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**(How) did museums escape New Public Management?**  
**The special case of cultural value**

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Traditionally major national museums in many countries have been based in the capital city, and often been conservative and even exclusionary in terms of their depictions of cultural identity and audiences served (*see* Gilmore and Rentschler 2002). In recent decades there have been a range of political, social and cultural pressures to change, adapt and modernise (Windey et al. 2008), in addition to economic and ideological factors stemming from public sector reforms commonly known as New Public Management (NPM), which is the focus of this paper.

While there is some literature on specialist museum management (and particularly marketing) (*e.g.* Moore 1994; Sandell and Janes 2007; Camarero and Garrido 2008), studies within a broader public sector management context are less common. The museological literature tends to be dominated by social constructivist and interpretive approaches based on theoretical assumptions of human behaviour and the functions and effects of museums, rather than empirical evidence (Gray 2011). At the same time the cultural sector has only been of marginal interest in journals of public administration and management (Lindqvist 2012). Thus, the effects of public sector reforms on arts and cultural organisational management is understudied (DeVereaux 2009). Yet the management of cultural and arts organisations is distinctive from both for-profit and other public sector organisations because its products, services and role are unique, along with complex political and societal dimensions (Lindqvist 2012).

As major museums are public institutions in most countries, the sector has had to grapple with a familiar set of challenges confronting all public organisations (Windey et al. 2008). These include: constrained government funding and fiscal consolidation after crises; organisational and management changes away from bureaucratic hierarchies; preferences for increased marketisation, outsourcing and increased user fees; an orientation towards the ‘customer’ and reliance on social networks; and the adoption of performance indicators (*see* Gilmore and Rentschler 2002; Paulus 2003). While these reforms to most parts of the public sector have been extensively studied, museums have largely been excluded as a special case. This is because museums often have a special administrative status, a distinctive ‘publicness’ and relationship with the private and not-for-profit sectors, along with embedded notions of value beyond economic, utilitarian or individualistic.

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In this study we examine a sample consisting of twenty of the world's most visited museums in order to understand how museums have not only responded to austerity and public sector efficiency drives but have seemingly flourished and broadened their audiences. We apply a refined input-output-outcome framework and observe three trends: an expansion of the logic of consequences, the increased visibility of the logic of appropriateness, and a tension between the two logics. We argue that, perhaps perversely, NPM reforms have enabled museums to promote their cultural value to mass markets while retaining an elite and privileged position.

### **Changing role of museums**

In 1971, Cameron notably declared that major museums were in an 'advanced state of schizophrenia' due to their inability to clearly define their role as either a museum, church, temple, school or forum (p. 11). Cameron argued that the collections were organised and structured by the academic and curatorial elite according to the values of the upper-middle-class, with the need for reforms to democratise culture, and create a 'equality of cultural opportunity' (p. 18). As early as the 1920s, museums in some countries were being more closely scrutinised and had to defend their funding (Lawrence 1993). This became more pronounced in the 1980s as New Public Management (NPM) gained ascendancy in the Anglophone and some European countries, and the cultural sector needed to justify its relevance in terms of both social and economic goals (O'Brien 2013). Thus the cultural sector was starting to be pressured by two movements: neoliberals interested in value for money, particularly less money, and a social movement (or movements) questioning the non-economic values and the power of elites, which of course included the neoliberals. After protests and social demands in the 1970s and growing ecological awareness during the last few decades, museums are now expected to perform in active role in influencing mentalities, attitudes and behaviours (Dubuc 2011). There was a shift towards considering visitor experiences in the 1980s, albeit this was not wholeheartedly embraced by all museum professionals (Ross 2004). Yet museums have increasingly become more visitor-focused and therefore their role has changed and continues to change (Reussner 2003).

There is debate in the museological literature around the appropriate functions of the museum and the intersection and tension between internal and external drivers, and how that influences perceptions, expectations and intended audiences (Gray 2011). Dubuc (2011: 498) describes the International Council of Museum's (ICOM) 'four great historical, self-proclaimed' museum functions as 'outdated', as museums no longer just collect/conservate, research, exhibit/interpret and educate. Museums have evolved to become public-service institutions pursuing diversity, accessibility, outreach, repatriation and institutional collaboration (Lynch 2011). Dubuc (2011) proposes eight meta-functions of contemporary museums: conservation (but broadening the concept of the object to include immaterial culture and intangible heritage); culture (both as a sphere of the arts world and a transmitter of knowledge); social (from a historically elite institution

to fostering inclusion and social changes); economics (indirect economic, tourism and development benefits generated by museums); scientific (due to constrained funding research and advancing knowledge has largely shifted to universities); politics (creation of national identity); education (the learning experience of the visitor, particularly a global experience); and symbolic ('The museum could thus be said to be a utopia essential to our comprehension of the world' (p. 506)). We now briefly consider each of these functions—with the exception of the increasingly redundant scientific—and the issues and questions that arise from NPM and other reforms since the 1980s.

### *Conservation*

This traditional function remains largely unchanged but it is now competing more against the other functions. Curation is a major cost and maintenance costs are often fixed, or in many instances increasing (Camarero et al. 2011). Who decides (and on what basis) how much of the organisational budget to spend on conservation rather display or education (Gray 2011), for example? Ashley (2014: 276) contends that: 'In essence, choices must be made as to whether the museum organisation, and its professionals, wants to risk losing control in order to attain meaningful contact'.

How 'audiences', 'visitors', 'customers', 'citizens', 'consumers' or 'learners' are seen affects what is displayed and how, as well as the functional role of staff (marketers, educators etc), the degree of interactivity and technological adoption, and attraction to the media, sponsors and volunteers (Gray 2011). The view that museums simply transmit content is widely criticised along with the assumption of a homogenous audience, although there is often a top-down process where exhibits can reflect certain social, cultural, economic and political preferences (Gray 2011). There are now greater expectations of direct community collaborations, public participation and more public accountability (Lynch 2011).

### *Culture*

When governments decide the relative value of public services, the range of data around museums is often more narrow than for other services (Conolly 2013). Public value emerged as a corrective reaction to NPM in addressing issues of legitimacy and the institutional context as well as providing an extra-economic framework for measuring performance (O'Brien 2013). Public value is often translated into 'cultural value' in the museum sector, yet it is widely seen to be unquantifiable (O'Brien 2013). It is difficult to produce clear evidence of the 'cultural' work of museums, and the definition of culture is itself contested (Conolly 2013). Yet there is an assumption that cultural value is being created. Public support is justified given imperfect markets to provide cultural goods and services—which can be considered as merit goods—to wide public audiences (Camarero et al. 2011).

Museum managers do not necessarily know what public value is and politicians are yet to craft alternative conceptions of value that appropriately capture the cultural sector (Heal 2013). Performance reporting tends to encourage short-term activities like exhibitions, over long-term functions like the conservation, restoration and archiving of objects in the interests of intergenerational equity (Thompson 2001). The objects should be culturally relevant, but for cultural participation there needs to be access for wide and diverse sections of the population and include representation of and for minorities (Reussner 2003).

### *Social*

The importance of community engagement has also been a focus (Herguner 2015). Public input on public services has been sought in many areas such as health, education, housing and social services, but genuine dialogue with museums has been challenging (Lynch 2011). Ashley (2014: 261) critiques the notion of ‘engagement’ as having emerged during the 1990s as part of good governance and democratic participation along with arresting declines in social capital, and is often invoked in mission statements ‘as a process for generating, improving or repairing relationships between institutions of culture and society at large’. It has also been an inclusive response to increasing multiculturalism and recognition of minorities in postcolonial societies (Ashley 2014). Evidence of social progress or social cohesion resulting from the museum experience would be useful (Conolly 2013).

According to Ashley (2014) engagement has different possible dimensions along with some negative connotations, including: intellectual or curatorial excellence in being seen as global and educating the public passively with knowledge and information that is considered important; social integration and cultural diversity; market orientation with success measured by market penetration, ticket sales, and attractiveness to financially valuable audiences; participation and interaction where visitor’s are challenged, perhaps with negative emotions; political practice, where there is dialogue, active feedback and cultural debates beyond comment cards at the exhibition and the physical museum itself. Non-visitor research can be just as useful (Reussner 2003). How do we know why people are not engaging? Can everyone be expected to engage?

### *Economics*

The shift towards ‘edutainment’ and the need to satisfy visitor needs to secure funding has seen museums become a cultural tourism resource, with ‘blockbuster’ exhibitions, noteworthy architecture, new and interactive technologies and a greater retail focus (Lockstone 2007). Museums have to compete, not just with other museums but with other leisure activities and attractions (Reussner 2003). Museums are generally non-profit organisations with social objectives, however they also have commercial goals and financial objectives (such as increasing visitor numbers and revenues) (Camarero et al.

2011). Public funding has been constrained, with museums seeking alternative sources of finance, pursuing a customer orientation and increasing management efficiencies (Camarero et al. 2011).

However, the pressure to generate economic benefits, such as through ‘blockbuster’ exhibitions, may not produce the most cultural benefits (Conolly 2013). The museum building itself can become an attraction, and they have become part of grand architectural designs signifying their importance to cities (Dubuc 2011; Balloffet et al. 2014). Many have expanded beyond their original homes, such as the Tate (Britain/Modern/St-Ives/Liverpool), the Louvre (Lens/Atlanta/Abu Dhabi) and the Guggenheim (New York/Bilbao/Abu Dhabi) (Dubuc 2011).

Temporary ‘blockbuster’ exhibitions are essential for a museum’s financial health and can take three to four years to plan (Thompson 2001; Ashley 2014). However, they are also a major cost, and generally ticket prices will reflect this, which then makes it less accessible to broader publics (*see* Balloffet et al. 2014). Museums can also generate revenue by loaning their collections for touring exhibitions at a charge (Thompson 2001). A globalised industry has been created.

Demonstrating external economic benefits and an increasing focus on revenues can also lead to internal organisational changes. There has been pressure to outsource and privatise commercial activities, and even if they are retained in-house, museum shops, cafes and venue hire have become important revenue centres (Thompson 2001; Camarero et al. 2011). Funders’ expectations of what museums should be doing and producing are shifting (Weinberg and Lewis 2009). In order to attract private funding and donors, museums must offer a wider range of services and increased commercialisation (Camarero et al. 2011). After a meta-analysis of studies of the effects of public sector reforms, Lindqvist (2012) finds that arts and cultural organisations now have more sources of income (and income linked to projects), shorter-term employment, new organisational forms (often more autonomous and decentralised control), more external audits (and managing to audits), tendencies towards policy attachment, instrumentalisation and managerialisation, and tensions in professional roles.

### *Politics*

In competing for funding with other sectors and other organisations within the same sector, museums have had to show how they are furthering the government’s policy goals, which is a commonly referred to as instrumentalisation (Gray 2008). The goals can include the aforementioned social inclusion, education and lifelong learning, regional regeneration, and tourism and economic development. Gray (2008) argues that museums are particularly vulnerable as they lack the clear policy cores of other organisations. Yet at the same time, museums generally exist at arms length of government so as not to be unduly influenced or censored, and as such typical public sector organisational structures, relationships with executive government and accountability processes are not always

present (Gray 2008; Camarero et al. 2011). This can weaken the political influence of museums, and cultural policy is not at the centre of political debate or policy choices.

A more traditional political role has been to project a national identity by showcasing the country's artists and art, with depictions of the nation's history and culture. Yet in multicultural or postcolonial societies this can conflict with the other goals of social inclusion and engagement with minorities and other historically marginalised groups. External political actors can see museums as instruments of social, cultural and political change (Gray 2011).

### *Education*

The degree to which museums have to demonstrate policy relevance has a range of consequences, although whether they are instrumentalising the top-down demands of the state or just attaching themselves to the rhetoric for political and economic reasons (Gray 2011). For example, governments may portray museums as places of learning, and museums may emphasise their educational role (Gray 2011).

Yet as previously alluded to, in attempting to boost audiences there can be dangers where culture is commodified and the spectacle becomes excessive in order to entertain rather than educate (Baloffet et al. 2014). Success is often defined in market terms given constrained public funding and philanthropy, while the richness of the collection is now considered in terms of dissemination of information and digital access, which is synonymous with 'edutainment' (Baloffet et al. 2014) Digital accessibility in particular is becoming increasingly important (Weinberg and Lewis 2009).

In terms of knowing whether and what visitors are actually learning, visitor surveys are one of the best currently available tools. Yet they are limited in scope and do not assess the expectations of the broader citizenry and whether those are being met (Conolly 2013). The existing performance measurement systems are linear and ill-suited to evaluating how different visitors are actively involved in making sense of their experience (Newman 2013).

### *Symbolic*

The benefits for citizens can be broadly categorised as 'use value', 'non-use value', 'instrumental value' or 'intrinsic value' (see Conolly 2013). Use value broadly encapsulates the first three functions along with education. Non-use value can also include these functions when thinking about the broader societal effects, along with economics. The instrumental value is particularly apt in terms of politics, while the intrinsic value is largely symbolic.

The shift from the four classical functions to the seven functions has broadened the role of museums and allowed to develop the two logics: consequences and appropriateness.

## Methodology

In order to analyse the shifting realities of the public sector and its reforms, we observe shifting patterns in relation to the underlying logics driving these changes. One logic is concerned with problems where solutions are generated only to lead to new problems, and so the sequence continues. Another logic is concerned with trajectories related to tensions between three clusters of values as theorised by Hood: sigma (efficiency/leanness and effectiveness/purposefulness); theta (honesty and fairness); and lambda (robustness and resiliency). From these broader logics and following March and Olson, rationales for the two logics can be further developed: a logic of consequences, and a logic of appropriateness.

A logic of consequences is compatible with the basic elements of common performance reporting, that is, inputs, outputs, outcomes (Thompson 2001), which can also be conceptualised as the sequence of resources-processes-outputs-outcomes within a country. An inputs-outputs-outcomes framework assumes a level of predictability though, such as the effect that viewing art will have, which may not be uniformly experienced among different groups, particularly lower socio-economic groups with lower levels of cultural capital (Newman 2013). Furthermore, NPM can privilege economic language, impact and measurement (O'Brien 2013).

A logic of appropriateness realises intended consequences and considers ethics, values and culture within a legal systemic framework. Like other public sector organisations, museums have had to articulate clear statements of organisational intent and performance assessment to justify public funding and demonstrate policy effectiveness (Gray 2008). Of course, museums do not independently determine their aims and purposes (Reussner 2003), and there is a question about who decides what museums will do and the politics behind it (Gray 2011). Similarly, performance indicators have generally not been initiated by museums themselves, but rather became requirements after government reforms to the public sector (Lin 2012).

The two developed logics can also be combined and consolidated. For example, it is conceivable to have a strong logic of consequences combined with a logic of inappropriateness, such that efficiency and effectiveness is achieved without integrity, observance of the rule of law, inclusion, fairness and equity. It is also possible to focus strongly on appropriateness yet the consequences are pressured.

Figure 1 depicts the reformist trajectory in the 1980s (from position 1 to 2) as New Public Management gained ascendancy with a focus on the logic of consequences until the 2000s. Since the Global Financial Crisis there has been increased attention given to both the logic of consequence and the logic of appropriateness across government (position 3). We are interested in observing whether this has also occurred in the museum sector around the world.

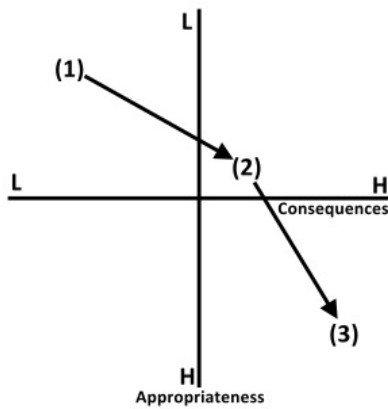


Figure 1: Monitoring Public Sector (Reform) Logics

We do this by examining the annual reports of a sample of museums. Of course there are some limitations with this approach. For example, funding pressures can create internal resistance to genuine scrutiny as positive representations are desired (Lynch 2011). However, the reports do show what performance frameworks, indicators, and reporting requirements, and values that they seek to espouse. Each museum will be placed in one of the four main quadrants. The first quadrant is pre-NPM containing position 1, where the focus is on inputs and resources rather than outputs and outcomes, and only a cursory consideration of integrity, if at all. The second quadrant is the NPM-environment containing position 2, where there is an increased focus on resources, outputs and outcomes, along with some attention given to integrity. The third quadrant is post-NPM where outcomes are prioritised in addition to issues of trust, legitimacy and inclusiveness. The fourth quadrant is theoretically where there is a focus both on inputs and appropriateness.

The sample of twenty museums consists of the most visited public art museums with publicly available annual and financial reports in a language understood by the researchers (Catalan, Dutch, English, French or German). Given the concentration of museums in cities like London and strong representation of certain countries, an effort was made to increase the geographic spread and thus the public sector management logics within the sample. Eight of the top ten most visited art museums are included in the sample (excluding the fourth placed Vatican Museums and the ninth placed State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg). As this includes several museums from England and the United States, the most visited Australian, Dutch, Scottish, Belgian, Canadian and Irish arts museums are also included. The sample is broadened further with a French and Spanish museum outside their country’s capitals, along with an Austrian museum.

Table 1. Sampled museums with international rankings according to 2015 visitor figures

	<b>Museum</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Visitors</b>		<b>Museum</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Visitors</b>
1	Louvre	Paris	8,600,000	22	Rijksmuseum	Amsterdam	2,345,666
2	British Museum	London	6,820,686	25	National Galleries of Scotland	Edinburgh	2,148,242



3	Metropolitan Museum of Art	New York	6,533,106	31	Van Gogh Museum	Amsterdam	1,908,744
5	National Gallery	London	5,908,254	38	Mucem	Marseille	1,500,000
6	National Palace Museum	Taipei	5,291,797	81	Kunsthistorisches Museum	Vienna	767,413
7	Tate Modern	London	4,712,518	82	Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts	Brussels	767,355
8	National Gallery of Art	Washington, DC	4,104,331	84	Art Gallery of Ontario	Toronto	762,110
10	Musée d'Orsay	Paris	3,440,000	94	National Gallery of Ireland	Dublin	718,637
16	Centre Pompidou	Paris	3,060,000	97	Stedelijk Museum	Amsterdam	724,257
21	National Gallery of Victoria	Melbourne	2,411,311	100	Museu d'art Contemporani	Barcelona	713,627

Source: *The Art Newspaper*

Camarero et al. (2011) conceive of three types of performance: economic (resource acquisition, increasing visitor and member numbers, creating jobs, generating revenue from temporary exhibitions); market (improving visitor perceptions in terms of satisfaction, interest and reputation); and social (appreciation of culture, advancement of research, conservation and heritage). We have adapted this to create a coding scheme to analyse the annual reports and financial statements.

### Operationalisation and preliminary results

Part of the public sector reforms that were discussed at the beginning of the paper was to accentuate the precise responsibilities and accountability of agencies, often through written and publically accessible documents. These included contracts, performance budgets, annual reports, and performance audits, along with a range of embedded financial and non-financial indications across the documents. In this study we are focusing on the annual reports and financial statements where available, as not all countries have embraced the performance management agenda. Even when they have, it has not necessarily been comprehensive or easily accessible to the public.

We have constructed an analytical framework to capture the logics of consequences and appropriateness, as expressed in the most recent and electronically accessible annual report for each of the sampled museums, along with each institutional context and the mission and vision. This framework is detailed in Table 2.

*Table 2: Operationalisation of the purpose, practices and performance of museums*

Variable	Attributes & Differentiators	Descriptors & Examples
Institutional context	foundation year; governance & legal status;	<i>The oldest museum in the sample is the British Museum (1753) and the youngest is the Centre</i>

	subsidiaries & degree of commercialisation & expansion plans; defined stakeholders & ‘friends’	<i>Pompidou (1977). Museums can be classed as public agencies, foundations, or other. Some museums have opened branches in other parts of the country (Louvre-Lens) and even other countries (Louvre Abu Dhabi). Defined stakeholders can include other public institutions, sponsors, members and official ‘friends’.</i>
Mission and vision	role & purposes; special context or contingencies; defined functions	<i>Whereas ‘historical art museums’ tend to focus issues of past and identity (e.g. Kunsthistorisches Museum), ‘contemporary art museums’ are generally concerned with current societal issues (e.g. Stedelijk Museum). This may have implications for related functions. As for contingencies, some museums have referred to a societal responsibility for defending values of civilisation in periods of terrorism (e.g. Louvre).</i>
Logic of consequences	inputs inc. funding, user fees & staff; activities & measures; outputs inc. visitor profiles; outcomes inc. media coverage (both social and traditions), ‘customer’ satisfaction (and methods of feedback) and public benefits	<i>Production functions and variations in terms of types of visitors, self-financing ratios, or electronic services.</i>
Logic of appropriateness	individual; organisational; policy	<i>Individual appropriateness refers to individual values which are promoted by the museum. Organisational appropriateness refers to sustainability or accessibility. Policy appropriateness refers to inclusion, or long term public (cultural) benefit.</i>

Most of the museums now operate independently of a government department/ministry/agency under special legislation and governed by a Board of Trustees (or Governors or similar). The National Gallery of Art in Washington DC has one of the most prestigious boards, which includes the Chief Justice of the United States, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of the Treasury. Museum directors report to and receive authorisation and guidance from the board, which sits at the top of the management structure. The National Palace Museum in Taiwan is an exception though, with the director solely in charge albeit with an advisory council.

Many of the museums have quite recently emphasised a desire to become more accessible to the whole country by opening branches outside of the home city, which is usually the capital. London’s Tate has been most successful, with several other branches across the country as well as in London. The Scottish National Galleries have adopted a different strategy in partnering with galleries in both the north and south of Scotland, while opening multiple branches in Edinburgh itself. As previously mentioned, the Louvre is opening an international branch in Abu Dhabi, but it could be argued that the primary motivation is financial rather than merely accessibility, with Abu Dhabi’s government reportedly paying US\$1.3 billion for the deal (*New York Times* 2007). However, even for the museums with only national plans for expansion, such goals do

provide a more tangible vision that they actively promote in fundraising efforts. All have also embraced commercial activities to supplement their income, including shops, restaurants and venue hire.

British museums tend to be best in clearly identifying their stakeholders, in what seemed to be a way of further emphasising their importance and wide networks. In addition to range of government agencies, identified stakeholders included national and international visitors, other London museums, regional museums, international museums, universities, sponsors, donors and people and communities from current and future generations across the globe. All museums do acknowledge the value of their members and friends. Many have actually created different tiers of prestige or ‘circles’, akin to airline frequent flyer status. Members of the high tiers are individually named, along with corporate sponsors. While most are domestically-focused, the British Museum has a specialist friends’ organisation in the United States, the American Friends of the British Museum (AFBM).

The missions of all museums are remarkably similar, and almost appeared as if they are looked to each other as they crafted them. While there is some variation based on the periods of the collections or the types of collections, generally all captured most or all of what we term the *4Is*: imaginative, innovative, inspiring, or international (worldly). The most unique mission is England’s National Gallery, which also includes the statement: ‘Foremost among the National Gallery’s aims is to establish a central role for old master paintings in modern cultural life’.

Although most museums claim to be interested in increasing accessibility, only the museums in the Anglophone countries (except the Art Gallery of Ontario) has free admission to the permanent collections, although fees are usually charged for visiting exhibitions. The British Museum (BM) proudly proclaims that: ‘The BM is one of the marvels of the Enlightenment. Access to the greatest achievements of humanity was made free to all, and what was once the preserve of privilege became the right of everyone’. New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art *suggests* an admission fee of US\$25, but it is possible to pay less or nothing at all. The others have an entrance fee of about US\$10-15 for adults, although many have a certain timeslot or day with free admission along with a range of concessions for children and senior citizens among others.

The major functions of all museums are quite similar and include: collection conservation and preservation, research, audience engagement, loans, sharing expertise, education, concerts and lectures, internships, fellowships, exhibitions, installations, fundraising, developing staff, cultural development, and increasingly digitisation. Again Taiwan’s National Palace Museum is unique in defining some additional roles, such as inspiring cultural and creative industries, and notably cross-straight relations and promoting peace with mainland China through exchanges and bilateral ties with other museums.

Performance indicators tended to more comprehensive and detailed in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, although most did report physical visitor numbers by type (e.g. under 16, overseas, under 18 formal education/schools, under 18

organised activities, paid visits, under 16 from lower socio-economic groups and ethnic minority backgrounds, persons with disabilities, elderly visitors, different types of tours). Curiously, detailed breakdowns of where the visitors live was not provided publically for any of the museums, even though most collect data such as post/zip code or country of residence when tickets are purchased. There is also no information or reference to people who are least likely to visit nor specific strategies to reach these groups.

Increasingly, there is data relating to online accessibility, such as unique website visits, and some social media metrics, although generally there is only a list of social media platforms where the institution has a presence rather than any quantitative measures (only very few reported numbers of likes, followers, etc). Once again, the National Palace Museum (NPM) in Taipei is a notable exception, with their annual report stating that they responded to 91 percent of the comments of their *Facebook* page, with each response taking less than an hour on average. They pleasingly declare that it is ‘a testament to the NPM’s commitment to quality customer service’. While many museums reported the results of surveys of the percentage of visitors who would recommend a visit or the percentage of visitors who were satisfied or very satisfied, the National Palace Museum goes into much more detail. They report having monthly meetings to improve the quality of service, along with regular meetings across the museum to address issues raised in visitor feedback and to devise solutions to further improve services and the quality of exhibitions. The National Gallery of Ireland was the only other museum that was more proactive in considering feedback beyond just surveys and comment cards, and also analysing feedback provided on independent websites, such as *TripAdvisor*.

Other common performance measures are the number of loan venues, exhibition openings per year, media coverage (number of mentions), number of volunteers and their hours, donated works of art, number of research papers, seminars and lectures, and the number of internships and teachers trained. The National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne also provides more technical data, such as on agency collections storage meeting industry standard.

Otherwise, financial information was generally detailed in all cases, albeit some were much more comprehensive than others. This was contained in the annual report itself or in separate financial statements. The common measures include admission income, fundraising income, number of memberships and fee income, donations, corporate and philanthropic support, and sales and trading income.

In terms of appropriateness, accessibility is generally emphasised as previously noted, but only a few museums detail the practical implications of such as goal, such as improved physical and other infrastructure for people with disabilities, or explicit efforts to include disadvantaged parts of the population. There appears to be a tension between creating a space for national unity or pride, particularly for countries with historical legacies of exclusion, against sector-wide mission to be at the forefront internationally and contributing to some sort of global identity or representing all of humanity. Another contrast is around sustainability issues, with some explaining their strategies to reduce waste, water, and energy use, along with a range of measures and year-on-year

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comparisons. Yet there are no connections being made back to their collections and how the environment is depicted and has changed, or educating visitors on these issues. Thus it could be said to be a more superficial commitment or a regulatory requirement rather than genuine advocacy or fulfilling their mission statements to inspire others. Furthermore, many did not report on sustainability issues.

### **Preliminary conclusion**

The cases are still being analysed, so at this stage we are suggesting that museums did not necessarily *escape* NPM themselves, but rather than were never as closely scrutinised and criticised as other parts of the public sector, and certainly not to the point of having to forcefully justify their existence with public support. While public funding for most has become more constrained, and there is clear evidence of more corporate thinking, increasing sales, commercialisation, sponsorship, philanthropy and customer service quality, examples of actual innovation or changed operations are lacking. There are more performance indicators, but certainly not in all cases and not explicitly linked to funding. The missions lack the imagination that the claim to foster, and the broader contributions to society are assumed and only briefly mentioned in abstract terms. For example, there is no analysis of the economic benefits generated by museums as tourist attractions. Something like this would be expected if they were really fighting for survival or for increased support. Similarly, the actual commitment to serving disadvantaged communities is questionable. They appear to be more comfortable serving wealthy benefactors.

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