

Introduction:

For nearly a decade I have been monitoring the development of deaccessioning within the European Union. I first began this investigation in 2007 as a part of my master thesis research, *Deaccessioning on a European Level: opportunity or impossibility*, which focused on identifying the contemporary views of heritage professionals from all member states. Ultimately, I concluded that an all-encompassing policy could not exist, due to the fact that professional discourse within the various countries was quite divided.

However, over the past few years general trends regarding deaccessioning have drastically shifted. I believe the time has come to, once again, explore the contemporary context to determine the degree in which professional attitudes have changed since 2007.

The research:

While the research from 2007 will function as a benchmark, this investigation will focus on:

Main question:

To what extent have professional opinions and techniques, regarding deaccessioning, changed across European member states since 2007?

Sub-questions:

1. How is the museum sector (including subsidies) arranged in the member states?
 - a. Who owns the collections and the museums
 - b. Who is eligible to make decisions regarding the collections?
2. What are the rules, legislation and current techniques used regarding deaccessioning in the member states?
3. What are the opinions of the target groups on deaccessioning:
 - a. Governmental officials
 - b. Museum professionals
 - c. Academics in the museological field.
4. How have these opinions and techniques changed since 2007?

The hypothesis of the research is based upon the idea that while many countries in the European Union are taking a more cautious approach to deaccessioning due to the emergence of controversial examples, deaccessioning in and of itself is a reliable and ethical techniques and methods when carried out appropriately.

In order to appropriately contextualize the research material gathered from the differing member states, a thorough explanation of the countries' legislation, mandates and ethics on cultural matters will be presented.

Please note that while I intend to identify the various attitudes professionals have towards deaccessioning, I will not attempt to provide guidelines or improvements to existing deaccessioning policies. Since the Netherlands has been a pioneer in the field of deaccessioning, regarding controversial case studies and progressive, innovative policy and legislation, I will refer to Dutch examples throughout this investigation and use them as a general standard.

Methodology:

This quantitative research consists of thorough desk research as well as a comprehensive literature review in order to provide an extensive background into the different situations of each collaborating country.

A survey on the subject will be distributed to as many professionals as possible via (social) networks and personal contacts.

I will also visit ten member states in order to elaborate on the specific situation of each country. If possible, the three target groups will be interviewed by means of a workshop of around 3 hours. I have chosen this method since it allows for an open dialogue with the participants and enables me to view the subject from different perspectives.

Furthermore, I have chosen to only include museum specialists in the target groups. I have deliberately chosen not to include public opinion, since the British Museum Association executed a thorough public consultation on the subject in 2006 concluding that the public tends to understand and accept disposal plans as long as they are well informed.

Planning:

The research will be executed between April 2016 and November 2017

- April – November 2016:
 - Desk research
 - Literature review
 - Questionnaire building
 - Contacting member states/professionals
- September 2016 – July 2017:
 - Sending out questionnaires
 - Visiting 10 member states
 - Analysing first batch of results
- July – October 2017:
 - Analysing all results
 - Compiling the findings
- October- November 2017
 - Editing
 - Lay-out
 - Publication

Exclusions:

The general topic of collection mobility and the restitution of illegally obtained cultural goods will not be covered in this research.

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