Mapping Knowledge Orders in Local Museums: An Example from Horodnic de Jos, Romania

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1 Abstract
Local museums in Romania are privately-owned, amateur presentations of identity and heritage that aim to preserve the past within the living spaces of their owners. This study identifies and maps several knowledge orders that emerged in one local museum visited in May 2014. Visual analysis and the gendered narratives of museum proprietors are used to reconstruct pathways through the museum in order to reveal orders of knowledge. The poster focuses on space-time arrangements, identifying the symbolic classifications of old/new and inside/outside. The study and interpretation rely on the literature of cultural motion (Greg Urban), and social classifications (Eviatar Zerubavel and Jens-Erik Mai). In Horodnic de Jos, the local museum emerges as an arena for knowledge production, where aggregation, bricolage and classificatory activities renegotiate the connections between past, present and future. This study exposes the local museum as a site of living memory that mediates local/national memory.

Keywords: Museums; Romania; social classification; amateurs; cultural motion

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1 Introduction
Local museums are private museums in which families collect and exhibit artifacts of traditional or peasant life within their homes. As a phenomenon, they offer the opportunity to observe unique and individualized museum-making activities occurring within the same space as the activities of everyday life. This project investigates knowledge production as it emerges through the proprietor-led tour of one local museum in Horodnic de Jos, Suceava County, Romania.

2 Methodology
Cultural heritage is inherently visual (Watson & Waterton, 2010). Therefore, any study of cultural heritage sites should involve the visual as well as the verbal/textual. In local museums, proprietors lead visitors through their museums on personal tours because, as the proprietor in Horodnic de Jos stated: “You can explain to people in a better way” than can signs or labels. Two research visits to this museum in May 2014 focused on recording the tour narrative in the form of audio recordings, photographs and field notes.

The tour emerged as a kind of show-and-tell where the proprietors talked about, demonstrated and pointed to objects during narrative exposition. These punctuated moments take place within the overall visual field, foregrounding certain objects or scenes as exemplary from among enumerated visual lists. From the research perspective, the “said” accompanies the “seen” to form a moment of intentionality which guides the gaze of the visitor, indicating a moment of transference of knowledge. These moments were recorded as photographs that represent a kind of punctum. In Barthes (2010), the punctum represents that which makes photographs memorable on personal level, in contrast to the shared symbolic meanings or studium. In the context of the local museum tour, punctum are moments in which the visual directed gaze is combined with the verbal expository narrative that stood out as notable moments.

3 Findings
Knowledge emerges through the collecting, arranging and maintaining activities that comprise the bricolage of museum-making. Symbolic classifications were also revealed through these museum-making activities. These classifications are mapped here as Pathways through and Zones within the museum site, which is part of the proprietors’ family property.
3.1 **Punctum**

Punctum represent data points used to analyze and map notable moments of knowledge production/knowledge transfer that arose during the museum tour. These moments and the location in which they were recorded are listed in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Punctum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the yard between the old barn and the new house</td>
<td>Proprietor: We collected somewhere around 3,000 pieces from the whereabouts of Horodnic and beyond. This barn (is part of a traditional) three-piece house, actually. It has over 100 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside museum (old barn)</td>
<td>Proprietor: This is to make the wood that covers the top of the houses (roof shingles) . . . this is made on four sides. That’s an already finished one. It’s very soft. And that’s how they place them. (It lasts) somewhere around 70 or 80 years. It lasts long but they treat it with burnt oil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside museum (old barn)</td>
<td>Proprietor: That’s how the peasants do it. They would come from the villages and put their things there. . . . That’s the pleasure, of seeing everything exactly where it was.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside the old barn</td>
<td>Proprietor: These are pretty much all of the objects we collected. [Household goods and food preparation tools are on the right; textile collection is on the left].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside museum (old barn)</td>
<td>Proprietress: In days of yore, [the peasants] didn’t have closets, so they would put everything in a special room, on a beam, as you see here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside museum (old barn)</td>
<td>Proprietor: My son bought a house that had all sorts of objects left in it... And I took all of (the objects left in the house). Now, the children of the old people are leaving for other countries and when they are coming back and their parents aren’t there, they simply throw everything (away). And I’m the one who picks them up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside new guest cabins and new “house of the peasants”</td>
<td>Proprietor: This is actually going to be the new house of the peasants (left). Now they just want to finish this and build some mannequins (to model the clothing). And they’re not going to put electrical light here. Proprietress: We also have two cabins for guests (right).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside one of the new guest cabins</td>
<td>Proprietress: I wonder whether I took this habit of understanding luxury as old things from when I went to Italy and saw it there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside one of the new guest cabins</td>
<td>Proprietress: My husband would help other people tar their houses and he noticed that people wanted to throw away a lot of things. So he started bringing them home and I was really upset at the beginning, but then we decided to make this exposition of them, and it was okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside the amateur planetarium and old barn</td>
<td>Proprietress: We have an astronomy-themed room. Do you want to see it? Researcher: Is it part of the museum? Proprietress: No. It is a separate room.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the amateur planetarium

New house (proprietors’ living quarters)

Table 1. Key punctum mapped for analysis
3.2 Pathways

Pathways represent the guided orders structured by the proprietors as the museum tour. Pathways reflect the tour path on which visitors were led alternately by either the proprietor or proprietress, as shown in Figure 1:

![Guided and gendered pathways](image)

Figure 1: Guided and gendered pathways (illustrating the tour path through the museum site on an aerial plan of the museum property)

This “tag team” approach to presentation of the museum by the proprietors (husband and wife) mirrored traditional cultural orders of gendered labor (Figure 2):

![Traditional cultural orders of gendered labor](image)

Figure 2. Traditional cultural orders of gendered labor (as illustrated in Figure 1)

Mapping pathways reveals this local museum property as a matrix of movement. The movements of both things and people within the property facilitate the emergence and transference of knowledge according to personal and subjective orders as well as in the context of larger cultural orders.

3.3 Zones

Zones are dialogic, corresponding to the voices of proprietors and researcher as they emerged within the spatial order of buildings and objects during the course of the museum tour. The mapping of punctum (notable moments in the verbal/expository narrative) reveals symbolic classifications of space/time according to old/new and inside/outside (what belongs in the museum and what does not). The mapping of these dialogic orders illustrates some of the ways in which museum maker’s cognitive constructions inform and are informed by the physical arrangement of the museum property.
3.3.1 Old/New

The museum was not simply an island of old things preserved or protected from modern life. Instead, proximity of old and new things in old and new spaces encouraged new dynamics between “traditional” and “modern” that emerged as interactions between degrees of oldness and newness.

Figure 3. Zones of old and new (mapped onto an aerial plan of the museum property)

Figure 4. Degrees of oldness and newness (as illustrated in Figure 2)
3.3.2 Inside/Outside

Though the space of the museum site appeared contiguous, the proprietors expressed clear ideas of what areas and structures were part of the museum and those which were not, mapped in Figure 5 and explained in Figure 6:

Figure 5: Zones of inside and outside (mapped onto an aerial plan of the museum property)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Museum</th>
<th>• Part of the museum in the minds of the proprietors; buildings that contained the bulk of collected objects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once/future museum</td>
<td>• Spaces that once housed or will house collected objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not museum</td>
<td>• Not part of the museum in the minds of the proprietors; buildings used more actively as spaces of everyday life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Zones of inside/outside (as illustrated in Figure 5)

4 Discussion

Knowledge production in this local museum emerges through processes of museum-making that allow old and new ways of knowing and doing to interact across old and new spaces, structures and objects. In Horodnic de Jos, the activities of collecting, arranging and maintaining museum spaces are entwined with the activities of daily life. This combined space of past/present becomes a space in which knowledge orders emerge through the cognitive and social-constructive acts of bricolage that comprise amateur museum-making. Data reflects the ways in which the proprietors’ mental topographies (Zerubavel, 1996) recognized points of sameness and difference that became “lumped” or “split” into categories of old/new, inside/outside (what is part of the museum and what is not) and along gender lines, illustrated here as zones and pathways. As sites of cultural heritage, this local museum space represents a nexus of
movement that allows culture as it is embodied by people and objects to connect and integrate in new ways. Where the past may be characterized as “lost,” the local museum becomes a space in which museum-makers emerge as entrepreneurs, defined by Urban (2001) as those who move the old into the new.

This local museum also organizes knowledge through social classificatory activities that contrast with traditional conceptualizations of classification as an objective, professional activity that attempts to describe orders of knowledge for all time (Mai, 2011). The approach these local museum makers have taken to organizing their museum reflects the classification-as-epistemology approach, where the space of classification allows for “interpretive flexibility” and does not require an artificial separation of classifier and classified (Mai, 2011, p. 711). In other words, classification as a sense-making activity happens in situ. The local museum is a place in which the relationship between meaning-object-interpretation can be mapped on a micro-level. The local museum represents a space in which disparate or distant bits of cultural knowledge can form new relationships because of the zones in which they exist and the pathways along which they move.

5 Future Research
The local museum in Horodnic de Jos is only one of a number of local museums found throughout Romania, each of which is prized for its unique approach to preserving heritage. This type of museum reflects one way in which the peasant, a national symbol of Romania, is preserved within the context of wider discourses on cultural heritage at the local, national and international levels. In 2008, an official museum, the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, gathered twenty-four local museums into a national association. This legitimating effort brings these personal, amateur and individual creations into the official fold of hundreds of historical, ethnographic and open-air museums within Romania. This makes it a particularly salient time to study local museums as they emerge as an evolving type of museum form that allows us to question what constitutes “the museum” and “heritage” in the 21st century.

6 References