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SOME STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR PROTECTION OF THE MUSEUM GOODS IN MACEDONIA

Abstract: Lack of strategy and action plan for the museums in Republic of Macedonia has its contribution to the failures to perform the tasks related to the museum goods efficiently. This is of particular importance in relation to the ten agents of deterioration and destruction of the goods. Therefore, bringing a strategy and an action plan is a necessity, so appropriate protection of the museum goods is guaranteed.

Key words: museum goods, strategy, agents, risk.

The first of the three main museological functions – protection, requires special methodological approach and use of technologies which will ensure durability of the protection of the information carriers – the museum goods (Maroevic 1993). In the sphere of protection of museum goods, of particular importance is the Codex of professional ethics, which binds the museums and the professionals to undertake activities for preserving of the goods and the information they carry.

Preservation of the museum goods, as preventive conservation, entails set of activities for slowing down the deterioration or prevention of the destruction of these goods. The preservation includes control of the environment and the usage conditions, and can also include treatment for maintenance of certain object in its original state, as much as possible.

The threats for degradation and destruction of the objects and the collections by natural or human factors are not uncommon. Therefore, it is necessary to identify these threats, to analyze the risk and to undertake measures for

elimination or alleviation of the consequences, through preventive strategies and actions. This demands knowledge of the standards for protection of the museum goods. The ten main agents of deterioration and destruction of cultural goods in the museums are well known (CCI 2009). With regards to their occurrence they can be permanent, sporadic or rare, and with regards to the intensity they can be catastrophic, severe or gradual.

This article will draw upon the ten causes for deterioration and destruction of museum goods:

1. *Physical forces* (impact, shock, vibration, pressure and abrasion). Of the most important are earthquakes and war.

The sources and intensity of physical force can be: Catastrophic (earthquake, war, shipment disaster, extreme handling hazards, roof collapse, floor collapse); Working forces (handling, transit (in-house), shipment, gravitational loads, construction vibration, excavation); and Cumulative forces (handling, shipping, gravity).

2. *Thieves and Vandals*

Thefts and vandalism over the museum goods and artifacts is ever present in the museum practice. Therefore, appropriate security system for the collections in the exhibit space, depots and other areas is a necessity. Observation by physical monitoring or other security equipment will ensure protection of the museum goods.

3. *Dissociation*

Dissociation, as a phenomenon in the museums, results in loss of objects, or object-related data, or the ability to retrieve or associate objects and data. Dissociation can be caused either by an action or by a failure to act. The former refers to inadequate action, for example recording object and collection data in an illegible or ambiguous manner etc. Failures to act can cause dissociation directly. For example, collection-related data are not transcribed or migrated to ensure continued accessibility – proper data management is essential for all spheres of museum functioning, and any collection without adequate documentation is not a real museum collection.

4. *Fire*

Fire causes irreversible damage to the museum artifacts. Special attention should be paid to keeping the fire protection systems in good working order and training of museum staff for fire response activities.

5. *Water*

The damage to the museum collections, caused by water, can also be great. In this case special planning and training of staff for response are essential as well.

6. *Pests*(insects, microorganisms, rodents, birds and bats)

Knowledge is needed in the pests' biology, environmental factors and technological response for prevention of the damage over cultural and natural goods in the museums.

7. *Pollutants*

There are three modes of action for pollutants to reach objects: airborne pollutants, especially from industry and cars; pollutants transferred by contact with polluted object and intrinsic pollutants, where the pollutant already exists, as part of the materials composing the object.

8. *Light, Ultraviolet and Infrared*

These cause gradual long-term damage of the objects. Depending on the material composing the objects the degree of their exposure can vary – the acceptable incandescent light can have 50/150/300 lux, while the UV light should be maximum 75 µw/lm.

9. *Incorrect Temperature*

This can contribute to the acceleration of the process of degradation of the materials composing the objects. The temperature variation is particularly harmful. Ideally, the objects should be kept in an environment of 18–22°C.

10. *Incorrect Relative Humidity*

It is also one of the agents for degradation of the materials composing the objects. The optimal humidity for the artifacts is 50-60%.

Can museums in Macedonia give proper response to the threats for degradation of the matter and the value that the museum goods carry? Having in mind the technical equipment, the capacities to perform protection, as the first and foremost function of the museums, and the priorities of the institutions, the local and the central authorities, the museums could not give proper response to the threats (K.B., B.M., Z.A.-B. 2010:). Which institution could control the microclimate of the depots and the exhibit space? To improve the situation with the protection of the cultural goods in the museums in Macedonia, it is necessary to bring strategy, which elements will be in accordance with the above mentioned.

If the term *strategy* is to be defined, we can say that it represents long-term planning, and setting physical, financial, philosophical and educational goals of certain institution. It entails long-term priority aspirations, as well as action plan for their realization.

In the former period there was evident lack of long-term strategy for operation of the institutions in the field of protection of the collections, which should encompass: responsibility and leadership, setting of standards, regular training and consultation, and change of priorities.

The strategy should be two-directional:

- Inwards, towards the museum institutions and
- Outwards, towards the responsible authorities in the local or central government.

INWARDS, towards the museum institutions

Assessment of the risk to the cultural and natural goods in the museums is a strategic determinant.

Basic tool for bringing the right decisions for protection of the objects and collections from many of the risks to their condition and safety is assessment of their values and meanings (Significance 2.0., 2010).

The risk management deals with identification, analysis, evaluation and assessment of the threats to the objects or collections of natural or human factors. We mentioned previously the ten agents which can be threat for the museum goods.

Strategic determinant – *phase digitization*

Phase digitization of the cultural goods in the museums in Macedonia should be performed in accordance with the Regulative for standardization and documentation of the museum material, Official Gazette of RM, No. 72, June 2006.

Strategic determinant – *3D technology*

The use of 3D technology in the documentation, conservation and restoration of movable and immovable cultural heritage is an important need.

Strategic determinant – *technical capacities*

The institutions need to be equipped with modern technology for monitoring and regulation of microclimate.

Strategic determinant – *training*

This refers to the training of the professionals, especially the curators, to prevent the dissociation of the objects and their values. There is lack of training courses and projects for the advances in the field of research of sources of destruction of cultural goods in the museums, which would enable responding properly.

Strategy – *control* (for various forms and levels of activities in the museums)

This strategy should include control of the professional performance, monitoring system, and control and prevention of theft and vandalism (protection, detection, response, reconstruction (recovery)).

Strategic determinant – *plans for action in emergencies*

Update of the plans for action in emergencies is one of the priorities. In this sense it is necessary to revise the plans.

Strategic determinant – *exercises and simulations*:

Exercises and simulations should be directed towards the risk assessment and response in emergencies.

Strategy – *cooperation with institutions*

The cooperation should target other institutions that deal with protection of civilians and material goods (Crisis Management Center, Protection and Rescue Directorate, the Police, the Army).

OUTWARDS, towards the responsible authorities in the local or central government:

Strategy – *state policy*

There is an actual need for policy and procedure for action in emergencies in the cultural institutions. One of the priorities is to further define the regulative related to the cultural heritage protection, but also to control the implementation of the laws and regulations in this sense. Special attention should be placed to the funds (the available assets for prevention and action in emergencies).

Strategy – *allocation of finances*

The allocation of financial assets and other resources should be directed more towards the internal museum activities, especially the protection of the cultural goods, and less towards the research and collection activities.

Creation of new museums and galleries would be lower priority, compared to the restoration of the current institutions and their adjustment to performing their tasks in accordance to the international standards.

Strategy – continuity in leadership

The constant changes of the management team in the museum institutions, driven by politics, could be detrimental for their functioning.

Conclusion:

The current practice of museum activities in Republic of Macedonia lacks strategy for development of each institution. Therefore, bringing a strategy for protection of the museum goods that sets priorities and is supplemented by an action plan is an imminent need. The management of the museums should undertake pro-active approach to implement the international standards for protection of the museum goods. The respect of the provisions of the Codex of professional ethics in the field of protection of the museum goods is of particular importance. It is important that the attitude of the local and central government towards the issue of protection of the museum goods is changed.

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