



**Eunamus
Final
conference**

**Central
European
University,
Budapest**

**14 December
2012**



Peter Aronsson, Eunamus coordinator, opened the conference by highlighting some of the most policy relevant findings of the project. Aronsson focused on the role of national museums in state-making processes. Here, the concept of **cultural constitution** has become central. National museums are part of the cultural constitution of a nation-state. The cultural constitution provides the political constitution with long-standing and materialised evidence of shared history, civic culture and values. It provides a relevant base for orchestrating directions to be taken by the community. Depending on the trajectory and timing of state- and nation-making processes in Europe, the national museum plays different roles. The national museum may act proactive in new or threatened ethnic nations, for example on the Balkans. It may securely and implicitly orchestrate shared values and conflicts in old states such as Sweden and Denmark, or universalise the knowledge and experiences of old empires, such as France and the UK.

Today the national museums *materialise* and *stabilise* knowledge and world views. They *emphasise* shared values, *deal* with conflicts and *act* on change within nation-states. They also have transnational powers, setting up an implicit European cultural language (classical heritage, the museum, spheres of knowledge, virtues of art and enlightenment). Moreover, they allow the negotiation multiple territorial and non-territorial identities.

Aronsson gave away four policy recommendations for stakeholders

- National museums should strive for the ever-shifting balance between stability and change (re-formulation, -narration, -mediation, -professionalization, -organization)
- National museums should balance the opportunities of new media with ongoing care of collections
- National museums should work more closely together, foregoing past competition
- National museums should partner with regional and local museums to promote the mosaic of identities within each nation

Finally Aronsson introduced four implications emerging out Eunamus' research for considering how historical representations in national museums might contribute to greater European Cohesion.

- National museums need to be autonomous creative institutions
- National museums need to overcome national constraints
- National museums can act as forum for contested issues
- National museums need to reach new audiences

These implications were starting points for the discussions in four panels with invited stakeholders from all over Europe. The discussants in the panels were all strategically chosen to represent different parts of Europe, from the far east of the south – Greece – to the far west of the south – Portugal – from east central Europe Hungary - to the north-western coast of continental Europe – the UK. The north was represented by Finland and Estonia, two nation-states with divergent democratic trajectories. All discussants are highly valued among museum professionals and several of them are active in influential stakeholder organisations such as NEMO (Network of European Museums) and ICOM Europe (part of International Council of Museums). One discussant represented the Budapest observatory (of cultural policy). One discussant represented the European Commission.



The panels were chaired by **Helene Larsson**, Head of Communication and Exhibitions at the Nobel Museum in Stockholm. Between 2009-2012 she worked as the Cultural Attaché at the Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade, Serbia, dealing with culture and arts as well as museum development, contemporary collecting, education and use of history.

This is how the topic of the first panel was introduced:

- There is no “one size fits all” solution to the production of histories in national museums that might promote greater social cohesion. Nation-states experience on-going change that test their inherent security – within the past few decades alone Europe has seen the breakup of the Soviet Block, internecine wars, the postcolonial re-imagining of power in society, economic migration and demographic change, the rise of ethnic and religious terrorism, global economic restructuring and crisis.
- If national museums are to be either partners in change or play a stabilizing role then they require institutional resilience and adaptability. It is also vital that they operate at a distance from government. Direct political interference in the operation of museums, whether in Paris or Berlin or the former totalitarian systems of Eastern Europe, causes the national museum to lose the trust of its audience, which can recognize political instrumentalisation at work.
- Nevertheless, national museums are at their most effective when working in harmony with the government agenda, and politicians should expect national museums to play an active role in future society. The most successful national museums, now and in the past, are distinguished by visionary professional leadership committed to the museum and to creativity: confident, empowered, intellectually youthful and internationally networked. Expertise from other sectors can also contribute to the increased social relevance of national museums. (from Eunamus report)

The first invited guest to respond was **Susanna Pettersson**, Director of Alvar Aalto Museo Finland. She nuanced the statement that national museums are at their most effective when working in harmony with the government agenda. She suggested that museums need to be critical friends to the public and to politicians. Museum professionals should ask difficult questions and develop social skills in order to be able to interact with both the public and the government.



Merike Lang, Susanna Pettersson and Simon Knell

Speaking from a nation-state previously included in the Soviet Block, **Merike Lang**, director of the Estonian Open-Air Museum, preferred working in harmony with the audience rather than with public funding and politics. Museums should be autonomous to decide on their own

networks and activities. In her view, neither state nor EU funding make museums autonomous.

Talking on behalf of the Eunamus project, Simon Knell pointed to the fact that museums always are political in the sense that they want to have an effect on people. Governments seek to instrumentalise and control museums by funding. In response to this, a voice from the auditorium suggested that one has to differ between the state and the government. It is not possible for national museums to be autonomous from the state, the political constitution. Governments, on the other hand come and go, and it is not self-evident that their agendas should shape museums.

In a comment on the differences between her and Lang's approaches to autonomy, Susanna Petterson suggested that there is a divide between countries where governments give museums blank cards (such in stable democracies), and countries where national museums are in the hands of the government (totalitarian states).

The topic of the second panel was "National museums need to overcome national constraints". This is how this implication was stated in the pre-conference report:

- Visitors overwhelmingly agree that national museums of all kinds, not just nationalistic ones, are key institutions in representing national values. Reflection on the manner in which national confidence and security controls and constrains national narratives may permit new performances of these values. Many national museums, particularly in South Eastern Europe, have struggled to think beyond essentialising and othering narratives and consequently have failed to see how national museums can present the nation as a modern democracy.

The discussants in this panel pled for two not necessarily mutually exclusive additional angles to the national take. **Peter Assmann**, Director of Landesmuseum Austria, was first to talk in this panel. He talked about accepting and promoting the regions, since they have a very strong value in many parts of Europe which need to be acknowledged in national museums. Museums are institutions for inclusion as well as exclusion and they could act as forum for complementing regional standpoints.



Anastasia Lazarido, Peter Assmann & Dominique Poulot

Anastasia Lazarido, Director of the Byzantine and Christian Museums, Hellenic Ministry of Culture Greece, instead discussed the ways in which her museum reached out for immigrant audiences. She also talked about the difficulties she had in keeping up exhibition politics and audience work in times of substantial financial and bureaucratic difficulties.

In his comment, Eunamus **Dominique Poulot** asked if the national utopia really is such a bad thing. The national frame has for a very long time successfully supported inclusion and solidarity. Perhaps it is about making the national frame more flexible, to include many perspectives. He also pointed to the many contemporary reactions to the nationalist constraints: cosmopolitanism, deconstruction of historical narratives and the creation of personal museums such as Orhan Pamuk's in Istanbul.

One way to include divergent perspectives within the museum walls is to promote that they act as a forum for contested issues. This was the topic of the third panel, introduced like this in the pre-conference report:

- National museums can become institutionalised arenas for developing new understandings of the nature of the nation and its external relations. Open debate of matters of unity, difference and conflicts, threats and hopes can help the nation negotiate stability and change. This role has not been extensively developed in Europe's national museums. The Deutsches Historisches Museum is an example of a national museum adopting this role; it negotiates a difficult past and the more recent transformation of the modern state. There are opportunities in other parts of Europe, where international and regional tensions and concerns continue to prevail, for national museums to act as forums negotiating new, pluralistic – rather than essentialised – understandings.



Luís Raposo, Péter Inkei and Arne Bugge Amundsen

Luís Raposo, Museu Nacional de Arqueologia Portugal, was the first to respond. Connecting to the theme of the second panel he argued that museums are useful for promoting national values. However, he underlined the democratic capacities of museums – in times of crises museums could turn into forums for discussing social issues and turn into places of resistance. To a certain extent, museums are able to handle conflicts in present societies.

Developing on the democratic capacities of national museums, **Péter Inkei**, Director of the Budapest Observatory, Hungary, suggested that the museum is in the same situation as the theatre. It has the ability to put contested issues on stage, particularly so in democratic societies. In more restricted contexts, museums and theatres have to find compromises. From his Hungarian point of view the EU seems more eager on this, than many governments are. He also suggested that there might be a gap between on the one hand critically minded professionals, and on the other hand the public and the politicians, with regard to the ability of museums to act as arenas for contested issues.

Arne Bugge Amundsen, the EUNAMUS consortium, argued that the national museum always has been a place for contested issues. It has expressed the aspirations of new nations as well as the voices of declining nations. However, a new set of contested issues have entered the stage in the last decades: unresolved issues after international conflicts (Germany & the Balkans); former empire's postcolonial problems (Belgium & France); transnational issues (Samis and Romas), and global problems related to environmental issues. Ending his intervention with the provocative question – what remains – Helene Larsson, the chair, responded – perspectives from the bystanders to recent atrocities. Out of her experiences as Swedish cultural attaché in Serbia she testified to how these difficult memories now are being dealt with by artists and in temporary exhibitions.

The topic of the fourth and final panel was national museums need to reach new audiences. This is how it was introduced:

- National museums are restricted by a number of factors in the audiences they can reach. While many are major sites of tourism, which opens up particular opportunities for bridge-building, many others are not. Without action to change this, national museums work in favour of the status quo and implicitly act against change. Some states, such as UK, have engaged in the decentralisation of national museums

through the building of branches. Others engage in internal loans and travelling exhibitions. Pioneering work was undertaken in this area by the Council of Europe after the Second World War. Much of Europe's elite material culture is little travelled, but this can inject confidence in a continent of beleaguered nations. However, greater consideration might be given to the circulation of nonelite culture. The ethnographic approach to society displayed at Nordiska Museet, for example, offers one model for building connections on the basis of human experience.

David Anderson, Director General of the National Museum of Wales UK, started this panel with a set of provocative questions and statements: Why should there be public funding of museums if they are not instrumental, in the sense of useful for the public? How many states live up to UNESCO's declaration on cultural rights and consciously implement them? Answering his own questions, he suggested that the reason that public institutions do not allow people to exercise their rights is that it is uncomfortable. In his view, the practical outcome of Eunamus research should be that museum professionals are made personally accountable for reaching out for new audiences.



Helene Larsson, David Anderson and Alexandra Kalogirou

Representing the European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture, Culture Policy Unit, **Alexandra Kalogirou**, advocated that museums need to develop to meet expectations from today's audiences and embed themselves in the wider community. Museums are assets for growth and creativity; through programmes and activities they can unite people, build bridges and create dialogues.

In her intervention, **Andrea Witcomb** spoke from the Australian experience. On this continent, the words negotiation and reconciliation are important to curators. So are the three c:s – collaboration, co-production, and conversation. Often the curatorial work is as important as the exhibition itself for audience development, and the web becomes an extension of the exhibition in strivings to dissolve the boundaries of the museum walls. Picking up on David Anderson's remark on instrumentalism, she concluded her intervention by saying: museums need to wear up to the fact that they are instrumental institutions and wear



Alexandra Kalogirou, Andrea Witcomb and Alexandra Bounia

their agenda on the sleeves.

Representing Eunamus **Alexandra Bounia** reflected upon the project's visitor studies, stating that national museums could do much more to implement human rights perspective. Especially to reflect upon the ways in which they represent and include people of different ages, genders, religions, ethnicities and classes.

A stage for contemporary European voices

Taken together, the discussions at Eunamus final conference pointed to the importance of interaction with audiences in order for museums to be able to contribute to greater European social cohesion. Museums could be instruments for the public rather than for governments. In that respect, the final conference especially emphasized one of the implications put forward in the project's summary report, and added to the report's focus on historical representations and modes of performances in museum. Both the invited discussants and the auditorium underscored the importance of museums to get to know, and invite, the public to discussions.

The first panel introduced two different perspectives. Whereas Merike Lang talked about adhering to audience expectations by connecting to their lifestyles, Susanna Pettersson advocated that museum professional should be creative critical friends, introducing the unexpected. The discussants in the second panel advocated that national museums could turn into forums for divergent regional outlooks and start dialogues and collaborations with new immigrant audiences. The two invited discussants in the third panel highlighted the democratic capacities of museums to stage contested issues, at least in democratic societies.

The panel dealing with audience development underlined that museums need to move beyond the model of social inclusion in terms of attracting disadvantaged social groups. In addition to accommodating new social strata (people that are not white, Christian and well-educated), the national museum needs to find ways of orchestrating a plurality of voices inside and across the museum walls.

The topic of audience development also provoked engaged interventions from the auditorium. Very much in line with values expressed in the contemporary community of museum professionals, the discussants and the auditorium agreed that museums should facilitate an active role on the part of the audience. However, some voices pointed to the pitfalls of turning the national museums into a scene for dialogue, debate and dissent. Among the questions raised were: Is it really possible to turn museums into forums for a multiplicity of voices? Is everyone's views welcome, also expressions of xenophobia?



Peter Assmann's response to this latter question was a clear yes, which caused Helene Larsson, to connect to Susanna Pettersson's plea for museum staff to develop social skills in stage-managing debates. Following up on this, Alexandra Lazarido underlined that one has to acknowledge that museums are part of divided societies. A suggestion that museum

professionals have to learn to argue against extreme nationalists was then met with the proposition that it is somehow idealistic to think that one could argue with the right wing.

Although there were divergent takes on the possibilities to incorporate also non-democratic voices, there seemed to be a consensus on the need for national museums to become even more inclusive institutions promoting democratic practices. Even though the topic of museum audiences only was the explicit topic of one of the panels, it echoed throughout the day.



Eunamus final conference brought together 80 policy makers at all levels, museum professionals and Eunamus researchers to discuss cross-cutting implications emerging out of the project's research.

A report summarizing findings and policy implications was distributed to nine invited panelists in advance. It was handed out to all the attendees of the conference.

Each panel consisted of two or three invited discussants and one researcher from Eunamus. The discussants were asked to prepare a 5-7 minutes intervention and the chair tied the interventions together with questions and comments. After each panel the audience was invited to feed into the discussions. Eunamus summary report is open access and available at www.eunamus.eu.



The project's three policy briefs were also available during the day.

Media Coverage

EUROPEAN NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN TRANSITION

Europæiske nationalmuseer er i forvandling Denmark's public service radio (DR). The item is available online

<http://www.dr.dk/P1/europoligenu/Udsendelser/2012/12/27104216.htm>

NATIONAL MUSEUMS ARE STILL POLITICAL DYNAMITE

Nationalmuseer fortfarande politiskt sprängstoff by Gunnar Bolin

Swedish public service radio (SR P1). The item is available online
<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=478&artikel=5383758>

EUNAMUS IN THE BUDAPEST OBSERVATORY MEMO DECEMBER 2012

Available at <http://www.budobs.org/narchive/14-memo/403-memo-december-2012.html>

NATIONAL MUSEUMS: CULTURAL CONSTITUTIONS

Þjóðarsöfn: Menningarleg stjórnarskrá by Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson. Article in the Icelandic newspaper Frettabladid. Available online

<http://visir.is/thjodarsofn--menningarleg-stjornarskra/article/2013701049967>

EUROPE'S MUSEUMS MUST STRIVE TO REPRESENT NEW REALITIES

Central European University's website reported from the preconference National Museums in a changing Europe: <http://www.ceu.hu/node/33479>



The Cultural Force of National Museums
Friday 14 December 2012 9.30-14
Auditorium, Central European University Budapest

Eunamus addresses how the national museum can best aid European cohesion and confront the social issues which test European stability and unity. Findings indicate that the national museum plays a vital role in stabilizing and balancing competing interests within both emerging and established political communities. Museums negotiate political claims for national unity at the same time as they showcase Europe's national, cultural, and ethnic diversity. They are born out of societal change and constantly adapt to alterations in political communities.

This conference brings together policy makers at all levels, museum professionals and Eunamus researchers to discuss cross-cutting implications emerging out of this three-year multi-disciplinary transnational project. Its four slots are stimulated by the pre-conference Eunamus report, *National Museums Making Histories in a Diverse Europe*

9.30 Introduction Peter Aronsson, Eunamus

9.45 National museums need to be autonomous creative institutions

Susanna Pettersson, Director of Alvar Aalto Museo, Finland
Merike Lang, Director of the Estonian Open-Air Museum, Estonia
Simon Knell, Eunamus

10.30 National museums need to overcome national constraints

Anastasia Lazaridou, Director of the Byzantine and Christian Museums, Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Greece
Peter Assmann, Director of Landesmuseum Austria, Network of European Museums, Austria
Dominique Poulot, Eunamus

11.15 Refreshments

12.00 National museums can act as a forum for contested issues

Péter Inkei, Director of the Budapest Observatory, Hungary
Luís Raposo, Museu Nacional de Arqueologia Portugal, President of ICOM Portugal, Board of ICOM Europe, Portugal
Arne Bugge Amundsen, Eunamus

12.45 National museums need to reach new audiences

David Anderson, Director General of the National Museum of Wales, UK
Alexandra Kalogirou Directorate General for Education and Culture, Culture Policy Unit
Alexandra Andrea Witcomb, Alfred Deakin Research Institute, Australia
Alexandra Bounia, Eunamus

13.30 Wrap up Peter Aronsson, Eunamus

14.00 Conference ends



European national museums

eunamus



Final Conference

The Cultural Force of National Museums

European national museums:

Identity politics, the uses of the past and the European citizen

www.eunamus.eu





Acronym: Eunamus

Title: European national museums:

Identity politics, the uses of the past and the European citizen

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Duration: 36 months

Coordinator: Prof. Peter Aronsson, Linköping University, Sweden

Website: www.eunamus.eu

Eight partners, Six sub-projects, fifty affiliated researchers, reference-groups, several hundreds active in ten (+six preparatory) conferences, Newsletters, nine OA publications, thousands of readers and millions of listeners. More to come.



Partners

Linköping University, Sweden

Prof. Peter Aronsson, The Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q)

University of Leicester, U.K.

Prof. Simon Knell, School of Museum Studies

University of Aegean, Greece

Dr. Alexandra Bounia, Department of Cultural Technology and Communication

University of Paris 1, France

Prof. Dominique Poulot, The Department of Art and Archaeology

University of Tartu, Estonia

Prof. Kristin Kuutma, The Research Centre of Culture and Communication

University of Oslo, Norway

Prof. Arne Bugge Amundsen, The Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages

University of Bologna, Italy

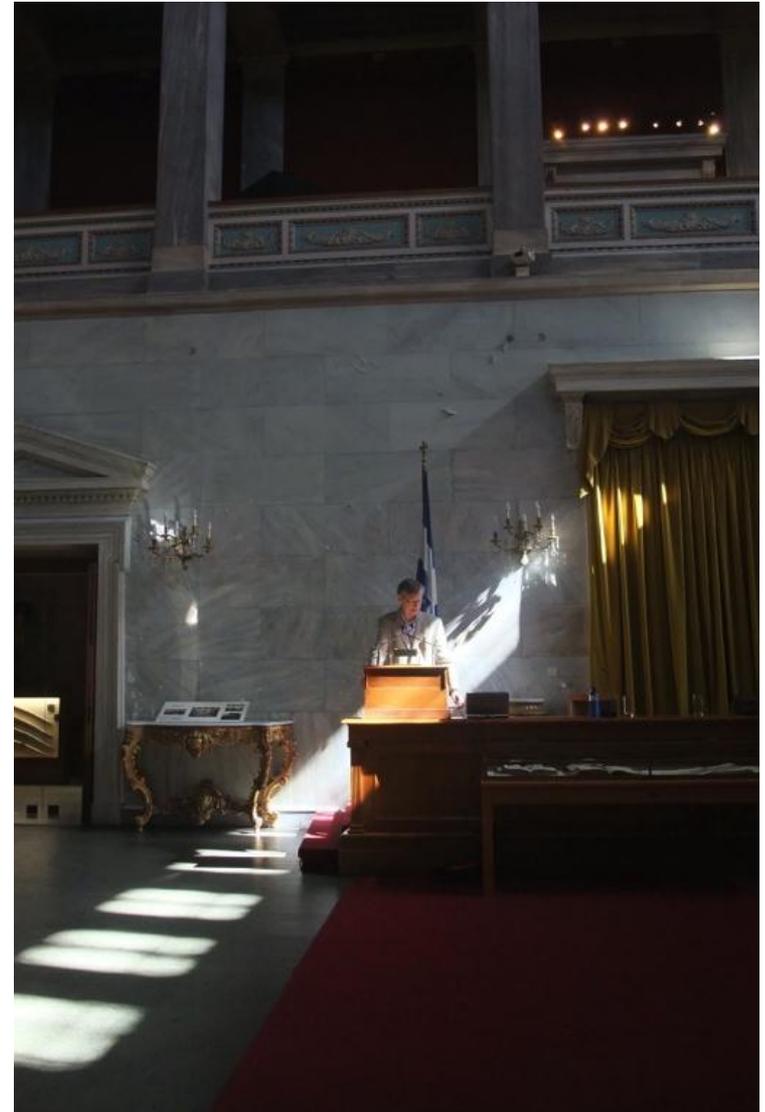
Prof. Ilaria Porciani, The Department for Historical Disciplines

Central European University, Hungary

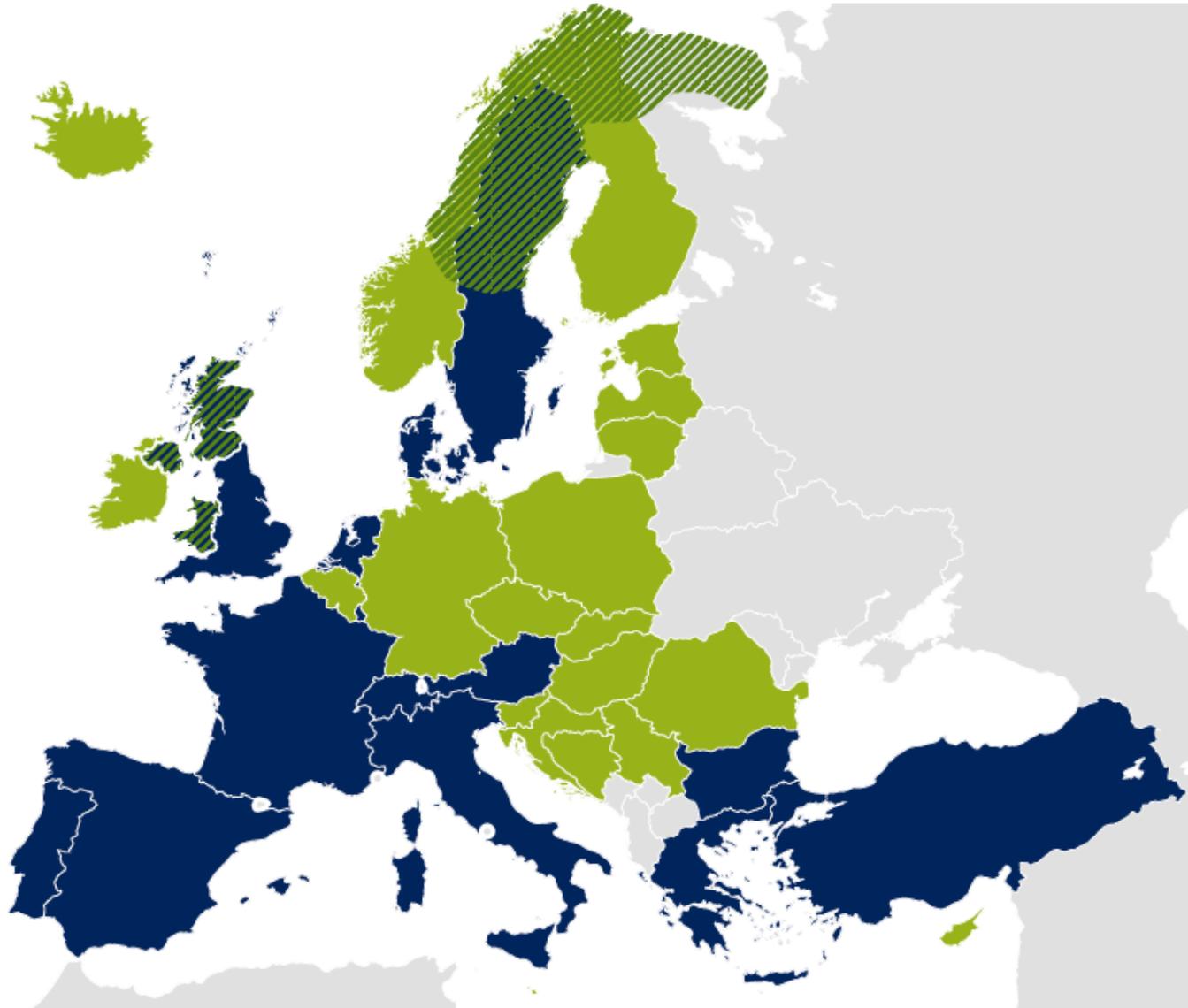
Dr. Constantin Iordachi, Department of History

Museums and cultural constitutions

The cultural constitution of a nation-state provides the political constitution with long-standing and materialized evidence of shared history, civic culture and values providing a relevant base for orchestrating directions to be taken by the community.



National museums play different roles depending on the trajectory and timing of the state- and nation-making process



Museums in nation and state-making

Relation: pro-active,
stabilizing, reactive, fading

Trajectory: imperial, new
nations, old states

1. Universalizing empires

2. pro-active
new/threatened ethnic
nations

3. Old states: secure,
implicit orchestration



Persuasive negotiations: hegemony and conflicts

- *materializing* and *stabilizing* knowledge and world views
- *emphasising* shared values
- *dealing* with conflicts
- *acting* on change

Failure has consequences



Trans-national powers

- setting up an implicit European cultural language (classical heritage, the museum, spheres of knowledge, virtues of art and enlightenment)
- allowing to negotiate multiple territorial and non-territorial identities
- only selectively put to work!



Policy recommendations for stakeholders

- National museums should strive for the ever-shifting balance between stability and change (re-formulation, -narration, -mediation, -professionalization, -organization)
- National museums should balance the opportunities of new media with ongoing care of collections
- National museums should work more closely together, foregoing past competition
- National museums should partner with regional and local museums to promote the mosaic of identities within each nation

Key observations (balance, negotiate)

- National museums project unity in diversity
- Museums are seeking balance (stability and change, national stasis and new mobility, authority and plurality)
- Museums can become places where airing conflict is balanced with resolution
- The balance between national and regional/local museums promotes layered citizenship
- Museums operate best when balancing autonomy with governmental policy.

1. National museums need to be autonomous creative institutions



2. National museums need to overcome national constraints

- to be true to the trans-national heritage of their own history and constitution
- to be represent the cultural mosaic shaping cultures
- to be relevant to the experiences of changing nations, societies and individuals
- to act for creativity and reconciliation



3. National museums can act as forum for contested issues

- **ADDING TO CONFLICT:** Museums that represent to mobilize present current hostilities
- **NEUTRALIZING CONFLICT:** Museums that naturalise the status quo ignore/obscure contentious issues.
- Museums that orchestrate diversity acknowledge difference but domesticate it into “united in diversity”.
- **PROMOTING RECONCILIATION:** Museums that frame community consensus appeal to values of democracy and human rights as universal goals actively promoted in the democratic world.

4. National museums need to reach new audiences

- Most visitors are happy with the way the nation is represented - should they be left in the comfort zone?
- Minorities feel non-represented or even silenced
- Large groups do not find their way to the museum
- Digital communication present potentiality - not yet fully explored