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**Sustainable audience development in museums:
How do long-term relations with social stakeholders
improve museums' social role? The case of MAXXI**

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Abstract

Museums are required today to be places of social aggregation and inclusion. They are increasingly committing to develop strategies and practices to reach and involve new audiences. Interviewing experts of the museum sector in Italy emerged that projects addressing social exclusion are currently a common practice among Italian museums. However, they are sporadic and not assumed in museums' institutional offer. There is limited literature on the importance of relations' continuity between the museum and the social stakeholders involved in these projects. This research aims to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence starting from the hypothesis that long-term relations with social stakeholders improve museums' social role. The study adopts an empirical approach through a case study that combines the use of secondary documents and interviews to analyse the factors that improve museums' social role. It envisages a three-level analysis of the museum MAXXI in Rome, examining its governance, organisational processes and three specific projects that involved the no-audiences. The research concludes that long-term relations with social stakeholders improved the museum's social role. On the institutional dimension, they do so by improving the institutional performance in terms of services provided and organisational processes; on the community dimension, by producing a long-lasting change within the community involved. Nevertheless, these relationships cannot develop in the absence of critical factors at the governance and organisational level.

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Introduction

This thesis has been inspired by a personal interest in recent cultural initiatives of urban or territory requalification by bottom-up movements, such as the experiences of *Mare Culturale Urbano* in Milan and *Farm Cultural Park* in Favara. Nowadays, we often witness citizens' led initiatives aimed at creating places for people's aggregation. Yet, we rarely seek to reconcile this spontaneous will of people's aggregation with the institutional dimension around it. Out of interest in this topic, I have chosen to look at museums -institutions *par excellence* of cultural diffusion and production- wondering whether they can become familiar places of people gathering and territorial development, and how they can be more integrated into society. After initial research into the museums' domain, I managed to understand the real issues that needed a deeper analysis. Museums are required to be places of social aggregation and inclusion, and they are committing to developing strategies and practices to reach new audiences. However, talking to experts of the museum sector, some critical issues emerged.

“The problem is the lack of continuity: these are projects that require a strong commitment in their design, development and implementation. Often, for a series of reasons, they are temporary and not assumed in the museum's cultural offer as an institutional offer”.

“Every project should be “generative” of meaning, experiences and other relations.” (S. Mascheroni, personal communication, July 6, 2021)¹

The research stems from these above-mentioned considerations and aims at giving empirical evidence of the critical factors required to make the interaction with the public '*generative*' of permanent value for both the cultural institution and the community involved. From the expert interviews, I observed that projects targeted at increasing and diversifying audiences, as well as improving social inclusion are now standard practice within cultural institutions (MIC, 2020). However, these initiatives seem to lack continuity and a structured organisational action in their implementation. Often, in fact, these projects remain temporary without a follow-up with the stakeholders and, most importantly, without permanent effects on the organisation and the community involved² (Bollo, 2017).

¹ Expert in intercultural mediation and heritage education, co-founder and coordinator of “Patrimonio e Intercultura” Department of Fondazione ISMU

² Observations from the interviews with museum's experts and professionals.

The main argument of this research takes the case study of some projects run by MAXXI and explores how long-term relations with social stakeholders improve the museum's social role. A relationship approach might be a response to ongoing requirements for museum and cultural organisation administration to be "more accessible, inclusive, representative, and innovative" (Harrison, 2013). The choice of MAXXI was driven by the museum's innovative participatory projects that have established long-term relations with different social stakeholders, in order to include and involve marginalised groups. In this way, it became an outlier in the museums' domain.

The starting assumption is that a museum's work is embedded³ in a system made of horizontal, vertical and diagonal relationships between people, organisation and place (Granovetter M. , 1985; O'Neill & Hooper, 2019). Recognising the relational capability of museums implies attributing them a role for the achievement of different purposes: well-being, economic and social development and cultural integration. Cultural institutions, by becoming network organisations, can innovate their experiential offer and, more importantly, move from an ego-centric vision toward a more socio-centric one by offering physical spaces, knowledge sharing and information exchange (Muzzarelli & Faccia, 2009; Argano, 2014).

The research is structured according to the following reasoning: the evolution of museums' role as social institutions that respond to the dynamic changes of society is leading them to widen and expand their audiences through strategies of audience development and diversification. Therefore, the first two sections will be dedicated to an overview of museums' role change and audience development theory. Within the framework of audience development strategies, the argument is to develop long-term relations with social stakeholders to improve cultural inclusion. Thus, the relational capital and relationship marketing theoretical approaches explain the processes of establishing relationships and the value they produce for the organisation. These theories will guide the investigation of the case study, the MAXXI museum in Rome. The analysis is structured on three levels: the museum's governance, the organisational processes, and three specific projects' implementation strategies that provide evidence on the initial research question.

³ "The embeddedness argument stresses the role of concrete personal relations and structures (or "networks") of such relations in generating trust and discouraging malfeasance." For further explanation, see Granovetter, 1985

Background

The current historical moment makes this research's focus on the relationship between museums, audiences and communities particularly relevant. The still on-going COVID-19 pandemic has forced the closures of most cultural institutions in 95% of the countries in the world (UNESCO, 2020). The crisis has emphasised the reflection on the relationship of cultural institutions with their public because it has exacerbated the already existing inequalities on access, participation and cultural fruition of people (UCLG, 2020). At the same time, it pushed cultural institutions to maintain their relations with their communities by reinventing and moving their cultural offer and activities online. As a matter of fact, online broadcasting has increased the demand for culture (Fondazione Symbola, 2021).

As a result of dramatically decreased tourist flows, the attention has now been shifting towards local audiences (Federculture, 2020). The issue of inclusivity in cultural participation and offer is gaining momentum. Cultural institutions have acknowledged the need to partner up and create networks to establish synergies between cultural and creative sectors, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation between culture and welfare. Since cooperation can promote well-being, social inclusion and environmental sustainability, European recovery programmes such as *Next Generation EU* and *Creative Europe 2021-2027* (Fondazione Symbola, 2021), as well as the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) (2021) prioritised the mission of accessibility in museums and cultural institutions and provided dedicated funding to implement it.⁴

At the same time, in 2020 Italy has ratified the Faro Convention⁵, which recognises the democratic and identity value of cultural heritage "as a reflection and expression" of people's "values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions"⁶. The focus is no more on the heritage's object, but on the subject, individual or community who is encouraged to participate "in the process of identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural heritage"⁷ (Council of Europe, 2005). It introduced a new vision of the relationship between cultural heritage and communities. Culture, indeed, can constitute the fourth pillar of sustainable development, ensuring cultural diversity protection, promotion and maintenance⁸ (Hawkes, 2001; UNESCO, 2005). Sustainable development

⁴ Investment 1.2: Removal of the physical and cognitive barriers in museums, libraries and archives to increase cultural access and participation

⁵ 23rd September 2020

⁶ Art. 2 Faro convention, 2005

⁷ Art. 12 Faro convention, 2005

⁸ Art. 2 paragraph 6 "Principle of sustainable development: the protection, promotion and maintenance of cultural diversity are an essential requirement for sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations" - Convention on the Protection and Promotion of The Diversity of Cultural Expressions, UNESCO 2005.

requires citizens' continuous participation in the public domain, and active cultural participation allows citizens to shape their society (Duxbury, 2012).

Finally, in the last decade, museums have been going through a radical change due to transforming external circumstances: the long-term economic downturns, the shrinking of welfare systems and spending for arts and culture, the digital shift, and the changes in people's experience of cultural products toward a more active participation and engagement. Furthermore, museums in Italy are recognised as autonomous institutions that should demonstrate their performance and value produced⁹ (Bollo, 2013). The 2014 cultural reform implied an increased need to value museums' capability to impact the reference communities (Valente, 2020). Today, museums are required to be inclusive and engaging with communities, meet different audiences' expectations, contribute to local development and attractiveness, and generate relevant tourist and economic flows (ICOM, 2019). Nonetheless, measuring projects' impact on the institution and community is complex when projects are short-term and sporadic. Instead, the effects and changes produced by a project need long-term monitoring and follow-up (Bodo et al, 2009).

1. Theoretical Framework

While several studies focused on the social role of museums and their connection with sustainable development (Matarasso, 1997; Sandell, 1998; Belfiore, 2002; Kawashima, 2000; 2006; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Stylianou-Lambert, 2014), there is more limited research on museums' relational capability, particularly on ensuring continuity in these relationships (Bodo, 2003; Kadoyama, 2018; Camarero et al., 2019). The concept of partnerships in museums emerged to improve the museum's economic and organisational performance because partners can provide sponsorships and sources of funding (Kotler & Kotler, 2000; Lindqvist, 2012). Researchers emphasised the importance of *bridging* with economically and socially disadvantaged groups (Belfiore, 2002; Sandell, 1998; 2002; Kawashima, 2000), which implies only connecting with them without explicitly creating long-term commitment. Others considered the partnership model with social stakeholders to reach new public but not to deepen relationships. The focus on deepening relationships mainly refers to habitual visitors that can be more easily involved; it does not apply to the audience by surprise (Kotler & Kotler, 2000; Argano, 2014; Bollo, 2014; 2017). Furthermore, as Bollo (2017) stated, there is a scarcity of theoretical reflections related to the importance of leadership to develop audience development practices. The current research helps fill the literature gap by developing empirical research to explore and demonstrate how long-term relationships improve

⁹ See art. 14 D.L. 83/2014, 31st May

museums' social role and key organisational prerequisites, at different levels, that enable these kinds of relationships.

A museum's very survival depends on how it handles relations with several key actors and stakeholders. Therefore, this thesis looks at the processes of establishing and deepening relationships with social stakeholders and their impact on the museum's institutional and community dimensions. A brief overview of the museum's social role is needed to understand why museums should become more open to society and expand their public. To achieve this goal, museums use audience development strategies and plans to reach and diversify the audiences. This theoretical framework will provide elements to analyse MAXXI's organisational practices and projects. Instead, the relationship marketing theory will better define the relationship approach and provides theoretical elements to establish long-term relations. This helps to understand the kind of relationships developed between the museum and the social stakeholders involved.

1.1. Evolution of museums' social role

A brief overview of the evolution of museums' role better explains the new perspective on cultural participation because the cultural, social, political and economic context is profoundly changed (Da Milano & Gariboldi, 2019).

The social role of museums is stated in the definition given by ICOM: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, research, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment". Therefore, as a social institution, a museum must respond to the dynamic evolution of society by changing its functions and role based on the new social composition and expectations. This definition includes the intrinsic sustainability concept of museums.

Indeed, museums are not only devoted to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and its value, but also to contribute to communities' well-being and representation of cultural diversity. Museums, just as other organisations, are required to assume sustainable behaviours that regard environmental, social and economic issues (Stylianou-Lambert, 2014). What regard to social sustainability, a museum is sustainable if it continues to serve its audiences and communities comprehensively, generating long-term value for both current stakeholders and future generations (Pencarelli, Cerquetti, & Splendiani, 2016). This definition is the result of an evolution of the museum institution over the years.

In the XVIII century, during the enlightenment and the French Revolution, museums were born to democratise culture and make it accessible to a broader public (Binni & Pinna, 1980). However, as highlighted by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, the museum was only dedicated to the conservation of artistic collection “Many art museums see themselves as rather special places, separate from the mundane world of every day, places that preserve the best of the past, and places that are appreciated by cultured and sophisticated people. The values that underpin professional practices in museums are those of preservation and conservation” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 167-190). Moreover, museums’ physical space was divided into two parts: one dedicated to the production of knowledge and the private consultation of artworks, the other open indistinctively to the public fruition (Bodo, 2003). The concept of a museum, far from the social and cultural context, is commonly referred to “Museum as a temple”, an idea that was confirmed during the XIX century. At the time, it was mainly conceived only as an archive with the functions of conservation and preservation of the heritage collections (Walt, 2006). According to Hooper-Greenhill (1992), the communication model of this kind of museum was defined as the “model of transmission”, namely the communication of knowledge from an authoritative institution to a generic and passive interlocutor.

In the mid-800 and at the beginning of ‘900, American museums started to develop practices with the visitors that can be defined today as entertainment and edutainment (Fiorio, 2018). The relationship with the visitors was more involving and participatory, differently from the European model, which had an elitist public treated as passive (Binni & Pinna, 1980). Looking at the American model, Hooper-Greenhill recognised: “Today, museums are subject to diverse demands to enable them to play valid roles in new worlds. Art museums must demonstrate their viability and argue their value in new contexts where former values are no longer taken for granted” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). The same author (2000) proposes a “cultural model” of communication, where visitors actively participate in constructing meanings, emphasising the volatility and temporariness of cultural values and recognising new means of communication and promotion (Bodo, 2003).

In Europe, ever since the 1960s, the social and political movement refused the conception of an official and authoritative culture in favour of new values and participation. Consequently, the museum's model as “a mausoleum” devoted to scientific completeness began to be questioned. A good museum cannot be limited anymore to conservation but has two other fundamental roles: research and communication. These new developments transformed it from a static institution to a dynamic one, from a mausoleum to a place of cultural production and diffusion. The emblematic case of this new conception is the construction of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, a multidisciplinary place open to the people and the territory (Fiorio, 2018). The international conference ICOM in Santiago

of Chile in 1972 confirmed the shift toward a visitor-centric approach, recognising that the museum must become a place in the service of society, where the visitor has an active and participatory role (De Biase, 2014). During those years, cultural democratisation found its application in policies of cultural access. In fact, access to culture was considered a universal right and the reduction of costs was seen as an equitable and democratic solution to encourage participation (Da Milano & Gariboldi, 2019).

In the '90s, cultural participation was also associated with social and economic development, a concept then integrated into European policies. Cultural participation had to be incentivised because it is functional to personal development and capabilities beneficial for territories' economic and competitiveness growth. (Da Milano & Gariboldi, 2019)

In recent years, the new social composition, new ways of interactions within society, the digital revolution have changed the conception of cultural heritage as intimately linked with communities and the people, as it now exists only if it enters in contact with the people (Council of Europe, 2005). The new conception of heritage makes it imperative for cultural institutions to widen their public in order to share cultural values and messages. Consequently, they ensure their sustainability in the long-term (Kawashima, 2000) by cultivating and nurturing relationships, bringing the audience to become a community (Blackwell & Scaife, 2016). The visitor becomes located at the centre of cultural production as an active member in the knowledge generation. Furthermore, the shrinkage of the public funding for culture forced the institutions to look at culture's demand side to increase cultural participation and access. The museum is now becoming a place of informal learning (Sani, 2003), social inclusion (Sandell, 2002), economic and social development for a territory (Sacco et al., 2012).

The evolution towards the new audience-centric approach found its theorisation in the essay by Nina Simon (2010, p.3), "The participatory museum", where she introduces the concept of participatory cultural institution: "A place where visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content. Create means that visitors contribute their own ideas, objects, and creative expression to the institution and to each other. Share means that people discuss, take home, remix, and redistribute both what they see and what they make during their visit. Connect means that visitors socialise with other people – staff and visitors – who share their particular interests. Around content means that visitors' conversations and creations focus on the evidence, objects and ideas most important to the institution in question"¹⁰. Therefore, the context of change calls for strategies within

¹⁰ Preface section – Why participate?

the institution to increasingly involve and include the public, increase the access, and diversify the audience to improve museums' social sustainability, integration, and impact in society.

1.2. Audience development theory

Audience development (AD) strategies aim to address the issue of *access to culture*: “an essential right of all citizens that becomes fundamental in the case of those with economic and social challenges such as young people and the elderly, people with disabilities and minority groups. Accessibility involves taking into consideration all citizens in their diversity, the creation and carrying out of cultural policies, the creation and management of cultural venues – their programmes and audience policies” (Bollo, 2017).

The attention to cultural access is motivated by three underlying assumptions (Kawashima, 2000). The first is the principle stated in art. 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.” (UN General Assembly, 1948). Besides the ideological value of culture, it is also recognised that cultural participation concretely affects aspects of daily life, such as health, well-being and capability development (Bollo et al., 2017). The second assumption is that reducing barriers to cultural access that hinder individuals from participating in the cultural fruition will boost attendance and engagement among marginalised groups (Kawashima, 2000). The third assumption considers culture as a powerful means to tackle social exclusion (Belfiore, 2002; Sandell, 1998).

Audience development (AD) and audience engagement (AE) strategies enable the exchange of knowledge and resources between the museum and its audiences. AD is a set of policies that foster the creation of relationships with current and new public's targets, which “can include aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, education, customer care and distribution” (Arts Council of England, 2011). AD policies aim to increase the number of visitors by attracting audiences who are like the already existing visitors in socio-demographic terms; to deepen the relationships with the existing public by implementing knowledge experiences; to diversify the audiences by attracting and persuading the “not easily available audiences” that include those who never or rarely participated in a cultural activity (Bollo, 2017; Kawashima, 2000).

Sustainable AD strategies should tackle all the dimensions of exclusion identified in access, participation and representation (Sandell,1998). Each dimension is addressed through different modalities. The access dimension is tackled through the removal of material and immaterial barriers

with marketing strategies or outreach projects. Traditionally, attention has been posed on physical and financial barriers; only in recent years, the immaterial barriers have been considered. Among these, the sensorial and cognitive barriers, cultural barriers (interests and lifestyle), attitudinal (culture and the institution's environment), technological barriers (lack of ICT development to promote access to cultural offer), misperceptions of "no audiences" (low priority toward cultural institutions, cultural institutions seen as elitist) (Bollo, 2017).

The participation dimension regards the second level of inclusion of audiences in decision making and creative processes; encouraging participation means considering the public as an active interlocutor to be involved. This level of involvement requires more complex and targeted strategies that involve the public in different ways through contributory, collaborative, and co-creative projects (Bodo et al. 2009; Simon, 2010). Finally, the third field of exclusion is that of representation, namely the lack or distorted representation of certain social groups, in favour of a dominant culture that does not consider alternative cultures and values (Sandell, 1998). By including audiences in creative processes and decision-making, they automatically would influence the representation dimension. According to Nina Simon (2010), participatory strategies address five reasons for public's dissatisfaction:

1. Cultural organisations (CO) have no significance for a person's daily existence.
2. CO does not change; people are not incentivised to return.
3. The institution's authoritative voice does not include an alternative point of view or provide context for understanding what is offered.
4. The institution is not a place where people can be creative and contribute to history, science or art.
5. The institution is not a welcoming environment to discuss views with friends and strangers.

Therefore, participatory projects make the institution a "platform" that brings together users who function as content producers, distributors, consumers, reviewers, and collaborators. This implies that the institution cannot guarantee that visitors' experiences will be consistent, but on the contrary, it produces a wide range of visitor-created experiences, called "multidirectional content experiences" (Simon, 2010, p.2).¹¹

The literature agrees that sustainable and successful AD plans should be embedded in the entire organisation (Bollo et al., 2009; Arts Council of England, 2011; Wallace Foundation, 2014). The

¹¹ Chapter 1 – Principles of participation

report *The Road to results. Effective practices for building arts audiences* (2014) identifies several crucial factors to make AD effective: leadership, diffused consensus, clarity and commitment within the organisation, and the staff to achieve AD objectives. This strategy is also defined as “distributed leadership”, namely every employee should be aware and contribute to AD. Blackwell and Scaife (2016) added some elements to these factors, referring to *building capacity*, all the set of resources that enable sustainable AD.

- “The latent potential of collections’ resources
- Vision and identity of the organisation
- Plans and organisational context
- Networking; Partnership; Dialogue
- Skills and problem-solving approach
- Appreciative/enquiry¹²
- Capital/investments
- Creativity, flexibility.”

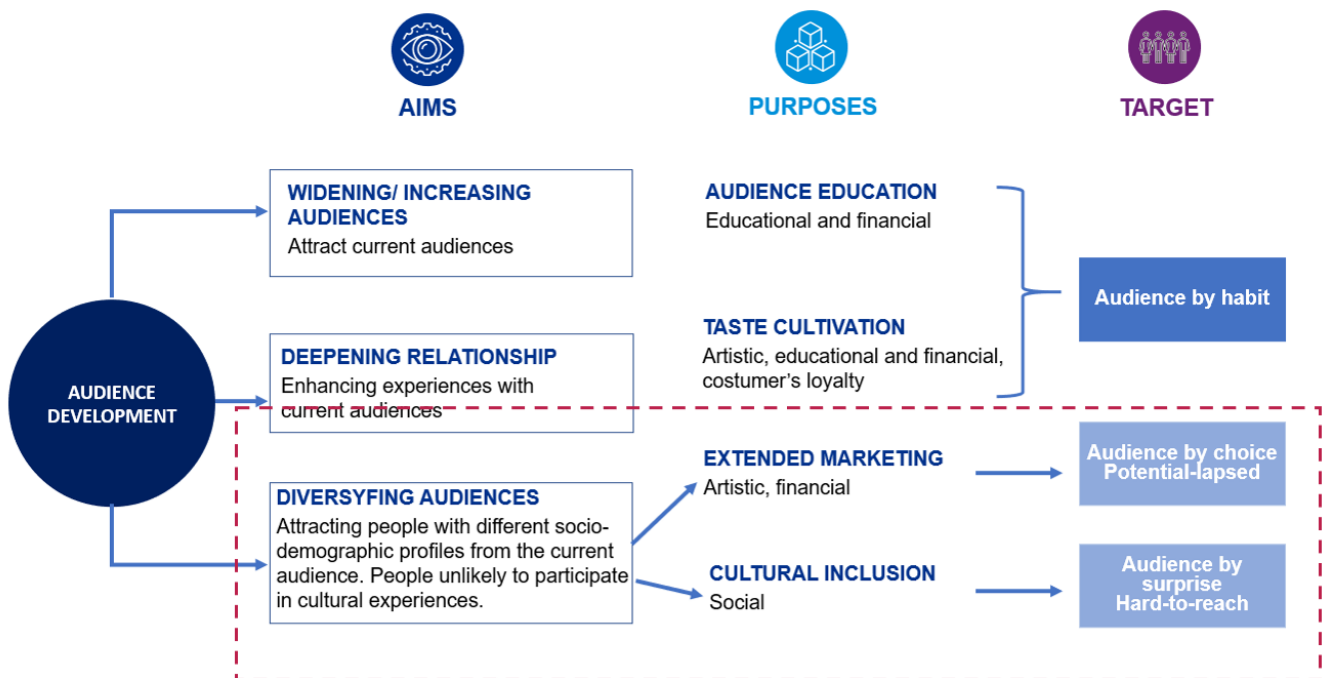
Considering the whole organisation, Kawashima (2000) identified four types of audience development strategies based on the target to be reached, the activity offered, and the final goal. In this research, Kawashima’s classification is integrated with the audience distinction proposed by the working group for Creative Europe (Bollo, 2017). These are: Audience Education, Taste cultivation, Extended Marketing and Cultural Inclusion-Outreach. The first consists of enhancing the quality of the habitual visitor’s cultural experience, the defined “audience by habit”, people who usually attend cultural activities and perceive cultural experiences as part of their identity. The organisation provides an in-depth understanding of the cultural offer through lectures, workshops, conferences etc. *Taste cultivation* is addressed to the audience by habit as well and aims to broaden the scope of the cultural offer by introducing different art genres and forms to attendees.

Extended marketing targets potential or lapsed attenders, namely people who are interested in the arts but do not participate for reasons of lifestyle, lack of opportunities or financial resources but do not have any particular social disadvantage. In Bollo’s framework, they are defined as “audiences by choice”, reached through the removal of material and immaterial barriers preventing attendance (leveraging on the place, digital, people factors).

¹² Expression used by the authors to define a working approach which is probing and asks questions in a positive sense, without blaming.

Finally, *Cultural inclusion - outreach* is when the museum goes beyond its borders, in places of daily life, to reach new audiences (Maitland, 2000). It aims to diversify the audiences as well. However, it targets the audience by surprise, those very unlikely to participate in cultural experiences due to different reasons related to social exclusion, education, and accessibility. This kind of audience is hard-to-reach, indifferent and hostile. In fact, their participation cannot be possible without a targeted, deliberated, and long-term approach by the organisation (Bollo, 2017). This framework is used as the basis of the analysis of MAXXI's organisation. Still, the focus will be on strategies to diversify audiences.

Figure 1 - Kawashima and Bollo frameworks and focus of the research (Bollo et al.,2017, p.12)



Once the barrier to access is overcome, the second level of audience development is related to engagement and active participation.

Further research focused on the level of involvement meant to encompass a wide range of potential relations, ranging from simple workshops to co-creation, assuming that having a relationship entails more than a one-way exchange of cultural content (Kelly, 2006). Nina Simon (2010, p.187) classified the active participation in four main categories: “Contributory projects, where visitors are solicited to provide limited and specified objects, actions and ideas to an institutionally controlled process. Collaborative projects, where visitors are invited to act as active partners in the institution. Co-creative projects, where community members work together with institutional staff members from

the beginning to define the project's goals and to generate the programme of exhibit based on community interests. Hosted projects, where the institution turns over a portion of its facilities and/or resources to present programmes developed and implemented by the public.”

This research, privileging the attention on the social value of museums' projects toward the community, as well as the underlying belief that culture can function as a means of social development and cohesion (Matarasso, 1997), will focus on participatory projects to address the no-audiences (*cultural inclusion*). In these projects, the museum becomes a space of interaction for different groups while audiences are personally involved in producing content to include different voices and perspectives. To make these projects more effective and impactful, long-term relationships should be established. For this reason, the following section will introduce the relational capital and relationship marketing theories.

1.3. Relational capital and relational marketing

Recognising that a museum's success is dependent on a variety of audiences, relationship marketing can be a suitable managerial approach for museums (Camarero et al., 2019). The literature related to the complementary approaches of relational capital and relational marketing (RM)¹³ helps to clarify the process of social relationships and theoretically justify how long-term relations of cultural organisations can enable knowledge sharing and value generation. According to Blackwell & Scaife (2016), the most successful and sustainable activities are those where the museum organisation revises its attitudes through dialogue with the audience. To do so, the museum needs to segment the audiences and adapt to their needs; for this reason, elements of RM can apply.

Relationship orientation is the proactive establishment, growth, and maintenance of connections with customers and other parties, resulting in mutually beneficial exchange in persons or organisations. Given that value generation is at the heart of RM analysis and the centre of contemporary public administration and management discussions, it is widely acknowledged as a critical starting point when analysing public services (Camarero et al., 2019). When exploring RM application in public service organisations, it is essential to specify that value varies based on the organisational context (Moore, 2000). In particular, the value produced by for-profit firms is related to financial revenues. Instead, the value produced by not-for-profit and government organisations

¹³ Relationship marketing is to identify and establish, maintain and enhance and when necessary, also to terminate relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties are met, and that this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises (Grönroos, 1994).

regards achieving social goals to meet the demands of individuals who support and contribute to the programs (Moore, 2000).

This research focuses on the relational capital (RC) of the museum that “includes all the organisation’s relations with individuals, group of people and organisations (companies, institutions, civil actors etc.)” (Argano, 2014, p.184). It has also been defined as external social capital, referring to the links an organisation maintains with external agents (Adler & Kwon, 2002). RC is a component of intellectual capital¹⁴ and represents the connections with the external context (Argano, 2014). The relational capital is of utmost importance for the integration of the cultural organisation with the external environment. It contributes to improving social capital, defined as all the relational resources inherent in cross-cutting personal relationships beneficial to community social groups’ growth (Tsai & Ghosal, 1998).

Other scholars provided a broader definition of social capital as comprehensive of social ties, trusting relationships and value systems (Coleman, 1990; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Putnam, 1995). Following this conceptualisation, Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1997) identified three dimensions of social capital – structural, relational and cognitive. They theoretically justified how these dimensions’ characteristics promote resource combination and exchange within businesses, generating organisations’ value (intellectual capital). The structural dimension encompasses the social interactions between individuals within society and allows information access and exchange. The relational component is concerned with the assets of these connections, such as trust and trustworthiness. Trust is a characteristic of a connection and can encourage joint efforts between parties (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994); trustworthiness, on the other hand, relates to the individual actor participating in the relationship (Barney & Hansen, 1994). A trustworthy actor is more likely to get cooperation from other actors in the fulfilment of goals. Finally, the cognitive dimension regards a shared model that facilitates a common understanding of collective goals and behaviours in a social system. Nahapiet and Ghosal (1997), recognising the relational dimension of social capital, also identified three crucial factors for developing social relationships: time, interaction and interdependence.

Indeed, relations are created by the growing and repetitive interaction between two actors that generate trust and trustworthiness. The same happens at the organisational level. Inter-organisational relationships at the beginning start as informal deals with little reliance on trust due to lower risk

¹⁴ All the immaterial assets that produce intangible resources (intangibles) in their interaction with financial capital. (Stewart, 1999)

(Friedman, 1992; Van de Ven, 1976). As these connections repeat over time and meet basic principles of equity and efficiency, the parties may increase their willingness to commit and invest resources creating cooperative relationships (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). This framework was also confirmed by the network literature showing how frequent and close interactions influence trust and trustworthiness, leaving actors knowing each other and sharing knowledge and points of view (Krackhardt, 1992; Nelson, 1989).

Applying RM to the research, Gummesson (2006) emphasised that an organisation's competitive advantage is not given by the mere ownership of relations but by the management and attention to them. Building long-term relations make the actors involved partners in a win-win logic where both parties gain from each other. This way, stable relationships acquire strategic relevance for the organisation. The variables that influence the longevity of a relation are collaboration, commitment, trust, sharing common objectives and values, interactions. The kind of tie developed that characterises a relationship can be weak or strong. Strong ties imply informal relations even in formal contexts, cooperation, shared expectations, predictability. Weak connections give access to new information but are superficial and casual. However, they are helpful to undermine routines and schemes and to create new knowledge experiences (Granovetter, 1973).

Putnam (1995) introduced two dimensions of social capital based on ties, either individual or collective, bonding and bridging social capital. The former refers to close ties and cohesiveness characterised by value sharing and mutual trust that enables exchange and collective action. It has to do with interpersonal or internal relationships. By contrast, the latter is described as the weak links individuals create with other groups that provide innovative thinking, opportunities, or information. According to Ryu (2017), managers' bridging social capital influences organisational performance by helping them communicate fresh and diverse ideas with individuals in other networks and infuse creativity into their organisations.

Developing relational capital means creating network of relationships with different social stakeholders. Argano (2014, p. 193), by elaborating the model of 30 relations by Gummesson (2006), grouped these relationships in four categories:

- Market relations: costumers, cultural organisations, competitors, public and private funders, public institutions.
- Relations above the market: policymakers, communities of the territory, media, opinion makers and leader
- Interstitial relationships: donors and artistic community.

- Relationships below market: relations within the organisation.

The analysis will focus on the museum's relational capital, represented by the managers and the museum's offices, which use their bridging social capital to build relationships with different social stakeholders (Camarero et al., 2019). Those that will be impacted by the cultural organisation's actions such as individuals, civic organisations, public institutions, companies, volunteers, policymakers (Kadoyama, 2018). This research will pay attention to the establishment and development of relationships between the museum and communities, public institutions, private companies and third sector organisations. The intensity of relations manifests at the artistic, social, educational, ideological, psychological and knowledge levels in the museum context and it is functional to develop experiential marketing strategies, emotional, generational and multicultural (Bollo, 2012; Gummesson, 2006). The analysis will look at projects where these dimensions manifest, and the connections analysed will be those described by Gummesson as partnerships, where both parties cooperate long-term.

2. Research Design

2.1. Research question and case study method

The research uses a case study approach that examines the organisation of the MAXXI museum in Rome and some of the projects it implemented. These are participatory projects of intercultural mediation, outreach and accessibility that have made the ‘target’ audience part of the project team in the co-production and design of a final product. The theoretical framework previously exposed helps guide the analysis of the selected projects, understand the audience development strategies implemented and define the process of relations developed.

The underlying question behind the research seeks to understand how long-term relations with social stakeholders improve the museum’s social role. This analysis finds its legitimacy in giving empirical evidence on the importance of developing long-term relationships with social stakeholders, whose voices and interpretations must be effectively included in the museum’s institutional offer, thus producing a tangible impact on the communities involved. The purpose lays on providing a basis of knowledge for policymakers and cultural professionals to develop policies and practices that ensure continuity in projects’ implementation, by creating structured partnerships with different social stakeholders. Furthermore, the research aims to provide possible policy recommendations from the grounded experience of the organisation, projects, museums’ experts, and projects’ participants, to encourage cultural institutions toward the new suggested developments.

2.2. Methodology

Although the research focus regards the museum’s social and relational dimension, it has been widely recognised that are still missing appropriate methodologies to capture and measure cultural institutions’ performances. In fact, available indicators are not representative of the “multifaceted” and “multidimensional” value of culture (Bollo, 2013). Therefore, qualitative methods are the most effective approach to conduct this research, adopting different means of exploration to answer the research question.

I conducted exploratory research using secondary data in form of documents and reports issued by MAXXI and other authors on the selected projects; semi-structured interviews with institution’s managers and projects’ managers as well as the participants; and experts’ judgments. Finally, in the case of the MIXT project, I had the possibility to gather first-hand experience since it was still in implementation at the time of the research.

The choice to use the case study method was given by the need to find a practical experience as a starting point to answer the research question. Indeed, the case study strategy allows for the use of different data collection methods. More importantly, Yin (1994) emphasises that this methodology is preferable when contemporary phenomena and behaviours are at stake. In addition, the case study method's practice-oriented approach allows to identify the main issue and to discuss with experts, practitioners, and professionals working in the institution subject of analysis (Dul & Hak, 2007).

Finally, the research looks at specific projects because projects are complex systems that effectively provide an overview of all the facets of the implementation process. Designing such projects implies a series of actions: from the initial detection of resources and constraints to the verification of feasibility conditions, and to the definition of the objectives and expected results. The interventions are articulated in phases and follow implementation times, adopting targeted strategies, monitoring, and evaluating results. Therefore, projects can function as paradigms for identifying indicators of success and criticalities, while also providing elements for reflection and comparison in a logic of comparability (Bodo et al., 2009).

2.3. Empirical material

As formerly pointed out, my research is grounded in the analysis of reports and interviews. MAXXI reports provide a general view of MAXXI's general figures, values, activities and functioning. Instead, reports related to the projects provide a preliminary and comprehensive understanding of the strategies and methods adopted for the specific projects, their results, their quality, and their shortcomings. To complement the information acquired through the documents, I conducted six semi-structured interviews with project managers and with the Heads of the Education and Public Engagement Offices. Then, I interviewed participants of the project *My Iran* and the Dean of the school involved in all the editions of *Il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola*. For the MIXT project, I attended its inauguration press conference, in which all the involved stakeholders witnessed their experience. The underlying assumption is that the direct experience of projects' managers and participants can provide proper insights on them.

Conducting interviews helped further explore all the strategy's qualitative aspects, the projects' key drivers, reasons and goals of the projects, their strengths and weaknesses, the value they produced, the collaborations with stakeholders as well as possible improvements. Specifically, I interviewed the following persons.

Mrs Marta Morelli, Head of the Education Office and Mrs Sofia Bilotta, Head of Public Engagement Office, they provided unique insights into the offices' reasons and goals and their strategies related to funding, screening of the projects, evaluation, and best practices followed. Since they were also the project managers for *My Iran, Il Museo tra I banchi di scuola* and *MIXT* they provided important witnesses of the projects' experiences, motivations and objectives, strategies, outcomes and critical issues. Mrs Silvia Mascheroni, an expert in heritage education and intercultural mediation, manager and coordinator of "*Patrimonio e Intercultura*"¹⁵, gave instead relevant insights on the importance of projects of social inclusion, their principles and methods, their criticalities and the need to implement policies to encourage them. She shared also her points of view about *My Iran*, being the coordinator of the project. Finally, the projects' participants have been important witnesses of their projects' perceptions, the value they gave to the activity, the relationship processes created with the museum after the collaboration, and ultimately, MAXXI's ethics and behaviour with them.

2.4. The choice of MAXXI

The selection of MAXXI as a case study is due to the significance of this museum with regards to a variety of relevant aspects. This museum has in fact two necessary preconditions to develop strategies of audience development, namely financial resources, and capacities.

MAXXI represents an example of a museum in Italy that has found a self-sustainable and autonomous business model of resources' procurement by creating partnerships with private enterprises (Melandri & Barrera, 2020). In fact, its governance model, in the form of a controlled public foundation, implies a participative governance and management model that involves multiple actors (audience, donors, sponsors, staff members). This structure generates pressure not only to find financial support but also to gain social legitimacy, hence becoming more outward focused toward communities (Camarero et al., 2019). In Italy, autonomous cultural institutions are considered actors of change for cultural consumption; they can guarantee efficient and effective performances as well as qualified employees (Scuderi, 2014).

MAXXI has been nominated by Artribune the best museum in Italy for the quality and quantity of exhibitions and initiatives for the public (Artribune, 2019). It has registered successful performances, which have been growing over the years: in 2019, visitors increased by +10.000 and

¹⁵ ISMU foundation department that for 15 years has been dedicated to documenting the good practices that cultural institutions carry out for heritage education in an Intercultural key. It is also involved in promoting training courses, conferences, and seminars. This year it has documented almost 100 projects. The most consistent part is represented by museums' projects that take place and are activated by museums but also projects that are activated by other subjects such as libraries, projects at European level to which ISMU as a partner participated.

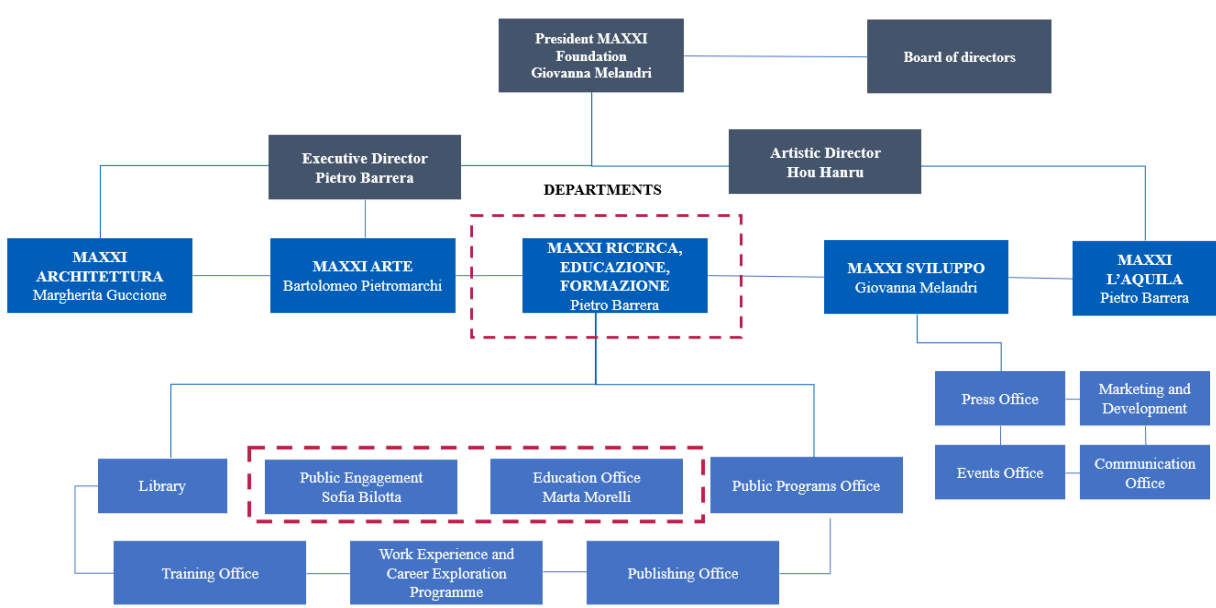
revenues increased by 15% compared to 2018 (MAXXI, 2019). During the dramatic pandemic-driven year of closure, MAXXI has been able to transform itself into a broadcasting enterprise, offering for free an original cultural offer created ad hoc for the emergency. Its programme *#iorestoacasa con il MAXXI – liberi di uscire con il pensiero* reached 14 million of people, demonstrating an extraordinary resilience and capacity of the museum’s professionals (Federculture, 2020; MAXXI, 2020).

The MAXXI’s vision, as declared in its annual reports, portrays the museum as a dynamic laboratory of creativity, research and knowledge production that responds to the needs of the changing world and reflects on social and cultural transformations (MAXXI, 2018; 2019; 2020). Indeed, in recent research conducted by Bollo (2017) on audience development, the museum has been selected as a best practice for how it has transformed its organisation and programming, taking into account audience needs and political issues of contemporary society and for its smart use of digital. Finally, MAXXI reports annually its activities and projects, providing a substantial amount of data that are helpful for research purposes.

2.5. Project selection and focus of the analysis

The strategies of audience development involve the entire organisation of the museum and different offices (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021) This research will focus on the Education and Public Engagement Offices that pursue the specific aim of increasing and diversifying the public (cultural inclusion), addressing the no audiences, taking for granted that core audiences should always be considered and cultivated (Hayes & Slater, 2002).

Figure 2 - MAXXI organisation - Focus on the offices of interest (Author’s elaboration from MAXXI.art)



Within the activities of these offices, to answer my research question, I have selected three significant projects agreed with MAXXI's management based on: the specific content coherent with the research, the availability of information, participants' reachability and management advice. Eventually, the projects selected are *Il Mio Iran (My Iran)*, *Il Museo tra I banchi di scuola* and MIXT – *Musei per tutti*. All of them, while representing different approaches encompassed strategies of audience development to involve and engage *no-audiences* (audience by choice and audience by surprise). In fact, as Bilotta asserts: “*The activities of outreaching, accessibility and intercultural mediation aim to bring the museum beyond its borders. These are different approaches but complementary because they address the “no audiences”*: accessibility, intercultural mediation, social inclusion brings inside the museum people who alternatively would not come alone, the outreaching activity does the contrary, brings the museum outside, to people who would not come as well. Therefore, these projects are very connected in terms of strategies and methods” (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

According to Bollo (2017), there are many strategies and tools to achieve different audience goals. For the present study, the projects were analysed following two main key action areas to diversify the public: 1. Active engagement, co-creation where the organisation focuses on the participatory factor, including and involving new audiences. 2. Collaboration, networking, innovative partnerships where the organisation commits in partnership or collaborations to reach new target audiences.

The analysed projects involve the public in the co-production of content, responding all to the “*macro-objective of the education office, namely, to expand the project community. In these cases, the participants are not considered only as a target, but become part of the project team, real co-creators.*” (M. Morelli, personal communication, June 25, 2021). The projects show an evolution of the strategies, from a first experimental project of intercultural mediation on the occasion of a temporary exhibition (*My Iran*) to projects with an increased continuity and more intense relationship with the stakeholders of reference (*Il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola* and *MIXT*).

Consequently, the analysis follows a chronological order. I compare the first intercultural project *My Iran* made in 2014, with the most recent projects *il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola* (2013-2021) and *MIXT* (2021). I use the former as a ‘control example’ to acknowledge the importance of the project's time and commitment to create a network of relations, while the latter two represent emblematic cases for my argument because they result from a long-term partnership and collaboration

with, respectively, one school and the associations of deaf and blind people that has brought to the rethinking of the museum's "hardware" (exhibition, organisation, staff and services).

As highlighted by the Fondazione Fitzcarraldo (2009) the involvement of the entire organisation is a critical component of successful AD plans and practices. The museum becomes inclusive of new audiences by producing exhibitions, educational programs and dedicated events only with a specific political and cultural will (Morelli & Mascheroni, 2015). Also, Argano (2014) emphasises that the development of relational capital depends on several factors:

- Systemic approach: rethinking the general culture of the organisation.
- Strategy of the organisation, which influences relations and networks
- Relations link to the ethics and identity of the organisation (humbleness, collaboration, welcoming)
- Time, which is crucial to stabilise relationships and to make them effective - quality is better than the number of relations.
- Social responsibility of the organisation.

Following this framework that stresses the relevance of the organisation's overall commitment, I realised that the project's analysis must be framed on three hierarchical levels: 1. A more general and strategic perspective related to MAXXI. 2. The specific strategy of AD of the Education and Public Engagement Offices. 3. Strategies and methods of the projects, particularly related to the type of relations developed.

1st level – Governance

The factors studied are:

- Leadership - Director's will of opening the programming and the museum to new audiences
- MAXXI's strategy regarding the openness to communities and the establishment of relations.
- Ethics and identity of the museum toward people.

2nd level – Organisation and Processes

- Strategies of education and public engagement offices regarding funding, national benchmarking, screening of the projects, building capacity and project evaluation.
- Reasons and values of their projects and activities

3rd level – Project Analysis

While describing goals, targets, strategies and outcomes (Annexes), project analysis is based on the following indicators.

- Public’s participation
- Time and commitment of collaboration
- Quality and relevance of collaboration (reciprocal will; resource sharing; new audiences)
- Number of stakeholders involved
- Type of stakeholders involved
- Follow-up with stakeholders involved
- Impact on the institution and on the community involved

The ultimate objective is to assess the improvement of the museum’s social role, looking at two dimensions (Table 1).

1. The institutional – seeing the impact of the projects in the institution in terms of access, participation and representation (Sandell, 1998) and looking at the organisational implications that these projects have in the staff training, exhibitions, offices, activities’ organisation.
2. Community dimension: what changes projects bring in the community involved as a whole.

Table 1 - Input factors and indicators (Author’s elaboration from Bodo et al.,2009)

Input factors	Museum's social role	
	Institutional impact	Social Impact
Participation of the public	Strategies improvement	Change in community involved
Time	New organisational structure	Creation of network of relations
Collaborations with SS	New competences of the staff	Knowledge exchange
Quality of the partnership	Diversification in programming	Intergenerational exchange
Number of stakeholders	Improvement of service provision and performance	Empowerment
Type of stakeholders	Increased participation	
Funding	Change in representation	
Human resources	Partnerships	

2.6. Research limitations

Despite the efforts to conduct meaningful research, the study has some limitations due to the scope and time constraints. Firstly, the subject of the study is limited to three projects implemented by one museum. Therefore, the case may lack external validity, namely its capability to be transferrable and adaptable to other contexts. It would have been more comprehensive to adopt a cross-case study strategy, analysing more than a cultural institution and projects in depth.

The qualitative method prevents the generalisation of the findings since the data collected are peculiar to this case. Interviewees were selected according to their relevance for the research and their availability to take the interview for the limited time frame available. Still, research biases come from several shortcomings related to the number and the selection of interviews; more respondents could have improved the reliability of findings and resolutions. Furthermore, biases may derive from the roles in the interviewing process, both on the interviewee's side and the interviewer one.

Nevertheless, even considering the described limitations, the current research may provide a sound basis of knowledge and approach to developing further research on a broader perimeter: local, regional or national. Once limits of the research have been made explicit, the following analysis and conclusions may be better framed and judged.

3. Analysis

This section reports the findings based on the three described levels. After a contextualisation of MAXXI with general figures, activities and strategies particularly related on its positioning toward the public, a descriptive analysis will present the projects with the main findings.

3.1. MAXXI context

MAXXI is the National Museum for the Arts of the 21st Century conceived as a “cultural campus” managed by a publicly controlled private foundation, instituted in 2009 by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and headed by President Giovanna Melandri. Since December 2013, Hou Hanru has been the artistic director of the museum. It is organised in four main departments with their offices: MAXXI Architettura, MAXXI Arte, MAXXI Ricerca, Educazione e Formazione, MAXXI sviluppo (Figure 2). The museum’s mission is to be “a place for the conservation and exhibition of its collections but also, and above all, a laboratory for cultural experimentation and innovation, for the study, research and production of the aesthetic contents of our time” (MAXXI, 2021). It aims “to be a centre of excellence, an interactive hub in which the most diverse forms of expression, productivity and creation may converge, combine and reproduce” (MAXXI, 2021).

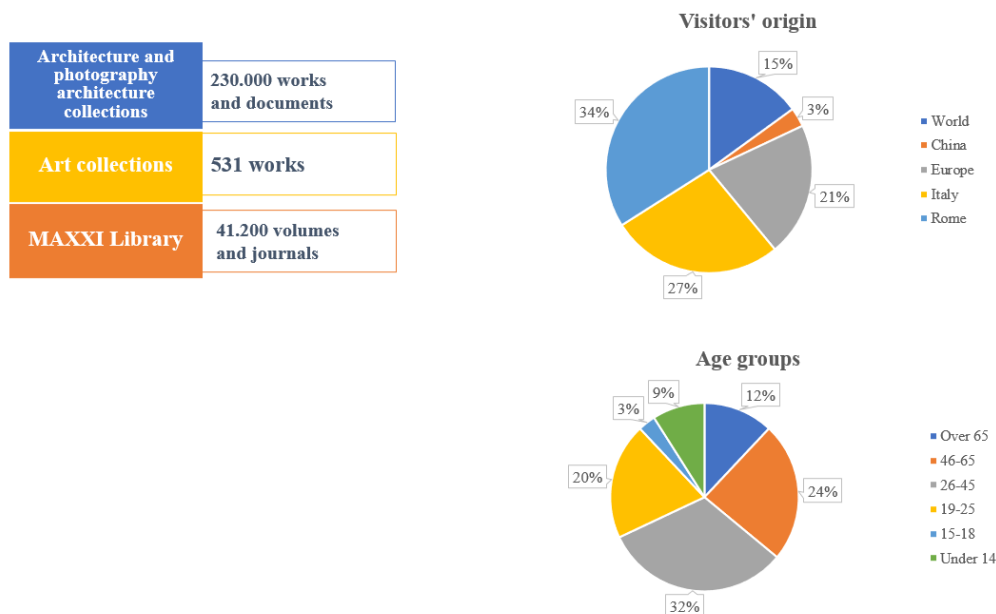
Its programming is therefore coherent with its mission. It includes a wide range of activities: exhibitions, workshops, conferences, shows, projections, educational projects (MAXXI, 2021). It has a public-private business model made of public funding but also partnerships and sponsors with private companies.

3.1.1. MAXXI general figures and activities

The museum has registered in the years 2018-2019 around 429.700¹⁶ attenders. Its revenues decreased between 16 million to 13 million in the same period. Following the art and architecture collections, the education programs represent the most considerable portion of the activities carried out by the museum, followed by events and public programs. The main target of education activities is adults, families and schools. In 2019, they scored 14.179 participants with 618 activities. In 2020, even during the lockdown, the education activities continued onsite and online, for a total of 428.

¹⁶ Visitors’ average between two years derived from MAXXI’s reports.

Figure 3 - MAXXI general figures of collections and visitors in 2019 (MAXXI Annual Report 2019)



Following the framework provided by Kawashima (2000), MAXXI commits to all audience development strategies. The most developed strategies are those to address audience by habit and audience by choice. MAXXI commitment is evident by a broad cultural offer related to taste cultivation and audience education, including lectures, workshops, guided tours, membership cards, public programs and events. There are numerous activities of extended marketing related to the space, the large square in the centre of the neighbourhood, the presence of the restaurant and cafeteria, the library, and the bookshop. Moreover, in 2019, thanks to the sponsors, there were days of free access to exhibitions or guided tours. Regarding events, some initiatives address different publics and increase MAXXI’s visibility, such as concerts, the music festival or the cinema organised on “Summer at MAXXI” in 2019 and “*La festa del Cinema di Roma*”. The prizes for young talents can also promote relations and creativity and attract different audiences (e.g., MAXXI Bulgari Prize).

Regarding the use of digital, MAXXI is well established on social networks, with five profiles on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Youtube, scoring a community of 556.000 contacts in 2020. During the year of lockdown, the museum created two original programmes entirely online *#iorestoa casa con il MAXXI* and *#nonfermiamoleidee*. Regarding partnerships, MAXXI registers 250 private companies’ partners and 230 private donors for funding sources in 2020 and cultural organisations for creative initiatives.

Within this broad spectrum of activities, a minor part is dedicated to cultural inclusion and outreaching projects, with a dedicated office of public engagement aimed at diversifying participation and representation, by involving marginalised groups through the co-creation of cultural products. This research focuses on education and public engagement activities to demonstrate that the museum can improve its social role by creating long-term partnerships with social stakeholders.

3.1.2. MAXXI's vision and culture

According to the Head of the Education Office, MAXXI has positioned itself always as a “forum”, especially since the artistic direction of Hou Hanru, that has introduced non-western and non-mainstream programming of great relevance, including and involving alternative societies (e.g., a trilogy of exhibitions dedicated to the Middle East and Africa.) (M. Morelli, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

Analysing reports between 2018-2020, MAXXI is described as a “dynamic laboratory for culture”, a platform of contemporaneity and experimentation open to freedom of expression, diversity, and dialogue; an “incubator” of creativity with its programs such as YAP (Young Architects Program) or MAXXI Bvlgari Prize. It is a museum that reflects on the issues of contemporaneity “reflects on the aesthetic, social and political change of our present” through specific exhibitions and programmes (B. Pietromarchi, MAXXI, 2018, p.29). It is a “propulsive centre” in “between tradition and innovation, memory and future” (G. Melandri, MAXXI, 2019, p.11), focused on diversifying the public and increasing its internationality. The museum aims to be an “urban square” for the neighbourhood, Rome and tourists (P. Barrera, MAXXI, 2019, p.15). In 2020, the museum’s presidency recognises the importance of public policies that encourage the demand side of culture, beneficial for people’s wellbeing (G. Melandri, MAXXI, 2020, p.12). All these reflections demonstrate a general commitment of the organisation to be audience centric.

3.2. Strategic analysis of the Education and Public Engagement offices

The Education Office born as “Education Services” in 2004, six years before MAXXI’s opening, during the construction of the building, due to the will of the General Directorate for the Arts and Contemporary Architecture of ex-MIBACT (Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities) and a specific course at Sapienza University on Museum and Territory Pedagogy. There was the need to mediate the relations with the inhabitants of the Flaminio neighbourhood with MAXXI’s project, which were hostile to the large construction site. University interns carried out the education services

thanks to the agreement signed with Sapienza University and the Museum and Territory Pedagogy course. From these years onwards, the museum started to involve the community of the neighbourhood and create long-term partnerships with the schools of the territory, the church next to the museum, the nursing home for the elderly. *“We were born with the specific purpose of involving the community of the neighbourhood”* (M. Morelli, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

The education services included temporary exhibitions, talks, lectures on contemporary architecture that characterised MAXXI on the national scene for the education services on architecture, particularly that of Zaha Hadid. *“I can affirm that thanks to the work done mostly by the education services, today the relationships with Flaminio’s inhabitants are very fluid, and our collaborations still last after seventeen years”* (M. Morelli, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

From 2010, adapting itself to the international debate, the education service changed its name in the “Education Department” to confirm the commitment of the MAXXI’s governance to education, aligning their activities to the other core departments of the museum. In fact, the concept of “service” seemed something optional and accessory. Today, the Education Office aims at increasingly reach and diversify the public, educate people on critical thinking and involve them in the project community. *“The most “fruitful” projects are when we involve the community before or at the beginning of the project. In this way, the participants are not a target, but part of the project team, like in My Iran or Il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola”* (M. Morelli, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

Originally within the Education Office, the Public Engagement Office has been recently aligned to the latter to increase the focus and resources to themes of social inclusion (accessibility, intercultural mediation, social inclusion). Today, the office is headed by one person that coordinates all the activities. The mission of the Public Engagement Office is to actively involve people usually excluded from the cultural participation, to introduce in museum’s cultural representation new points of view and the voice of marginality. The goal is to favour the social inclusion of these people and facilitate the experience of diversity by all visitors, adults and children, against embarrassment, stereotypes and intolerance. The office works with people with disabilities, migrants and immigrants, guests and workers of prisons, inpatients in care facilities, caregivers, children, women and the elderly in fragility. These are people who look for active involvement to contribute to the community’s cultural life. Therefore, the co-design and collective implementation of a cultural product, for which museums’ professionals and visitors work together horizontally, is one of the possible answers that the museum can give in terms of social relevance.

3.2.1. Strategy of resource allocation and priority dedicated to education activities

The Education Office has an annual budget that varies every year based on the museum's internal budget and the availability of sponsorships (before the pandemic). Sponsors permit to make cheaper tariffs for some of the educational activities, for instance, guided tours or summer centres for children. Sometimes, the collaboration with schools or specific target communities has dedicated public calls/funding (e.g., Piano Triennale delle Arti).

The same happens for the Public Engagement Office, which has a dedicated budget that varies based on sponsorships or public funding in case of specific social projects (e.g., MIXT, accessibility issue).

3.2.2. National benchmarking/ Best practices

“The legislation is not uniform. At the national level, the only reference that museums have about education, public engagement and relations with the public, is the document issued by the Directorate General for Museums “Uniform quality levels for museums”, which set the minimum standards museums must adopt. The objectives required are minimum. There is nothing on the strategies and contents. Therefore, each museum, based on its capacities and resources, decide what activities to develop” (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

There is not a national monitoring system to assess the development of audience development and public engagement strategies. Therefore, every manager directly involved in the topic follows some best practices to look at. According to the head of the Public Engagement Office, for accessibility, there are some best practices of reference. For instance, there is a system of museums in Tuscany dedicated to Alzheimer and intellectual disabilities. The Guggenheim Collection in Veneto is very specialised on visual disability. Each museum varies the field of specialisation, but the person dedicated to these projects usually is always the same because they require a high level of specialisation and dedication.

3.2.3. Screening of the projects

The planning of the education activities is done within the broader exhibition programming, there is not an ex-ante selection of the projects. The programming before the pandemic was linked to the cultural and artistic programming of the museum. The strategy is to develop education activities on the exhibitions that will receive more financial and communication resources. Nevertheless, some projects are independent from the exhibitions and are launched by the museum's initiative or by one of the partners, mainly schools (e.g., *Il Museo tra i Banchi di Scuola*).

Instead, the selection of projects by the Public Engagement Office is based on addressing a social issue and are independent from the exhibition programming, because the projects are usually connected to the permanent collection (MIXT, accessibility issue).

3.2.4. Evaluation

In every project there is an ex-ante, in-itinere and ex-post evaluation. The depth of the assessment varies based on the project. Now, the evaluation process is not structured nor quantitative. Usually the evaluation methods include open-questions surveys, group discussions, semi-structured interviews and conversations, reports of the activities and narratives. Further illustration of evaluation processes can be found in each project analysis.

3.3. Projects Analysis

In the following section, project analysis is carried out in chronological order. The structure of each project regards: description, reasons and goals and engagement process. Then, a section is dedicated to the value produced by each project toward the museum, the community involved and the external target (Annexes).

3.3.1. My Iran Project

Description of the project

Duration: September-December 2014

The project involved 10 participants of the Iranian community of Rome to interpret the heritage on display in the exhibition *Unedited History. Iran 1960-2014*. It consisted of participated writing workshops held weekly. The participants produced autobiographical narratives starting from the work and the artist chosen which stimulated their memory and personal experiences. The production of the texts and their editing was always shared with the group, this connected the private experience to a collective feeling. As also witnessed by S. Mascheroni: “*The visual art works helped them to objectify and also to interpret according to their personal experiences*” (S. Mascheroni, personal communication, July 6, 2021).

The project brought to several outputs: the production of texts that were exposed in captions alongside the works; the complete version was instead collected in a dedicated brochure. Participants’ video interviews were also exposed at the end of the exhibition and broadcasted in a dedicated channel on social networks. In this way, participants’ personal experiences and stories complemented the curatorial reading along with the whole exhibition.

Reasons and goals of the project

The project *My Iran* was launched by the decision of the artistic director Hou Hanru considering different motivations. First of all, the museum's recognition as a space of discourse and relations, a "contact zone open to dialogue with and between communities" (Bilotta et al., 2018, p.153), to include audiences and non-audience members in the museum's daily activities.

Secondly, heritage works as a perfect means to acknowledge identity as well as cultural diversity in an increasingly multicultural society, because it encourages dialogue between culturally diverse individuals and communities. Thus, the heritage is conceived as dynamic, made of multiple meanings to be relocated in a social space of exchange, not only as something to be conserved and transmitted. (Morelli & Mascheroni, 2015)

The project *My Iran* engaged the Iranian community in interpreting the history on display in the exhibition *Unedited History. Iran 1960-2014*, which showcased the diverse expressions of Iranian visual culture over the last 50 years. This was the first of a three-part series of exhibitions on the Middle East. The project's main goals were to involve Rome's Iranian community in sharing and producing alternative interpretations of their recent heritage vis-à-vis the curatorial art-historical reading; to produce different perspectives of a temporary exhibition for the museum's habitual visitors; to attract non-audience and potential audiences in the museum (in particular the Iranian community and followers of Iranian culture); to make the museum a place of conversation, intercultural integration and social development; to encourage visitors of all cultural and social backgrounds to interact with one another (Bilotta et al., 2018; Fondazione ISMU, 2015).

Engagement process

The funding of the project was part of the budget dedicated to the exhibition *Unedited History*.

Step 1: July 2014

- The curatorial team, MAXXI's Education Office and the artistic director Hou Hanru agree around the strategy of involving the Iranian community of Rome to mediate the content of the exhibition *Unedited History. Iran 1960-2014*.
- First contacts and meetings with the representatives of the Iranian community "Alefba Association" who involved through word-of-mouth other compatriots.
- Contacts and invitation of people in representation of the Italian component (mainly teachers who collaborated with the Education Office).

- Sending of materials to study to the first group of participants
- Involvement of an expert in intercultural mediation – Silvia Mascheroni – first meeting of the project team to define the workplan, the methods and strategies. The autobiographical narrative has been selected as the best method for this purpose.

Step 2: September – November 2014

- Completion of the timeline and structure of the workshops
- Provision of other materials to study on (Catalogues, Power Point presentations, images of the works exposed at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris)
- Beginning of the workshops that have been held until the end of November 2014
- In the first meeting the project, the goals, the timeline and commitment required were presented. The first meeting registered a large participation of both Iranians and Italians. However, the commitment required represented an important determinant for participation that brought many autochthonous to not continue the project. In the following meetings the artists, the art works and the exhibition in Paris were presented. The project team choose the artists and the works to work on. The participants worked on the reproduction of the works because the exhibition was not set up yet.
- During the participatory writing workshops, the participants wrote their texts starting from the artist and the works chosen which evoked the memory of their personal experiences.

Step 3 – December 2014

- Inauguration of the exhibition *Unedited History. Iran 1960-2014*
- Final Assessment and informal discussion with participants (Fondazione ISMU, 2015).

Value produced

a. Toward the museum

It was the first time that MAXXI engaged in an experimental project such as *My Iran* because, differently from other intercultural projects that involve migrants from different cultures in the interpretation of a western or westernised and historicised cultural heritage, *My Iran* involved the Iranian community in interpreting a contemporary heritage not yet historicised and still debated. The history of the Islamic Republic of Iran became a driver for the museum to encourage the active participation of the target audience and the introduction of new interpretative keys. Through this project, the Education Office was able to influence the exhibition's display, and for the first time, the

project was broadcasted on web communication to advertise the exhibition through video interviews with the participants (Bilotta et al., 2018).

The museum increased its participation dimension and was open to alternative interpretations. *“For the first time, the texts produced by the participants have been exposed with the same dignity and visibility of the captions of the curatorship. There was no hierarchy of values at the interpretative level”* (S. Mascheroni, personal communication, July 6, 2021). This was confirmed by one of the participants, Helia Hamedani, that valued that they were able to contribute to the production of an exhibition or event as museum’s professionals.

The project also generated a changed perspective of participants toward the museum because people felt welcomed. *“We were all happy that museums do these things. Before, we had no idea that department of education do these activities.”*

“To be honest, before starting the project, I thought about a simpler approach. I expected the museums wanted to ask us use and traditions and the usual cliché about our culture. Instead, I was surprised by the humbleness of our tutors; they gave us complete freedom of expression. Secondly, I did not expect the tutors were aware about our contradictory positions. We were able to create a dialogue even if everyone held a different position and I felt that all the points of view were heard” (H. Hamedani, personal communication, July 15, 2021).

b. Toward the community involved

It was a short-term project connected to a temporary exhibition. In this case, the project impacted mainly the individual dimension of the participants.

The coordinator of the project witnesses: *“There was a very nice atmosphere due to a series of circumstances. First of all, one strategic element is welcome. These participants felt welcomed. Then, this is a constant in all the intercultural projects, we give people time for themselves, the possibility to express themselves and a place to discuss”* (S. Mascheroni, personal communication, July 6, 2021).

It was an experience of mutual learning because the group was intergenerational and there were people that did not experience the revolution. So, the discussion among them helped the younger to learn from others’ experiences. Interestingly, several participants found surprising that the same Iranians provided different interpretations and opinions on the same common history.

“I am 73 years old. What I felt, I have seen and lived; young people did not experience it. There was this exchange of ideas. [...] My experience of the period before the revolution did not coincide with what the young people, born after the revolution, thought, or believed; they had a different vision about the past regime, compared to mine, that I had lived that period. This was also very helpful between us to get to know each other and to hear another voice different from what we thought” (A. Hatami, personal communication, August 4, 2021).

Participants felt also empowered by the project.

“For me this was a great example of collaboration, of mutual acknowledgment. It was a very intense, very enjoyable work, very constructive for us because we came together in a group, we did some group work and definitely learned from those who led us and offered something to those who led us” (A. Hatami, in Bilotta et al, 2018, p.161).

“It was nice to compare the various opinions, actually the versions, the different readings of the Iranian themselves when speaking about the same things...I very much liked the fact of insisting on different readings for a single subject. This is something that I hope will remain with me, I want to take it away with me so that I can apply this multiple vision” (Participant’s quote, in Bilotta et al., 2018, p.161).

The tutors and participants recognised an increased cohesion inside the group, despite they already knew each other. In fact, Helia Hamedani affirms *“I already knew the participants, but this experience has changed the affection that I had towards them. The last workshop we had was similar to a group therapy, because almost everyone decided to talk about the war, this was the therapeutic moment”* (H. Hamedani, personal communication, July 15, 2021).

On the relational dimension, *“one of the pillars of projects of intercultural mediation is that they do not address exclusively a segmented public. There should be always the inclusion of local communities to share different perspectives, otherwise the interpretation of the heritage would be auto-referential.”* However, *“in the project My Iran, the contacts activated did not have a positive effect. It would have taken time to activate relations also through embassies, consulates, cultural centres, and communities of reference”* (S. Mascheroni, personal communication, July 6, 2021). H. Hamedani says *“If I did not know Alefba association, I would not have participated in the project”* this demonstrates how a long-term commitment with different social actors would have made the project more impactful and participated (H. Hamedani, personal communication, July 15, 2021).

Nonetheless, this project created a continuity of relations between the department of education and some of the participants for following professional collaborations in the co-conduction and co-production of laboratories for families for traditional Iranian events (in the Shab-e Yalda and Nowruz) but also in other projects. For the realisation of following projects, they contacted the participants of the previous ones. This was very appreciated by Helia Hamedani that recognised the MAXXI's continuity in its public relations.

c. Toward the exterior

The assessment conducted by MAXXI through semi-structured discussions and surveys has demonstrated that “participants became spokespeople for the museum and vehicles for the dissemination of its initiatives, involving fellow Iranians, friends, Italians and foreign acquaintances in the side activities” (Bilotta et al., 2018, p.161).

Critical issues

The project did not produce a permanent effect. This is also due to the project's peculiarity because it was related to a temporary exhibition and therefore was difficult to be replicable. It began with several constraints: the time available was limited, only two months to produce the final output, which implied a high level of dedication from the participants and represented, in fact, a key determinant in their decision to participate. As a matter of fact, in this project, the autochthonous component did not attend the workshops. The participants were not able to see the original works of the exhibition but worked on their reproduction. Also, according to Silvia Mascheroni, a major number of participants would have made the project more powerful and impactful, even if these projects require a meticulous work with each participant. Finally, the project was time consuming for the referent so that she could not support other activities of the office (Bilotta et al, 2018; Fondazione Ismu, 2015).

3.3.2. Il Museo tra i Banchi di Scuola

General description of the project

Duration: Three editions from October 2013 to May 2016 (The project has changed its name but still last today (2021) in the school IC Lucio Fontana, counting in total five editions).

This is an outreaching project where MAXXI collaborates with schools to stimulate creative and critical thinking in students, by developing creative projects that start from the interpretation of artworks. This project has been implemented differently in each edition, illustrated further in the following sections.

Reasons and goals of the project

“The title of the exhibition alludes to the active role that the museum can play in society, beyond the safeguarding of heritage and memory, transferring the museum experience to everyday life and familiar everyday spaces” (Bilotta et al., 2018, p.169)

This project had three editions. It was born from the request of the artistic director Hou Hanru to the Head of the Education Office in 2013. The director took inspiration from the exhibition done by the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschorn in the Parisian banlieue *“Le Musée Precaire”*, that borrowed works of art to the Centre Pompidou, creating an exhibition space, managed by the inhabitants of the banlieue.

On the other side, the dean of the school IC Largo Castelseprio, today, Lucio Fontana, an art historian, proposed to MAXXI a long-term collaboration in order to offer students high-quality experiences in a deprived neighbourhood of Rome such as Labaro, with the idea of giving them more chances and possibilities and, particularly, to improve the school’s education offer. *“It was natural for me to think about arts, because I believe arts allows a reading of the world that is fundamental and permits to make connections, as it happened, between different disciplines as well as creativity helps to mobilise many aspects of education”* (L. Presilla, personal communication, July 12, 2021).¹⁷ This way, the co-design of the project between the Education Office, the dean and teachers of the school started. The aim was to create a *“project of real interaction”* (L. Presilla) with high quality art and artists.

¹⁷ Dean of the School IC Lucio Fontana

The main goal of the project was to bring MAXXI's works, outside, specifically in schools, *"because in schools there are not only students, but also families and inhabitants of the neighbourhood"* (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

The other goals of the project include:

- Making MAXXI an active and inclusive means of informal education.
- Using contemporary art and architecture to involve communities and reevaluate peripheries.
- Making students the protagonists of the project.
- Sharing knowledge and skills between museum's professionals and teachers.
- To promote a direct experience with the museum to facilitate future cultural experiences and to break the traditional stereotype of the museum.
- To inspire new opportunities of knowledge and formation for students.
- Professional and emotional growth of all the project's participants.

Description of the project's editions

1st edition: October 2013 – May 2014

In collaboration with: Sapienza University of Rome, Teaching of Museum and Territory Pedagogy and Fine Arts Academy in Rome.

The first edition was a low budget edition, each class selected a work of art and the artist who created it. By adopting the artist's creative strategies of world's understanding, students elaborated their interpretation creating themselves a project around the artist's work. The education phase included peer tutoring and teaching, visits to the museum and workshops led by trainees, art history students from the university and the academy.

Students set up ten installations in school's spaces confronting issues such as freedom of expression, social stereotypes and constrictions, new forms of slaveries, urban decay and the territory, and the invisibility of weak people. The rationale of the art form of the installation was considered more powerful in involving a young public and influencing the space in which it would have been located. At the end of the year, these works were displayed in an exhibition, where students acted as mediators who explained their work and experience to the public (Bilotta et al., 2018).

2nd edition: October 2014 – May 2015

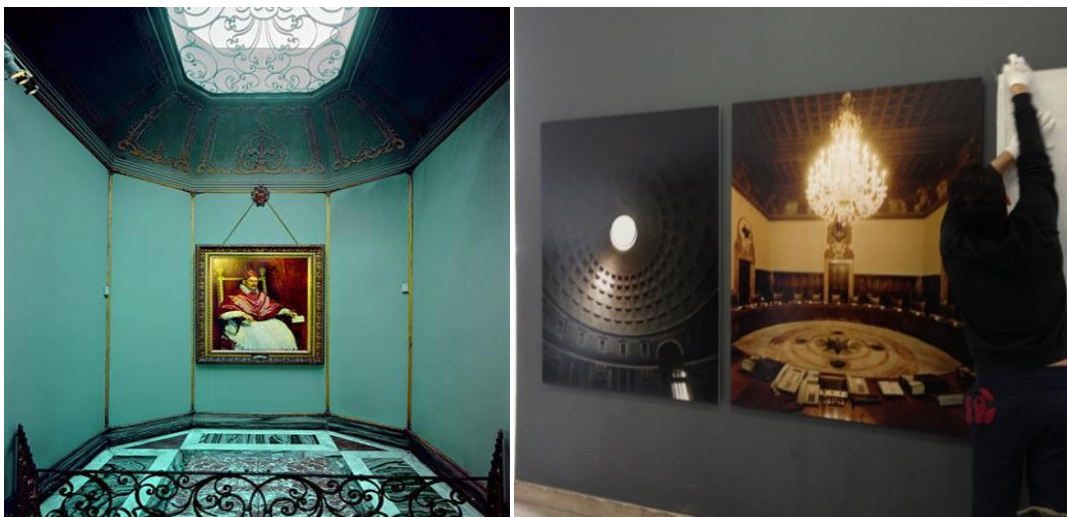
In collaboration with: Sapienza University of Rome, Teaching of Museum and Territory Pedagogy and Fine Arts Academy in Rome. Supported by MIUR, Ministry of Education, University and Research – General Board for students, integration and participation.

Thanks to the support by MIUR, three roman schools hosted in their spaces three works of MAXXI's permanent collection. Museum's professionals, educators, teachers, and interns from Sapienza and the Academy of Fine Arts involved the students in visits and workshops to educate them about the museum's exhibitions and professions.

The relocation of the originals in schools implied a formation with museum's professionals (e.g., conservators, registrars, restorers) who deal with the collections. Students could visit storage rooms and restoration laboratories, this aimed to educate them to take care of the works. Each student had a task related to security, conservation, mediation, and communication. *"This sensitised them to the responsibility of having a work of a national museum on loan for use"* (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021). Besides, like in the first edition, students realised artistic projects inspired by the work hosted at school. The schools involved in the project were ISS Europa V. Woolf located in Pigneto-Centocelle; IC Largo Castelseprio in Labaro; IIS Cine-tv "R. Rossellini" at Ostiense.

A series of three photographs by the Catalan artist Jordi Bernadó – *Pantheon, Palazzo Chigi – Sala del Consiglio dei Ministri; Palazzo Doria Pamphili – Gabinetto del Velasquez* (2007) were displayed at the school ISS Europa V. Woolf.

Figure 4 - Three photographs by Jordi Bernadó displayed at the school ISS Europa V. Woolf (MAXXI Presentation Il Museo tra i Banchi di Scuola 2nd Edition"



At IC Largo Castelseprio (Lucio Fontana), it was reproduced the mural painting “Extension Fade” by Iran do Espirito Santo, the drawing of a wall whose bricks gradually ranges from white to dark grey. Students reinterpreted the concept of the wall in different ways, they tried to give a new shape to the chromatic scale of greys.

Figure 5 - Mural Painting “Extension Fade” by Iran do Espirito Santo and students’ reinterpretation at IC Lucio Fontana (MAXXI Presentation Il Museo tra i Banchi di Scuola, 2nd Edition)



The IISS Cine-tv Rossellini hosted the work “Derailing Beirut” by the architect Bernard Khoury. The work is composed by a series of photographs that represent a Beirut devastated by the war on which run unlikely roller coasters. Completing the installation is a bomb/capsule, a means of transport imagined by the architect for the visitors’ tour of the visit. The work is a denunciation against the mass tourism which promotes aggressive urbanisation that removes all traces of the war from the urban context. Khoury focuses on the concept of the urban scar and memory, namely, to maintain the sign of history but also to recompose it in its space and function. Students reinterpreted these concepts, the scar functions all at once as a hinge, an aperture and a suturing mechanism.

Figure 6 - “Derailing Beirut” by Bernard Khoury at ISS Cine-tv Rossellini (MAXXI Presentation Il Museo tra i Banchi di Scuola, 2nd Edition)



The concept of mass tourism was reproduced in the performance *Rome two directions*: blindfolded students made pictures of the most famous monuments and sites in the historic centre from an open tourist bus, following the indications of an amateur tourists' guide. In the way back to Centocelle they removed the blindfolds and began to see the “real” city in a more critical and reflexive way.

Figure 7 - Students' reinterpretation (MAXXI Presentation Il Museo tra i Banchi di Scuola, 2nd Edition)



At the end of the year, the projects of all the three schools were presented with a final one-week exhibition. Museum's directors and the artists Bernard Khoury and Iran do Espirito Santo met the students and participated to the final exhibition. *“This was an important confirmation and gratification for students”* (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021). Also, families and inhabitants of the neighbourhood participated.

Figure 8 - MAXXI's Artistic Director Hou Hanru and Iran do Espirito Santo meet the students (MAXXI Presentation Il Museo tra i Banchi di Scuola, 2nd Edition)



Engagement Process

Funding: the second edition was financed by MAXXI that had a dedicated budget for this project together with MIUR.

Phase 1: Design and information of the project

- Team project design between museum's professionals, teachers and trainees
- Selection of the permanent collection's works to loan to schools
- Meeting at museum between museum's professionals and students to visit storage rooms and restoration rooms.
- Visits of the museum led by the interns
- Lectures at school guided by interns on contemporary art and the selected artists

Phase 2: Implementation

- Collection works' installation in schools
- Tasks' assignation to classes and students
- Workshops at school and on the territory to reinterpret the works of art and to produce personal elaborations inspired by them.

Phase 3: Final exhibition

- Exhibition installation with students' works
- Mediation by students
- Lectures and artists' participation at the final exhibition.

Phase 4: Assessment

- Reporting and communication of the project
- Assessment and evaluation through semi-structured discussions in-itinere and ex-post with students and teachers, in-itinere evaluation through reports by educators and interns' training diaries.

3rd edition: February – May 2016

The third edition of the project, born on the occasion of the new installation of the permanent collection, focused on the principles of composition in contemporary art and architecture. The artist Pietro Ruffo worked with students at the school IC Largo Castelseprio, involved in all three editions, to guide students and co-create a work of art connected to the neighbourhood Labaro.

The initial plan of the project involved students in lectures and visits at the museum. The second part of the project was dedicated to laboratories with the artist and explorations on the territory. Students worked in couples on an area of the neighbourhood chosen, they had to reproduce with chromatic intensity their satisfaction about places of the neighbourhood, the more the satisfaction, the more intense the colour given to that place. In the end, the work “Labaro Blu” was created, and today, it is still on loan for use in the school hall.

“These projects allowed students to have a direct and personal contact and relationship with a contemporary artist, this opportunity of learning expands students’ possibilities” (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

Method:

In all the three editions there is a coherence of method and achievement of goals. The museum has become more accessible on the territory of reference, the work of art has been used as a means of learning and a source for new interpretations of the world. Students are the very protagonists of the project in each phase and the project was always codesigned and implemented with the collaboration of all actors involved.

- Integrated and multidisciplinary approach *“Every time the theme of the project has a different historical, social and artistic interpretation, so based on the theme, different disciplines are mobilised”* (L. Presilla, personal communication, July 12, 2021).
- Co-participated design of the project by the museum, university, academy and school.

Strategies and tools

Funding: the project was funded by *Piano Triennale delle Arti*, a public grant promoted by MIUR.

- Outreaching – museum outside the museum, involvement of schools on their territory
- Different museum’s offices participated to the project.
- Peer to peer learning among students of different ages
- Preliminary presentations and explorative visits
- Laboratories based on hands-on activities, performances, explorations, elaborations through digital, videos and photos.
- Practical connection between arts and students’ daily life
- Involvement of artists and architectures in the building of meanings
- Expertise about works as a fundamental precondition for the creative elaboration

- Appropriation of artist's creative process
- Mediation to understand content and process interiorisation and assess the achievement of goals
- Interns' training diaries and meeting for discussion to assess the results achieved.

Value produced

a. Toward the museum

The museum in this project expands its project community, the target audience is no more a target but becomes the co-producer of the project. On this occasion, MAXXI engaged in an extraordinary project, because of its outreaching activity and the creation of a long-term and close cooperation with one school in particular, IC Lucio Fontana. The project of outreaching demonstrates an important diversification in programming and the necessity of a leadership's will to commit in such projects. In addition, the continuity permits a stronger impact on the school's community.

Indeed, teachers the first year opposed many resistances, today they are the main interlocutors with the museum. *"At the beginning I found many resistances from teachers; they perceived this project as a top-down decision. I cannot deny it because it was my idea. After doing it, I perceived a lot of enthusiasm and passion, and the participation has increasingly become more active."* *"Today, teachers are very eager to collaborate with MAXXI, we have become the main interlocutors of the museum. For instance, this year they called some of our classes to experiment the new spaces dedicated to museum's education, another class worked on co-production of captions for an exhibition."* *"I believe I created a familiarity and confidence with these projects"* (L. Presilla, personal communication, July 12, 2021).

"The first years we perceived a sort of suspicion by teachers, we had to negotiate the projects, then they understood that our work would have enriched their work and that of students, today teachers urge us to do them, for instance this year we managed to do the project during lockdown in distance learning with all the students" (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

It stimulated the change of perspective toward the museum also by students. *"Younger students of previous years looked with admiration and expectation at the project of the older students, because they knew that the following year it would have been their turn"* (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021). This is confirmed also by the dean of the school that says: *"Today, I feel a sense of duty to continue these kinds of projects, because they have also become part of the school's training offer, so I commit myself to let students work in these subjects, not only with MAXXI but also with*

other institutions” (L. Presilla, personal communication, July 12, 2021). Furthermore, in the assessment phase, during collective discussions with students emerged an increased familiarity with the institution.

Another relevant aspect was related to the sharing of knowledge among museum’s professionals, teachers and students from university and the academy. The co-design of a project brings to involve the target audience at an equal position as museum’s professionals, *“this put together different competences and knowledge and the risk of failure is much reduced”* (M. Morelli, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

“The shared planning phase with the Academy's trainees: the fact that the Education Department dedicated an entire afternoon a week to us trainees, considering us an active part of the project, right from the early planning stages, made me feel motivated and attached to the project from the beginning, as well as loaded with responsibility. The shared planning was also a moment of exchange and cooperation between people with different and complementary points of view and skills” (Interns’ training diaries).

According to Sofia Bilotta, working with students allows museum’s professionals for a constant updating about the more recent practices. The multiple editions permitted to improve the strategies and practices of the project each year adding elements and complexity: from the simple reinterpretation of the artworks to the direct involvement of an artist in the co-production of an artwork.

b. Toward the community involved

The continuity in collaboration permits to create new means of informal learning, therefore empowering the community of reference.

“These projects introduce new methodologies of learning. First, working with a goal and the practical method of laboratories - the learning by doing method – because often students create, by their own, final products but also, through these projects, they are connected to real-life problems. For instance, in one edition, we recreated all the museum’s offices to carry out the project and the final exhibition. These projects mobilise theory and practice and multiple disciplines based on the theme of each project. Finally, not less important, these projects allow the redefinition and the aesthetic improvement of school’s spaces. Today we transformed the school, with some artworks inside, this is a physical and emotional requalification. This also helps the student to create a strong emotional bond with the school. Besides, these projects are an occasion to open the school to the

territory with the final exhibition guided by students” (L. Presilla, personal communication, July 12, 2021).

“These projects have also an orientation power because they introduce students to new education paths but also new professional profiles (e.g., communicators, video-makers, educators, artists). They improve the cultural level and art must be of a very high quality to achieve this objective” (L. Presilla, personal communication, July 12, 2021).

The project’s enriching collaboration and positive aspects brought the dean to introduce it in the established learning offer (*POF – Piano dell’Offerta Formativa*). *“At the beginning, in 2013, it was born as a project where all of us put many energies. After five editions, we integrated it into the permanent training offer, which has characterised the school’s profile. We also changed the school’s name based on this activity” (L. Presilla, personal communication, July 12, 2021).* This result would not have been achieved without the continuous commitment of both parties. The dean confirmed this, bringing the example of the second edition where two other schools participated. However, the lack of deans’ intention made the implementation of the project more difficult. *“This is a project that requires high involvement of both parties and a very high commitment at the organisational level because these activities take place during school hours” (L. Presilla, personal communication, July 12, 2021).*

According to the dean, a key strength is the peer tutoring between students of the academy and the university and students at the school, the relationship among them is different from that with professors. She finds this collaboration among young students a very effective learning method. Also, the creation of final products results from a constant negotiation, mediation and team working among students. This is also very educational because help them to find a synthesis between divergent opinions.

Regarding the relational dimension, beyond the collaboration with one school, in the second edition of the project the interinstitutional collaboration with MIUR allowed for the involvement of three schools, making the project more participated and impactful. The partnership in all the editions with the Academy of Fine Arts and the Teaching of Museum and Territory Pedagogy of Sapienza University, provided an important support of human resources for the implementation of the project.

These projects are also a good occasion for interns to do practical experience and to understand their professional path. *“This training phase was a very important beginning. It was a way of welcoming us into the Education Department, showing us what it has done and does, and I received*

it as a direct and concrete continuation of the course of Museum and Territory Pedagogy.” (Interns’ training diaries)

“My work with the museum is gradually changing my idea of what a museum is. I am especially referring to the work the museum does outside its walls. The acquisition of more experience and a great deal of new knowledge made me hope in a future with more prospects for work.” (Interns’ training diaries in Bilotta et al, 2018, p.211)

c. Toward the exterior

This project made accessible the museum to non-usual visitors such as the neighbourhood’s community and students’ families and educated to creativity and the creative environment non-habitual attenders.

“The installation of an artwork at school makes the latter the propulsive centre of the neighbourhood and destination of pilgrimage. Also, it knocks down the barriers (distance, price) that usually discourage the visitor from coming into contact (from the museum to the school, from the centre to the outskirts, from an elite group to the creation of a new group of beneficiaries) [...]” (Interns’ training diaries in Bilotta et al, 2018, p.211).

The project stimulates a network of relations between the school and other social actors such as the university, the academy, and other cultural institutions. *“I firmly believe on the importance of collaborations between schools and other cultural institutions, not only with MAXXI, because the cultural offer should be of a high level”* (L. Presilla, personal communication, July 12, 2021). It happened also in following projects where the school collaborated with another school, the IED of Rome, MACRO and another artist.

The project made the school an active player in the social development of the neighbourhood’s local community. It was *“a museum outside the museum”* (Bilotta et al., 2018) managed by the students, who took care of the work, like museum’s professionals, until it was physically inside the school. *“So, the school became a branch of the museum with MAXXI’s permanent work, and the works made by students. Students became mediators and readers of the works with the public”* (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

3.3.3. MIXT – Musei per tutti

Two-year partnership with multiple stakeholders: Mediavoice S.r.l, DS Tech S.r.l, *Unione Italiana dei Ciechi e degli Ipovedenti (UICI) - sezione territoriale di Roma*, *Ente Nazionale Sordi Onlus (ENS)*, Architalab, Lucky's Pr., *Federazione Nazionale delle Istituzioni Pro Ciechi Onlus*.

Description of the project

Duration: 2019-2021

This project results from a participated design of an itinerary for the discovery and description of MAXXI's architecture by a team of ten deaf and six visually impaired people from different educational backgrounds, museum professionals and IT staff. The experience includes two narrative methods: *MAXXI to be heard* and *MAXXI to be looked*. The former consists of the mediation of participants with visual disabilities, the latter on the mediation of deaf people. Both narratives allow all visitors to discover the museum's architecture from these people's perspectives. Indeed, the architecture can be discovered with the support of tactile materials, audio descriptions, participants' stories and video guides in Italian and International Sign Language. Every visitor can contribute to the collective story on the social wall of the digital platform by sharing on social networks the materials created during his/her visit - photographs, videos, audio files, etc. by using the hashtag #MAXXIpertutti. Using a mobile device loaned at the Infopoint, the visitor can be accompanied for all the itinerary to the 11 places of the exhibition.

Reasons and goals of the project

The project was thought and designed by the Head of the Public Engagement Office that aimed to define a work method for the office by presenting a project and proposals to the top management. The main goal of S. Bilotta was to create an innovative project that would have put into practice what the theories had already analysed about participation and co-design with audiences. She took inspiration from the experiments done by British museums collected in the report "Rethinking the disability representation" in 2008. The underlying belief of the manager is that people that experience cultural projects must be involved at the beginning in the general cultural plan of the museum, especially with people with disabilities.

Furthermore, she aimed to create stable and long-term collaborations for the office with different social stakeholders recognising that having permanent and continuous collaborations make the projects more impactful and create a permanent value within the institution.

“I decided to propose this project because previously, at MAXXI, there was anything permanent related to accessibility. Therefore, I decided to commit myself to a structured and long-term project that would offer to my successors, practices, museum’s itineraries, objects and a structured office dedicated to accessibility with permanent collaborations and relations. This is why, for two years, I have stable collaborations with different institutions of the third sector, the most important are Federazione Nazionale delle Istituzioni Pro – Ciechi, Unione Ciechi di Roma (UICI), Ente Nazionale Sordi della Regione Lazio (ENS). Other partners are the Istituto Leonarda Vaccari for cognitive disabilities, such as autism; Spazio Donna San Basilio for women victims of violence and women empowerment. It is important to have less collaborations but for long-term projects, with a measurable impact. In this way it is possible to actively involve people and to create stable relationships” (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

The goals of the project are:

- “Encouraging and empowering the participation of the Deaf Community and of visually impaired people to the MAXXI cultural mission
- Developing a positive disability representation through personal narrative of people with disabilities
- Involving disabled peoples’ voices to provide new, often challenging, ways of looking at the museum and its architecture
- Enhancing the participation of people with disabilities as active players and co-creators of cultural meaning, showing their interpretations as equal as that of museum professional community
- Developing MAXXI’s architecture as a social and relational object, able to connect personally with people, improving the quality of the relation between the visitors and the museum
- Strengthening the museum role as a participatory and life-long learning place” (Bilotta, 2021)

“We would like to promote a change of perspective toward people with disabilities, they must not be seen as users of a service or a target of a cultural offer, but instead are engaged in the co-design of this cultural offer. I worked in a team of six blind people and ten deaf, they co-designed the project, but also were mediators of the experience, by interpreting the architecture and telling it to all MAXXI’s visitors. This helps to modify the public opinion toward disability and to let visitors get in contact with people with disabilities” (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

Engagement process - Strategies and tools

Compared to other practices generally carried out in museums, the uniqueness of this project is that the architectural models and the audio description in LIS have been co-designed and co-produced ex-ante with the target audience (that in this case becomes staff's partner). The project was financed by POR FESR Lazio 2014-2020.¹⁸ The strategy adopted consisted of the universal design of the final products for the exhibition.

Design:

- Initial workshops and explorations of the museum space with deaf and blind participants.
- Co-creation of contents: blind participants corrected and validated the audio description texts and the tactile maps and models in the prototyping step. Deaf mediators together with LIS interpreters wrote the audio description texts for the video guides.
- Creation of personal stories about their own experience of architecture and space.
- Creation of three levels editorial contents:
 - o 1st level institutional: Audio descriptions/LIS/IS video guides
 - o 2nd level personal: deaf and blind participants' stories
 - o 3rd level social: sharing the experience on the dedicated website MIXT

Implementation and assessment:

A physical path of eleven sites was set up, so that all visitors can explore the museum's architecture with tactile materials, audio descriptions, participants' stories and video guides in Italian and International Sign Language. It was created the website and a prototype of an APP to browse the MIXT path on site and online.

¹⁸ Avviso Pubblico n.7 "Beni Culturali e Turismo"

Figure 9 - MIXT first station with tactile models and descriptions together with LIS description in the monitors (Author's personal images, July 13, 2021)



The implementation phase was designed according to the ex-ante evaluation with visually impaired and deaf people to understand their expectations and needs. As a matter of fact, after the evaluation, taking into account participants' issues, some services were implemented, and others improved. The main output of the first ex-ante evaluation with visually impaired participants (UCI and Federazione Nazionale Pro-Ciechi) was to develop a *phygital* itinerary considering these aspects:

- These people can be independent, digital devices can help to support, but the human relation is unavoidable. As a result, staff of the front desk, reception and visitor assistance services must become efficient and trained to deal with people with visual disabilities.
- The tactile path must be permanent and maintained throughout all the itineraries.
- Audio description must orientate the blind effectively with a clear and well-defined explanation.
- Digital solutions must be user friendly and easy, but there should be always an offline support in each model.

The evaluation with deaf participants (ENS) raised other considerations:

- Storytellers must be LIS deaf natives
- MIXT project must be a meaningful learning opportunity for the empowerment of the deaf community and a supportive tool for the public acknowledgment of the deaf community and of LIS as a minority language.
- Efficient digital devices with dynamic, appealing and smart contents

As a result, the ex-ante evaluation led to the creation of a training and awareness course about sensorial deficits and how to deal with people with disabilities for museum workers: the front desk staff, the reception and gallery assistants. They were also trained to basic elements of LIS, in collaboration with UICI and ENS.

A dedicated service for blind people “Call and be welcome” was created: the person calls the museum InfoPoint before the arrival and the staff will be prepared at the entry to welcome the visitor and orientate him/her to the museum tactile path.

Some improvements of the tactile path have been made in the permanent museum display. Every station is supported by an onsite description, and it is connected to the MIXT app in the tablet supplied by the museum. The descriptions in LIS are done by LIS native speakers and the training and awareness course for the staff is also led by deaf and blind people.

Expected value to be produced

MIXT project has not been fully implemented at the time of the research. In this case, it is possible to assess the project’s impact on the institutional dimension: what the people involved have brought inside the museum and how the service provision improved. It is also possible to evaluate the project’s design and the answer of the communities toward the museum’s engagement.

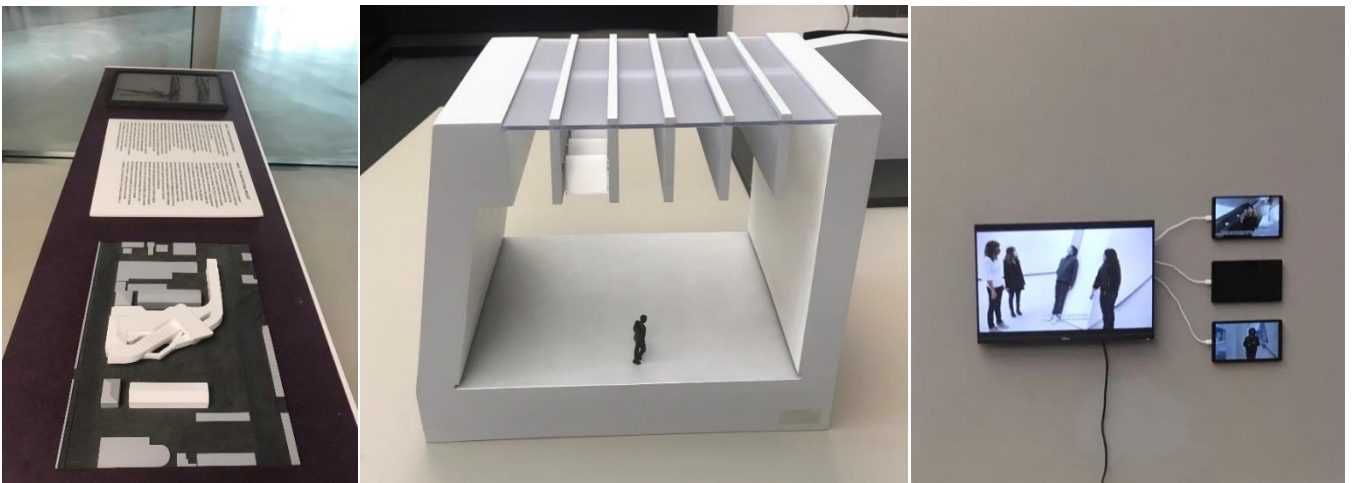
a. Toward the museum

This project implied an important rethinking of the museum’s organisation: it was created a permanent exhibition’s path accessible to deaf and blind people; the front-line staff was trained in order to be able to deal with people with disabilities; a new service was created to make these people feel welcomed in the museum. The office, on the occasion of this project, has created stable collaborations and relations, making the museum more inclusive and participatory. The project helps the museum to become innovative and open to change, thanks to the redefinition of the concepts of authorship and ownership and the introduction of new voices in the interpretation of the heritage. Indeed, the permanent museum’s path and materials were co-produced with all the participants and, now it is possible to ensure continuity in project implementation and improvement. It is also expected that this project can bring to the museum an increase in visitors, both in terms of numbers and ranges of the public.

Starting from the assumption that representation can shape our way of thinking (Bilotta, 2021), involving disabled people in all the phases of the project allows for a new representation and narrative

of disability, educate usual visitors to get in contact with disability and help them to change the point of view toward it. The itinerary gives evidence of people who are active participants and can enrich the final product. Furthermore, the tactile models and the audio descriptions support the usual visitors in the discovery and understanding of MAXXI's architecture. As a matter of fact, the detailed tactile models offer a general visual understanding of the architecture and the video guides in LIS/IS offer to the visitor perception of the space he/she is experiencing.

Figure 10 - Examples of tactile models and video guides in the exhibition itinerary (Author's personal images, July 13, 2021)



In this case, the museum not only removes the barriers to access, but learns from the participants to improve its services and make them effective and understandable. Usually, projects of accessibility are designed by museum's professional and then are tested ex post by people. Instead, in this case, the manager of the Public Engagement Office decided to activate a dialogue with interested stakeholders in order to provide a better service.

b. Toward the community involved

“When the museum calls disabled people to participate in projects, the answer is always positive. The engagement of them in the co-creation of contents, this kind of access to their competences make them very proactive in the participation. Furthermore, they have been involved as trainers in the training course. This idea of a welcoming museum that improves itself through the contribution of their competences, makes everyone in an equal position” (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

“Nothing about us, without us” (Participant's quote, MIXT Press Conference, September 23, 2021). Project's participants stressed the point of the importance of involving them in co-designing

services of accessibility, because only they can inform about their experiences of disability. All the participants valued the idea that people with disabilities are active parts of the project and not only a target. This made them feel responsible and considered in project's implementation (MIXT press conference, September 23, 2021).

Directly engaging people with disabilities, it is possible to introduce in an official institution, like the museum, a new narrative and representation of disability and, for deaf people, of the LIS language. The museum that conserves what has a value for society has *“the authority to declare that something has value and creates narratives of meaning for the community who create it. Therefore, if we involve in these narratives those who usually are excluded, we can facilitate the change of perspective toward them”* (S. Bilotta, personal communication, June 25, 2021).

These people can enjoy having a physical access to a space, that alternatively would not have been so easily and autonomously accessible and understandable. In addition, maintaining the relationship, the museum encourages the empowerment of disabled people by offering them learning opportunities. For instance, the Head of the Public Engagement Office, in the future, aims to involve LIS native speakers in the established staff of the museum.

“Supporting UICI and ENS, national institutions for the blind and the deaf, MAXXI is trying to react and answer to cultural expectations and need of the communities engaged at different levels: local, regional and national” (Bilotta, 2021)

c. Toward the exterior

The value of this project is that it refers to everyone, in fact “Museums for all”, at home and in every part of the world thanks to the translations in International Sign Language and in English. Every visitor can enjoy an enriched display regarding MAXXI's architecture and be educated on disability. In addition, the innovativeness of this project can be a replicable practice in other museums or cultural institutions at the local or national levels (MIXT Press Conference, September 23, 2021).

4. Discussion and recommendations

As mentioned earlier, the question guiding the analysis is: “How long-term relations with social stakeholders improve the museum’s social role?” Consequently, “What are the organisational prerequisites and implications to favour these relationships?” The second question derives from the consideration that every project developed by the organisation’s offices is dependent on a top management decision. Furthermore, the literature and the empirical material demonstrated that museum’s openness toward the public stems from a complex system that involves the entire organisation at all levels analysed: at the governance level, in terms of organisational processes and concerning the projects selected.

The top management level (governance) should ensure a clear commitment towards AD regarding leadership’s political will, mission, resource allocation and organisational structure. In this regard, MAXXI can represent a best practice, since all the projects analysed have been launched or approved by the artistic director Hou Hanru together with the top management. The explicit intention behind them was to make the museum open to society and everyday spaces, as in the case of *Il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola (MBS)*, but also to alternative cultures and narratives, as shown in the cases of *My Iran* and *MIXT*. This is confirmed by directors' general vision and mission, which conceive MAXXI as a dynamic laboratory responsive to social, political and cultural transformations.

For what concerns financial resource allocation, the Education and Public Engagement Offices have an annual budget depending on the museum’s internal budget and sponsorships. The interviews raised the issue of a discontinuous and variable budget that may represent a risk for the continuity of the project’s programming. Yet, the number of activities per year witness the relevance of audience development activities for the institution. The funding allocation also depends on political decisions at the regional and national levels. This implies the need for public policies to create items of funding in cultural policy planning that encourage social inclusion and participation projects.

Regarding the organisation, the Education Office has aligned its role to the museum’s other core departments. More importantly, a dedicated organisational unit coordinates the projects related to the themes of social inclusion and public engagement. This demonstrates that public engagement issues have been recognised and promoted by the institution to become a continuous line of action, increase cultural participation of marginalised groups; institutionalise and include new narratives in the institution; and improve the network of relations with social stakeholders.

The pluriannual experience of the Education Office with the neighbourhood's social stakeholders demonstrates the museum's commitment and openness toward the local community and the territory, thus providing another evidence for the research question raised. The long-term relations established with local social actors, especially with one school of the neighbourhood, have changed the way people live and experience MAXXI. In addition, the fact that the Education Office is born as a continuation of the course in Teaching of Museum and Territory Pedagogy at Sapienza University, also demonstrates the network capability of the museum with the different institutions of the territory.

Before the pandemic, the Education Office's project planning depended mainly on the exhibition programming. The organisational processes lacked indeed a structured evaluation of the mission to be pursued, the target to be reached or the outcome to be achieved in the community involved. The projects implemented are those that receive more resource allocation. Instead, the resource allocation should depend on an ex-ante evaluation of the outcome the museum wants to achieve. The recent transposition of educational activities online has demonstrated the necessity of implementing targeted projects to pursue a specific mission independently from the exhibition programming (Fondazione Symbola, 2021). Besides, the project evaluation ends with the project's conclusion without a follow-up and monitoring in the long-term, and especially without visibility of the value produced by the project. Regarding public engagement projects, even if they are independent from the exhibition programming, they still lack a strategic ex-ante evaluation of the specific social issue to address, the target to be involved and the impact to be produced. Therefore, a structured ex-ante evaluation is crucial to establish a final goal to achieve and assess the project's potential impact on the target community. Instead, the ex-post monitoring of projects helps make the museum's mission more effective and targeted and gives visibility to the results, which would help the museum receive more sponsorships, public funding, and social legitimacy.

Furthermore, there is no evidence of a national observatory that assesses museums' audience development strategies and best practices regarding public engagement and participation issues. The *Uniform Quality Level for Museums* represents minimum standards that leave space for discretion to other more performative museums. Therefore, the discrepancy of museums' actions and activities prevents museums from promoting structured social inclusion practices as well as from influencing public policies to encourage these projects. Also, the lack of a platform for best practices makes innovative projects more difficult to replicate.

There should be a national benchmarking, a platform for best practices, or a collaboration among the most performative cultural institutions to encourage a systemic action in social inclusion

issues. The interinstitutional creation of a permanent observatory could bring much value for improving AD into the involved institutions. Typically, these organisational instruments allow the creation of several thematic workshops on all the subjects described – governance, sponsorship, resource allocation, organisation and participatory processes, reporting and ex-post monitoring of results.

The projects analysis showed different results, due also to the different characteristics of each project. Nonetheless, strategies and methods are similar since each project aims to involve the community in the co-production and co-design of the project and the final products. These projects, that correspond to a small portion of the several developed by the organisation, prove that MAXXI is increasingly becoming a participatory cultural institution.

This discussion does not aim to assess what project is more successful or best, because each of them has its peculiarity coherently with the museum’s mission. In this research, the purpose is to show how the continuity in relations can bring a better outcome. The initial hypothesis was to see how long-term relations with social stakeholders improve the museum’s social role. Looking at projects, it emerged that some key factors improve the effectiveness and the outcome of the institutional organisation for service provision, participation, and representation of alternative narratives (institutional dimension). The same key factors can produce a change in the community involved (community dimension). The objective is to see how these projects can produce a permanent effect both within the organisation and in the community involved. The factors identified regard mainly the time and commitment dedicated to the project and the collaborations with social stakeholders; the quality of the partnership in terms of the will from both parties, resource sharing and participation; the number and type of stakeholders in the collaboration (See Table 1 – Input factors and indicators and Table 2 – General assessment).

Table 2 - General assessment (Author's elaboration)

	Time	Collaborations with SS	Quality SS	Number of Stakeholders	Type of stakeholders	Institutional impact	Community impact	Funding	HR
My Iran	5 months	2 months; professional collaborations with individual participants	No partnership; Knowledge sharing	1- Alefba Association	Individuals semi-organised in the Italo Iranian Association	First Intercultural mediation project; Increased participation	Individual dimension	Unedited History	Involvement of an expert
MBS	5 years	5 years	Reciprocal will, Human resources support	4 - Schools, Sapienza University, the Academy of Fine Arts; MIUR	Interinstitutional	First outreaching activity; improvement of museum's strategies; school becomes a permanent interlocutor	School's community; interns	2nd edition more successful thanks to the funding by Miur and 3rd edition Piano Triennale delle Arti	More HR crucial to carry out the project in a vertical structure (organisational level)
MIXT	2 years	2 years	Participants' enthusiasm; Partnership and knowledge sharing	7 - UICI, ENS, Federazione Pro Ciechi, Istituto Treccani, Architalab Studio, Mediavoce s.r.l, DSTech s.r.l	Third sector associations; private companies	Staff training; new service; permanent exhibition	Deaf community and blind people empowerment	POR FESR LAZIO 2014-2021	Deaf and blind people provide knowledge and experiences on disability. IT staff provide competences for the implementation of digital tools

The intercultural mediation project *My Iran* highlighted the issue of the limited project timing for the project's success, since these kinds of projects require a high commitment to identify the stakeholders, increase participation and create relations. According to the expert in intercultural mediation, “*there is not a one-size-fits-all strategy to define the optimal amount of time needed for an intercultural project. There is a time for the individuation of stakeholders, contacting institutions and communities of reference that could potentially be interested. A time for the project's design, the definition of the strategies, goals, methods and outputs. A time to create relations with people, to study the works and the heritage both by the tutors and curators and the participants; a time for the implementation of the project: the workshops, the elaboration of the narratives and the revision of the narrative. Finally, there is time for the outputs and the final assessment. Besides, there is the time dedicated to organisation and logistics*” (S. Mascheroni, personal communication, July 6, 2021).

Instead, the experience in *Il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola* showed first of all, the necessity of at least one year span to implement projects that involve different actors in co-design of the project. Secondly, the continuity of the relation between the school IC Lucio Fontana and MAXXI has changed over time the complexity of the strategies implemented by the museum but, more importantly, the attitude of the school's community towards the project. The witnesses of the school's dean demonstrate that if the project had stopped after the first year, it would have been a special project to be carried out against the resistances of students and teachers, without any follow-up with the museum, any project's evolution and consequently any change in students' experiences. After five editions, creative projects are included in the permanent training offer, and both teachers and students are MAXXI's permanent interlocutors.

In the case of MIXT, the two years collaboration with third sectors actors aims to improve the strategic and operational performance of the organisation and services related to accessibility. Also, in this case, the collaboration began with temporary projects both with the deaf and blind people. This initial involvement transformed into a partnership when these people were called to design and co-create content to build up a permanent exhibition and improve the museum's accessibility.

Furthermore, *Il Museo tra i Banchi di Scuola* gives evidence of the importance of the quality of the partnership, namely the reciprocal will to collaborate and commit, for the good implementation of the project. Indeed, referring to the second edition, the dean of the school highlights that the lack of intentionality of the other involved schools' directors, represented an obstacle for the project's development.

In the case of MIXT, the quality of the partnership is detectable, firstly, in participation and will of the stakeholders. The museum, in fact, through the collaborations with different third sector associations, has been able to reach both the deaf and blind people, and consequently, to engage them in the project. Also, the answer to participation was positive and proactive. Secondly, the partnership favours knowledge sharing to improve the service provided by the museum.

In *My Iran*, instead, there was not a proper partnership with stakeholders. Participation depended mainly on the word of mouth of people belonging to the same Italo-Iranian Association Alefba. However, the interpretation of the heritage by the Iranian community introduced new narratives in the institution for a temporary period, providing unique knowledge and experience about the Iranian culture.

With regards to the number and type of stakeholders involved, in *il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola* there is an inter-institutional collaboration between schools, Sapienza University, the Academy of Fine Arts, and support in the second edition from MIUR. The multiple partners are crucial for the implementation of the project because they provide fundamental human resources and make the project 'generative' of diffused effects for all the individuals involved. In fact, there is an exchange between students from different institutions and the impact is not only on the school's community but also on universities' interns. The witnesses proved that the inter-institutional exchange of practices, knowledge and skills could improve the final strategies and outcomes among all the institutions involved. The dean of the school IC Lucio Fontana said: "*We thought together about the idea, MAXXI helped us to make it real*" (L. Presilla, personal communication, July 12, 2021). This project has provided a practical work experience for universities' students; it has improved the school training offer, the teaching method, the school's orientation power and the school's environment.

The financial resources by MIUR in the second edition make the project more structured and diffused on the territory through the involvement of three schools and the move of MAXXI's permanent works in schools. The endorsement by MIUR demonstrates that the museum, with its multidisciplinary action, through the support of MIC can gain further funding. Furthermore, by partnering with public institutions it can widen the scope of its projects and achieve different social purposes. An example of this, is provided by the public grant "*Piano delle Arti*" promoted by MIUR, which encourages cultural education and creative programmes in schools; and by the "*Piano Nazionale Cinema per la Scuola*", where the partnership between MIC and MIUR introduces in schools' training offer programmes to educate students to the cinema.

Looking at the same framework in MIXT, the partnership with private companies permits the implementation of the project and the improvement of the museum's operational and service performance through co-creation and the universal design approach. Specific tools, such as the App (DS Tech), the audiovisual content (Mediavoice) and the tactile materials (Architalab), were designed following the specific recommendations of deaf and blind people belonging to third sector organisations UICI, ENS and *Federazione Pro Ciechi*. Furthermore, the partnership with third sector associations for deaf and blind people make the museum representative and inclusive of their specific social instances.

Taking a comprehensive look at all projects, it emerged that the “success” of a project in terms of innovation, production of final products, involvement and participation of the public and, above all, continuity in collaboration, is ensured only with a dedicated budget and human resources' competence and commitment. In fact, in all the projects mentioned, the most innovative and productive projects receive targeted funding. In the case of *My Iran*, there was a specific budget dedicated to the exhibition *Unedited History*. For what concern *il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola*, the most fruitful editions are: the second, where MAXXI had a dedicated budget for the project and also support by MIUR, and the third one, financed by *Piano delle Arti*. Finally, MIXT was financed by POR FESR LAZIO 2014-2020 to improve museums' accessibility.

Nonetheless, human resources are also a fundamental precondition because these projects require high competencies and commitment that cannot be sacrificed from other museum's activities. For instance, in the case of *My Iran*, the commitment required prevented the manager of the Education Office from dedicating to other activities. Moreover, the high level of competence required in *My Iran* led MAXXI to involve the expert Silvia Mascheroni, since it was MAXXI's first intercultural mediation project. In the second edition of *Il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola*, interns were crucial resources to carry on the project in three schools, allowing for a vertical structure at the organisational level. After all, the way of working was horizontal. At the top, the project manager coordinated the activities; each school had one professional educator; and the interns carried out more operative activities like visits, lectures, and workshops.

Finally, in the case of MIXT, the project on accessibility is entirely followed by one coordinator that learned the LIS language to develop it. This aspect gives evidence of the need for very specialised competencies. Instead, deaf and blind people are the teachers of the staff in the training course. They provide knowledge and experiences of disability that the project manager could not have and permit the Head of the Public Engagement Office to dedicate time to other projects and activities. Moreover,

IT professionals of private companies provide knowledge and innovative practices for the proper implementation of digital tools.

These practices highlight not only that building capacity is fundamental, but also that museums' services and performances improve if their professionals recognise their level of knowledge and competence to carry out such projects. In fact, by recognising a lack of human resources capability, museum's professionals would be driven by the need to update, to partner up with stakeholders or to involve experts. Once again, MAXXI professionals demonstrate to be a good example because, through partnerships and contacts, they enable the sharing of knowledge and competencies.

Conclusions

This research aimed at filling the gap in the literature and, more importantly, in museums' practices, to highlight how the continuity of museums' relations is relevant to making social inclusion projects more effective. Therefore, the questions: How do long-term relations with social stakeholders improve the museum's social role? What factors enable these relationships? The purpose was to provide empirical evidence for museums' professionals to implement projects that have a longer duration and permanent effects. For policy makers to develop policies at the national, regional and local level that create the enabling conditions for museums to ensure the continuity of their social action, in terms of funding, benchmarking, evaluation systems and encouragement to networking.

The research, taking stands from the literature of audience development and relational marketing, adopts an empirical approach through a case study method that uses secondary documents and interviews to analyse the factors that improve the museum's social role. It envisages a three-level analysis of the museum MAXXI in Rome, focusing on its governance, organisational processes and three specific projects that involved the no-audiences.

The empirical approach foresaw the desk analysis of the projects by examining secondary documents in the form of annual reports, documents related to the projects, and selected interviews with the key people involved, namely project managers and participants. The case studies and the interviews gave evidence of some recurrent critical issues, helpful inspiration for public policy development, while suggesting some critical elements of success for the effective implementation of social inclusion projects.

These were summarised in:

- Clear and continuous governance commitment toward the involvement of the public and public engagement activities detectable in the museum's core values, practices, financial resources allocation and human resources capability.
- Explicit organisational structure, with a dedicated manager, at the highest level of the organisation to the themes of Public Engagement; structured processes related to resource allocation, project selection and evaluation and performance assessment looking at best practices.
- Project selection favouring long-term commitment, long-standing partnerships, adequate number of stakeholders involved and adequate quality of the partnership concerning reciprocal will to collaborate, resource and knowledge sharing.

The research permits to answer in qualitative terms, considering multiple variables and the limitations of the research, that long-term relations with social stakeholders improve the museum's social role on the institutional dimension, because they permit an improvement in the institutional performance in terms of (a) participation and especially representation of cultural marginalities; (b) strategies and methods - the more years the collaboration, the more refined the strategies implemented; (c) competences and knowledge sharing - the more the social partners, the better the outcome.

On the community dimension, the continuity of the projects gives the recipients and participants time to get to know creative practices, understand their benefits, and generate a change within the institution partners. The results and witnesses of the experts showed that this systematic evolution and shift in museums' practices in Italy is still on-going with still sometime to be achieved. This is mainly due to a general resistance of museums, but also to the lack of enabling public policies that favour continuity of funding and planning for these projects, together with uniform guidelines for museums to improve their participatory and public engagement projects.

“In Italy the field of conservation still prevails over that of the museum's social commitment, but the two areas can profitably coexist” (S. Mascheroni, personal communication, July 6, 2021).

This research aims to provide an “inspiring” basis of knowledge and methodology for further investigations at a broader scope - at local, regional and national levels, taking into account different institutions. Another interesting field of research would regard an assessment related to best practices at the national level of museums' commitment toward social inclusion and public engagement and the political enabling conditions. Finally, the projects analysed such as *il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola* and MIXT may be further investigated to see their impact at a broader scope: respectively, on the neighbourhood's community and on deaf and blind people, considering also that MIXT has not been fully implemented yet.

Suppose we recognise that museums can effectively pursue a social role by committing for the long-term. In that case, they can achieve several objectives - from social inclusion to territorial development – and considering their network capability with individuals and social stakeholders, they can activate relationships, while stimulating entrepreneurship and a creative environment. This research demonstrates that museums can be open spaces for society if they not only open their doors but also directly involve and engage social actors in the museum's cultural offer.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Analysis My Iran and personal guide for the interviews

MY IRAN				
Relevant Dimensions		Study focus	Lessons learned	
Reasons and goals of the project		Involving the iranian community of Rome in the production and sharing of alternative interpretations. Reach no audiences and potential audiences; make the museum a place of dialogue and intercultural integration; make the museum a place of contact for different cultures.	Who wanted this project? Who thought about it? Why an intercultural mediation project?	Importance of leadership political will since the project was launched by Hou Hanru
Target		Audience by habit; Audience by choice (potential) or by surprise	What relations with the iranian community? And between the iranian and the italian? Did The exhibition reach new visitors?	There was not bridging between the italians and the iranians. There were some professional collaborations between MAXXI and the participants; Iranians valued the welcome and openness of museum's professionals
Project description		September - December 2014	What is the optimal amount of time to create long-term relations and value?	There is no a one- size- fits-all strategy. These projects require high commitment and dedication. The time here was an important determinant for participation
Key elements				
	What activity?	Production of autobiographical captions alongside the whole exhibition Unedited history through the involvement of the iranian community.	What are, in your experience, the most successful project?	The most successful projects are those were participants are involved at the beginning in the project design and implementation, because it is possible to know better the target to reach and the risk of failure is reduced
	Who is involved?	Iranian community of Rome	What are the other stakeholders involved in the project? What stakeholders should be involved?	More social stakeholders such as embassies, consulates, third sector associations would have increased participation
	How many? What formation?	10 participants with high formation	Were they enough?	Lack of the italian component
	Final product	Creation of captions in the exhibition, a brochure and video-interviews with project's participants		
Engagement process				
	Stakeholders	Italo-iranian association in Rome Alefba		
	Project timeline	3 phases: Introductory meeting; 10 laboratories of autobiographical writing - text production and final exhibition		
	Internal organisation and workplan	July 2014: Involvement of an expert in project coordination; first contacts with stakeholders of the iranian association and italian people; sending of materials to study; Sept-Dec 2014: completion of the project's structure; provision of other materials to study; beginning and development of the workshops. Decmeber 2014: final exhibition and assessment	What competences are needed to guide these kinds of projects? Was it difficult to manage the activities? The resources were able to conduct the activity and achieve the objectives?	These projects require expertise and high commitment. Proper strategies and tools should be adopted. The manager of the Education Office was not able to follow the other activities of the museum.
	Financing/endorsement	Budget dedicated to the exhibition Unedited History.	For these activities are recognised extra financial resources or sponsorships?	Sponsors usually finance education projects, but there is not a financial reward for the projects implemented.
Role and means of physical involvement of the museum			The meetings were at the museum? For how long and how many hours per week?	The meetings were at the museum for 10 workshops of 2h30
Value produced				
	Toward the museum	Contributory project and increased participation; alternative interpretations in representation; Changed perspective toward the museum; sense of belonging;	What benefits and changes the museum gained from this experience?	
	Toward the community involved	"Cohesion inside the group"; welcome; knowledge sharing and mutual learning; intense professional relations with the participants	Why was there cohesion inside the group? What does this experience generated? What elements prove this? What participants feel? Relations between italians and iranians? Relations with MAXXI?	
	Toward the exterior (audience and revenues)	The iranian community became spokespeople of the museum and its initiatives	Did the project reach new audiences? Extra sources of funding?	
Conclusions				
	Lessons learned		What are the objectives achieved? What are the critical issues? What should have been done better? How can intercultural mediation projects bridge the different communities of the territory? How did you measure these results?	Increased participation and new representation of the iranian culture. Time factor critical for participation, because the autochthonous component did not participate. The involvement of multiple stakeholders is fundamental to reach diverse audiences. Results measured through informal discussions at the end of the project.

Annex 2: Analysis Il Museo tra i Banchi di Scuola and personal guide for the interviews

IL MUSEO TRA I BANCHI DI SCUOLA				
Relevant Dimensions		Study focus	Lessons learned	
Reasons and goals of the project		To bring outside MAXXI's works in the schools; Making MAXXI an active and inclusive means of informal education, to inspire new opportunities for students; to enable knowledge sharing between museum's professionals and teachers ...	Why an outreaching activity? What were the main goals with students? Who wanted this project?	Outreaching because around schools there are not only students, but also families and neighbourhood's communities. The leadership will be fundamental together with the reciprocal will of collaboration.
Target		Schools' communities and neighbourhoods	How was the project able to reach families and neighbourhood's communities?	the school became a branch of the museum because it was able to reach different people in the final exhibition.
Project description		October 2013 - May 2016		
Key elements				
	What activity?	1st edition: workshops at museum and works' reproduction at school by students; 2nd edition: MAXXI's permanent works moved in three schools and students' creative projects; 3rd edition: art work co-produced by students and one artist		
	Who is involved?	In all the editions classes of IC Lucio Fontana apart from the 2nd edition IIS Virginia Woolf; IIS Cine tv rossellini; interns Sapienza and Academy of fine arts		
	How many? What formation?	In all the editions classes of IC Lucio Fontana apart from the 2nd edition IIS Virginia Woolf; IIS Cine tv rossellini		
	Final product	Artistic works realised by students based on MAXXI's works and workshops; final exhibition at the end of the year.		
Engagement process				
	Stakeholders	In all the editions Sapienza and Academy of Fine arts; 2nd edition: MIUR General Board for students, integration and participation	What institutions facilitated the effective implementation of the project? Benefits of involving interns?	MIUR made the project more diffused and distributed. Sapienza and the Academy provided crucial human resources to develop the peer tutoring methodology; the impact of the project was also on them. The sharing of competences and experiences among all the actors improve the final outcomes;
	Project timeline	Design and information of the project; implementation; final exhibition and assessment	Workplan of the project?	Different phases and strategies both at school and at the museum
	Internal organisation and workplan	The project design has been participated by multiple actors in a horizontal way: museum's professionals, trainees of Sapienza and the Academy, artists and teachers. The organisation of the activity was vertical with one coordinator, one educator for each school and trainees for the operative activities.	Project implementation thought with the school or only by the museum? Criteria of selection of the schools?	Co-design of the project - the school proposed the idea, MAXXI implemented it through the consultation of all the stakeholders involved. Schools in the periphery were selected.
	Financing/endorsement	1st edition: low-budget; 2nd edition: MAXXI and Miur budget; 3rd edition Piano Triennale delle arti	How the project was financed?	A dedicated and targeted budget improves the effectiveness of the project. (2nd and 3rd edition)
Role and means of physical involvement of the museum			School hours or after school?	School hours - the project has been introduced in the permanent training offer of the school
Value produced		Assessment through training diaries and meetings of discussion with teachers and students	How did you evaluate the results?	The assessment finished with the conclusion of the project, without any follow-up with students or neighbourhood's communities.
	Toward the museum	Improvement of project's strategies in each edition; outreaching activity; expansion of the project community; changed perspective toward the museum		
	Toward the community involved	Improvement of the school's teaching method; informal learning with students; multidisciplinary approach; better school's environment; peer tutoring; improvement of school's orientation power; practical experience for interns		
	Toward the exterior (audience and revenues)	Reach of new audiences of the neighbourhood; The school active player in the neighbourhood; school's improved ability to networking		
Conclusions				
	Lessons learned		Is it more effective to work with one school over more years or working at annual projects with different schools? What is the most successful edition? Why?	The more years the collaboration, the better the outcome. More stakeholders and actors help to effectively implement the project in terms of organisation and logistics but also help to reduce the risk of mistake. Every edition has its own specificity, the whole project created an experience of real interaction with arts and the art world for students.

Annex 3: Analysis MIXT and personal guide for the interviews

MIXT			
Relevant Dimensions		Study focus	Lessons learned
Reasons and goals of the project		Encouraging and empowering the participation of the Deaf Community and of visually impaired people to the MAXXI cultural mission; Developing a positive disability representation; Enhancing the participation of people with disabilities as active players and co-creators of cultural meaning; Strengthening the museum role as a participatory and life-long learning place ...	Why this project of accessibility? Who wanted it?
Target		Deaf and blind people (no-audiences); all MAXXI's visitors	Innovative and long-term project that would produce permanent objects and practices related to accessibility. Participation of people with disabilities at the beginning of the project, in the co-production of content
Project description		How did deaf and blind people react to the request of working with the museum?	The museum work with the target audience as a partner in co-design and co-production of the project. MAXXI needs their competences to improve the service provision. The answer is very positive and proactive. This is also a fundamental precondition to collaborate long-term.
Key elements		2019-2021	
	What activity?	Co-designing tactile materials, audiodescription, videoguides in LIS for the permanent exhibition on MAXXI's architecture	
	Who is involved?	Mediavoice S.r.l, DSTech S.r.l, Unione Italiana dei Ciechi e degli Ipovedenti – sezione territoriale di Roma, Ente Nazionale Sordi Onlus, Architalab, Lucky's Pr., Federazione Nazionale delle Istituzioni Pro Ciechi Onlus, , museum professionals and IT staff	
	How many? What formation?	10 deaf and 6 blind people coming from different educational backgrounds.	
	Final product	MAXXI to be heard and MAXXI to be looked. The architecture can be discovered with the support of tactile materials, audio descriptions, participants' stories and video guides in Italian and International Sign Language. Creation of a social platform to share the experience	
Engagement process			
	Stakeholders	Mediavoice S.r.l, DSTech S.r.l, Unione Italiana dei Ciechi e degli Ipovedenti – sezione territoriale di Roma, Ente Nazionale Sordi Onlus, Architalab, Lucky's Pr., Federazione Nazionale delle Istituzioni Pro Ciechi Onlus.	What actors facilitated the effective implementation of the project?
	Project timeline	Design and co-creation of contents; implementation and assessment.	Deaf and blind people provide knowledge and experiences on disability. IT staff provide competences for the implementation of digital tools
	Internal organisation and workplan	Design and co-creation of contents; implementation and assessment.	What benefits bring the ex-ante involvement of participants?
	Internal organisation and workplan	Initial workshops and explorations of the museum space with deaf and blind participants; Co-creation of the audio description texts and the tactile maps and models in the prototyping step; audio description texts for the video guides; Creation of personal stories about their own experience of architecture and space; Creation of three levels editorial contents	The ex-ante evaluation led to improvement of services: phigital itinerary; training course for the staff; new service of the museum
	Financing/endorsement	POR FESR Lazio 2014-2020 (€400.000)	How the project was financed?
	Financing/endorsement	POR FESR Lazio 2014-2020 (€400.000)	A dedicated and targeted budget improves the effectiveness of the project.
Role and means of physical involvement of the museum			
Value expected to be produced		How did you evaluate the results?	
	Toward the museum	Rethinking of museum's organisation: it was created a permanent exhibition's path accessible to deaf and blind people; the front-line staff was trained in order to be able to deal with people with disabilities; a new service was created to make these people feel welcomed in the museum. Stable collaborations and relations for	What benefits and changes the museum gained from this experience?
	Toward the community involved	New narrative and representation of disability; empowerment of deaf and blind communities; removal of architectural barriers	
	Toward the exterior (audience and revenues)	Enriched display for all MAXXI's visitors	
Conclusions			
Lessons learned		How do long-term relations affect the strategic and operational performance of the organisation? Quality and benefits from the partnerships? What competences are needed?	This initial involvement of deaf and blind people transformed into a partnership when they have been called to design and co-create contents in order to realise a permanent exhibition to improve museum's accessibility. The quality of the partnership is in the participation and reciprocal will; knowledge sharing among the actors; specialised competences

Annex 4: Guidelines for the semi-structured interviews related to the strategies of the Education and Public Engagement Offices

1. Motivation and medium-long term objectives of the Education and Public Engagement Office
2. Priority dedicated to the activities of Education and Public Engagement: strategy of resource allocation
3. Mode of screening and selection of the projects
4. Ex-ante/ex-post evaluation of projects' impact and implementation format
5. MAXXI placement compared to other national museums. Benchmarking/Best practices of reference
6. Organisational implications for the implementation of participatory/engagement projects
7. Type of relations developed after the projects with participants and stakeholders.

Summary

Museums are required today to be places of social aggregation and inclusion and they are committing to develop strategies and practices to increasingly reach and involve new audiences. Interviewing experts of the museum's sector in Italy, emerged that projects addressing social exclusion are today a common practice among Italian museums, however they are sporadic and not assumed in the museum's institutional offer. Recognising a gap in the literature related to the importance of continuity of relations between the museum and the social stakeholders involved as well as of these projects, this research aims to fill this gap starting from the hypothesis that long-term relations with social stakeholders affect the museum's social role. Therefore, the question guiding the entire research is *How do long-term relations with social stakeholders improve the museum's social role?* and *what are the key organisational prerequisites, at different levels, that enable these kinds of relationships?*

The purpose is to provide empirical evidence for museums' professionals to implement projects that have a longer duration and permanent effects in museum's institutional offer; for policy makers to develop policies at the national, regional and local level that create the enabling conditions for museums to ensure the continuity of their social action, in terms of funding, benchmarking, evaluation systems and encouragement to networking.

The research, taking stands from the literature of audience development and relational marketing, adopts an empirical approach through a case study method that uses secondary documents and interviews to analyse the factors that improve the museum's social role. It envisages a three-level analysis of the museum MAXXI in Rome, its governance, organisational processes and three specific projects to involve the no-audiences. Therefore, this thesis looks at the processes of establishing and deepening relationships with social stakeholders and their impact both on the institutional and community dimensions of the museum.

The selection of MAXXI as a case study is due to the significance of this museum considering a variety of relevant aspects. This museum has the necessary preconditions to develop strategies of audience development, namely financial resources and capacities. It has an autonomous and self-sustainable business model made of partnerships with private enterprises. Its governance model of a public controlled foundation implies a participative governance and management model that involves multiple actors (audience, donors, sponsors, staff members) and pushes the museum to become more open toward society to gain public funding and social legitimacy. In addition, in Italy the autonomous cultural institutions are considered actors of change for cultural consumption, they can guarantee

efficient and effective performances as well as a qualified employment. Also, the vision of MAXXI is that of a museum responsive to social changes. Finally, for research purposes, MAXXI reports its activities and projects, therefore there are available data to analyse.

The empirical approach foresaw the analysis of reports and the conduction of interviews. MAXXI reports give a general view of MAXXI's general figures, values, activities and functioning. Reports related to the projects provide a preliminary and comprehensive understanding about the strategies and methods adopted for the projects, their results, their quality and shortcomings. To complement the information acquired through the documents, I conducted six semi-structured interviews with project managers as well as the heads of the Education and Public Engagement Office. I then interviewed participants of the project *My Iran* and the dean of the school involved in all the editions of *Il museo tra I banchi di scuola*. The underlying assumption is that the direct experience of projects' managers and participants can provide proper insight of the projects.

Interviews helped further explore all the qualitative aspects related to the strategy, the key drivers, reasons and goals of the projects, the strengths and weaknesses, value produced, collaborations with stakeholders and possible improvements.

I selected three significant projects agreed with MAXXI's management based on the specific content coherent with the research, for the availability of information, participants' accessibility and management advise. Eventually, the projects selected are *Il Mio Iran (My Iran)*, *Il museo tra I banchi di scuola* and *MIXT – Musei per tutti*.

All of them, while representing different approaches regard strategies of audience development to involve and engage *no-audiences* (audience by choice and audience by surprise). They involve the audiences in the co-production of content increasing the museum's participation but, more importantly, they have been realised through the collaboration with different social stakeholders. The selection of projects is motivated by the fact that they are complex systems that provide a general view of all the aspects of the implementation process. They imply a series of actions and can function as paradigms for identifying indicators of success and criticalities and provide elements for reflection and comparison.

I compare the first intercultural project *My Iran* done in 2014 that I use as a 'control example' to acknowledge the importance of the project's time and commitment to create a network of relations, with the most recent projects *il Museo tra I banchi di scuola* (2013-2021) and *MIXT* (2021), emblematic case for my argument because it is the result of a long-term partnership and collaboration

with the associations of deaf and blind people that brought to the rethinking of the museum's "hardware" (exhibition, organisation, staff and services).

The research starts from the recognition of crucial aspects of the current context. First, according to the definition of museum provided by ICOM, the museum is not only a place of conservation and preservation of cultural heritage, but it is also a social institution and, as such, must respond to the dynamic changes of society: its composition, expectations and needs.

Second, the new conception of cultural heritage stated by the Faro Convention in 2005 make the heritage a means of social representation and expression of people's values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions, consequently the focus is no more on the object of the heritage but on the subject, individual or community who is encouraged to participate in heritage's study and interpretation. It is so that culture constitutes the fourth pillar of sustainable development because it preserves and ensures the cultural diversity. Therefore, it is urgent to address the issue of access to culture: a people's fundamental right, that becomes more important in cases of economic and social disadvantage or exclusion. Third, the work of a museum is embedded in a system made of horizontal, vertical and diagonal relationships between people, organisation and place. Recognising the relational capability of museums implies attributing them a role for the achievement of different purposes: well-being, economic and social development and cultural integration.

The theory of Audience development (AD) helps to guide the analysis of the case study. First, because it highlights that sustainable AD, namely the continuity and the social effect of audience development strategies are ensured only with the entire commitment of the organisation from leadership to staff commitment and organisational processes. This is the reason why the analysis of the case study focuses also on the governance and organisational levels. Furthermore, it puts the basis of knowledge to understand the projects selected. In fact, AD strategies adopt different means and target different audiences based on the goal they want to achieve. AD aims to deepen relationships with the existing audiences, but also to increase and diversify the audiences by tackling the barriers that prevent people's participation in cultural fruition.

Sustainable AD should tackle all the dimensions of exclusions identified in access, participation and representation. Each dimension is addressed through different modalities. The access dimension is tackled through the removal of material and immaterial barriers with marketing strategies or through outreach strategies to reach the hard-to-reach audiences in places of everyday life, these kinds of strategies require high commitment and dedicated attention of the museum. The participation dimension means considering the public as an active interlocutor to be involved, therefore audiences

are involved in decision making and creative processes. This level of involvement requires more complex and targeted strategies that involve the public in different ways through contributory, collaborative and co-creative projects. Finally, another field of exclusion is that of representation, namely the lack or distorted representation of certain social groups, in favour of a dominant culture that does not consider alternative cultures and values. By including audiences in creative processes and decision-making, they automatically would influence the representation dimension.

The research, privileging the attention on the social value of museum's projects toward the community and the underlying belief that culture can function as a means of social development and cohesion, focuses on participatory projects addressing the no-audiences. (Iranian community, peripheries' schools and disabled people)

Sustainable AD is when the museum revises its attitudes entering in contact with the public. Relationship marketing can be a suitable managerial approach for museums because they need to segment the audiences and adapt to their needs; for this reason, elements of relational marketing (RM) can apply. The literature related to the complementary approaches of relational capital and relational marketing (RM) helps to clarify the process of social relationships and theoretically justify how long-term relations of cultural organisations can enable knowledge sharing and value generation. The relationship orientation is the proactive establishment, growth, and maintenance of connections with costumers and other parties, resulting in mutually beneficial exchange in persons or organisations.

This research focuses on the relational capital (RC) of the museum that "includes all the relations of the organisation with individuals, group of people and organisations (companies, institutions, civil actors etc.)." It has also been defined as external social capital, referring to the links an organisation maintains with external agents.

The relational capital favours the integration of the cultural organisation with the external environment and improves the organisation's social capital, namely all the relational resources of the interpersonal relationships that are beneficial to people's growth in community social groups. The RC also promotes resource combination and exchange within businesses, generating organisations' value (intellectual capital). Indeed, relations are created by the growing and repetitive interaction between two actors that generate trust and trustworthiness. The same happens at the organisational level. Inter-organisational relationships at the beginning start as informal deals with little reliance on trust due to lower risk. As these connections repeat over time and meet basic principles of equity and efficiency, the parties may increase their willingness to commit and invest resources creating cooperative relationships.

Applying RM to the research, Gummesson (2006) emphasised that organisation's competitive advantage is not given by the mere ownership of relations but by the management and attention to them. Building long-term relations make the actors involved partners in a win-win logic where both parties gain from each other. It is so that stable relationships acquire strategic relevance for the organisation. The variables that influence the longevity of a relation are collaboration, commitment, trust, sharing common objectives and values, interactions.

In the museum context, the research focuses on the museum's relational capital, represented by the managers and offices, that use their bridging social capital to build relationships between the museum and different social stakeholders. This research considers the establishment and development of relationships between the museum and communities, public institutions and third sector organisations. The analysis looks at projects where the intensity of relations manifests at different levels and the connections analysed are those described by Gummesson as partnerships, where both parties cooperate long-term.

The theoretical framework guides the analysis of MAXXI's organisation and projects. The strategies of audience development involve the entire organisation of the museum and different offices. This research focuses on projects of the offices of Education and Public Engagement that pursue the specific aim of increasing and diversifying the public (social inclusion), addressing the no audiences, taking for granted that core audiences should always be considered and cultivated.

Since the involvement of the entire organisation is a critical component of successful AD plans and practices and that the development of relational capital depends on the systemic approach of the organisation, the strategy, the ethics and identity of the organisation. The project's analysis is framed on three hierarchical levels: 1. A more general and strategic perspective related to MAXXI. 2. The specific strategy of AD of the offices of Education and Public Engagement. 3. Strategies and methods of the projects, particularly related to the type of relations developed.

1st level – Governance

The factors studied are:

- Leadership - Director's will of opening the programming and the museum to new audiences
- MAXXI's strategy regarding the openness to communities and the establishment of relations.
- Ethics and identity of the museum toward people.

2nd level – Organisation and Processes

- Strategies of education and public engagement offices regarding funding, national benchmarking, screening of the projects, building capacity and project evaluation.
- Reasons and values of their projects and activities

3rd level – Project Analysis

Project analysis, while describing goals, target and outcomes (Annexes), is based specifically on the following indicators.

- Time and commitment of collaboration
- Quality and relevance of collaboration (reciprocal will; resource sharing; new audiences)
- Number of stakeholders involved
- Type of stakeholders involved
- Follow-up with stakeholders involved
- Impact on the institution and on the community involved

The ultimate objective is to assess the improvement of museum’s social role, looking at two dimensions.

3. The institutional – seeing the impact of the projects in the institution in terms of access, participation and representation (Sandell, 1998) but also looking at the organisational implications that these projects have in the staff training, exhibitions, offices, activities’ organisation.
4. Community dimension: what changes projects bring in the community involved as a whole.

Table 3 - Input factors and indicators (Author’s elaboration from Bodo et al.,2009)

Input factors	Museum's social role	
	Institutional impact	Social Impact
Participation of the public	Strategies improvement	Change in community involved
Time	New organisational structure	Creation of network of relations
Collaborations with SS	New competences of the staff	Knowledge exchange
Quality of the partnership	Diversification in programming	Intergenerational exchange
Number of stakeholders	Improvement of service provision and performance	Empowerment
Type of stakeholders	Increased participation	
Funding	Change in representation	
Human resources	Partnerships	

The analysis of the entire organisational system of governance, organisational processes and project implementation led to the following results.

The top management level (governance) should ensure a clear commitment towards AD regarding leadership's political will, mission, resource allocation and organisational structure. In this regard, MAXXI can represent a best practice, since all the projects analysed have been launched or approved by the artistic director Hou Hanru together with the top management. The explicit intention behind them was to make the museum open to society and everyday spaces, as in the case of *Il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola (MBS)*, but also to alternative cultures and narratives, as shown in the cases of *My Iran* and *MIXT*. This is confirmed by directors' general vision and mission, which conceive MAXXI as a dynamic laboratory responsive to social, political and cultural transformations.

For what concerns financial resource allocation, the Education and Public Engagement Offices have an annual budget depending on the museum's internal budget and sponsorships. The interviews raised the issue of a discontinuous and variable budget that may represent a risk for the continuity of the project's programming. Yet, the number of activities per year witness the relevance of audience development activities for the institution. The funding allocation also depends on political decisions at the regional and national levels. This implies the need for public policies to create items of funding in cultural policy planning that encourage social inclusion and participation projects.

Regarding the organisation, the Education Office has aligned its role to the museum's other core departments. More importantly, a dedicated organisational unit coordinates the projects related to the themes of social inclusion and public engagement. This demonstrates that public engagement issues have been recognised and promoted by the institution to become a continuous line of action, increase cultural participation of marginalised groups; institutionalise and include new narratives in the institution; and improve the network of relations with social stakeholders.

The pluriannual experience of the Education Office with the neighbourhood's social stakeholders demonstrates the museum's commitment and openness toward the local community and the territory, thus providing another evidence for the research question raised. The long-term relations established with local social actors, especially with one school of the neighbourhood, have changed the way people live and experience MAXXI. In addition, the fact that the Education Office is born as a continuation of the course in Teaching of Museum and Territory Pedagogy at Sapienza University, also demonstrates the network capability of the museum with the different institutions of the territory.

Before the pandemic, the Education Office's project planning depended mainly on the exhibition programming. The organisational processes lacked indeed a structured evaluation of the mission to be pursued, the target to be reached or the outcome to be achieved in the community involved. The projects implemented are those that receive more resource allocation. Instead, the resource allocation should depend on an ex-ante evaluation of the outcome the museum wants to achieve. The recent transposition of educational activities online has demonstrated the necessity of implementing targeted projects to pursue a specific mission independently from the exhibition programming (Fondazione Symbola, 2021). Besides, the project evaluation ends with the project's conclusion without a follow-up and monitoring in the long-term, and especially without visibility of the value produced by the project. Regarding public engagement projects, even if they are independent from the exhibition programming, they still lack a strategic ex-ante evaluation of the specific social issue to address, the target to be involved and the impact to be produced. Therefore, a structured ex-ante evaluation is crucial to establish a final goal to achieve and assess the project's potential impact on the target community. Instead, the ex-post monitoring of projects helps make the museum's mission more effective and targeted and gives visibility to the results, which would help the museum receive more sponsorships, public funding, and social legitimacy.

Furthermore, there is no evidence of a national observatory that assesses museums' audience development strategies and best practices regarding public engagement and participation issues. The *Uniform Quality Level for Museums* represents minimum standards that leave space for discretion to other more performative museums. Therefore, the discrepancy of museums' actions and activities prevents museums from promoting structured social inclusion practices as well as from influencing public policies to encourage these projects. Also, the lack of a platform for best practices makes innovative projects more difficult to replicate.

There should be a national benchmarking, a platform for best practices, or a collaboration among the most performative cultural institutions to encourage a systemic action in social inclusion issues. The interinstitutional creation of a permanent observatory could bring much value for improving AD into the involved institutions. Typically, these organisational instruments allow the creation of several thematic workshops on all the subjects described – governance, sponsorship, resource allocation, organisation and participatory processes, reporting and ex-post monitoring of results.

The projects analysis showed different results, due also to the different characteristics of each project. Nonetheless, strategies and methods are similar since each project aims to involve the

community in the co-production and co-design of the project and the final products. These projects, that correspond to a small portion of the several developed by the organisation, prove that MAXXI is increasingly becoming a participatory cultural institution.

This discussion does not aim to assess what project is more successful or best, because each of them has its peculiarity coherently with the museum's mission. In this research, the purpose is to show how the continuity in relations can bring a better outcome. The initial hypothesis was to see how long-term relations with social stakeholders improve the museum's social role. Looking at projects, it emerged that some key factors improve the effectiveness and the outcome of the institutional organisation for service provision, participation, and representation of alternative narratives (institutional dimension). The same key factors can produce a change in the community involved (community dimension). The objective is to see how these projects can produce a permanent effect both within the organisation and in the community involved. The factors identified regard mainly the time and commitment dedicated to the project and the collaborations with social stakeholders; the quality of the partnership in terms of the will from both parties, resource sharing and participation; the number and type of stakeholders in the collaboration (See Table 1 – Input factors and indicators and Table 2 – General assessment).

Table 4 - General assessment (Author's elaboration)

	Time	Collaborations with SS	Quality SS	Number of Stakeholders	Type of stakeholders	Institutional impact	Community impact	Funding	HR
My Iran	5 months	2 months; professional collaborations with individual participants	No partnership; Knowledge sharing	1- Alefba Association	Individuals semi-organised in the Italo Iranian Association	First Intercultural mediation project; Increased participation	Individual dimension	Unedited History	Involvement of an expert
MBS	5 years	5 years	Reciprocal will, Human resources support	4 - Schools, Sapienza University, the Academy of Fine Arts; MIUR	Interinstitutional	First outreaching activity; improvement of museum's strategies; school becomes a permanent interlocutor	School's community; interns	2nd edition more successful thanks to the funding by Miur and 3rd edition Piano Triennale delle Arti	More HR crucial to carry out the project in a vertical structure (organisational level)
MIXT	2 years	2 years	Participants' enthusiasm; Partnership and knowledge sharing	7 - UICI, ENS, Federazione Pro Ciechi, Istituto Treccani, Architalab Studio, Mediavoice s.r.l, DSTech s.r.l	Third sector associations; private companies	Staff training; new service; permanent exhibition	Deaf community and blind people empowerment	POR FESR LAZIO 2014-2021	Deaf and blind people provide knowledge and experiences on disability. IT staff provide competences for the implementation of digital tools

The intercultural mediation project *My Iran* highlighted the issue of the limited project timing for the project's success, since these kinds of projects require a high commitment to identify the stakeholders, increase participation and create relations.

Instead, the experience in *Il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola* showed first of all, the necessity of at least one year span to implement projects that involve different actors in co-design of the project.

Secondly, the continuity of the relation between the school IC Lucio Fontana and MAXXI has changed over time the complexity of the strategies implemented by the museum but, more importantly, the attitude of the school's community towards the project. The witnesses of the school's dean demonstrate that if the project had stopped after the first year, it would have been a special project to be carried out against the resistances of students and teachers, without any follow-up with the museum, any project's evolution and consequently any change in students' experiences. After five editions, creative projects are included in the permanent training offer, and both teachers and students are MAXXI's permanent interlocutors.

In the case of MIXT, the two years collaboration with third sectors actors aims to improve the strategic and operational performance of the organisation and services related to accessibility. Also, in this case, the collaboration began with temporary projects both with the deaf and blind people. This initial involvement transformed into a partnership when these people were called to design and co-create content to build up a permanent exhibition and improve the museum's accessibility.

Furthermore, *Il Museo tra i Banchi di Scuola* gives evidence of the importance of the quality of the partnership, namely the reciprocal will to collaborate and commit, for the good implementation of the project. Indeed, referring to the second edition, the dean of the school highlights that the lack of intentionality of the other involved schools' directors, represented an obstacle for the project's development.

In the case of MIXT, the quality of the partnership is detectable, firstly, in participation and will of the stakeholders. The museum, in fact, through the collaborations with different third sector associations, has been able to reach both the deaf and blind people, and consequently, to engage them in the project. Also, the answer to participation was positive and proactive. Secondly, the partnership favours knowledge sharing to improve the service provided by the museum.

In *My Iran*, instead, there was not a proper partnership with stakeholders. Participation depended mainly on the word of mouth of people belonging to the same Italo-Iranian Association Alefba. However, the interpretation of the heritage by the Iranian community introduced new narratives in the institution for a temporary period, providing unique knowledge and experience about the Iranian culture.

With regards to the number and type of stakeholders involved, in *il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola* there is an inter-institutional collaboration between schools, Sapienza University, the Academy of Fine Arts, and support in the second edition from MIUR. The multiple partners are

crucial for the implementation of the project because they provide fundamental human resources and make the project 'generative' of diffused effects for all the individuals involved. In fact, there is an exchange between students from different institutions and the impact is not only on the school's community but also on universities' interns. The witnesses proved that the inter-institutional exchange of practices, knowledge and skills could improve the final strategies and outcomes among all the institutions involved. This project has provided a practical work experience for universities' students; it has improved the school training offer, the teaching method, the school's orientation power and the school's environment.

The financial resources by MIUR in the second edition make the project more structured and diffused on the territory through the involvement of three schools and the move of MAXXI's permanent works in schools. The endorsement by MIUR demonstrates that the museum, with its multidisciplinary action, through the support of MIC can gain further funding. Furthermore, by partnering with public institutions it can widen the scope of its projects and achieve different social purposes. An example of this, is provided by the public grant "*Piano delle Arti*" promoted by MIUR, which encourages cultural education and creative programmes in schools; and by the "*Piano Nazionale Cinema per la Scuola*", where the partnership between MIC and MIUR introduces in schools' training offer programmes to educate students to the cinema.

Looking at the same framework in MIXT, the partnership with private companies permits the implementation of the project and the improvement of the museum's operational and service performance through co-creation and the universal design approach. Specific tools, such as the App (DS Tech), the audiovisual content (Mediavoice) and the tactile materials (Architalab), were designed following the specific recommendations of deaf and blind people belonging to third sector organisations UICI, ENS and *Federazione Pro Ciechi*. Furthermore, the partnership with third sector associations for deaf and blind people make the museum representative and inclusive of their specific social instances.

Taking a comprehensive look at all projects, it emerged that the "success" of a project in terms of innovation, production of final products, involvement and participation of the public and, above all, continuity in collaboration, is ensured only with a dedicated budget and human resources' competence and commitment. In fact, in all the projects mentioned, the most innovative and productive projects receive targeted funding. In the case of *My Iran*, there was a specific budget dedicated to the exhibition *Unedited History*. For what concern *il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola*, the most fruitful editions are: the second, where MAXXI had a dedicated budget for the project and also

support by MIUR, and the third one, financed by *Piano delle Arti*. Finally, MIXT was financed by POR FESR LAZIO 2014-2020 to improve museums' accessibility.

Nonetheless, human resources are also a fundamental precondition because these projects require high competencies and commitment that cannot be sacrificed from other museum's activities. For instance, in the case of *My Iran*, the commitment required prevented the manager of the Education Office from dedicating to other activities. Moreover, the high level of competence required in *My Iran* led MAXXI to involve the expert Silvia Mascheroni, since it was MAXXI's first intercultural mediation project. In the second edition of *Il Museo tra I Banchi di Scuola*, interns were crucial resources to carry on the project in three schools, allowing for a vertical structure at the organisational level. After all, the way of working was horizontal. At the top, the project manager coordinated the activities; each school had one professional educator; and the interns carried out more operative activities like visits, lectures, and workshops.

Finally, in the case of MIXT, the project on accessibility is entirely followed by one coordinator that learned the LIS language to develop it. This aspect gives evidence of the need for very specialised competencies. Instead, deaf and blind people are the teachers of the staff in the training course. They provide knowledge and experiences of disability that the project manager could not have and permit the Head of the Public Engagement Office to dedicate time to other projects and activities. Moreover, IT professionals of private companies provide knowledge and innovative practices for the proper implementation of digital tools.

These practices highlight not only that building capacity is fundamental, but also that museums' services and performances improve if their professionals recognise their level of knowledge and competence to carry out such projects. In fact, by recognising a lack of human resources capability, museum's professionals would be driven by the need to update, to partner up with stakeholders or to involve experts. Once again, MAXXI professionals demonstrate to be a good example because, through partnerships and contacts, they enable the sharing of knowledge and competencies.

All this being said, the research answers to two questions: How do long-term relations improve the museum's social role? What are the factors that enable these relationships?

The case studies and the interviews gave evidence of some recurrent critical issues, useful inspiration for public policy development, while suggesting some key elements of success for the effective implementation of projects of social inclusion.

These were summarised in:

- Clear and continuous governance commitment toward the involvement of the public and public engagement activities detectable in museum's core values, practices, financial resources allocation and human resources capability.
- Explicit organisational structure, with a dedicated manager, at the highest level of the organisation to the themes of Public Engagement; structured processes related to resource allocation, project selection and evaluation and performance assessment looking at best practices.
- Project selection favouring long-term commitment, long-standing partnerships, adequate number of stakeholders involved and adequate quality of the partnership concerning reciprocal will to collaborate, resource and knowledge sharing.

The research permits to answer in qualitative terms, considering multiple variables and the limitations of the research, that long-term relations with social stakeholders do improve museum's social role on the institutional dimension, because they permit an improvement in the institutional performance in terms of (a) participation and especially representation of cultural marginalities; (b) strategies and methods - the more years the collaboration, the more refined the strategies implemented; (c) competences and knowledge sharing - the more the social partners, the better the final outcome.

On the community dimension, the continuity of the projects give time to the recipients and participants to get to know creative practices, to understand their benefits and to generate a change within the institution partners.

The results and witnesses of the experts showed that this systematic evolution and shift in museums' practices in Italy is still on-going with still sometime to be achieved. This is mainly due to a general resistance of museums but also to the lack of enabling public policies that favour continuity of funding and planning for these projects and of uniform guidelines for museums to improve their participatory and public engagement projects. In this context, the research provides useful demonstration of the museum's social capability, and it is an inspiring basis of knowledge for further investigations.