

20 What are museums for? - Revisiting “Museums in a Troubled World”

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***Abstract:** Focusing on the present situation in the Nordic museum scene, entailing economic pressures and restructuring, this article introduces the thoughts and ideas of Canadian museum expert and author, Robert R. Janes, to put things in perspective. After revisiting the 2009 book “Museums in a Troubled World”, authored by Janes, a discussion between the authors is presented which focuses on the complexities of collaboration between museums and business. Finally a “hands on” section is included, in which different types of possible collaborations are examined. In this section, the topic of value creation is also addressed, as it is pointed out which measures might be necessary to rebuild a position of relevancy in society for the Nordic museums.*

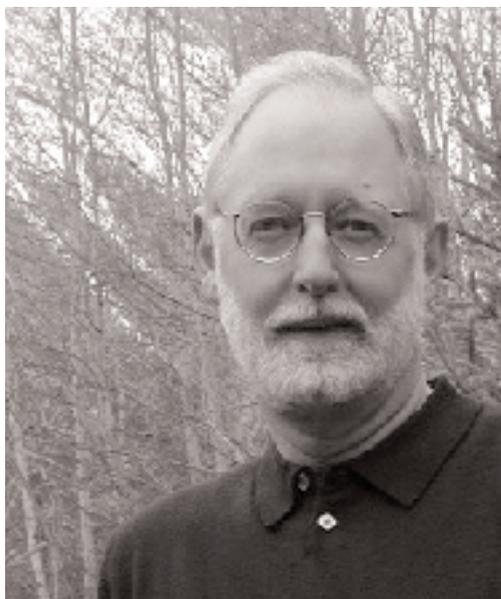
Key words: museum development, museum business collaboration, value mediation, strategies, business literacy, museum relevancy, tradition, social responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to do three things. First, it will put recent Nordic museum developments into context, and it will introduce the reader to the thoughts and ideas of Robert R. Janes, as presented in his 2009 book “Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse” (London and New York; Routledge). These initial sections are developed by the first author. This is then followed by a themed discussion between the first author and Robert R. Janes, drawing on his perspectives concerning the “troubled museums”. Finally, a hands-on perspective is added, as some

current challenges in the sector are treated, hopefully adding to a prosperous debate on the future of Nordic museums.¹ It should be stressed that, while aiming for debate, the terms and concepts presented by the authors might seem open-ended; this is fully intentional, as the authors are not pressing for any predetermined, fixed model or solution. Rather, our intention is to encourage a more reflective and self-critical approach to museum development, which might present itself in a variety of ways. In other words, in reading through the text the keyword should be “reflection” and not “fixed solution”.

In recent years, museums in the Nordic



Robert R. Janes. Foto: R. Janes.

countries have been under tremendous pressure to perform and act as private companies, rationalizing and focusing on profits over traditional museum activities. This is hardly a surprise as the international museum scene, at least since the 1990s, has been much influenced by private business and politicians with an unprecedented belief in continuous economic growth. For museums, the result has typically been voluminous prestigious buildings - referred to as 'vanity architecture' by critics. Oftentimes, the very same museums have committed to investing enormous sums of money into short-term special exhibitions: instant and positive consequences have been a substantial rise in audience attendance. However, long-term effects include heavy debts, as the initial interest is followed by a decreasing number of

visitors, while fixed costs remain high. Currently, this type of development is also identifiable in Nordic countries, while perhaps to a lesser extent. Another trend, which has marked the Nordic countries, is a museum sector divided into A and B sectors as a result of some museums rejecting the economic growth paradigm, often choosing entrenchment and sticking with tradition, or the "usual" practice, which boldly stated has hindered any kind of developments.²

There is certainly a paradox in having a museum sector that at the same time is over and underdeveloped. Sadly, one common feature shared by many museums is that they have increasingly lost their relevance to

Morten Karnøe Søndergaard. Foto: L. Karnøe.



22 surrounding society. Too much emphasis on revenue generating has meant that museums have shortened their scope to counting visitor numbers instead of asking questions about relevancy. Following a path of solid entrenchment is far from doing better, as relevancy is not even put up for debate. While some traditionalist's might dispute such remarks, while claiming a self-evident museum relevancy, there is a growing debate in the Nordic countries on what the future of museums should look like. It has become increasingly legitimate to question the purpose of museums. While this debate is rather new in the Nordic context, such questions have been on the agenda of the international museum community for some years.

A participant in provoking and propelling this international debate is the co-author of this article who, in 2009, published the book "Museums in a Troubled World. Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse". Despite being an independent work, the book builds on ideas and perspectives which Janes discussed earlier in his 2007 article; "Museums, Corporatism and the Civil Society" and equally so in the book "Museums and the Paradox of Change: A Case Study in Urgent Adaptation" (1995; 1997), as well as in edited volumes such as "Museum Management And Marketing" (with Richard Sandell, 2007) and "Looking Reality In The Eye: Museums And Social Responsibility" (with Gerald T. Conaty, 2005).³ All works should be of interest to Nordic museum professionals in the present context, but undoubtedly "Museums in a Troubled World" is the magnum opus. Fortunately, Janes has since remained very much on the same track, which is illustrated by the Q and A between the author and the co-author from a previous article:⁴

MKS: In your final section [of the article: "Museums, Corporatism and the Civil Society"] you quote Stephen Weil that there is no essence of museums. Museums should simply exist of and by society in an ever-changing process. This also means branding and rebranding. In your perspective, why are museums lacking behind in this area?

RRJ: "Museums have led a privileged existence as agenda-free and respected custodians of mainstream cultural values - certainly not beholden to the incessant demands of the so-called real world. There is no doubt that museums enjoy a great deal of trust and respect from society at large, whether or not it is merited. This, in turn, has created a sense of complacency among museum practitioners, causing them to assume that traditional thinking and practices are adequate. This perspective is further exacerbated by the many museums managers and leaders who may have 20 years of experience, but it is the same year repeated 20 times. In other words, there is an unwillingness or inability to learn and grow, in part because of intense work pressures. Complacency, a sense of entitlement, the absence of learning, and the weight of tradition all contribute to the failure to rethink and reinvent the role and responsibilities of museums. The problem with museum branding is that it has been borrowed uncritically from the private sector and, with few exceptions, most museums do not brand their values, ideas, mission or substantive contributions. They brand "stuff", using the language of the marketplace and treat visitors and users as consumers and customers. It is time for museums to move beyond the language of the marketplace to create civic brands around ideas and values

that are based on the answers to key questions. These questions should consider why the museum exists, what changes it is trying to effect, and what solutions it will generate. Branding values and ideas is an essential means of heightening museum consciousness and moving beyond the reigning model of economic utility."

The relevancy of bringing Janes to the scene should be evident from the above. Janes takes pride in museum development, and he can easily visualize the ideal museum and, referring to the words of one reviewer of his 2009 book, he manages to put his points in a provocative, yet thoughtful way.⁵

MUSEUMS IN A TROUBLED WORLD REVISITED

Most readers of "Museums in a Troubled World" will admit that it leaves no one unaffected.⁶ Janes deliberately provokes thought by addressing themes that are controversial or, at the very least, untested in a museum setting. So, what are the themes and issues which Janes brings to the forefront?

Essentially one question stands before all others with Janes, and that is the role of museums as social institutions. He is curious about why museums are embracing, knowingly or unknowingly, the values of relentless consumption, while at the same time neglecting issues related to the well-being of their communities, including social challenges and environmental issues (these are repeated topics throughout the book). Janes' main argument, or criticism, is that much more could, and should be, expected from museums that are publicly supported, knowledge-based and trusted civic institutions. Janes builds his work around four basic assumptions. The first

of which is the assumption that human beings are the co-creators of their lives and their organizations if they accept the responsibility to do so. Translated into the museum context, the point is that museum boards, staff and supporters are potentially the real experts on what is needed, but they need to unlock their tacit knowledge and put it to use. Museums also need to include unorthodox and non-museum perspectives, which they have a tendency to neglect, and hence there exists a lot of untapped knowledge.

Janes' second assumption is that museums have the potential to be among the most free and creative workplaces, but will fail to fulfill this potential as long as museum mission statements are focused on how the work is done, instead of asking why these tasks are relevant. The third assumption is that there is a lack of self-criticism, or an inability to ask difficult and uncomfortable questions among museum workers and their museums. Janes' assumption is that learning is grounded in the idea of self-critical and reflective thought, a task which has become a survival skill for those organizations who wish to learn.⁷ Janes' fourth assumption is that the future is not knowable, meaning that instead of all museums doing precisely the same thing i.e., upgrading on technology, there should be more debate and discussions. Museums should, in Janes' words, "question everything", including what tomorrow might bring. From these basic assumptions, Janes dives in.

One of the main topics dealt with is the fact that the world is facing global environmental changes that threaten our public resources, and museums need to react as responsible knowledge institutions to this unfolding. The threats are laid out as interrelated stress factors, putting human and ecological

24 existence under pressure. Factors included by Janes are environmental damage and pollution, climate change, and important in this context, economic instability. The role of museums should be to raise awareness about such issues and exercise stewardship. As pointed out by Janes, stewardship lies at the heart of public museums, making them ideal instruments for engaging in long-term involvements for the future. The call for change is imminent, as more and more museums leaders seem to be keen on doing the same thing over and over again. In Janes' perspective, the unreflective pursuit of economic growth is a destructive practice. Museums need do more on behalf of their communities, but also they need to be reflective, especially concerning their role and potential in society.

The call to become engaged and let go of traditional thinking is becoming even clearer as Janes, in his fourth and fifth chapters, deals with the marketplace and corporatism. He states that these entities have to be seen for what they are, as they continue to derail museums from focusing on their core values and building their strengths as social institutions. Another argument is that corporatism, and the values embedded in the framework of the free market, are actually obstacles to achieving any kind of long-term sustainability. This is a hint, not just for museum professionals, but also for private entrepreneurs and corporate leadership, that a new and more responsible approach is called for. And, as Janes' points out, there are alternative and new ways of collaborating across diverse perspectives, but they are not found in conformity and unthinking consumption.

It is clear to all that there is certainly a clash

of values between private businesses and museums. Market ideology and corporatism have failed to demonstrate any real ability to deal with the complexities of a competent museum. Subjecting a museum to market forces is essentially undermining the core of the museum. There is however, as indicated by Janes, potential in creating shared values and societal responsibilities between business and museums. Truly recognizing this could be the first step in renewing insights and potentially obtaining sustainability. This perspective will guide the following discussion.

DISCUSSION: COLLABORATION BETWEEN MUSEUMS AND BUSINESS⁸

After establishing the framework within which the Nordic museums find themselves, and introducing some of the thoughts and ideas put forward by Robert R. Janes, this section is dedicated to a themed discussion between the authors. The pivotal theme will be collaboration between museums and business, a focus that is very much derived from Janes' chapters on corporatism and the marketplace.

MKS: The 21st century has been an age of accelerated interdependence. Cross-sectorial collaboration between corporations, nonprofits, networks, governments etc. will intensify. A convergence of political, economic and social pressures is fostering such collaboration. Part of your focus is on museums meeting private business. Looking at the overall picture, what would you say is the greatest risk which might come from this meeting?

RRJ: I think that the greatest risk is already widespread, with museums increasingly held captive by neo-classical economics and marketplace ideology – the idea that economic

growth and consumption are the keys to prosperity and societal well-being. In North America, at least, business leaders and economists are some of the most influential people in society. Yet, they advocate ways of thinking and behavior that are completely outmoded and, in fact, are unintelligent and harmful to our collective well-being. Business leaders, business school academics, economists and politicians are apparently oblivious to several profound issues, including the depletion of natural resources (including fossil fuels, minerals and water); the proliferation of negative environmental impacts (including the burning of fossil fuels); and the inability of governments and banks to deal with the enormous government and private debt that has accumulated over the last 20 years.⁹

Economic growth is essentially finished as a result of these issues, and the real question now is how society is going to adapt to a non-growing, equilibrium economy. As the energy expert, Richard Heinberg, succinctly noted, "Civilization is about to be downsized."¹⁰ This is not apocalyptic thinking, as resource depletion, climate impact and systemic financial failures (international bank failures, the European debt crisis, house foreclosures in the United States, etc.) are already well underway. The risk for museums in collaborating with business is becoming complicit in this destructive view of the world, which is based on wealth accumulation in the short term with no regard for the future. Not only do the vast majority of corporations and businesses remain committed to growth and profit irrespective of the societal costs, they are also highly tribalistic.

By tribalistic, I mean a particular reference group in which individuals identify with each other through common language, ritual and legend.¹¹ Business tribalism has several faces,

including the celebrity worship of business leaders; in-group thinking that excludes non-business people; immature and self-serving corporate governance, and narcissistic notions of personal worth as measured by obscenely high salaries for executives in North America and Western Europe. These faces of business are now corroding museum practice, disguised by the imperative that museums must become more like businesses. Museums must consider just how invasive this commercial ideology has become, recognize it for what it is, and change direction. It doesn't make sense for museums to partner with business organizations that are oblivious to the profound issues confronting society and the planet. This culture of business is a dominant factor in blinding museums to a sense of their own worth and well-being, and constitutes the second risk of aligning with business, along with the complicity mentioned above.

MKS: Museums, and cultural institutions at large, work from different optics than private business. However, the search for new alliances is on, as it is becoming obvious that resources and insights might be drawn from this. What are, in your mind, the essential ingredients in casting an alliance between a museum and a private business?

RRJ: There are various stories about museum/private sector partnerships, some of which are happy while others have been disastrous, but all of which contain many hard-won insights and lessons. At the outset, it is best for the museum to choose its own partner and this means developing criteria in advance for what is required in any museum/business alliance. There is no sense in wasting time and energy in reacting to a partner you didn't choose. Avoiding this passive role requires defining what success looks like at

26 the outset, and then selecting your partner accordingly. This, in turn, requires a holistic consideration of the museum's mission, purpose and values in advance of the alliance, and not fixating on the celebrity building as an easy solution, for example. Sustained rigour in decision-making is essential, which means paying attention to content and substance, and not succumbing to the inevitable commercial dogma that accompanies corporatism, business hype, marketing, and the search for quick fixes.

Museums must continually revisit their mission, and ask why they are doing what they're doing, and how will the new business alliance enrich the mission and the results. The momentum and excitement of a corporate courtship can easily sidetrack the key question – 'Will our mission and values be advanced by this initiative, or is it a superficial solution to more important concerns?' It is easy to assume the merits of a corporate alliance, and it is necessary for both the governing authority and the staff to truly reflect on the potential advantages and disadvantages. The boards of directors of many museums have an obvious business bias because many of the board members come from business – this can be dangerous. The marketplace has but one master – the bottom line – and to think otherwise is unrealistic and naïve. As the former CEO of the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Canada noted, 'There's no such thing as pure corporate philanthropy – it's all strategic now.'¹²

MKS: In your book, you stipulate the meeting between museums and private business as a clash of values. While this perspective undoubtedly holds to be true what, or perhaps who, can facilitate mediation between the two types of values?

RRJ: Values are essential and enduring beliefs that articulate how a museum will conduct itself. Values also serve as guiding beacons by describing how the museum wants to treat others, as well as how it wishes to be treated. It would seem that in the marketplace, there is little time for considering values. Instead, values are replaced by imperatives – more visitors, more earned revenues, more collections, etc. Unthinking adherence to the marketplace by museums has caused a conflict of values, because every museum, in the language of the marketplace, is a mixed portfolio. Some museum work is clearly subject to market forces, such as restaurants, shops and product development, while other activities, such as collections care, scientific research and community engagement, are not. The latter bear no relation to the market economy and, in fact, require a safe distance from marketplace and corporatist influences. Further, marketplace ideology and corporatism have failed to demonstrate any real ability to deal with the complexities of a competent museum and are, instead, homogenizing the complex portfolio with a stultifying adherence to financial considerations – at the expense of most everything else. The tyranny of quantitative measures, such as attendance numbers and shop revenues, is a clear indication of this reality.

It is obvious that the marketplace is incapable of addressing the collective good, while museums are potentially key agents in doing so. Corporations, both national and multinational, are second only to governments in their influence on public policy and have clearly demonstrated time and again that the common good can be an inexhaustible arena for private gain. Business people believe that markets create communities when, in fact, the

opposite is true - marketplace activities actually deplete trust.¹³ Communities and their nonprofit organizations create and sustain the trust upon which the marketplace is based. Many museums are apparently unaware of their role and their strengths in this vital responsibility, and are willing to let their unique assets be subsumed under the rhetoric of business imperatives. For all these reasons, I believe that each museum must be the final arbiter of its own best interests, irrespective of any business alliance it might have.

MKS: A different aspect of collaboration between museums and business is the question of life span. In your work you address this topic by noting the fact that the average life expectancy of multinational corporations is between 40 and 50 years, while museums, on the other hand, are more or less intended to exist for an indefinite number of years. Yet, behind this lies very different strategies and understandings. What in your view is the most damaging effect of museums having adopted “the corporation” mentality? And are there any positive effects?

RRJ: Overall, I believe that the preoccupation with money and quantitative measures has diverted museums from fulfilling their potential role as trusted social institutions, aligned with the interests, aspirations and issues of their communities. It is important to realize that the private ownership of natural resources; the increased centralization of power between governments and corporations; the elimination of biological and human diversity; the irrational belief that science and technology will undo or fix the problems we have created; the refusal to set limits on production and consumption, and the concept of progress at the expense of the biosphere – all of these things are the consequences of marketplace

ideology or are in the service of this ideology. Why museums would embrace commercial dogma as a strategy for the future when heightened stewardship is of paramount importance remains a vexing and essential question.

In fact, the toxicity of the corporate/business world has become so pronounced that the Harvard Business Review recently published an article which notes that the capitalist system is under siege and that business is increasingly seen as the major cause of social, environmental and economic problems.¹⁴ How refreshing to see this admission of failure in the world’s leading business publication, although the authors maintain that corporations are still superior to government and the social sector in leading social progress. Predictably, business tribalism and arrogance persist, despite the authors’ admission that “the legitimacy of business has fallen to levels not seen in recent history.”¹⁵ There are certainly positive effects coming from business, however, and perhaps the most important is the introduction of business literacy to the museum community – a topic that is discussed later in this interview.

MKS: A general trend throughout your book is the call for museums to position themselves in a development that will take us from ego to eco. In other words, putting museums at the forefront when it comes to addressing pressing social and environmental issues. What is it specifically about museums that make them appropriate to perform this task?

RRJ: Museums and galleries are potentially the most free and creative work environments on the planet, and the scope for creativity and initiative should be just about limitless in a well-run museum. There are very few other

28 workplaces that offer more opportunities for thinking and acting in ways that can blend personal satisfaction and growth with organizational and societal goals. These opportunities constitute the true privilege of museum work, and it is up to each museum worker to seize them. Unlike the private sector, museums do not have production or sales quotas, although the imposition of quantitative measures has certainly moved museums in that direction. Nonetheless, they are still relatively immune to the tyranny of production that marks the private sector. In contrast to the public sector, museums are not forced to administer unpopular government policies.

Most importantly, museums are privileged because they are organizations whose purpose is their meaning.¹⁶ This elegant observation suggests that any activity unaligned with organizational purpose could jeopardize the meaning. The failure of museums to ask 'why' they do what they do prevents self-critical reflection, which is a prerequisite to heightened awareness, organizational alignment and social relevance. Instead, in the absence of 'why', the focus is largely on the 'how', or the clichéd processes of collecting, preserving and earning revenue – the latter being the cause of much of the organizational drifting characteristic of many contemporary museums.

MKS: In the latter decades there has been a tendency, especially among politicians, to treat museums as a mere consumer good. Museums have had to play along focusing on becoming actors in the so-called experience economy. While this perspective is perhaps fading out in some countries, what are the effects of such "here and now" ideas, which are forced onto the museum sector? And is the call to forge alliances and collaborate with

private business just another short-term trend?

RRJ: For museums, one of the most misleading ideas coming from the business world is that of financial self-sufficiency. It is a myth that permits museums and their governing authorities to pursue growth and consumption as the keys to the future, thus avoiding any substantive consideration of what sustainability might look like in the long term. Sustainability could actually mean a smaller core staff or a smaller building; or starting afresh with a new mission and values focused on social responsibility; or merging with like-minded organizations, or even deaccessioning or mothballing a portion of the collection. Forging alliances with private business should be part of this thinking, as there are undoubtedly a variety of innovative opportunities that require risk taking and experimentation.

In seeking long-term sustainability, boards and staff should also ask two essential questions – 'If museums did not exist, would we reinvent them and what would they look like?' And, 'If the museum were to be reinvented what would be the role of the public in the reinvented institution?' It might be helpful to bear in mind that the "the crucial dimensions of scarcity in human life are not economic, but existential. They are related to our needs for leisure and contemplation, peace of mind, love, community and self-realization."¹⁷

MKS: Museum professionals are rarely trained business professionals, who have a strong focus on strategies, revenues and earnings. Rather, museum professionals are trained in having a sharp focus on arts or history. In an era of new and changing times, where does this status of training and

experience rank the museum professionals when it comes to the ability to engage in “business practice”? Can museums professionals act and intermediate beyond their professional context; or what is necessary to build this capability?

RRJ: Irrespective of my criticism of business, I want to make it make it perfectly clear that business literacy is essential for any competent museum. By business literacy, I mean the staff’s ability, at all levels of the organization, to fully understand the museum in all its complexity.¹⁸ If the staff understands the ‘big picture’, or the larger context within which the museum operates, they will have a greater appreciation and investment in the outcome of the work. Knowledge of the operating and capital budgets, along with the long-term financial outlook for the museum, are critical parts of the “big picture.” Business literacy begins with ‘open-book’ management, whereby the museum staff is given full budget information along with the assistance required to make sense of it. This approach also requires that senior management communicate fully and openly about the museum’s strategic priorities, opportunities and threats. I know of several museums that do none of these things and the director withholds financial information from staff in order to maintain power and control.

Business literacy in museums is not only necessary for enhanced sustainability in an era of scarce resources, but it is also essential to individual and organizational accountability. A working knowledge of finances/budgeting, earned revenues, business processes, time management, public service, project management and so forth are the foundation for enhanced effectiveness and efficiency – the purpose and outcome of business literacy. But

it is important to note again that business literacy is about methods and techniques, not values.

MKS: It has been mentioned that tradition is an inherent key value for many museums; therefore, it might be questioned whether it is, in fact, realistic to have the museum scene change in a major way, seeking new and supplementary tasks of relevancy. Do you, drawing on your international background, believe that there is a critical mass of willingness to change or is it rather a utopian dream?

RRJ: It is true that museums are conservative institutions and suffer from a variety of self-inflicted challenges and intractable traditions that make innovation, creativity and experimentation difficult. These self-inflicted challenges include the lone museum director with too much authority; myopic management which is unwilling or unable to embrace socially relevant missions; unimaginative exhibit methods and techniques that remain unchanged; and the unswerving commitment to the permanent collection – despite the museum’s inability to keep pace with the enormous cost of keeping collections forever in accordance with rigorous professional standards. Until museums fully embrace the need to question, reflect and innovate, much of the emotion, imagination, intuition and reflection – the best qualities of the people who work in museums and the arts – will remain largely unrecognized and unused.

At the same time, museums have existed for centuries, unlike most business enterprises. Museums have evolved through time, from the elite collections of imperial dominance, to educational institutions for the public, and now to the museum as “mall”. The mall is the culmination of marketplace dominance, over-merchandised and devoted to consumption,

30 edutainment and entertainment.¹⁹ There is an important lesson in this historical trajectory, however, and it is the ability of museums to learn and adapt as circumstances require, however slowly. Although we have no explicit record of museums giving prominence to societal considerations, their development over time mirrors such concerns, as their missions changed to suit the times. Whether or not museums themselves led this change is immaterial. I am not a utopian, but this evolutionary record of museums makes me optimistic about the future.

There are important initiatives and experiments now underway around the world, as museums awaken to their social responsibilities. In addition, new developments are apparently taking place that are redefining how companies and nonprofit organizations interact and learn from one another. These initiatives will hopefully create new opportunities to address some of society's long-standing and complex issues, while strengthening business and nonprofits in the process.²⁰ The choice for all museums is between more of the same – with an emphasis on business – or embracing a greater awareness of the world in pursuit of societal relevance. Time is of the essence as global issues intensify.

HANDS-ON PERSPECTIVE

There is hope, possibilities, and meaning to museums as entities in modern day society. This is basically the positive lesson to be had from the above discussion. A vital note, however, is that turning the tide and finding new perspectives only comes with an effort. This can be seen as common knowledge but, all too often, when focusing on challenges within the museum sector, the practitioners'

perspective is neglected. Therefore, in this section some pointers will be given, drawing from the insights and experiences of the authors and previous literature, as to what type of collaborations might be initiated between museums and business; what the value construction might look like, and what drivers and enablers should be considered essential.

Looking at the different types of collaboration, which might exist, it is important to perceive these as evolving, rather than static, entities. Some collaboration could and should evolve over time, from one type of collaboration to another. Research findings from the field of strategic collaboration indicate that three types of collaboration are predominant between non-profit and profits in this context – meaning museums and business.²¹ These are: philanthropic, transactional, and integrative. In the philanthropic stage, the nature of collaboration is largely that of charitable donors and recipients. In a Nordic perspective, this type of collaboration is especially well known from the art museum scene, where there is a long tradition of art museums being underpinned by a number of benefactors. Typically, this relationship is quite conservative, as donors and recipients have been involved for many years.

In the transactional stage, there are explicit resource exchanges focused on specific activities. For example, event sponsorship, cause-related marketing and contractual service arrangements would fall into this category. In recent years, more museums in the Nordic sphere have moved into this type of collaboration. One example is the European Union (EU)-funded IKON-project, which consists of 48 collaborative partners, primarily cultural heritage museums, art museums and

municipalities in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The goal of the network is to have an increased number of visitors coming to the region and visit the museums. A predominant activity within the network has been to arrange events, and the typical set-up has been one museum taking the role as prime organizer, focusing on a given theme. An example is Limfjordsmuseet in Løgstør, Northern Jutland (by the brink of the Limfjord), which is devoted to the life in and around the fiord. In 2009, when the project was initiated, it was natural to organize a seafood festival with the help of local sponsors and partners, including restaurateurs, jazz-bands, port authorities, the fishing industry and fishermen. The event was co-marketed with the local tourist organization and became a yearly and successful event - backed by both event sponsorship and related marketing.²²

The third type of collaboration identified is the integrative stage, in which collaborations have progressed, so that partners' missions, people and activities have begun to merge into more collective action and organizational integration. Yet few, if any museums, in the Nordic context have managed to move to this stage. However, there are rich possibilities for museums to develop in this direction. Sustainability is a topic of relevance to all, locally, regionally, and globally. Because Denmark is well-known and respected for its industry and development work with wind power, it makes sense for a museum to engage in collaboration with the wind power industry, having a mutual mission of creating awareness and anchoring the values in a local and historically-conscious setting. Another idea, again using Denmark as the example, would be for a museum to focus on sustainable catches within the fisheries. Denmark is, and has for

number of years, been a leading fisheries nation within the EU. Despite this status, the museums dealing with fisheries history are not prioritizing the responsibility aspect of the fisheries. There might be more reasons to this: political, economic and strategic. Nevertheless, it could be meaningful to have a much greater outreach and collaboration, which most likely would benefit both the industry and the museums involved, as they are reconnected with the local community and gain on a higher profile on the growing sustainability agenda.

One requirement is, of course, identifying the types of collaboration that exist, how they work, and bring up suggestions on which collaborations might be initiated. Another is to understand how the creation of common values functions. It should be quite clear that the degree of value in any collaboration is related to the nature of the resources involved. Related to the collaboration typology above, value creation includes three categories: generic resource transfer, core competencies exchange and joint value creation. The first type of value creation equals the classical approach of a company or private patron - giving money to a museum and the museum then supplies good deeds and good feelings. Core competencies exchange is focused on using each partner's distinctive capabilities to generate benefits, as in the example of Limfjordsmuseet. Finally, joint value creation represents benefits that are not bilateral resource exchange, but rather joint products or processes developed from a common pool of resources and understandings.²³ Having a joint value setting is a particularly high-value source, as it is unique in its nature and therefore nonreplicable. However, the extent to which this type of collaboration can be

32 accessed and deployed is very much dependent on the quality and closeness of the partner's relationship. There also needs to be a value balance in the development of the collaboration, as imbalances eventually will end up being "deal busters".²⁴ Looking at the Nordic museum landscape, there are certainly possibilities of joint value creation, but it remains to be seen if these can be constructed with the necessary mutual balance.

What should ultimately be understood from the above is that museums certainly have possibilities for collaboration, as well as opportunities for gaining increased relevancy. When everything is said and done, however, it all boils down to personality and skills. Building joint values relies on exactly these skills, plus connections and relationships. Therefore, when trying to renew museum values and regain relevancy, museum leaders should be recruiting individuals who might be able to open up more discourses, while at the same time being able to stand firm when creating balanced relationships. The Nordic museum scene is undergoing changes presently, and hopefully these changes will enable museums to assume the relevant position they could have in society.

NOTES

1. To fully inform the reader on the origins of the different sections in this article it should be specified that the Introduction (which includes the two initial sections leading up to the discussion) is solely developed by the first-author. The discussion section, which is designed as an interview (for details see note 8) is the co-responsibility of both authors, and the same applies for the final section entitled "hand-on perspectives".
2. M. Karnøe, "Museernes non-essense. En dialog med Robert R. Janes", in *Danske Museer* 2011, 24, 6, pp. 14-17.
3. R. R. Janes, "*Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?*", Routledge, London & New York, 2009; R.R. Janes, Museums, Corporatism and the Civil Society, in Curator: *The Museum Journal*, 2007, 50, 2, pp. 219-237; R. R. Janes, *Museums and the Paradox of Change: A Case Study in Urgent Adaptation*, Glenbow Museum, 1997; R. Sandell and R.R. Janes, *Museum Management and Marketing*, Routledge, New York 2007; R.R. Janes and G. T. Conaty, "*Looking Reality In The Eye: Museums and Social Responsibility*", University of Calgary Press, Alberta, 2005.
4. M. Karnøe, "Museernes non-essense. En dialog med Robert R. Janes", pp. 16.
5. S. B. Hafsteinsson, "Robert R. Janes, *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?*" Review in *Nordisk Museologi*, 2010, 1, pp. 149-151.
6. R. R. Janes, "*Museums in a Troubled World. Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?*", has been the subject of more reviews. The reader is referred to the following: S. B. Hafsteinsson, "Robert R. Janes, *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?*" (review) in *Nordisk Museologi*, 2010, 1, pp. 149-151; Mary Case, "Troubled Waters" in *Museum*, May-June, 2010, pp. 22-23; J. P. Greene; "*Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?*" (review) in *Recollections – Journal of the National Museum of Australia*, October 2009, vol. 4, no. 2 (unpaginated.); S. Davies, "*Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?*" (review) in *Curator*, April 2011, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 227-230; M. Schwarzer, "Museums in a Troubled World" (review), in *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 2009, vol. 24. No. 4, pp. 389-392.

7. R.F. Nelson, 'How Then Shall We Live?', *The Post-Industrial Future Project Working Paper No. 2*, Canmore, Alberta, 1989, p. 45.
8. The discussion in this section was conducted as an e-mail "interview". In a correspondence ranging from November 30th 2011 through January 31st 2012 the first author sent questions to the co-author which, in turn, were replied to. Follow-up questions were then formulated and final replies given.
9. R. Heinberg, *The End of Growth*, Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2011, pp. 1-4.
10. R. Heinberg, *The End of Growth*, p. 27.
11. R.B. Lee and I. DeVore (eds.), *Man the Hunter*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968, p. 188
12. Interviews with Michael P. Robinson: transcript, p. 6, also 30 October 2008 (telephone).
13. J. Rifkin, 'The end of work'. Public address on behalf of the Volunteer Centre of Calgary, Palliser Hotel, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, November 13, 1997.
14. M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 'Creating shared value: How to reinvent capitalism and unleash a wave of innovation and growth', *Harvard Business Review*, January-February, 2011, pp. 62-77.
15. Porter and Kramer, 'Creating shared value', p.77.
16. C. Handy, *The Age of Paradox*, Boston: The Harvard Business School Press, 1994, p. 183
17. F. Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture*, New York and Toronto: Bantam Books, 1983, p. 397.
18. M. Morris, 'Organizational health', *NEWStandard* (1)3, The American Association of Museums, Washington, DC, 1998, p. 4.
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20. K. Pickus, "The disappearing barriers between business and nonprofits are driving innovation". In CO.EXIST. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.fastcoexist.com/1679040/the-disappearing-barriers-between-business-and-nonprofits-are-driving-innovation#comments>.
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22. Further information on the IKON project and Limfjordsmuseet available at: <http://www.ikon-eu.org/>.
23. J. E. Austin, "Strategic Collaboration Between Nonprofits and Business", pp. 78-80.
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