family[4].

FARO-workgroups & independent reading groups

The previously discussed museums could give me much insight into the institutional change process and how museum professionals negotiate and experience this change together within their own (institutional) context. However, as has become clear in the theoretical introductions, the increase in museum practices relating to the social function of the museum and its extra-museal connections is largely driven by a change in national policy and connected funding bodies. Through my existing network, I was able to bypass institutional (bureaucratic) boundaries and gain access to spaces in which heritage and museum professionals interacted with each other. Here my own 'embeddedness' and positionality as a 'museum professional to be' was valuable. My previous internship supervisor (Dieuwertje Wijsmuller) worked on a project regarding heritage and museum participation that was funded by The National Agency for Cultural Heritage (Rijksdienst Cultureel Erfgoed [RCE]) and part of an exploration regarding collaboration in the museum and heritage field. She discussed my research with project leaders at the RCE and supplied me with the personal e-mail addresses of persons directly involved in the themes of heritage and museum collaborations. In 2018 the RCE expressed an interest in signing the FARO Convention.[5]Which was researched during 2019-2021.

The Netherlands has detailed three focal points in this treaty. The first aims at increasing participation: the FARO treaty explicitly focuses on the sharing of agency in decision-making

[4] The idea of “Chosen Family” refers to a non-biologically related group of people established to provide ongoing social and emotional support, often important for people part of the LGTBQ+ Community members that have been rejected by biologically-related kin and/or close community based on their sexuality.

[5] As stated on the website of the Council of Europe, The FARO Convention: "Emphasises the important aspects of heritage as they relate to human rights and democracy. It promotes a wider understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society. The Convention encourages us to recognise that objects and places are not, in themselves, what is important about cultural heritage. They are important because of the meanings and uses that people attach to them and the values they represent.” (Council of Europe: https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention)

processes which can be linked to the concepts discussed in the previous chapter: museum authority (who has the authority to make decisions?) and museum boundaries (how do museum boundaries decide who is "inside" and can make decisions, and who is "outside" and cannot). The Netherlands' second and third points of focus derive from more social and radical ideas of the new museology. The second point aims to 'be more open for different understandings of heritage' and argues to look at heritage (and thus also museums) not from "the inside out" but "from the outside in", in which the perspective of the civil public is taken as the starting point of creating and making decisions around heritage. Lastly, the treaty stresses using heritage as an instrument in the 'social domain': the FARO treaty focuses on using heritage institutions as places to think and work on social cohesion and wellbeing.

The implementation of this treaty requires new approaches to museum work. For this reason, different work groups were started by the various departments of the RCE. During my research, I was part of two work-groups: the Work-group dealing with frequently asked questions about *co-waarderen* [co-collection evaluation] and the Workgroup Perspective of the Participant. While the previous collaborative endeavours of Rembrandthuis and Zeeuws Museum mainly focused on exhibition making and other kinds of public programming, these working groups specifically focused on museum collections. The working groups were organised together with the FARO Fulcrum of Cultural Heritage in Flanders, which meant that these work-group interactions were online. These groups consisted of museum professionals connected to different kinds of institutions. During the work-groups, they reflected on past experiences with collaborative methodologies and discussed present ways of giving meaning to collaborative methods. The work-groups above had an open but still goal-oriented and slightly formal character. I also joined an informal reading group of museum professionals thinking and working with "everything co-". This group was international and was specifically set up to discuss connections between theoretical research and literature about the meaning of "everything co-" and how they could or could not connect and use these findings in everyday practice. The argument of this thesis uses ethnographic data collected at the Rembrandthuis and Zeeuws Museum. The work and reading groups contextualise the two institutions in their broader field of policy and national developments. Participating in reading and work groups besides studying the two institutions brought to light experiences, questions and attitudes experienced by a broad range of museum and heritage professionals.

Ethics and Methods

Learning more about the museum as a social entity through investigating collaborative methods shifted my relationship with these institutions. Instead of the classical researcher-subject relationship, this relationship evolved into something more of a collaborative nature, including the promise of sharing knowledge and the perception of sharing a common goal. This has been argued as a way to re-conceptualise policy-focused fieldwork; a temporary partnership between researcher and policy bodies (Tate 2020: 89). Approaching two museums that were both working on the same program strengthened the "collaborative" relationship I had with them, both museums and individuals inside the institution were eager to learn about and from each other through my research. The sharing of knowledge, contacts and possibilities became a way to ensure access to the institutions and processes I wanted to understand. As explained in the previous sections, being embedded into my "field" meant that I had connections with people who worked on similar things as I did, were interested in similar topics, and generally had a similar background.

An example of this is that most of my interlocutors were white women and had an academic or otherwise educated background in museum and heritage practices. As has been discussed by various other researchers (Van der Vaart and Cruickshanks: 2019; Ahmed: 2007), projects on institutional change are often led by people who already have an existing interest in the topic at hand and thus fulfil a role of advocacy within the institution (Van der Vaart and Cruickshanks 2019). People who form part of a team that argues for the implementation of collaboration in museum practice generally have a positive outlook on the idea of collaboration.Consequently, I was prone to collecting singular perspectives on the topic. Being aware of this bias, I tried to utilise my current network by asking for contacts, checking their socials and, in general, getting familiar with their social surroundings, which were, in some cases, very different from mine. One of my interlocutors reflected on her experiences gaining access to (activist) spaces and marginalised communities. During her time as a student, she researched multivocality in museum spaces. She especially focused on the perspective of individuals living in the Netherlands with a Curaçaoan biracial background. Her interest in this topic was also partly based on her experiences as a biracial woman visiting museums and working in the museum/heritage sector.

She stated*: "[I have] experienced "colourism" in different ways. For my thesis, I wanted to interview eleven Curaçaoan people, and I approached a few, and I was sent to someone I couldn't reach. And then I ran into her at a meeting, and I said, 'Hi, I'm trying to reach you.' And then, she said, 'Oh! Is that you? I thought you were white.' So yeah, then you know that there is something going on".*

There was an implicit assumption that she was white and "wanted something" from a biracial and marginalised community for her project. Based on these assumptions, she was denied access or contact with some of the people she wanted to talk to. She further reflected that there is a general distrust towards "this kind of" projects because of their echo of colonial hierarchies: what will happen with the information they give, and what will it be used for? This is not an uncommon feeling. Maranda & Soares (2017) describe this as the museum's 'predatory' nature. Where "'…where the incorporation of the voice of the other makes “the ethnographer or […] the curator empowered to orchestrate the museum’s convincing performance”(Maranda & Soares 2017: 14).

Moving away from this predatory nature is difficult, even though museum professionals have the sincere desire and intention to create a real partnership. The profession and institution remain structurally colonial in many aspects, which presents a difficulty in creating equal relationships within an 'unequal' institutional structure (Boast 2011: 16). The friction my interlocutor presented to me was something I could have assumed. Hearing her experiences and discussing what exactly caused this friction and how she dealt with the situation gave me a starting point for the ways I could reach out, communicate and facilitate those that I did not yet reach. My previous experiences as part of a collection evaluation project in which we worked with marginalised and racialised communities exposed me to this expression of distrust. This memory helped me maintain a reflexive and honest attitude when approaching people outside my familiar contexts.

Of course, there are certain limits within this research project, boundaries in the relationship set by both the research and the 'researched'. Zeeuws Museum had just started its relationship with an LTBTQ+ Chosen Family group. I was not invited to these meetings because I was an unfamiliar face, which could make them feel unsafe. Although this is understandable, it does mean that this research presents a limited perspective on the expression and experience of the museum professional’s expert positionality in these interactions.

My identification as an 'expert' of some sort – based on the fact that I studied and worked in the museum sector- influenced the ethnographic methods I employed, especially in the context of the working and reading groups. Participants in these groups interacted with me as if I was 'one of them'. The asked for my perspective or experience as part of the input for the questions they were engaging with. I was more a 'participant' than an 'observer'. During my research, I consistently reminded them that I was there as an interested fellow-museum professional but also as a researcher. These meetings helped me gain insight into the emotional component of museum work – fears, excitement and insecurity were expressed as if the participants were among 'their own. This allowed me to gain

insight into the tension between the ideal collaborative practice that the museum professional's experiences.

Being part of an institutional context at Rembrandthuis and Zeeuws Museum required a different ethnographic presence. While the reading and work groups were focused on empathetically understanding the discussions of the museum professionals and partaking in them as fellow 'expert', the attendance of the meetings at these two institutions required a method focused on ethnographic observing. I did not have a very active or participative role in these meetings. This meant I was able to pay attention to details: the way meetings were organised, who was in the lead, the tone of voice used and the kind of themes discussed.

Furthermore, I conducted in-depth interviews with museum practitioners and artists connected to the institutions, policymakers, and independent museum professionals. These interviews are important for two reasons. While observing and participating allowed me to analyse behaviours and words that might have been unconscious, the interviews created space for conscious reflection and discussion. These interviews contributed to my understanding of the institutional processes that I observed and allowed me to compare experiences of different positions within the same project. I conducted and recorded 40 interviews in different contexts: over dinner, coffee, at someone's house, or online through teams or a phone call. Before these interviews, I set up lists of themes and questions – these differed per interview. The 21 interviews I conducted at Zeeuws Museum and Rembrandthuis had similar questions, which allowed me to compare answers in my analysis. However, I made sure not to stick too close to these topic lists to leave room for my interlocutors' questions and stories. In addition to these methods, I conducted content analysis of current policy documents of both museums, analysed the online communication platform they use(d) during their project and analysed existing Dutch policy documents that informed the work-groups in which I participated. This method allows for an understanding of how intuitional written discourse has shaped current practices and if and how it reflects these practices and attitudes. I focused on the reaccurance of secific words linked to specific definitions, themes and actions (Bryman 2016: 283). Analyzing these documents helped me understand how individual understandings of the museum and its function associated with their position were informed by these discourses and ideas: it helped me understand perspectives on "collaboration" and "expertise" on an institutional level.

It is necessary to note here that I wrote down recorded interviews, because I intended to adopt a collaborative stance towards my research, I wanted to ensure that my interlocutors knew that the data I collected was as much mine as theirs. I exchanged interview summaries and verbatim transcriptions with them and worked with a consent form in which my interlocutors could express

their individual preferences. This revealed interesting perspectives on the importance of a museum (professional's) image: after I shared verbatim transcriptions, some adjusted the transcription to present a more nuanced perspective. I always asked permission for recording and kept up an ongoing conversation about my presence in certain processes. The public nature of the museum made it difficult to completely anonymise my interlocutors. Therefore I asked each practitioner for their preferences. However, it is important to note that some interlocutors did not fill in the form or respond to any requests to let me know their preferences; some had given verbal consent after repeated requests. I analysed my interviews through *open* and *focused coding*, allowing me to discover themes, structures and categories in my data.

Chapter one: looking “inside” the OBFA-team

> *"Welcome to Stage 3! It's time to get to know your Community of Interest (COI). This is a time to start shifting away from an institutional frame and into a community-centred frame. Reflect on your starting points, go forward- and listen deeply. The tools in this stage will prepare you before your first meeting with your Community of Interest, whether this will be taking place virtually or in person. These meetings are opportunities for you to learn directly about the COI's assets, interests, and goals. You'll use what you learn to form the basis of your Change Plan in Stage 4. We think of these two stages in tandem, and we encourage you to keep detailed notes in Stage 3 on changes you could commit to as part of your Change Plan.*
>
> *Remember: you're talking with real people here, not just research subjects. Ground yourself in curiosity, and be transparent about your hope to build stronger community relationships. You'll learn unexpected things that will set you up to do great community work, leaving the door open for many possibilities (without overcommitting).”*

This is the first thing museum professionals part of the OBFA-team read when they log on to their online OBFA environment and scroll to their current "phase" of change. The Rembrandthuis and Zeeuws Museum were just entering this "phase" of change around January 2022. The first two "phases" of their change plan had occurred eight months before. The OBFA-method defines a "social" cultural institution (a museum) as an institution that works together with others through building deep partnerships based on trust; this method demands that a museum is open and welcoming towards its (target) public (Simon 2010). This attitude shift must first take place within the museum. This chapter focuses on change-makers' perspectives within institutions, those who lead, introduce and implement change. I explore their expectations, experiences, and doubts. I will start by presenting their motivations and aims in joining the OBFA team, then explore their views on and experiences with collaboration, paying particular attention to the challenges they face. Lastly, I will connect their experiences and views on *extra-museal* collaboration to their reflections on collaboration *within* the museum, demonstrating that their collaboration with each other and the rest of the museum faces similar challenges as extra-museal collaboration.

In order to represent their perspectives, I will first provide some more detail regarding the composition and history of both teams that are central to this chapter. Firstly, my informants working for the Rembrandthuis. This team consists of eight museum professionals who, despite having different roles within the museum (as elaborated below), are all part of the OBFA team and the “diversity” workgroup. These people are: Hester (Exhibition-manger/Head of Exhibitions), Julia (Education, Diversity & Inclusion), David (Head Curator), Neelam (Public-service professional, active

at front desk and museum-store), Lidewij (director) and three museum professionals who preferred to remain anonymous. The Zeeuws Museum has a similar but slightly smaller setup. This team consists of five museum professionals, Ivo (Exhibition maker and Curator), Maaike (Communication and Marketing), Renée (Communication and Marketing Online), Raymond (Public-service and museum store), and Marjan (Director).

1.1 Getting familiar: introducing the socio-political context and the OBFA-teams

I found that at both institutions, the emphasis on collaborative practice was figure headed by a sub-group of the larger groups elaborated above. Their perspectives seemed to be of particularly significant influence in implementing collaborative methodologies. At the Rembrandthuis, Hester and Lidewij appeared to be the figureheads. At Zeeuws Museum, Ivo and Marjan positioned themselves as change makers and pillars within these projects and were positioned as such by their colleagues. Indeed, institutional attempts to incorporate collaborative (or "participatory") methodologies led by a specific (isolated) team or are instigated by individuals that have a pre-existing interest are not uncommon (Van der Vaart and Cruickshanks: 2019; Lynch 2020). These professionals see it as their duty to translate this change in attitude for the rest of the organisation. Conversations with these change-makers revealed that several contextual factors had shaped the institutions and museum professionals' drive to become part of the OBFA-program. Exploring this will allow us to formulate starting points of investigation. The current socio-political climate and specifically relevant museum policy in Amsterdam and Zeeland focus on ideas of "inclusion," "diversity," and "collaboration/participation"(Gmeente Amsterdam 2021; Provincie Zeeland 2022)[6].

During my first conversation with Lidewij, she explained that this exploration started with the goal of making the "hardcore art historical story" more accessible to a broader public. In her narration of this development, Lidewij mentioned the municipal elections of 2018 as a "beginning point" that had a significant role in how the museum developed itself in the upcoming years. The leftist councilor at the time argued that the cultural sector of Amsterdam and Amsterdam Nieuw-West could and should be more inclusive and accessible. Crucially, this explicit call for inclusion and accessibility also meant that the municipality could offer the museum support (what exactly were these?), which enabled them to develop skills and locate areas of development. The museum formulated a "'baseline measurement" through which the museum investigated current points of development concerning inclusion and diversity related to accessibility. Lidewij described that "being" inclusive and diverse is about your organization and not just about 'organizing a few programs or exhibitions.

[6] Amsterdam: Subsidy foci: https://www.amsterdam.nl/subsidies/nieuwwest/, ; https://assets.amsterdam.nl/publish/pages/891290/hoofdlijnen_kunst_en_cultuur_2021-2024_nieuw.pdf; https://www.zeeland.nl/sites/default/files/digitaalarchief/ZEE2200077.pdf

In order to safeguard growth within the organization, the museum developed a multiannual policy plan (2021-2024), of which inclusion, diversity and multivocality, and collaboration were "an integral part"(Stichting Rembrandthuis 2020). After our conversation, I read this plan. The museum stated an explicit goal to create a representative, diverse, relevant museum. This would involve 'working with others which they describe as co-creation with "relevant representatives of our society" (Rembrandthuis 2020).

From Ivo, I learnt that although the Zeeuws Museum is located elsewhere, they experienced a similar development trajectory. I spoke with Ivo towards the end of my research and had often heard the word BIS: which turned out to be the request for basic infrastructure funding [*Nederlands: basisinfrastructuur].* This funding application played a significant role in the museums development. Ivo explicitly mentioned that the discovery of a national call for funding proposals that could be sent in on behalf of provinces sparked the idea to set up a broader project that focused on the social position and function of the museum. In collaboration with provincial governments, the museum sent a proposal for project-based funding. The (additional) funding was meant to support municipal and provincial museums in the fulfilling of "public duties," its goal to give an extra impulse to public activities organized by museums (Raad Voor Cultuur 2021). Initiatives that focused on participation, accessibility, and co-creation were positively received and given preference over those that did not.

Now that the backdrop of this development is clear, it seems pertinent to return to this chapter's focus- namely, the reactions and perceptions of museum staff to the OFBA-program. When I met Hester, she mentioned that she had followed Nina Simon's work since 2010 and was always interested in trying this way of working in order to tell stories that the museum cannot tell on its own. HERE created a broader support base for extra-museal collaboration within the organization [Nederlands: meer draagvlak], while previously, these topics were not living in the organization.

Ivo explained that he had seen this way of working in another museum and was curious if this would fit the Zeeuws Museum. With Marjan, he explored if the method would suit their museum. Coincidentally, Marjan later told me that she has been interested in 'participation' since 2011. She described these explorations as the initial stages of a movement where the museum as an object-focused institution shifted towards an institution that focuses on human experiences and society. The idea that a museum can have a positive impact on society is something that motivates her. One of the experiences Marjan recounts as a motivation to explore the idea of the 'social museum' is a collaboration with Reinwardt Academy students. The students formulated an educative program based on a project plan with health-care institutions for the elderly with somatic health concerns, students from high schools, and health-care programs. This museum program stimulated

intergenerational contact, which exceeded a single visit to the museum and had a visible impact on people's wellbeing. These previous experiences and attempts to collaborate made both Hester and Marjan realize that they knew collaboration *could be* fruitful but that before they could reap similar rewards, they needed to develop their skills. Both emphasised a pressing need to refine ways of making collaboration structural and thus to nurse relationships beyond project basis.

The above analysis of the relationship between national/provincial policy and the actions of Hester, Ivo, Marjan, and Lidewij suggests that the museum is, to some extent, still perceived as an instrument that has the (moral) duty to engage with and solve social problems and be 'of use' for society (Tlili 2008; O'Neill 2008). We can see that carving out space for developing skills in collaboration depends mainly on the funding and pressure provided by governmental bodies, combined with the personal motivations of museum professionals that fulfill a function of authority within the museum (Karp and Lavine 1991). The specific choice to use the OBFA-method to develop these understandings and skills is, for these museums, dependent on museum professionals with a pre-existing familiarity with the method.

Now that we have discussed the motivations of OFBA team 'leaders,' we must look toward the motivations and views of other team members. (could say something here about one of the main things of OBFA being a move away from focusing all the attention on those at the 'top'?) On January 26, I attended the OBFA-team meeting at the Zeeuws Museum for the first time. Because this was the first time we met, introductions were exchanged. Raymond explained that he has worked at the museum for about ten years and is part of the public service and security team. He ended his introduction by saying: "I also like to stick my nose in other kinds of business, like OBFA!" by saying this, Raymond implied that his activities within the OBFA-team were different from his everyday activities.

Indeed, the OBFA-program strongly encourages working on the program with an interdisciplinary team from different departments. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this is the case at both the Zeeuws Museum and Rembrandthuis, where the OFBA is a unique combination of different professionals. OFBA professionals often reflected on working together across different departments; during conversations, I learned that this was a shared motivation to join. As Maaike explained, she was nervous about doing something new and different but motivated and intrigued by the opportunity to work across disciplines. I learned that the method did not only motivate professionals to work interdisciplinary but it also challenged the professional to work outside of their museum expertise. It does not matter if you usually work with collections or finances; every team member is to engage with the "outside ."This had significant effects on the museum professionals. At Zeeuws

Museum, every OBFA-member had conversations with the COI. While, at the Rembrandthuis, this was more a topic of discussion. Some professionals stated that they felt like they had nothing to offer" and were unsure how to handle questions about areas that were "other people's expertise" This insecurity in doing something that feels beyond their museum expertise returned more often, both inside and outside the OBFA-team. This finding will therefore be discussed more in chapter 2. Now, I first return to other motivations.

I later asked Raymond why he became part of the OBFA-team. He told me he was interested in inclusion, and I learned that his personal interest in inclusion could, in part, be related to his own experiences. He explained that he identifies as a gay man and argued that he, therefore, is more aware of how museums often present from a single perspective. He explained this as having "practical experience" that gives him a little head start. Furthermore, recently Raymond has started to lose his vision (as a result of a genetic disorder). He talked about this openly and brings his experiences, good or bad, to his work. He found that he became aware of how specific actions can exclude, such as smaller texts or low light in museums, and discussed this with colleagues. It is essential to reflect on how I found an interest in inclusion and diversity based on one's own experiences to be a recurrent motivation amongst OFBA team members. Julia expressed that the fact that she identifies as belonging to a marginalized group as a biracial woman makes it easier for her to connect with 'others' outside of the museum.

Similarly, Neelam, and two other team member expressed that "they know what it is like." They explicitly mentioned this as a form of expertise they brought to the team. Some museum professionals were motivated to join the OFBA team because they saw it as a way of potentially broadening the way they practice their expertise within the museum. One of the museum professionals – focused on organisation management, wanted to learn how to create relationships with and attract a bigger diversity of new professionals, which she described as anyone but 'the usual suspects: white and art-lover. Julia already works on inclusion and education and aims to learn how to implement structural collaborative practices in the field of education. Neelam, Renée, and others expressed an interest in ensuring that what they learned during the program was implemented and shared with the rest of the organization.

We can thus take away from the above discussion that the professionals of both teams are motivated by a need to learn more about inclusion and diversity through interdisciplinary working. Their views on inclusion and diversity seemed to be informed by two aspects. Firstly, by their own experiences, which are framed as a distinct form of expertise. Secondly, by the awareness that they now cater to a specific white and normative public - which they want to change. When discussing their experiences,

it was brought up that the structure of the meetings and the method itself strongly focus on reflexivity. The vulnerability of sharing personal experiences, expressing insecurities that come with working beyond your museum expertise, and working towards a new practice is described as adding a sort of intimacy to the relationship. This intimacy is experienced as positive but can also cause other team members to feel excluded. This finding will be discussed more in chapter two, where I focus on the experiences and reflections of professionals outside the OBFA-team.

1.2 Understanding collaboration

Thus, it seems that the team members I worked with focused on using their participation in the OFBA project as a learning experience. But what exactly did they want to learn, and how did the OBFA-program help them with this? What parts of the collaborative museum experience did they seek clarification of? This is what the following sub-section will attempt to explore. For the Rembrandthuis members, the experience of HERE was still fresh in mind, which informed their definitions and questions about collaboration as an inclusive practice. Hester was one of the team members who explained her aim of museum collaboration straightforwardly. She reflected upon the start of the HERE project and told me, "I knew that there would be elements and factors in the story which I would not be able to estimate how they would be experienced, positive or negative." Hester characterised the organisation as "too white to make an exhibition about this ."Her reflections demonstrate that collaboration can therefore be about gaining a specific knowledge you lack. Other museum professionals corroborated this primary aim of collaboration. Julia's reflections stress that collaboration is about confronting blind spots and gaining a perspective on certain experiences which cannot be fully understood through empathy; the expertise of lived experience. Working with this kind of expertise will allow the museum to connect with a broader public. The Zeeuws Museum team had more abstract reflections: "You do something together, not for them, but with them." These abstract reflections were indeed accompanied by the need to learn about the experiences of others.

We can locate this aim in the acknowledgement of the fact that museums have long represented and catered to dominant, white, western and normative perspectives and publics and therefore miss certain perspectives, as has been argued by Ouédraogo et al. (2019) and Treier (2021). And, as can be derived from Hester's reflection, still cater to the norm. This aim is accompanied by other criteria against which these museum professionals measure the idea of 'successful' collaboration; these criteria are immediately accompanied by perspectives, fears, or experiences that are resistant to the change that it implies.

Shared and divergent goals

For these museum professionals, collaboration moves beyond listening and collecting perspectives. It also aims to share authority over the decisions that are made. The idea of 'just taking something' is often associated with more passive and restricted "participation," which both institutions reject. Marjan gives the example of the selection of paintings: the museum chooses a hundred, and "the public" is allowed to choose 25, this she thinks, is "just a sham" [Nederlands: een wassen neus]. However, acting upon this ideal was more difficult. Marjan noted that, during a previous project, the museum still behaved like "a project manager" and strongly guided the collaboration. Instead, professionals have argued that the focus should be on listening.

David gave an example of how radical listening, as introduced by (Strother 2020), leads to action to share authority. During the exhibition process of HERE, a painting was proposed by the museum team. However, the panel vehemently rejected this because it was experienced as a negative portrayal of Black people. This resulted in the painting being cut from the exhibition. This can be understood as an attempt to position the different kinds of expertise as equal and, thus, with the same amount of authority. For David working with and actively listing to the panel was 'golden .'It proved that people with different ideas and aims, who were working in their own worlds, were able to come together with the same intention. However, these ideals or experiences that suggest successful sharing of authority are also accompanied by different experiences. Hester described that at some point, collaborators introduced changes in the narrative that 'strayed too far from the main message,' which resulted in the museum team deciding not to include all the proposed changes. One of the professionals part of this project first described this as somewhat of a conflict between the museum and her collaborators. The collaborators were unhappy when they made this decision and argued against it. However, later in her reflection on this conversation, she backtracked on this statement and added that in the end, the collaborators understood the museum's decision. The collaborator in question explained that even though some changes were made, the exhibition narrative was still close to the original ideas of the museum. Reflections on these experiences often returned in the OBFA-meetings and were presented as an area of development. The team wanted to learn how to 1) deal with discomfort in changing plans and 2) ensure that disagreements do not sour relationships. More importantly, these reflections tell us that museum professionals feel like they have not yet 'shared authority over a process the way they want to and feel the need to. Positive experiences of the museum professionals demonstrate that sharing authority can lead to interesting, and we might even argue better results. However, there is some resistance to sharing authority when suggestions move too far away from the initial ideas of the museum. The acknowledgment or experience of conflict is portrayed as something they want to avoid.

Active listening, openness, and guarding your own ideas

The idea of sharing control as a form of museum activism is often mentioned when working with activists or activist topics, which I argue is almost immediately implied when museums work with marginalized communities. The idea of taking on an activist stance through collaboration is met with unease and hesitance. A team member of the Rembrandthuis OBFA-team, explained that during their collaboration with guest conservators and the panel as a part of the HERE exhibition, the team ran into the fact that their collaborators were "more activist" than the museum. Which, according to this person, begs the question; who are you, when do you take a stance, and what fits your (institutional) identity? To what extent do you support your collaborators' views to maintain or nurture a collaborative relationship? This has been a topic of conversation during the Rembrandthuis' meetings as well as the Zeeuws Museum's. When further investigating this idea of 'non-activist' presentation and collaboration, it became clear that for museum professionals part of the OBFA-team, this ideal 'non-activist' but socially grounded presentation and action consisted of several layers.

Firstly, some of the museum professionals (from both museums) valued the museums ability to present and engage with socially relevant topics and communities without taking a stance. This is partly located in wanting to consider the needs of "all" public and a wish to exclude or lose existing publics. Museum professionals at both museums spoke of not wanting to polarize or 'choose a side. Potential partners of Zeeuws Museum expressed the need for more publicity. This became a point of discussion during the meetings. Sharing their activities on social media would support building their relationship but also implied a public expression of support, which could lead to negative responses from others. Secondly, the museum professionals within the team value the 'specialness' of the physical being of the museum. This was predominantly present in the Rembrandthuis. For the Rembrandthuis, this meant that the team cared about maintaining the historical importance of the building and doing it justice. A potential collaborator requested if they could take pictures in the Rembrandthuis with their collective. Some museum professionals immediately responded positively to this, but it became a point of discussion in follow-up meetings. It was brought up that the museum should not become a mere set piece and did not always grant such requests, and never for free. – guarding, on the one hand, the museum's historical significance and uniqueness, and on the other, the museum's income. Therefore, this became a discussion about the extent to which the museum should challenge its boundaries to create a deeper relationship with its prospective partners.

Thus, these museum professionals want to learn how to balance the different needs and wants in a collaborative relationship. My empirical materials demonstrate that the OBFA-method starts this discussion within the museum and motivates professionals to challenge their "predatory nature" to move toward a reflexive museum practice, as presented by Maranda & Brulon Soares (2017). I follow

Lynch's argument, which states that the museum's need to guard its agendas and goals limits its ability to create a relationship with participants. She implies no longer viewing the intuition's values and aims as unchangeable and inert in this relationship, instead viewing them as made by political processes (Lynch 2020:5-6). This, as can be read, is difficult.

The OBFA-methodology itself has also been a point of discussion during the meetings at Rembrandthuis and Zeeuws Museum. Up to this point, these discussions have been about the use of "COI" to identify the potential partners of the museums. At the Zeeuws Museum these discussions were about the fact that the COI itself is just a generalization, a label but that this does not mean that everyone within this COI has the same views or feel 'united'. Interestingly, at both museums these discussions have also revolved around the categorization that is done by the museum professionals. The teams have identified different individuals or organizations that *they* feel fit the profile of their COI – but does this individual or organization think so to? The discussion on labels and the effects of these labels will be continued in chapter 2.

1.3 Concluding remarks

The most important conclusion we can take form this chapter is that the teams at both museums are eager to develop more knowledge about inclusion, diversity, and collaborative practices. Previous and current experiences, whether in the museum space or personal life, serve as a motivation to join the OBVA team. Reflections upon these experiences demonstrate the tension between the goals or ideals of a collaborative relationship (creating space for the "expertise of lived experience," sharing authority, and active/radical listening) and the actual practices or current doubts and challenges. The OBFA method allows both museums to create space to discuss these tensions. It is noticeable that these discussions are often centred around their own "expertise of lived experience" and ability to reflect, display empathy, and connect with others. The focus on these skills shows us that OBFA-method does expect the museum professional to become a "social expert" in addition to their museum expert position. Some find this challenge more manageable than others and tend to hold on to the safety of their current area of expertise, therefore creating and confronting a social boundary. Discussions about these challenges transform the inter-team relationship into a more intimate one.

The professional's reflections also show that, although an equal and open relationship is the aim, the team often keeps the museum's motivations, values, and identity as a 'neutral' or 'knowledge' institution at the back of their minds. This demonstrates that even within the "change-team," people experience resistance. Even though these assumptions are again discussed, creating a reflective loop within the team. This conclusion can be nuanced by the fact that at the time, the relationship with potential collaborators was still fresh – which caused the professionals to revert to familiarity.

The OBFA-teams have been busy confronting, challenging, and reflecting. Coincidentally in the same week, the third week of February, both museums decided that it was time to think about how to share the decisions that they made, based on this extensive progress of reflection with the rest of the museum – because their decisions would eventually influence others within the museum. As has been previously stated, the intimacy felt by the OBFA-team had a turn side, namely that the rest of the museum felt a distance or detachment. Which sometimes leads to resistance to the OBFA-program. The OBFA-program argues for a structural change carried by the entire institution. Therefore I dedicate my next chapter to those on the "outside" of the OBFA-team.

Chapter two: Looking “outside” of the OBFA-team

A Rembrandthuis team meeting held on February 14th has stuck in my mind since it happened. The meeting focused on sharing the chosen COI with the rest of the museum. Hester, as team-champion, took the lead. Occasionally, the OBFA-team updated the rest of the museum on their progress. The next shared session will be about the COI; Dutch-Moroccan families from New-West (Amsterdam). She announced that, firstly, the groups would reflect on the different ‘future visions’ as one of the assignments done earlier in the program by the entire museum team. These future visions focus on how the museum has changed after the OBFA project and with whom they are now connected. Hester stressed that the focus of this session would be on the connections between these future visions and the chosen COI. The COI was to be connected to existing target audiences, such as families or young audiences, but also new ones. The session was meant to include the rest of the team in the decisions that were made. Participants of the meeting were to be asked to give their input based on the information that was presented to them. After that, the OBFA-team took the lead and was supposed to bring the meeting to a close. Hester explained that this meeting would be informative and less interactive than before. She added that the rest of the team would be present in these meetings to ‘keep the ambience going’ because she already anticipated that tensions might be present.

The meeting took place later that week. The setting was hybrid; some museum professionals were present in the museum, while others were online. The session I attended was led by Julia, who gave a short recap of the terms used in the presentation and moved on to the focus groups. The three focus groups first proposed were students with a Chinese background living in the Nieuwmarktbuurt area, status holders (refugees) learning Dutch in daily life, and lastly, Moroccan-Dutch families with children between the age of four and six. These were the three COI’s that the museum started with. Now, the choice had been made to focus on Moroccan-Dutch families. I noticed immediately that the mood shifted when this choice was introduced. The responses of the other museum professionals were hesitant and somewhat critical. One of the team members doubtfully asked: “Are these the things.. the groups that we came to with all of us..?” He referred to a previous session where team members collaborated to explore possible COIs. An OBFA-team member answered: “This decision is made within the training group, with representatives of each department.” He responded hesitantly; ‘Was there a lot taken from the ‘future visions? I remember that we had sessions before.. about which communities we saw... we imagined... Is that also a part of this, or is that another project?’ His questions were not answered because more questions arose, and the conversation continued. One of the other, more direct, responses was: ‘*We* can’t say anything. Everything is already boarded up!’

[Nederlands: dichtgetimmered]. The meeting came to a close calmly, but an air of confusion and dissatisfaction remained.

On March 30th, I noticed an out-of-place face during the OBFA-meeting at Zeeuws Museum. Nathalie is not part of the OBFA-team but and works as a project secretary. We have spoken the week before this meeting. Ivo explained that he asked Nathalie to attend the meeting to help the OBFA-team plan upcoming meetings with possible collaborators. Her attendance is discussed in more detail at the end of this meeting. Ivo asked her how she experienced being present at an OBFA-meeting: are there things she noticed that made her curious or confused? He asked this because the previous meeting, on February 16th, brought to light that the OBFA-team wanted, and needed, to take stock with the rest of the museum, just like the Rembrandthuis was doing. Nathalie said that she feels that she "did add something to the meeting" because she was there to help with the planning, but that besides this, she felt like she "just randomly fell into something", which made her insecure. Ivo responded empathetically and stressed that he wanted to create space to discuss her questions. Nathalie admitted that she is emotional. Tearfully she explained: "It makes me emotional that we have to do this, that we have to come up with all these elaborate schemes to just be in contact with people." She added that this might be connected to her personal home life and apologised. Her openness was praised. Maaike, an OBFA-team member, added: "the fact that you feel like this, and that you can explain how all this [the OBFA program] is affecting you, maybe we have to ask YOU about how we can make sure that we share this with the rest of the organisation. We can work very hard to connect with those outside our doors, but I think we have to start with our insides. I don't know if we are successful at this right now. Can you share ideas on how we can become better at this?" Nathalie responded:

> *"I notice, and I also discussed this with Roos, that I just don't know enough about it. Of course, I know in a limited way what the goal is, but I just don't feel part of it. I think... I don't have a ready-made solution. But it does help that everyone has the same feeling about this. That it is important and that everyone can be themselves and can partake with us. So we need to propagate this more internally. A team meeting, once in a while, is not enough to connect people to you."*

The perspectives of the "others" inside the museum – those not part of the OBFA-team are central to this chapter. The two situations sketched above reveal a similar relationship between those "inside" and "outside" of the OBFA-teams. There is a friction present that is expressed in frustration, insecurity, vulnerability, and openness. This chapter explores the perspectives of the museum

professionals on the “outside”. What exactly makes them feel like they are “outsiders”, and how do they view the change that the OBFA-method tries to start within the museum related to their position of expertise? By revealing these perspectives, it becomes possible to discuss the way social boundaries between “inside” and “outside” are created within the museum and how they influence the process of attempting to fade the “traditional” boundaries of “inside and outside” of the museum through the introduction of collaborative methodologies.

I spoke to 10 museum professionals, fulfilling different roles of expertise within the museum. At the Zeeuws Museum, I met Mike and Kevin (public-service and security), Karina (exhibition maker and collection professional), Saskia (project leader), Nathalie (project secretary) and Nienke (registrar). At the Rembrandthuis, I met Iris (registrar), an anonymous professional who focused on content and collection research, Annelies (Funding and Relationship Management), and Jasper (head of public service and security).

2.1 Understanding OBFA and collaboration outside of the OBFA-team

One of the first museum professionals I spoke to outside the OBFA-team was Kevin, who works as a public-service attendant, focusing on security and contact with the public. I had decided to ask every museum professional I met to explain what OBFA meant for them and to reflect on previous collaborative experiences if they had any. Kevin summarised that, even though he does not have a lot of knowledge about the goals, he finds what the team does essential. According to him, OBFA is about becoming inclusive. For Kevin, being inclusive meant being able to offer a broad perspective on the array of subjects the museum presents, connected to their collection or, in some way, including people who are not part of the current dominant visitor demographic, such as people with disabilities or from “different cultures”. An example is engaging with themes that the local public is interested in. He mentioned talking to local visitors with Surinamese and Antillean backgrounds who said they were ‘looking for subjects connected to slavery’. The museum was not able to offer this, which caused disappointment. It is interesting to note how I found similar narratives at Rembrandthuis, where some described the OBFA-project as one of the programs or actions the museum undertakes to ensure that they can offer art in an accessible way, that includes catering to audiences with which the museum is not yet familiar, or that do not yet feel welcome at the museum. In both museums, museum professionals were aware that, even though they feel like they are “already there for everyone”, – this “everyone” might not feel that way; this is why paying specific attention to programs such as OBFA is judged necessary.

The increased focus on being inclusive is experienced as being influenced by current trends in the museum sector that pay specific attention to inclusion, diversity and social justice. Mike from Zeeuws

Museum explained this as something that was already “hanging in the air”. He narrated OBFA as something museums do partly because all museums do it, and this museum cannot stay behind. This idea following a trend was also present in the Rembrandthuis. For some professionals, this meant that they did not necessarily feel a deep personal need to change their practice or views. However, they stressed that knowledge about and attention to these themes is necessary to exercise their expertise, such as a funding manager at the Rembrandthuis.

> *I am present on the sidelines. I am just a conduit. So I might not be very idealistic based on the content, but on the focus to formulate a good funding application. That is the opportunistic side of this program.*

Referring back to my conversation with Mike, it is interesting to reflect upon his explanation that the museum-wide sessions he had attended and the in-between conversations he had with Raymond changed his definition of what it means and what is needed to be inclusive. He told me that this project, and its aim to be more ‘inclusive’ , moves away from the idea of a museum as a neutral being that “shows and gives” information toward a socially involved museum.

The professionals introduced so far have something in common, they supported the ideals of becoming more inclusive and diverse but saw no immediate need to join the team or further deepen their involvement. Nienke, a museum collection expert, was able to formulate this eloquently. She explained that as a museum collection expert, she did not see a direct contribution to her joining the OBFA-team however, indirectly, she aimed to contribute to the cause of inclusivity and accessibility by ensuring that basis registration, search-ability and data management will be in order to in the case that if the museum wants to work with ‘others’ in her area of expertise, the collection is as ‘inclusive’ and ‘accessible’ as possible. For Mike and Kevin, this could take the form of adjustments of texts, both content-wise or the physical placement, to not be “discriminative or exclusive” and to “serve a broader public” I noticed that possible practical results or consequences are used to make sense of what the method means and what kind of effects it could have on their museum practice, or how they, within their area of expertise, contribute to the aim of inclusive practice.

We can thus conclude that museum professionals who are not part of the OBFA-team and have little to no experience in collaborative practices understand OBFA as a program that will help museum staff become more inclusive by learning what kind of actions and behaviour from the museum professionals ‘get people in’. Non-OBFA-members have an awareness of the boundaries that prevent inclusion in their specific area of expertise and up to this point, frame the OBFA program as something that helps them become aware of these boundaries.

During my conversations with these professionals, I also noticed that everyone said something about "not really knowing anything about it". I think that for those with little experience and currently no concrete way of working with collaboration, only the ideological idea of 'inclusion' and 'diversity' remains, without tangible, visible progress or result. This seemed to feed into a detachment towards the museum's change process, strengthening an 'outside' 'inside' dynamic. Noticeably the idea of collaboration and sharing power is rarely mentioned when talking about the OBFA-program and is not yet part of everyone's perspective. Professionals that mentioned this aspect often have experiences with extra-museal collaboration and seemed to view the OBFA program differently, which is why I now turn to their perspectives.

Professionals with collaborative experience at the Rembrandthuis used the exhibition about Rembrandt's work on the elephant Hansken as an anchor to reflect on experiences with collaborative work. The museum team worked with a panel consisting of activists, nature-conservation organisations, and guest curators of Artis (Amsterdam Historical Zoo). This exhibition project took place after the museum had done its first collaborative exhibition (HERE) and started the OBFA-program. This resulted in an exhibition team that consisted of professionals who had experience with either or both of these endeavours. Partly Informed by their experiences, this resulted in an exhibition that took historical artworks and historical experiences to discuss both past and present themes around animal cruelty. One of the professionals working on the narrative and content of the exhibition described this way of working as a change in "what the museum is telling, how they are telling this, and who they are telling this to". These experiences changed how she approached her role as an expert within the museum. She elucidated; that she now considers more perspectives next to the museum's art-historic approach. Considering these perspectives changed how she looked at the material objects; they became more connected to the people and perspectives around them. She argued that working this way requires a different way of thinking [Nederlands: omdenken]. Crucially for this thesis and its argument, she added that taking perspectives informed by other kinds of expertise as seriously as your own is vital. An example she gave was the considerations made in deciding to move the skeleton of Hansken, which were informed by the perspectives of their (activist) collaborators. This attitude towards 'rethinking' is one of curiosity in which different layers of information and perspectives can be stacked. She argued that collaboration demonstrated that there is more than a single storyline and perspective. Which Indeed reminds me of Hutchinson's (2019) take on collaboration: the museum expert's voice does not become 'less' in collaborative projects but becomes one of many.

Reflections of Karina, a curator and collection professional, demonstrated another approach to collaboration and its effects on her expertise. Her reflections focused more on the social use of

museum space. Karina set up De Werkplaats, which connects to the fashion and costume exhibitions. She explained that the Werplaats was a space next to the exhibition spaces that offered an opportunity to learn (traditional) crafts. However, more importantly, it is meant to be a free public space connected to the museum. Visitors do not have to pay an entree fee to access the Werkplaats. Her goal is to bring people together and make the museum a social space. She collaborated with The Pennywafelhuis, a "community art project" set up by two artists to contribute to social cohesion, mainly focused on immigrant communities (Pennywafelhuis s.a)[7]. Karina visited the Pennywafelhuis, and participants of the Pennywafelhuis visited the museum, organically figuring out what they could offer each other. These exchanges made the museum space familiar, and discussions around the collection facilitated social interactions. Karina told me that she had met a young man that joined for a visit. He was standing in front of a painting that depicted a single man with multiple women. The young man noticed that it was a man with numerous women and that in "his culture", this was normal, and in "this culture", not yet so much. Karina engaged, and through their conversation, they became connected and more familiar, and the young man felt more welcome or 'at home' in the museum. For Karina, interactions like this confirm that art (objects) can be a means to a goal: facilitate social connections. Karina connected her experiences to the OBFA program and explained that the OBFA-program gives constant attention to the possibility of museum collaborations and the social function of the museum. This gives her collaborative project more status within the museum and anchors it into her colleagues' thinking processes, who now include the Werkplaats in their suggestions and plans. From Karina's perspective, we can conclude that collaboration challenges the museum to become a "social expert", as reflected upon in my theoretical discussions; in the following sections, I will further elaborate on the responses to this challenge.

From the presented perspectives, we can carefully conclude that the OBFA-program is understood as a way to become more aware of one's practice and possibly change actions that 'exclude'. Those with experience in collaboration present similar reflections as those in chapter one. Namely, that collaboration aims to include and gain knowledge that the institution does not have, which challenges the expert to share authority over presentations and narratives. For professionals with experience in collaborative projects, OBFA is a way to pay structural attention to the possibility and the importance of collaboration to solidify the museum's place in society. Just as in the first chapter, I now focus on the tension between the ideal of collaboration and the actual practice and effect of implementing the OBFA-method. This will allow us to discover what makes the museum professionals feel part or not feel part of this institutional change.

[7] Pennywafelhuis "Het Initatief":https://pennywafelhuis.nl/#het-initiatief date accessed: August 2022

2.2 Social Boundaries in the museum

Working 'outside' of your expertise

Iris, who is part of the Rembrandthuis, was very hesitant when I contacted her and asked if she would be open to a conversation about OBFA and HERE – her first response showed that she was unsure of what her perspective would add since she had "very little to do with it". Nevertheless, Iris agreed to meet and explained in greater detail why she was, as she explained, "so reserved". Iris explained that all the team members are obliged to partake in the museum-wide OBFA meetings, and Iris "wasn't really jumping up and down to participate."

She elaborated on this "My affinities are just not really at the 'visitor-side.' So sometimes I find it difficult to think about all those things that are outside of my responsibilities." Thus, similarly to what was discussed in chapter one, there is a resistance toward working outside of your area of expertise. Interestingly, at the Zeeuws Museum, I encountered similar perspectives, Kevin explained that he did find the topic interesting and important, as was discussed previously, but he found other activities more interesting to work on in the time that he had. Indeed, it is essential to recognise that many of these museum professionals carry existing responsibilities within the museum practice that require time – which runs out. The dimension of time in this change process will be further discussed in chapter three. Now I first turn to Karina, who offered me another perspective on the influence of current areas of expertise on the social boundaries between the professional and the methodology. Karina used to be part of the OBFA team at the Zeeuws Museum. However, she quit the team. As previously discussed, Karina has already worked with collaborative methodologies. Therefore she argued that she did not need a 'method' to collaborate. In addition, the meetings and assignments cost her time, which she had to spend on other responsibilities. Karina explicitly mentions her experiences in different fields such as fashion, design, and psychiatric healthcare, which makes collaboration, especially with unfamiliar publics or communities, "comes easy to her"

These reflections tell us multiple things about the connection between expertise and boundary making. People's current ideas on what has solidified a boundary that holds them back from participating in the OBFA-program. As demonstrated in chapter one, similar doubts were present in the OBFA-team. Partly this boundary is solidified even further by the dimension of time and current responsibility, which will be touched upon in the third chapter. Interestingly, museum professionals who have worked in different fields find no need for a "method" and struggle less with collaboration as something beyond their expertise. I carefully argue that these experiences contribute to the ability of these museum professionals to position themselves as "social experts". Further on in this chapter, I elucidate how these similarities play a role in the relationship between the "inside" and the "outside" within the museum.

So far, I have focused on the professional's reflections on collaboration and the OBFA method related to their own experiences and views. However, during my conversations, I noticed that there were also specific method-focused questions that contributed to the feeling of distance or detachment. And more importantly, it contributed to the inside/outside dynamic as introduced at the beginning of this chapter. I now turn to these reflections to deepen our understanding of these social boundaries.

Defining communities and language

Overall, the general goal of inclusion and diversity is supported by museum professionals who are not part of the OBFA-team. Iris, despite her hesitance, stressed the positive influence that the HERE exhibition had on her: a younger, different public, working with live artists, and more energy in the museum; similar statements were made by Annelies and others from the Rembrandthuis, Karina and more. However, a "but…" was often added after these exclamations of support. Karina was one of the first professionals to explicitly mention shrinking away from the theory that OBFA presents, not collaboration itself. She explained: "I had the feeling that there was continuously talked about people, where these people are not present." Indeed, criticisms directed at the method itself are important to discuss. One of the most recurrent judgements came down to the "American-ness" of the method. As has been touched upon in the previous chapters, the OBFA-method was developed in America and presented as an English-spoken program. This judgement was twofold. For some, it came down to practical challenges, the English instruction videos were too fast, or they simply did not feel very comfortable speaking, reading or writing in English. This was mainly the case at Zeeuws Museum – where some professionals had been part of the team but were 'spooked' by the overwhelming "American" content. Second, the more pertinent challenge was translating and using specific terminology. Especially the idea of 'community'. During one of the museum-wide meetings at the Rembrandthuis, of which one was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, a museum professional made the following statement: "Of course, you are going to go for Moroccans, now you can check your box!" This presents the crux of the OBFA-method as a policy of 'inclusion'. The naming or labelling of a 'Community of Interest' can reify and thereby essentialise who they (the COI) are. This question was returned at Zeeuws Museum as well. The need to define these communities was labelled as 'American' "as if everyone has to have a label […] you don't have to name it like this, you can just go and talk to people to see what their needs are", argued Saskia as a reflection on the use of a COI. Museum professionals express uncertainty about the choice to work with a precisely defined COI: "If I look at the project that is chosen now, I think; 'oh, that is a pretty small and niche group we are looking at. What exactly will we do?" – was said by Iris. A counter-argument accompanies these doubts for a specific definition. As Saskia explained, you can measure your work's impact by making specific choices. The empirical material presented in chapter one demonstrated

that OBFA-members struggled with the same questions and doubts, which resulted in constantly questioning the labelling of their COI – leading to an increased awareness of (harmful) assumptions, which motivated the OBFA team to reflect and research continuously. A key difference here is that the OBFA-team had time and space to discuss these doubts and criticisms, resulting in this feeling of intimacy. At the same time, other museum professionals are unaware of these extensive discussions and – as stated at the beginning of this chapter, are not given insight into the process of discussing these labels within the OBFA-team often enough.

Thus we are reminded of (Naidoo 2016), who argues for critiquing these 'homogenising notions of 'community' (Naidoo 2016: 512) *within* the 'languages of inclusion and diversity' because the use of the inside/outside paradigm in museum practices, such as participation, contribute to the strengthening and reconfiguring of these "inside" and "outside" boundaries. The OBFA-program is an example of these 'languages of inclusion and diversity'. The discussions sketched above offer empirical material that demonstrates that these museums *are* critiquing their own 'languages of diversity', which reveals the complexities connected to these abstract labels of inside/outside or 'community' – however, the missing link here is the fact that there is not yet sufficient communication and space between the "inside" (The OBFA-team) and the "outside" (the rest of the museum) within the museum itself.

At the Rembrandthuis, this resulted in open conflict during one of the shared meetings. Based on the lack of contact with and insight into the OBFA-program, the assumptions made, especially in the Rembrandthuis, a binary distinction between "the floor" and "the office". It was expressed that "the office" did not pay enough attention to the current public or actively excluded other public by making these choices. We can again employ Naidoo's argument in analysing this perspective. We can reason that indeed, by 'privileging' one "outsider" narrative over the other, the museum signals "to those who enter to participate, which parts of their cultural identity to check at the door, and which to foreground" (Naidoo 2016: 512), meaning that again – what and who is welcome inside and what remains outside (and thus "other") is decided by the institution. However, the nature of this conflict was interpreted to be different. During the OBFA-meetings, it was theorised that these responses are based on personal emotions and negative live experiences regarding (racial?) labelling or white saviorism. This caused discussions and tensions beyond the OBFA-method, not in the least, about organization-structures with a long history of tension between "the floor" and "the office". The shared OBFA-meetings offer an opportunity to discuss these tensions and differences, while the OBFA-project itself is used as a conduit to confront these tensions. However, I could not speak with "the other side" of the conflict and only collected second-hand insight from the OBFA-members present at this discussion.

Thus, we might even go as far as to argue that the museum is transformed into a *conflict zone,* not between the public and the museum, but among professionals who grapple with different cultural experiences and experienced hierarchies. Consequently, this was one of the main points of criticism toward the OBFA-program: how does an OBFA-team handle this amount of conflict and resistance beyond the program's scope?

Guarding the museum's expertise position

On the other hand, the act of choosing a specific COI or working with a particular group ("people from the neighbourhood" or "activists") was sometimes described as being "a bit excessive" [*Nederlands: een beetje overdriven]*. We could also interpret criticism on defining a specific COI as a somewhat conservative attitude. For example, Annelies stressed this excessiveness and followed up with the opinion that the museum should be able to 'just make nice art exhibitions' The previous material presented here, and in chapter one, demonstrate that the acknowledgement of the museum's normativity has motivated specific individuals into change, by critically examining who they cater to, what their organisations look like, and thus also identifying the kind of perspectives that they miss. The intention behind identifying a COI is to criticise. This process questions the neutrality of the museum as an 'inside' and implies that the museum itself is changeable. Therefore assumptions of "just a nice art exhibition" are questioned and presented as a specific perspective instead of the 'correct' or neutral perspective on (art) history. Annelies her view of this "excessiveness" clearly demonstrates that the "outside" is interpreted as "new" and "different" while the inside is "normal" (Naidoo 2016: 4); thus, "just an art exhibition".

However, we cannot neglect discussing what hides behind the statement "just an art exhibition". As has been argued before, museums are framed as 'knowledge institutes' throughout history, and in discussing this change, we should not neglect this interpretation of the museum. In chapter one, I demonstrated that the 'identity of the museum' still (partly) revolves around collecting, presenting, creating and guarding knowledge. The museum professional is positioned as the expert in providing this knowledge of (art)historical context. Another professional I met who was familiar with the OBFA method argued that the museum had the responsibility and skill to present "contextual information" and ensure that the museum is "coherent". She stated: "Those are the things that make the museum a museum. If you cannot go to the museum for this knowledge, then where do you go?"

Others offered a similar perspective and explained that they value the museum's role in presenting "a not over emotional and neutral account" of the 'content'." Which means that museums have the function to uncover what there is to know about history, but not make it more than that it is. This responsibility also translated to "the inside" of the museum. I learned that there had been

discussions about the history of the Rembrandthuis. During this discussion, questions were raised about the possible connections to the slave trade between the East and the West. Someone had prompted: what is the deal with the house itself? Is that made with money over the backs of others?' These discussions are received positively because they motivate professionals to be critical of their history. However, this professional also stated that the museum depends on experts with the skill of research and the ability "to formulate careful and sought out perspectives." These two perspectives focus on the public role that the museum has, and the responsibility museum professionals feel to share their expert knowledge with the public and their colleagues as part of fulfilling their societal role. Thus, we can conclude that the scholarly expertise housed in museums is still significant and not valued less. However, the addition of critical voices and other forms of expertise (such as the expertise of lived experience) leads to new discussions where scholarly expertise is no longer taken at face value.

2.3 Concluding remarks

From this chapter, we can conclude that those not part of the OBFA-team interprets the goals of the OBFA-project and museum collaboration similarly to the professionals discussed in chapter one – as a way to include previously excluded perspectives and knowledge (which requires sharing of authority). For many who do not have collaborative experiences, the program is understood as a way to change your practice, not focused on collaborating with extra museal partners. At this time, the OBFA-program is framed as something quite abstract that professionals 'don't really know anything about, which contributes to a feeling of detachment towards the program. This chapter also identifies social boundaries within the museum that contribute to the creation of an "inside/outside" dynamic within the museum.

Firstly I gained insight into the connection between expertise and boundary making. Similarly, as in the first chapter, museum professionals felt that participating in OBFA would be beyond the scope of their expertise. Secondly, the OBFA-method itself contributed to the creation of boundaries. This contribution was twofold: For some, the boundary was solidified because the program is English spoken. However, a more pertinent challenge arose in how OBFA presents working with extra-msueal partners. The idea of a specific Community of Interest was questioned: does this not contribute to the essentialising and maybe even stereotyping of "other"? In chapter one, I demonstrated that this approach is also questioned within the OBFA-team, but that – because of the more practical dimensions of time and scheduling, these extensive processes of reflection are not adequately shared with the rest of the museum(s), resulting in a disconnect and sometimes even conflict. Notably, the shared meetings are of great significance in institutional change. During these meetings, this disconnect is confronted, transforming the space into a *conflict zone*. Where individual

cultural or social experiences become just as important, and maybe even more important than one's position of expertise within the museum – demonstrating that the OBFA-project creates more space for the "expertise of lived experience" within the museum itself and taps into more complex processes within the institution – such as organisational culture and leadership.

However, we can also identify another side of this argument against identifying a COI which, for my argument, we can simplify as a more conservative stance regarding inclusion policies. The idea of identifying a Community of Interest to locate perspectives that the museum misses is also identified as "excessive". We can present this attitude as one that resists change and holds on to the idea of the museum as presenting a "neutral" perspective. However, closer inspection of this statement reveals a nuance. Museum professionals value the academic or scholarly skills of the museum (professional) and search for ways to combine both the "emotional" and the "scholarly" perspectives.

The next chapter reveals different ways museum professionals try to work across the boundaries identified in the previous chapter, especially paying attention to how they do this together with their extra-museal collaborator. The next chapter also locates these attempts into structures that are mainly out of the museum professional's control, such as governmental funding, the passing of time and the assumptions of others.

Chapter three: moving between “outside” and “inside

When discussing the “boundaries” that museum collaboration attempts to reconfigure or work across there is no shortage of metaphors that speak of thresholds, walls or even strongholds and towers that museum’s try to break down. As Bernadette Lynch eloquently put “Museums therefore have a clear and urgent choice to make in terms of which pat to take: stay within the old parameters, behind the ‘wall’ of the institution, or step up and bravely embrace their civil society role at the heart or our divided metropolises” (Lynch 2017: 25). These walls as physical and conceptual are designed with passive visitor in mind, and limit the museum’s ability to work together and create equitable or equal, as Lynch puts it, relationships. Lynch argues for the deconstruction of these walls – taking apart meanings, together with their collaborators. So, as already has been established the ‘walls’ that I discuss are more social and cultural than physical – as social boundaries. What has not yet been discussed is the crucial influence of those who move between “inside”(as the museum) and “outside” as (society or communities), and thus contribute to what Lynch calls *collaborative reflexivity*, that allows the museum to be critical, together with their partners (Lynch 2017:22) This chapter focuses on their perspectives and experiences. Which demonstrate the emotional impact museum collaboration can have on both extra-museal partner and museum professionals that move in between the “inside” and the “outside”. By combining their perspectives with the ones discussed in the previous chapters I identify bigger social structures and boundaries or “walls” shaped by centuries of assumptions and expectations of the museum’s function that contribute to the difficulty of actually changing museum practice through collaboration.

3.1 Negotiating boundaries between “outside” and “inside”

I return to one of the previously mentioned case-studies to demonstrate what, and who exactly I mean when I talk about moving “outside” and “inside”. When reflecting onexhibition process of HERE. Hester described that when she realized she needed extra-museal expertise her first response was. “I know, but help me, I don’t know how!”. She mentioned, that one collaborator had been crucial in getting the extra-museal expert panel together and that – without this person, the process would have been almost impossible. The person Hester was talking about, was Chantal. She was said, both by others and herself to fulfill a “network function” within the exhibition process. Chantal became the link to the network that the Rembrandthuis had no access to yet. Chantal thus had a vital role in making this exhibition collaborative. This in itself is enough incentive to uncover Chantal’s perspectives and experiences with being this “missing link” in museum collaborations. Chantal explained to me that, within the HERE project, she organised the panel discussions and contacted different individuals who became part of these discussions. Chantal’s decision to work with museums in general was motivated by her interest in stepping “outside” of her own familiar bubble. Instead of

surrounding herself with familiar Black or POC experts, she wanted to "move into worlds that are more white […] but where there is a need to know more." She explained that she has always been a storyteller interested in debates on multivocality, racism, diversity and inclusion which has been a vital part in her work on documentaries, television and social programming, and that she aimed to add and uncover untold perspectives – which part of why Chantal started working with museums. Chantal's approach to the HERE project will help us understand the importance of Chantal's role and thus others like her, as a facilitating professional in collaboration between the museum, and extra-museal partners. One of the interesting things that Chantal noted was the importance of having an advocate or a "safe person" that facilitated the interaction between the museum and extra museal partners. As a part of the collaborative process of the HERE project, panel discussions were organised. Chantal explained that she made an effort to stay in touch with these panel members after the discussions that had taken place in the museum. Private reflections on the sessions allowed panel participants to express perspectives that might have not fit into the panel discussion, or that the panel participants felt uncomfortable expressing towards the museum directly. In part, Chantal explained this had to do with the fact that extra-museal panel members were insecure of what they could and could not say in the context of the museum because they felt like they did not know the 'rules' of the interactions within the museum space. Here, the expertise of lived experience returns – Chantal is attuned to possibility of negative experiences of museum collaboration (especially for this group in question, people identifying as belonging to POC or Black communities) because she herself identified as part of this community. Another professional shared similar experiences and explained that her own experiences made her more "culturally aware" and therefore skilled, or at least suited to facilitate these interactions. Professionals like this take it upon themselves to 1) advocate and protect the needs of extra-museal collaborators, especially concerning marginalised groups and 2) "translate" experiences between both parties, and educate and support the museum professional in creating a collaborative relationship.

Chantal's reflections upon her role in HERE – and the effect her role had on the museum and its collaborator demonstrate that network functions, or professionals specialized in facilitating collaborative interactions between "outside" and "inside" are crucial. We might even argue that museum professionals are to some extent dependent on individuals who are willing and able to move in between different "worlds". Now that we have identified the motivations of the "experts in between" and the effects of their actions on museum collaboration it is pertinent to discuss how these experts experience continuously crossing these boundaries because oftentimes, their own social and cultural experiences and identifications are central to their role within collaborative

projects. And utilising one's own life experiences to move in and out of the museum's institutional context can be quite impactful, as will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Crossing boundaries: emotional and traumatic.

I learned that fulfilling this in-between position can have a profound emotional impact on these experts and, is sometimes even described as traumatic and draining. Ecrin, who worked on collaborative projects with local communities described an incident at a previous work-place that harmed her. Ecrin explained that, according to her, the intuition she worked at abused the idea of "collaboration". This museum would approach local (marginalised) communities, under the guise of collaboration, but in the museum's office, and during meetings the rest of the museum team would say things like "This person looks right for the picture". Ecrin explained that her own Turkish background made this experience even worse. If the extra-museal collaborator was invited in because they "looked good on the picture"- why was she there? She proceeded to explain that this instilled a lot of self-doubt in her and even made her wonder if she was hired because of her expertise, or because she was Turkish. Ecrin decided to stop working at this place.

Richard shares a similar perspective as Ecrin. Richard works as an artist and curator and has long worked at the Dutch Museum of World Cultures. In his work he focusses on his own diasporic experiences and explores future and past Black consciousness in his work (Kofi s.a.)[8]. During our conversation he described working within institutional contexts as "quite a personal journey". Richard told me that he needed both sides of his practice: his art, and spending time with his community, as well as the museum. The collection in the museum inspired him, he felt a deep personal connection to the objects – which feeds back into his art. This deep connection to the objects motivated him to work at the museum and to want to make a change – among others through collaboration with extra-museal partners. However, working in the museum – with its colonial roots was heavy for him. Richard told me that his work at the museum influenced the relationships he had in his community, others positioned his work within the museum as contradictory, and were almost a little suspicious. On the one hand, he identified as part of, and emerged himself in diasporic communities and argues for activism and decolonizing practices. On the other hand, he was part of an institution with colonial roots that to some extent represented all he argues against. Richard further elaborated on his predicament by stating that his love for the collection and his community motivated him to *want* to change the museum but that change is slow, small and difficult – he said that sometimes he would celebrate the changing of a small text because

[8] Richard Kofie: "About Me" https://www.richardkofi.com/about-7 date accessed: August 2022

that was all that could be changed. The slowness of this process, and dealing with pressures from within his community, as well as from the museum make it a thought and tiring process.

However, not only professionals with the expertise of lived experience fulfilled these facilitating functions within museum collaborations. From Mieneke, conservator at Boerhaave, the Museum of the history of Science and Medicine, I learned that in 2021 the museum started a co-collecting project in which the perspective of the patient instead of the medical-professional, would be central. The focus of this project was on those who had experienced fertility treatments. The museum worked together with patient-organisation Freya, and an external collaboration-expert, who fulfilled a similar role as Chantal. The project consisted of five meetings with experts-by-experience, who shared their stories regarding fertility treatments, and brought in objects that could become a part of the museum collection. During these meetings, Mieneke tried to be present, the contact was guided by Leonie,who fulfilled the position of moving in between both spaces. Mienke experienced this as something positive, because in this way the interaction was moderated by an external partner, and Mieneke was able to represent a distinct separate voice: the voice of the museum.

This again demonstrates how a separate mediator can guide a collaboration by moving in-between spaces. This could possibly create a feeling of equality, of closeness between the groups, because “the museum” is no longer the all-knowing narrative of voice, but becomes a voice that is part of the interactions. However, the positive perspective on an external moderator can also be refuted: when Mieneke and Leonie shared their experiences in the FARO work group, other museum professionals stated that having an external moderator does not ensure that working collaboratively is embedded in the museum structure or creates a sustainable connection with the extra-museal collaborators.During our conversation Mieneke was able to explain to me that she argued for Leonie’s role in the project, because of Leonie’s experience and expertise in guiding collaborative interactions. Another important factor was time: Mienke would not have been able to dedicate the time that was needed to nurture these relationships next to her existing responsibilities. The passing, and pressure of time is also appliable to the creation of relationships and inlclusion in change *within* the museum, as became clear in chapter two.

This explains two important things. Firstly, it shows that the ability to guide and facilitate collaborative interactions is seen as a distinct form of expertise, which is also supported by the perspectives of Richard and Chantal. Of course there are differences: Richard and Chantal express a personal connection to the projects they undertake, while this is not explicitly mentioned by Leonie and other individuals who considered themselves experts in the leading of collaborative projects that I spoke to. Secondly, it demonstrates that, in an attempt to take collaboration seriously, museum

professionals like Mieneke recognize that, in order to commit to this interaction, they need to be able to dedicate the amount of time necessary. This is especially crucial in collaborative relationships because the way and the amount of time you spend is depended on both parties part of the relationship – and can therefore not be decided beforehand. Time is just one of the, often crucial and sometimes overlooked factors that influence how museums are able to create and sustain collaborative relationships. During our conversations, many other outer-museum factors and structures were discussed – which will be central in the next section.

3.2 The influence of existing structures

In February I visit Raul at his atelier. Raul was involved in the process of the HERE exhibition, which is why I reached out to him. One of the first topics we discussed was the "mental change" that is needed in museums. Our conversation steered towards museums who engage with colonial topics. Raul noted that Dutch museums are definitely engaging with these topics. However, he questioned if the admission of new perspectives, that challenge the existing national narrative that has long been presented can actually change the essence of a museum, because it is so rooted in its history. However, later in our conversation Raul gives this critical perspective an interesting spin, which might very well describe the relevance and need for collaboration. If we take the foundation of the museum as a powerful institution of mass education as point of departure, is it not then the museum's responsibility to take the lead?

Conversations with these "inside" "outsiders" gave insight into the complicated factors that make taking this responsibility and making this commitment more difficult, and demonstrate this 'rootedness' in the museums history, as well as in present day structures. The upcoming subsections each address structures that affect museum collaboration: expectations of museum production and scheduling, equality and appreciation in extra museal exchanges, discussions on expertise in intra-museal relationships, and lastly the assumtpions about academic expertise as museum expertise.

Expectations of museum production and scheduling

The previous section already suggested that facilitating sustainable and non-harmful collaboration requires a dedicated expert. This means investing time and money, which for a lot of museums is scarce. One of the first professionals to give a detailed elaboration of the problem with museum projects and their expectations and schedules of production was Marjelle, whom I met in a café in Amsterdam. Marjelle has different experiences with collaboration and participation projects, and told me that she is especially interested in the idea of broadening the relevance of museums through sharing ownership of the museums activity. According to her the concept of empathy is immensely important in these relationships, a view shared by many other museum professionals that I spoke to.

Marjelle explained that working in project structures is one of the main things that spoils the possibility of a good collaborative relationship. The genuine intention of creating a relationship is damaged by the pressure of deadlines. A collaborative relationship is often not compatible with a project structure: building a relationship is precarious, you do not know how long it will take, and need to be flexible which was already suggested by Mienke. However, a lot of museum organisations are still structured as a project-based organisation. The effects of a more experimental way of working is that the rest of the organisation cannot plan ahead, which is experienced as a lack of control and disliked. Marjelle told me that sometimes, this leads to extreme resistance.

As chapter one and two have indicated, museums are strongly embedded in structures of municipal, provincial or national policy and funding systems. This embeddedness can also have a negative effect on the collaborative relationship. Marjelle explained that the criteria set by funds can close off a lot of opportunities. She elaborates that funding agencies often want museums to state or indicate the result of a project beforehand, which limits the museums opportunity to "leave things open". Museums try to work around these structures, and embark on (limited) collaborative projects anyway, but they cannot completely avoid having to state a goal or a result because they are so dependent on the fundig, as Marjelle explained: "the structure in which msuems are stuck is pretty dominant".

Equality and appreciation in extra-museal exchanges

Money also plays a different kind of role in these relationships, in connection to the ideal of equality as a starting point of the collaborative relationship. Museum professionals get paid for their work, and there is often still an imbalance on how extra-museal collaborators are compensated in exchange for their expertise. My interlocutors mention the idea of a voucher, a bottle of wine, a bouquet of flowers or other complementary gifts as a way that signals that their expertise is not taken as seriously as the expertise of the internal museum professional. In this sense, money, or the lack of it, defines inequality in appreciation of expertise from the museum-sector's perspective. For extra-museal parties the inequality of payment and resources is an important issue that needs to be discussed and changed in order to come closer to the idea of equality within a collaborative relationship. Next to this, payment is also seen as something that an extra-museal partner "gets" out of the relationship, which then becomes a satisfactory exchange.

However, this not the only way in which equality (of expertise) is established or how an exchange of expertise can be made satisfactory for both parties. Some collaborative relationships were less shaped by monetary aspects. An example of this is the collaboration between experts of experience and MuZee Scheveningen. During a visit I attended a collection-valuation meeting, during which

extra-museal partners and museum professionals worked with the collection. While working with the collection we discussed motivations to become part of this project. For both of the extra-museal partners the satisfaction of working with and being close to objects related to their interest was a big part of what the extra-museal partners got out of the relationship. The social contact that came with the project also played a role: museum staff and extra-museal partners had coffee or lunch together, and during working there was room for (personal) conversation. During our work, several museum visitors passed by and took a look at the collection-lab. The lab was accessible for everyone. Nearing the end of my visit a couple came strolling in our working place. The woman explained that she had a possible donation for the museum: two white lace haircaps. Justa, the museum's curator explains that the museum already has a lot of similar haircaps, to which Bianca, an extra-museal partner responds that the historical dress association 'the friends of MuZee' do not have a lot of those, and could use them. Within minutes it is arranged that Bianca can keep the haircaps, since the museum cannot include them in their collection. This demonstrates a different way in which the exchange of expertise and time is made satisfactory and the relationship solidified.

Intra-museal relationships

Although it is clear that collaborative relationships inspire change in the way that museum professionals engage with partnerships, the feeling of being "stuck" in an existing structure that is difficult to change remains, and becomes visible in small ways. Marjelle's observations and experiences are corroborated by Raul, who as has been made clear, has worked with museums. Raul has worked with museums as an exhibition designer, but is also an artist. In his work he engages with the way "our exploitative state of mind frames the shape of the world" (Balai 2019). He moves between "inside" and "outside" and can give us a more detailed insight in how existing structures influence collaborative relationships. He explained that the adherence and dependency on these structures, and de embeddedness in historical habits can cause tensions within collaborative relationships. As an example he elaborates on his experiences at the Rembrandthuis. According to Raul extra-museal collaborators see historical objects differently: "We will throw out all the paintings, if that tells the story better." While museum professionals value the objects differently, in part because they are dependent on loans from other (prestigious) museums which ensures that the museum becomes part of a political process: "If you agree to loan the work a year in advance and do not show it, then the other will be offended." If these processes take such a long time to prepare, he argued that it would have been more productive if the extra-museal partners were involved earlier in the process. This would safeguard a real opportunity to have a say in the process.

He empathised with the museums, to some extent, because they feel a responsibility towards other museums to tell a specific story, connected to a specific object. Raul also connected this to a fear to disappoint or to create discussion and go against prominent discourses.

Assumptions about academic expertise as museum expertise

The way museums' attempts at facilitating interactions between "inside" and "outside" are differently perceived by other social actors. During conversations with museum professionals, it also became evident that in some cases, attempts to share power with their collaborators is received with some hesitancy because their collaborators hold certain assumptions about the position of the museum professional in their relationship. Mieneke provided me with an example when she reflected on her position within the fertility techniques project. Mieneke explained that at the beginning of the project she gave a presentation based on the museum's perspectives, their insights, goals and ways of working. As has been stated before, Mienke was present at the shared meetings. During these meetings extra-museal partners would often confirm their opinions or perspectives with her. This made it more difficult to "give" participants the lead – Mieneke's perspective was sometimes used to validate the extra-museal insights, while this was not the intention of the project. These kind of interactions demonstrate that the idea of expert positions, and the extended power that is associated with these positions is created in interaction with each other. It does not only require the museum professionals to change their ideas about expertise and power, it also requires a change in mentality of the publics and/or external experts that they work with. Mieneke expressed that the expectations of the relationship made it more difficult to attempt to share sovereignty of the project.

Similar discussions were held with Ella who has worked on a co-creative project during which control of the valuation of the a museum's historical collection[9] was shared with local residents, they were asked to share their stories expertise-by-experience, and/or family histories in order to decide which collection pieces belonged in the city museum's collection.

> *The project was really co-creative. However, my role as conservator was very traditional. As in, in the end, I was the person who had to decide. I was expected to know more about the collection and its history. Which means a lot of traditional research. And I notice that I think differently about this, because of OBFA.*

Ella explained this difference by the way she became curator at this current museum, which was motivated by the fact it decided, just like the Rembrandthuis and the Zeeuws Museum, to become

[9] Museum redacted to preserve anonymity

part of the OBFA-program. Ella presented herself as somewhat of an 'outsider conservator' at the application procedure.

> *At this museum I kind of said: Your vacancy says this: a very traditional conservator. That is not what I am. However, eyeing the OBFA-program, if you really stand by this, then you need me. I think I am the only one who became part of the organisation the way I did. I did not study history, or art history. This means that I never know better, but always remain open for different insights, I think.*

Ella expressed that she sometimes felt uncomfortable with the authority she is given in making decisions about the collection. In collaborations with publics and partners, it is not that much of a problem. However, fellow colleagues sometimes do take on discussions with Ella about the criteria of being seen as a 'professional conservator' – things that this person is supposed to be able to do or to know, Ella's counter answer to this discussion is always that she is transparent about this with the museum, and that she has skills and experience. In these discussions she brings forth her experience as a conservator in a well-known museum in London[10]. The assumption of needing a specific academic education that equals the skills needed to fulfil a function is not lost on Ella: she sometimes experiences the same thoughts regarding the leading of collaborative projects. Shouldn't this person have had more experience, have you done this before?

An interesting question arises from Ella and Mienke's reflections. It becomes clear that the challenging of traditional museum structures through collaborative exercises questions the authority held by expert positions within the museum. These museum professionals stay in this role as authority figure in order to provide a sense of direction and comfort for the people they work with .This position of expert does not only rely on academic background, as has become clear through Ella's perspective. This could mean that the assumption of the importance of a specific academic background regarding museum professionalism is less of a criteria in museums that focus on incorporating collaborative and socially relevant practices, instead moving towards social experience. It also demonstrates that having relevant experiences (such as fulfilling a position previously) are part of validating ones expert position.

[10] Museum redacted to preserve anonymity

3.3 Concluding remarks

From this last chapter, we can conclude that museums are to some extent dependent on collaborators and experts who are willing and able to move in between the "inside" and the "outside". These experts can fulfil the role of translator and are in some cases able to be a "safe person" within the institutional context, advocating for extra-museal collaborator's needs while at the same time supporting the museum's development towards reflexive practices. These professionals are in some cases aided by their, now often mentioned, "expertise of lived experience" – which at the same time makes their role in collaborative projects vulnerable. They deal with the emotional consequences of moving in-between spaces – experiencing racism or feeling torn between the needs and values of your community, and working with an institution that has contributed to the social processes that influence this community negatively. The importance of these experts for museum professionals part of an institutionalized context is twofold, it helps them in gaining experience in *how to* collaborate, as was shown by Hester's reflections, and, a large part of this is decided by time. Museum professionals recognize that the nurturing of collaborative relationships need time and that the creation of a relationship is decided by two parties – not only the aims and needs of the institution. The aspect of lack of time can be connected to the influence of existing extra-museal structures that influence the practice. Museum professionals engaged in collaboration are pressured by their colleagues and social policies to demonstrate what kind of "product" they will produce, and how long this will take, an expectation that is almost unavoidable because museums are dependent on funding. Money is also introduced as a way to signal equality of expertise, in a collaborative relationship – although satisfactory exchanges can also be decided by non-monetary factors. The last two sections demonstrate clearly the ideas on expertise as a social process, presented by Carr (2010) and Boylan (2006). Museum expertise, and what is valued as museum expertise is confirmed by both intra-museal as well as extra museal interactions.

This chapter gave us insight into the structures that – to some extent are outside of the museum professional's control. However, it did show us that the temporary goals found in collaboration allow museum professionals and extra-museal partners to cleverly work across and within structures that sometimes feel unchangeable.

Chapter four: conclusion, beyond “inside” and “outside”

The introduction of this thesis I posed that, in order to understand the influence of the introduction of collaborative methodologies on museum practices we must not forget to look “inside” – to the perspectives and experiences of museum professionals who are challenged with changing their practice. I hope that, after this thesis I have been able to demonstrate – to some extent, the complexity of collaboration in museum spaces. First I will return to the main question I posed in the very first chapter of this thesis: *In what way does the introduction of collaborative approaches influence the understanding of museum expertise and expert identity held by museum professionals?*

The many individuals that I spoke to, including those whose perspectives are not part of this written product, have demonstrated that collaboration is understood in many different ways, and employed for many different aims. Which was demonstrated in the first two chapters. What became clear for the two museums central to this thesis was that, within these institutions, the idea of museum collaboration is solidly connected to the pressure, and the need to “become” more inclusive and diverse. We could argue that museum collaboration is about adding or ‘noticing’ perspectives that fall outside of dominant frames – the museum professional’s very own take on Tsing’s (2014) “arts of noticing”. However, for the museum professionals central to this study, collaboration goes beyond ‘noticing’ or ‘listening’, collaboration radicalizes ‘noticing’ and calls for action. As Strother (2020) argues – radical listening. However, this ‘radical listening’ and taking action can be quite scary, and insecure. Policies and methodologies – such as OBFA offer the museum professionals a form of stability and guidance in dealing with the contingency of collaborations. Working with the OBFA methodology has opened up discussions about the ideal of collaboration, but maybe more importantly about the assumptions and ideas museum professionals have about each other, themselves and “outsiders”. These meetings with “outside” collaborators, and the “inside” discussions have a significant effect on how expertise is framed and understood by the museum professional, which allowed us insight in how expertise is understood by museum professionals.

Firstly, truly attempting to listen and to connect to “others” and their experiences outside of the dominant frame have repositioned ideas on existing museum expertise; its root in colonial systems are questioned. This attention to non-scholarly or non-institutionalized expertise does not devalue this traditional form of expertise, but it does motivate to critically examine the way this expertise is presented (as a singular perspective) and how different forms of expertise are related to one another. This re-examinations of forms of expertise is not only applicable to the museum and its extra-museal partners but also happens within the museum itself. Scholarly and academic expertise within museums is no longer taken at face value but discussed, challenged and presented as one of the many perspectives in the stories that museums try to tell. The expertise of lived experience, as

presented by Hutchinson (2019), became more important within the institutions themselves. These discussions and 'new' forms of expertise confront social boundaries within the museum itself. Whether these are based upon life experiences, or related to one's specific expertise position within the museum. Collaboration demonstrates, and brings forth the importance of individual experiences combined with scholarly expertise. T two are inseparable and that they therefore should become and remain part of the museum professional's practice. This, in some way transforms the museum itself into a *contact zone* (Clifford 1979; Pratt 1991) where museum professionals confront boundaries created within the museum and most importantly, try to work across them by questioning their own assumptions. This demonstrates that the museum is changeable, and is changing on "the inside".

However, my material in chapter one and two has demonstrated that the hierarchical relationship between these two forms of expertise does not necessarily change when engaging with extra-museal collaborators. Scholarly expertise still remains an important and identificatory characteristic of the museum that, for most museum professionals is still leading their practices. In chapter three, I discussed that this immunity to change and feeling of inertia can in part, be contributed to the influence and pressure of government and funding policies, this is a great source of frustration for both those "inside" and "outside" of the museum. These pressures ensure that it is difficult for these two museums to let go of their institutional aims and goals. The last chapter also demonstrated that the process of change museums embark on is dependent on those who specialize in facilitating collaborative relationships and are able (sometimes facilitated by their expertise of lived experience) and willing to move between the intuitional ideals and goals ("inside") and extra-museal collaborators ("outside"). Their sometimes vulnerable positions remind us again of the importance of affective and social skills for the current museum professional, which we might argue transforms the museum professional into a social professional.

Lastly, I must reflect upon my own contribution and role in this research. The complexity of writing down all that I have experienced, and all that has been shared with me has been a great challenge but reflects the interconnectedness and complexity of museums which is only increased by museum collaborations. This project thought me, as a researcher and as a museum professional that understanding and learning about collaboration requires patience and perseverance. What it also demonstrated is that the best way to understand collaboration is to try to let go of your assumptions (so to really radically listen) and, as one of my interlocutors said at the end of a conversation. "We make all these complicated theories and possibilities. But, I think.. Maybe you just have to do it!."

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