

Chapter 13

Conclusion: The Museum of the Future and the Future of Museums



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Abstract This book and the contributions to this book look on the *future of museums*, by focusing on the *museum of the future* and by moving with further steps “beyond.” The chapters refer all to a specific set of questions that drive the analysis. For further discussion, the following propositions can be identified: (1) Museums continuously play and will play a role for art and society. As art and society are changing, these changes also must be reflected by the museums, their structures and processes. (2) Museums are (being) partially interconnected with culture, the tourism, and by this with the economy. But beyond such an economic dimension, museums (at least in principle) are (should be) also connected to knowledge production (research) and knowledge application (innovation) in the knowledge society, knowledge democracy, and knowledge economy. (3) Digital technologies open up new perspectives, but also expectations, how visitors may interact and interconnect with museums. As art is continuously exploring and experimenting with new forms, this also is (or should be) the case for museums. (4) One purpose of museums is to store (and preserve) knowledge. However, museums also must be organizations (locations) that

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engage in creating and producing knowledge and new knowledge, and by this, they are continuously of importance. (5) Museums have to engage in processes of virtualization. However, not everything is a question of technology only. (6) To be able to produce (new) knowledge, museums must engage in networks with artists and researchers, so to produce art and artistic research (in innovative combinations). Forms of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary art and research are here equally of importance. *Finally, said in summary, the intertwining helix of museum of the future and future of museums will drive the development and evolution of museums further.*

Keywords Art · Future · Future of museums · Museum · Museum of the future

The spectrum extends and stretches here from the *Museum of the Future*¹ to the *Future of Museums*. Or, as Joshua Decker is asking in this volume, in his contribution: “I’m more worried about the future of our futures than I am worried about the future of our museums. From pessimistic anthropocene-capitalcene theoretical perspectives, the future has already become our past. From an accelerationist theory perspective, the sooner we arrive at the future that has already become our past the better, so that we can move beyond the capitalist-planetary apocalypse.”

This volume was set to refer to several questions (already being indicated and introduced, at the beginning, in the introduction). In the following, we want to *propose some propositions* for further discussion [2].

1. What is the role of museums for art and society?

Museums continuously play and will play a role for art and society. As art and society are changing, these changes also must be reflected by the museums, their structures and processes. Examples for such external influences are technologies, digitalization, and the Internet. Other examples are changing modes of knowledge production and innovation. Here also “visions” and the creation of visions are important for museums.

2. How will museums have to change, given the dynamic developments in art and society, to gain or rather regain relevance – in the sense of a power to influence?

Museums are (being) partially interconnected with culture, the tourism, and by this with the economy. This may differ in importance from country to country, but museums are always (mostly) representing also an economic factor. Greece is here a good example: “It is believed that public museums could become one of the central axes of cultural development and the central axis of tourism development” (Eleni Mavragani). In that sense, the financing and the fundraising for museums also are gaining in importance. But beyond such an economic dimension, museums (at least in principle) are (should be) also connected to knowledge production (research) and knowledge application (innovation) in the knowledge

¹On the *Museum of the Future*, see also Bott [1].

society, knowledge democracy, and knowledge economy. By this, museums represent organizations that take part in networks of knowledge production (and not only in knowledge preservation).

3. Which answers do museums have for the challenges that arise in the production of art and with the use of permanently and rapidly changing technologies? Furthermore, which answers do museums have for the increasing importance of the different artistic disciplines, and how do they (the museums) assess the status and importance of digital artistic media? And which answers do museums have for the increasing importance of artistic disciplines, which refuse to use classical or digital artistic media in artistic processes, such as performance art or social interactive art?

Digital technologies open up new perspectives, but also expectations, how visitors may interact and interconnect with museums. But of course, not everything is a question of technology, and also technology is changing.² Art (often) wants to have an impact on society, politics, and economy, and here museums can support and develop (co-develop, co-create) such aspirations of art (and artistic research). As art is continuously exploring and experimenting with new forms, this also is (or should be) the case for museums.

4. How to keep museums in contact with the recipients of art in a world in which the patterns of communication and perception have changed so dramatically? Will the reception and dissemination of art to a broader public still be a domain of museums in the future?

One purpose of museums is to store (and preserve) knowledge. However, museums also must be organizations (locations) that engage in creating and producing knowledge and new knowledge, and by this, they are continuously of importance. Museums can be seen as “laboratories for citizens to explore new worlds” (Peter Weibel) and by this also feed the “dreams of humanity” (Virgil Widrich), to name here some examples.

5. Can the art museum, as a real place, be a counterpart in a virtualized and digitalized society, or will museums need to virtualize and even globalize themselves virtually?

Museums have to engage in processes of virtualization. However, not everything is a question of technology only. There is something like an “intangible cultural heritage” (Harald Kraemer). Also, museums are connected to social, political, and economic change and to “social struggle” (Nora Sternfeld). How can museums support here the artists and researchers, and civil society, and democracy?³

6. How do the reception and representation of art change, and what does this mean for museums?

To be able to produce (new) knowledge, museums must engage in networks with artists and researchers, so to produce art and artistic research (in innovative

²For example, see Reichle [3] on *Art in the Age of Technoscience: Genetic Engineering, Robotics, and Artificial Life in Contemporary Art*.

³See, furthermore, Falser and Juneja [4].

combinations). Forms of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary art and research are here equally of importance.

The future of museums is more than only the museum of the future. In that sense, the future of museums is farther and further reaching (and it is beyond). But, the museums of the future are a part of (and belong to) the future of museums. The intertwining helix of museum of the future and future of museums will drive the development and evolution of museums further.

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