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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ROMANIAN VERNACULAR MUSEUMS AS
SPACES OF KNOWLEDGE-MAKING AND THEIR INSTITUTIONAL
LEGITIMATION

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

An Ethnographic Study of Romanian Vernacular Museums as Spaces of Knowledge-making
and their Institutional Legitimation

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The primary purpose of this study is to understand vernacular museums: as a phenomenon; as interactive spaces of knowledge-making for visitors and makers; and as an emergent institutional form within the broader contexts of legitimation of Romania's cultural "heritage" institutions. The focus is on describing and analyzing experiences of embodied knowledge-making for museum makers and visitors at the personal level; and on understanding contexts of legitimation of these emergent institutions related to cultural programs and policies being enacted at Romanian state and EU institutional levels.

An ethnographic research approach incorporating autoethnography collected data through in-person visits to four vernacular museums during which the researcher audio-recorded the museum maker's tour narrative and photographed notable moments that captured self-reflexivity during the experience of the museum tour. Impressions of other visitors were collected in eight interviews and in guestbook comments at three museum sites. Multi-sited fieldwork was complemented by textual analysis of documents produced by the national-level cultural program that worked to legitimate the 24 vernacular museums that are a part of this study, their website descriptions, and cultural program and policy documents related to Romania's EU accession in 2007.

Findings suggest that makers present their museums as conceptual journeys that foreground how each maker's idiosyncratic knowledge world entwines with the material arrangement of objects in the museum space. Each museum visit conveyed distinctive perspectives on the past that revealed a response to problems the maker perceived in the present. Visitors recognized vernacular museums as both contiguous-with-yet-distinct-from institutional museum experiences because of the person-to-person connections they made with museum makers and the rich sensory experiences that characterized these often unplanned encounters.

Vernacular museums are a distinctive emergent cultural form because of how they foreground personal interpretations of the past that contrast with those featured in institutional museums. Museum experts cultivated vernacular museums as a unique yet viable form of culture by adapting and improvising common museum practices. These experts also capitalized on developments in cultural policy and legislation that emphasized participatory approaches to culture, including the creation of an association of these museums as an example of civil society. The RECOMESPAR association enhanced the efforts of this group of museum makers, allowing them to reclaim continuity with the past by foregrounding the making of heritage on their own terms. Vernacular museums are hybrid institutions that insert personal, local and individual perspectives on the past into the public/private cultural binary as a complement to and commentary on official institutional representations of heritage in ways that exemplify the participatory and visitor-focused tenets of new museology.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A walk around Romanian villages enables you to find small and modest ethnographic museums administered by city halls or just poorly funded ‘museum corners’ organised by state institutions, particularly by schools. . . However, when you least expect it, you can often come across collections of ethnographic objects, small museum-houses or even real private museums, open or accessible only under certain circumstances to the local public or to tourists. Designed by enthusiastic persons who lack specialized knowledge, they are sheltered in their own households or in spaces acquired by private funds. (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 123)

Private citizens in Romania have been creating and presenting their own self-designated museums at least since the 1989 revolution that ended the communist regime in that country (Mihăilescu, 2009; Mihalache, 2008, 2009a, 2012). This post-communist period brought extensive economic, political and social changes to all facets of life as the country moved towards democracy and eventual accession into the European Union in 2007. The accession process included codifying and adopting inclusive and participatory approaches to culture and heritage and expanding human rights and freedoms for individual citizens. In this period of extensive social change, collecting and displaying objects from the past within one’s own vernacular museums has become a way for some individuals to respond to the scope and scale of these changes and their effects on everyday life.

The introductory quote above captures three essential characteristics of these vernacular museums: their makers are relative amateurs unschooled in professional techniques of museum creation; the museums are located in privately-owned and funded spaces, usually households; and these museums themselves are somehow unexpected within the places in which they are found. Oana Mateescu (2009) has described these museums as personal expressions of their owners, who are the curators of each museum’s installation. Carmen Mihalache (2009a) notes that these museums show “the fruit of a single person’s

hard work and enthusiasm” (p. 124). The story of these museums is embodied by the museum proprietors as much as it is situated within and dependent upon the collective arrangement of material objects in the museum spaces. Mihalache (2009a) describes how the owners receive visitors with a “warm, familiar and personalized welcome” and engage them in “friendly, informal conversation” through which visitors are “‘contaminated’ by the host’s passion for objects, which makes [the visitor] come back with other people who will experience the same feeling” (p. 124). This suggests that the space of these museums allows for an affective exchange between museum makers and visitors that is essential to the vernacular museum experience.

Because of the personal and affective qualities that these museums afford their visitors, Romanian vernacular museums were selected for a national-level cultural program *Colecții Sătești din România - 2008 – 2013* (Village Collections of Romania - 2008-2013, hereafter Village Collections Program or VCP), a program designed to bring visibility to and confer legitimacy upon this emergent institutional form (Mihăilescu, 2009; Mihalache, 2009a). Arguably the most visible outcome of the VCP was the creation of an association of twenty-four of these museums established as *Rețeaua Colecțiilor și Muzeelor Etnografice Sătești Particulare din România* (the Network of Ethnographic Collections and Private Village Museums in Romania, hereafter RECOMESPAR). The VCP was an outgrowth of research efforts by professionals at the *Muzeului Național al Țăranului Român* (National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, hereafter MRP) (Mihăilescu, 2009; Mihalache, 2009a) in the early 2000s through which examples of what have come to be known in the Romanian museum literature (in Romanian and English) as local museums (Mihăilescu, 2009), *muze de autor* (“author museums”) (Mihalache, 2009b) or village collections (Mihalache, 2009a). The VCP was funded from 2008-2012 by the Romanian Administrația Fondului Cultural

Național (National Cultural Fund Administration, hereafter AFCN) not long after Romania joined the European Union (EU) in 2007 (Mihalache, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Muzeului Național al Țăranului Român, 2012). As Romania was being brought into the fold of EU-related cultural heritage policy initiatives, so, too, was this new institutional form gaining legitimacy through VCP-sponsored activities, bringing to the fore the question of how these institutions have a place within more official heritage and museum discourses as examples of “grass-roots decentralization of heritage” (Mihăilescu, 2009, p. 11).

This study aims to understand the emergent phenomenon of Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making and their contexts of institutional legitimation within the heritage realm. The overarching research problem is one of understanding these museums as a cultural form appearing during Romania’s post-communist period. This study approaches vernacular museums as an emergent type of knowledge institution that creates distinct experiences for museum makers and visitors around presentations of everyday knowledge and considers how these emergent institutions figure into the national and international cultural policies, programs and practices that legitimate vernacular museums at institutional levels. Vernacular museums are investigated as unique environments within personal, intimate, everyday spaces filled with arrangements of objects that make possible different kinds of meaningful interactions between people and things, creating trajectories of movement and proximities of people and objects that might not otherwise be possible outside of these museum spaces. They are spaces that engage embodied meaning-making. A theoretical perspective on meaning-making is understood here as the means through which an individual comes to “have a world” (Johnson, 1990) or how meanings cohere for an individual into her way of knowing the world and as the relational framework through which she assimilates experiences like visiting vernacular museums.

This study relies on an ethnographic approach to research that incorporates aspects of autoethnography in order to foreground the systematic analysis and interpretation of my personal experiences as the researcher. On my initial visits to Romanian vernacular museums in 2011, 2014, 2016, I experienced them in a way that was different from my visits to conventional museums in Romania, including the Museum of the Romanian Peasant and other formal ethnographic collections. This was in large part because of the involved, personal, lengthy and detailed museum tours given by proprietors. Such tours are recognized as the hallmark of the vernacular museum visit by those who study this phenomenon (Mateescu, 2009; Mihalache, 2009a; Mikula, 2015). Typically, during the museum tour, museum maker and visitors are brought together in a personal setting, often a home or other domestic space, through which stories of the museum and its objects are told by the proprietor, with these stories unfolding in relation to the museum as a navigable space and in response to visitor engagement (Mateescu, 2009; Mikula, 2015). In this study, description and analysis of the museum tour narratives are situated within an autoethnographic account that is supplemented by interviews and written commentary of other visitors relating their impressions of vernacular museums. These impressions form the basis for understanding vernacular museum as spaces for knowledge-making for visitors and museum makers.

My and others' visitor experiences can be contrasted to an understanding of vernacular museums within the institutional contexts by curators and researchers at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant who are agents of legitimation at the state level. Museum professionals at the MRP established the VCP as a national-level, grant-funded cultural program intended to legitimate the network of RECOMESPAR museums that are the subject of this study (Mihăilescu, 2009; Mihalache, 2009a, 2009b). In addition to elucidating the processes MRP professionals employed to legitimate vernacular museums, a final goal of

this study will be to contextualize the emergence of vernacular museums within the developments related to cultural heritage policy at the Romanian state and EU levels. These institutional dimensions will emerge through textual analysis of relevant cultural program, policy and related legislative documents. Both the personal and the institutional perspectives are needed to fully engage and capture the nature of this phenomenon because these levels interact at the site of the encounter within the museum itself.

The next section defines how the key terms vernacular museums, knowledge-making and institutional legitimation will be employed in this study.

1.1. Definitions

1.1.1. Vernacular museums

Vernacular museum is the term employed here to describe the phenomenon of study. The existing scholarly literature in English authored by professionals and researchers at the Museum of the Romanian peasant most often refers to these museums as local museums (Mihăilescu, 2009) or village collections (Mihalache, 2009a). The term vernacular museum is taken from Maja Mikula's (2015) study of a similar kind of museum found in Karelia, Finland, created by members of the evacuee communities in this contested geographic area. Mikula (2015) describes the self-created museums she finds in Finland as vernacular museums because the term "encapsulates the 'domesticity' of the practice" (p. 757) in that the museum is a product of home-based practices that work to capture and preserve the ways of life that have taken place within it as a place of fragmented memory. For Mikula (2015), the vernacular museum transforms the home into a space of intersections: of past and future; of private and public; of personal and communal. As with the Romanian museums discussed here, the vernacular museum is quite literally situated

within a home, as a place of history, memory and tradition borne out of everyday life and ways of being situated in the domestic spaces where life plays out.

The Romanian vernacular museums included in this study comprise the following salient qualities and characteristics identified by Mihalache (2009a): (1) they are privately-owned collections created by amateurs with little or no professional museum training; (2) they are situated within or in close proximity to the proprietor's living space; (3) they are found mainly in villages and small towns; (4) they often feel "unexpected" within their locale; and (5) they are unique. Further, they aim to tell the proprietor's personal story about his or her objects within the museum context (Mateescu, 2009). Several of these characteristics overlap with the museums in Karelia, Finland described by Mikula. The museums she describes are hidden in that, for one to recognize one of them requires some prior knowledge to understand what marks these Finnish homes as museums. Further, Mikula (2015) describes how the maker's presence "affords visitors a feeling of intimacy and belonging" (p. 769) and meanings are "co-created interactively through conversation" (p. 769) between visitors and museum makers. Co-creation implies a connection that resonates with Mihalache's (2009a) description of how visitors to Romanian museums are literally "contaminated" (p. 124) by the host's enthusiasm. The nature and quality of the interactions and connections between museum makers and visitors is perhaps one of the most salient qualities of these museums that will be investigated here.

In this study, vernacular museums refer specifically to the twenty-four museums that are members of the RECOMESPAR association.¹ Those that are part of RECOMESPAR

¹ Other examples of this type of private, independent, idiosyncratic museums exist within Romania that are not a part of this association. During fieldwork in 2018, for instance, planned site visits to RECOMESPAR museums uncovered other informal networks of private museums that became interwoven with the research itinerary. They are similar to the RECOMESPAR museums in that they were often located in repurposed homes or apartments and many of them emerged concurrently with or after RECOMESPAR's period of

are also sometimes referred to by researchers at the MRP as “village collections” (Mihalache, 2012). For this research project, the conscious decision was made to refer to the RECOMESPAR museums being studied more generally as vernacular museums so as not to conflate the phenomenon of study with the outcome of the VCP cultural program. This definition is informed by descriptions found within the existing literature that have been confirmed as representative of the phenomenon through the researcher’s site visits to Romanian vernacular museums.

1.1.2. Knowledge-making

In this study, knowledge-making emphasizes the creative and embodied aspects of how an individual comes to “have a world” (Johnson, 1990). Mark Johnson’s (1990, 2008) embodied theory of meaning understands knowledge as embodied and relational but also as a phenomenon of knowledge-making in which an individual forms knowledge through the activity of relating new sensations and experiences to existing knowledge as she moves through and interacts with things in the world. Building from the embodied theory of meaning, knowledge-making emphasizes knowledge being embodied and relational and as a product of movement through vernacular museums. The focus is on how experiential moments arise during these museum visits described as felt patterns of experience related to sensory perception and other felt qualities of the museum and through the use of metaphorical language to characterize the experiences of making and visiting vernacular museums.

1.1.3. Institutional legitimation

Institutional legitimation describes the macro-level processes employed by museum professionals (i.e. established standards and practices) to legitimate vernacular museums (i.e.

activity (2008-2013). However, they are omitted from the current study that focuses specifically on the museums related to the work of the VCP and RECOMESPAR.

implemented through cultural legislation, policy and programs at the national level). The sociology of knowledge refers to the processes through which knowledge becomes shared and codified in society. Legitimation is the means through which new institutional forms are established, resulting in institutionalization as knowledge becomes shared, codified and “taken-for-granted,” establishing the self-evident routines (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 57) and in this case made vernacular museum makers and their museums visible as a participatory cultural form.

Knowledge-making and institutional legitimation are key concepts that describe personal and shared processes through which meaning and knowledge are made and sustained by human beings as they will be understood within the context of this study. The vernacular museums phenomenon provides an exemplary case for studying knowledge-making as embodied experience and institutional legitimation because of how visitors experience these museums through an awareness of their difference from institutional museums and their distinct quality.

The remainder of this chapter introduces the main research objective and provides an outline of the dissertation.

1.2. Outline of the dissertation

The main research objective of this study is to understand vernacular museums: as a phenomenon; as interactive spaces of knowledge-making for visitors and makers; as an emergent institutional form within the broader contexts of legitimation as Romania’s cultural “heritage” objects. To accomplish its objective, the dissertation continues with Chapter 2, which provides historical information on the MRP’s museological approaches and background information on the development of the VCP and RECOMESPAR along with personal observations that contextualize this study of vernacular museums. Chapter 3

follows with a review of relevant research literature in museums and information studies in order to establish vernacular museums as a research context and to identify gaps in existing research that structure the current study's research objectives, which are presented in the chapter conclusion. Chapter 4 outlines the theoretical and methodological frameworks and methods for this dissertation and describes the research processes applied to achieve the research objectives. Chapter 5 presents research findings related to the understanding of vernacular museums as a phenomenon. Chapter 6 presents the autoethnographic account of my four museum visits that capture the experience of vernacular museums as interactive sites of knowledge-making from the researcher's perspective. Chapter 7 presents findings that portray vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making as related from other visitor perspectives. Chapter 8 considers the contexts of legitimation through which Romanian vernacular museums are emerging as a new institutional form. Chapter 9 concludes by summarizing the key findings from Chapters 5 through 8, and identifying theoretical and practical implications, discussing limitations of the research, and suggesting future directions for extending this research.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT AND PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS INFORMING THE CURRENT STUDY

This chapter presents in six sections the relevant historical and institutional contexts in which Romanian vernacular museums became a legitimate institutional form as well as the personal observations that have informed the current study. Section 2.1. begins by presenting the historical development of the Muzeului Național al Țăranului Român (National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, hereafter MRP) as the key legitimating actor for the museums included in this study. This section captures the institutional climate that allowed MRP museum professionals to develop the Colecții Sătești din România - 2008 – 2013 (Village Collections of Romania - 2008-2013, hereafter Village Collections Program or VCP) as the key legitimating cultural program for Romanian vernacular museums described in Section 2.2. Section 2.3 discusses the Rețeaua Colecțiilor și Muzeelor Etnografice Sătești Particulare din România (the Network of Ethnographic Collections and Private Village Museums in Romania, hereafter RECOMESPAR) as an outcome of the VCP, and including a survey of its member museums and museum creators that are the subject of this study. Section 2.4 briefly sketches the broader European context and developments related to Romania's EU preaccession in which the phenomenon of vernacular museums began emerging. Section 2.5 briefly summarizes Sections 2.1-2.4. Finally, Section 2.6 conveys my experience of “discovering” a RECOMESPAR museum in 2011, describes site visits in 2014 and 2016, and presents related personal observations to further contextualize the research motivations for this study. Together, these sections provide both institutional and personal background information as justification for the theoretical and methodological frameworks that undergird the current study (presented in Chapter 4).

2.1. History of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant

The Museum of the Romanian Peasant (MRP) has been the main institutional legitimator of vernacular museums at the national level. The MRP is located on Kiseleff Boulevard in Bucharest in a building that has housed various museums since the building's completion in 1941. The building was originally designed and built to house the Museum of Ethnology and National Art (MENA), founded by Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș in 1906. Romanian historian and MRP researcher Simina Bădică (2011a) describes the MENA as a “museum of national art in a national building that employed an ethnographic/peasant art approach to national identity” (p. 718). While this description of the early museum is accurate, its conciseness belies its complex development and tumultuous history that refracts Romania's history. In contemporary historiography, the histories of the MRP and the MENA are connected by the story of an emerging Romanian nation, interrupted by a communist dictatorship, presently struggling to recover from its autocratic past and reorienting itself within the contexts of a democratic society and, since 2007, the EU membership.

The history of the MRP is presented here in four sections. First, a brief introduction to the development of the Romanian nation and the peasant as a national symbol situates the development of this museum within the wider historical contexts. The subsequent history of the museum is divided into three periods corresponding with three developmental eras: national era (1848-1947), communist era (1948-1989) and post-communist/democratic era (1990-2016). The development of the MRP throughout the 20th century is based on the activities and writings of three key figures: Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș, considered as the “father” of Romanian museology (Gheorghiu & Mateoniu, 2012); and artist Horia Bernea and writer Irina Nicolau, who were active in the development of the MRP after the

communist revolution of 1989.² Here, the museological approaches and their implications for visitor experiences of Tzigara-Samurçaș, Bernea and Nicolau are contrasted with communist museological approaches that physically displaced the MRP in the 1950s and replaced it with various iterations of the communist party museum, which was known by several names throughout its existence (discussed in Section 2.1.3). Knowledge of the MRP's museological practices and this successive staff is essential to understanding the motivations for professionals at the MRP in the mid-2000s and their effort to initiate a cultural program to recognize and legitimate local museums and village collections because of their role as a national-level heritage institution. Foregrounding the literature by Romanian scholars in order to emphasize their perspectives within the context of this project and how it relates to national-level heritage and legitimation is presented next (Sections 2.1.1-2.1.5).

2.1.1. The Romanian nation and the peasant as national symbol

The Museum of the Romanian Peasant is currently located in the building designed and built to house the Museum of Ethnography and National Art (MENA). But the history of the MENA could be said to begin in the mid-19th century, a period recognized as a time of national revival in Europe (Ingrao, 2000) and “linked to the political romanticism spreading over Europe during the revolutionary times of 1848” (Hedeșan & Mihăilescu, 2006, p. 191). In 1866, Romania adopted its own constitution in preparation for independence with the provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia incorporated as Romanian territories³ (Hitchins, 2014). The merging of these provinces into a national state was paralleled by a growing interest of the political, intellectual and cultural elites “in general data

² The ending date for what I have termed the Post-communist/Democratic Era was chosen because the MRP closed for extensive renovations in the summer of 2016 and its permanent collections as they were conceived and installed by Bernea and Nicolau were completely deinstalled. As of December 2019, renovations were ongoing and the MRP's website indicated that the main exhibition area was still closed.

³ Transylvania became part of Romania in 1918.

about the people of these territories for diplomatic, administrative and/or economic reasons, [resulting in] a growing corpus of administrative and economic statistics and geographic descriptions that can be put together as ‘knowledge *about* the people’” (Hedeşan & Mihăilescu, 2006, p. 190, emphasis in original).

The political convergence of these territories into a coherent space happened across the physical reality of an ethno-linguistically diverse, heavily rural population (Boia, 2001b; Hitchins, 2014; Verdery, 1983, 1995).⁴ In order to envision the nation beyond village or ethnic boundaries as a shared construct in the spirit of Benedict Anderson’s (2006) imagined community, the political and intellectual elites worked to connect the realities of daily peasant life across these ethnically diverse territories into a larger, coherent whole. These elites did so through the development of historical themes of unity and continuity: unity that bound together these groups of ethnically diverse peoples inhabiting the land and continuity that connected the people to the physical territory across time (Gheorghiu & Mateoni, 2012). These themes took hold in various forms of cultural expression, including libraries and museums, and strengthened a semblance of coherence for the Romanian nation between these provinces across space and through time. One outcome of making the Romanian nation according to these themes was the bolstering of Romania’s national foundation myth, without which a nation “[does not] exist, or [it] exists in a marginal manner” (Boia, 2001b, p. 33).

Romania’s foundation myth has an autochthonous component – the Romanian nation emerged with direct ties to the ancient Romans who inhabited an indigenous superstate which had become the Romanian nation (Boia, 2001b; Djuvara, 2014). The

⁴ This is reflected within Romania’s demographics even today. As of 2013, the latest year for which statistics are available, over 46% of Romania’s population lives in rural areas (Andrei, 2015). The ethnic population breakdown generally counts ethnic groups including Romanians, Hungarians, Saxon (ethnic Germans), and Roma, among others.

challenge for the elites then became how to connect this ancient Roman lineage to the current population. Romanian scholars Otilia Hedeşan and Vintilă Mihăilescu (2006) describe how ethnology was used as the institutional vehicle through which these connections could be made by the intellectuals through their field studies of local populations — of peasants. As these scholars describe the tactics of ethnologists: “the methodological solution was to turn continuity into tradition and unity into typology: ethnology’s Peasant was a representative Autochthon so far as he was the typical traditional man” (Hedeşan & Mihăilescu, 2006, p. 193). In this way the “Romanian peasant” as a typicality became intrinsically tied to the shaping of the new Romanian nation by the relatively small group of political, cultural and intellectual elites during the 19th century (Boia, 2001b; Hitchins, 2014). And it was this sociocultural and political environment that influenced Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaş to create a national museum of Romania as one of the central cultural sites in 1906, which will be discussed next.

2.1.2. National era (1848 – 1947)

Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaş, the father of Romanian museology, gathered support for his museum in a way that was common to the development of other museums within Romania (Gheorghiu & Mateoni, 2012). As Bădică (2011a) describes it, museums often began as “the brainchild of a cultural figure with . . . some political connections, enough to make the figures idea gain state funding and support” (p. 718). Tzigara-Samurcaş studied art history at the University of Munich in Berlin in the 1890s and returned to Romania around the turn of the century “convinced that the Romanian museum institution needed to be rebuilt” (Pohrib, 2011, p. 319). Romanian scholar Iulia Pohrib (2011) describes Tzigara-Samurcaş “[pleading] for the creation of a genuinely ‘Romanian’ museum where the *bric-a-brac* of the Museum of Antiquities would be replaced by a carefully selected narrative built

around history and tradition” (p. 319). In other words, the Museum of Ethnography and National Art⁵ was created in response to the already established Museum of Antiquities (which eventually became the National Museum of Romanian History, also in Bucharest) as an attempt to foreground a cultural narrative of origin about the Romanian nation.

The National Museum of Antiquities was established in 1864 (Bădică, 2011a; Gheorghiu & Mateoni, 2012). Its collections were gathered and compiled according to the “curiosity principle,” that is to say it included interesting objects that were collected “without regard to national importance” (Bădică, 2011a, p. 717) and as an outgrowth of personal collections. In the spirit and tradition of cabinets of curiosities, such collections were meant to reflect the importance and worldliness of their collector(s) (Zygaruk, 2011). However, at the time when new nations were being established, collecting could become an activity that would reflect and represent the essential qualities and, by extension, the importance of the nation – or collecting according to the “national principle” (Bădică, 2011a, p. 717). As described by Tzigara-Samurcaș in 1907, this new national museum should be, “Set in such conditions and harboring all the artistic and cultural treasures of the peoples who lived on our land, from the most ancient times to today, the museum will constitute the most truthful and telling history of Romania” (in Pohrib, 2011, p. 319). Incorporating the themes of unity and continuity as tradition and peasant typicality discussed in Section 2.1.1, Tzigara-Samurcaș was able to gain traction with his ideas and the Museum of Ethnography and National Art was established in 1906.

Pohrib (2011) describes the museological approach of Tzigara-Samurcaș as “demonstrative history” driven by a “consequent historicism” that “determined the objects

⁵ The MENA was also an outgrowth of a prior, failed attempt at starting the Museum of Ethnography, National Art and Decorative and Industrial Art in the 1890’s. It later operated as the Carol I Museum of National Art from 1912-1944. A history of its development can be found in Bădică (2011a).

selected, a complex display and developed curatorial practices” (p. 319). She later goes on to describe how Tzigara-Samurçaş conceived his museum as “as a *loci memoriae*, whose collections convey a strong memorial and symbolic power, was to revisit the local tradition through the strong moments of the national history” (Pohrib, 2011, p. 321). Pohrib’s interpretation implies that the museum authored the story of the nation through the selection and display of carefully curated sets of objects collected and juxtaposed and based on their locality and ethnicity. Further, Pohrib (2011) seems to suggest that, for Tzigara-Samurçaş, the story of Romania emanated from the objects — as those objects were presented to visitors within contexts of key historical moments in national history. For Tzigara-Samurçaş, in the spirit of his times, what was essential about the nation was to be found in the materiality of objects in the collection and this essence could be extracted by placing the objects within a historical narrative across time. The museum as a place of memory relies on material artifacts and the story of the nation emerges through the arrangement of these objects.

Tzigara-Samurçaş described the role of his museum in 1912:

For, a museum in the true sense of the word is not only a temple, but also a school for education. It is a temple since within it, as in a national sanctuary, are forever housed the priceless treasures of a people, and at the same time, it is a storehouse of the national tradition. It is the greatest school, for in the museum, without any training, without even knowing the alphabet and without the assistance of a teacher, one may absorb unawares the most edifying lesson in patriotism. (in Gheorghiu & Mateoniu, 2012, p. 35)

This quote suggests that Tzigara-Samurçaş saw the goal of his museum to be preservational as well as educational through safeguarding and exhibiting of objects supporting an educational model. That model did not necessarily rely on the written descriptions of objects provided by curators or other forms of direct interpretation. The museum Tzigara-Samurçaş imagines only requires the visitor to be in close proximity to the objects, so that they may

“absorb unawares” the history of the Romanian nation. There was a message contained within the museum artifacts, rather than a prescribed message contained within the curators’ interpretations. If the visitor could not read, it was not a problem; seeing the objects would provide the spiritual connection to a sense of the nation. In this way, the museum also acted as storehouse for intangible as well as tangible elements of tradition. As Tzigara-Samurcaș statement above illustrates, this intangible connection was not only grasped intellectually, through language and written description; words were unnecessary – it was the gathering and display of objects that conformed to the idea of a self-evident visual narrative that the new museology positions at the center of museum experience (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). This sense of self-evidence gave these objects power; simply being in their presence allowed the visitor to comprehend the story of the nation in a way that she could intuit.

The MENA was not conceptualized as an elite institution; it was meant to be inclusive: “It will serve as a place of repose and reflection for intellectuals and dreamers desirous of a place for meditation on the past, a place for patriotic inspiration” (Tzigara-Samurcaș, 1912, in Gheorghiu & Mateoni, 2012, p. 36). Based on the writings of Tzigara-Samurcaș quoted above, being in the museum visitors could be at once past- and future-oriented. Regardless of a visitor’s intent, experience in the museum could exist along a continuum of directed looking as part of a guided contemplation where a sense of patriotism was transmitted as felt qualities transcending education level. Further the MENA might also be described as somewhat “participatory” in that anyone could theoretically contribute to its collections, having noted, for instance, “numerous donations of King, amateurs or peasants” (Pohrib, 2011, p. 321). The MENA wanted to offer visitors something of a “complete picture” of the people and to bring “ethnic issues” to light “through comparative study of items” found in these territories (Pohrib, 2011, p. 321). These items crafted and used by

peasants were objects born of feeling, they were suggestive of spontaneity, “hence the purity, originality and freshness of [the peasant’s] artistic productions” (Pohrib, 2011, p. 326).

After the launch of the museum in 1906, Tzigara-Samurçaș argued that the museum of the Romanian people also needed to be articulated as a museum in a building that reflected its contents. The foundation stone for the building on Kiseleff Boulevard was laid in 1912 and the building itself was completed in 1941. However, all this came to an end with the arrival of the communist regime in 1948, when Tzigara-Samurçaș was forced to retire and the museum is temporarily closed and, eventually, evicted from its home on Kiseleff Boulevard to make space for a museum telling the history of the Communist Party, discussed next.

2.1.3. Communist era (1948-1989)

In 1948, the MENA closed and reopened under different leadership in 1951 as the National Museum of Folk Art. Eventually, this museum was evicted from the building on Kiseleff Boulevard and moved with its collections to an “inadequate” storage elsewhere in Bucharest (Bădică, 2010, 2011a). In its place in the building on Kiseleff Boulevard were installed a series of museums dedicated to “the communist movement, ideology and party” (Bădică, 2010, pp. 88–89). The last and longest iteration of this series of museums was the History Museum of the Communist Party of the Revolutionary and Democratic Movement of Romania (informally called the Party Museum) (Bădică, 2010, 2011a).

These events and the accompanying changes to museology wrought by communism were illustrative of other kinds of massive changes being put into motion by the Communist Party after WWII. Since then, communism was an omnipresent force in Romania that attempted a mass reorganization and reclassification of the social space based on particular notions about modernity and progress as they were conceived of and dictated by an

oppressive regime as part of a cultural revolution. As Romanian historian Lucian Boia (2001b) explains, the “coming of the new (communist) world . . . inevitably meant the radical transformation of the landscape and the human habitat” (p. 135). Two of these radical transformations were referred to officially as *colectivizare* or collectivization (of property, negating rights to ownership of private property and bringing it under state control) and *sistematizare* or systemization (a program of urbanization/industrialization that aimed to destroy towns and villages and move their populations to new urban centers) (Boia, 2001b; Câmpeanu, 2010; Marginean, 2010). Accompanying the material and psychological effects of the regime was the country’s radically transformed relationship to time. The communist era has been characterized by Romanian scholars as being a metaphorical “black hole” (Bădică, 2010) or “barbed wire fence” (Cordoș & Făta-Tutoveanu, 2010) where Romania was felt to be somehow out of the flows and progression of time and history. This era was also described by Romanian historian Lucian Boia (2001b) as the time in which a “parallel reality” (p. 116) emerged because of communism’s invasive attempts to dismantle and remake all aspects of the social structure and a historical past. As Boia (2001b) describes it, under the severe communist dictatorship as it was applied in Romania, “The ‘normal’ world [had] to be remade, reinvented, down to the cellular level” (p. 116). In this way, Boia suggests that the experience of what used to feel like regular life, including the experience of time and space, had been not so much destroyed but minimized or negated and felt to be happening alongside the new normal of communism.

Communist leadership also produced changes in Romanian museums during this period. One Romanian scholar who has written in English on the history of Romanian museums under communism is Simina Bădică, researcher and curator at the MRP. Where the communist regime could be described as destructive, aiming to completely reorganize

the sense of shared space and time, Bădică (2011b) explains how “museification acts as one form of destruction, insofar as the only thing that is not acceptable to Stalinism is ‘the living past’” (p. 275) (i.e. a past with more than one controlled meaning or that could be subject to reinterpretation). Therefore, “Socialist regimes used museums to enforce their view of history on the present; museology was just another form of propaganda” (Bădică, 2011b, p. 272). Much like the regime it represented, museology of communist Romania was coercive, redundant and dictatorial in the purest Foucauldian sense (Bennett, 1995). Bădică (2011b) describes a typology of the kind of museum valued by the regime as museums dedicated to providing “the answers” to an unquestioning populous (p. 279). These museums were characterized by what she describes as a fear of objects as things that are silent, dangerous, ambiguous and difficult to control, the only solution for which is to “get rid of the object or surround it with words and explanations” (Bădică, 2011b, p. 279). In the communist museum, objects were not left uninterpreted for the viewer to encounter; the whole point was to control every aspect of the visitor experience – both while in the museum (where mandatory visits were organized by the communist leadership in the 1970s and 1980s) and once they left.

The museum that eventually takes over the building on Kiseleff Boulevard in 1952 is described as a museum of “objects of a fake past, of an unreality” (Bădică, 2011b, p. 286). And the museological forces did not only install new exhibitions within the museum space: “In the case of the Party museum, the interior architecture of the building on Kiseleff Boulevard was truly hidden as the vaults and arcades became squares and straight walls” (Bădică, 2013, p. 297). Bădică describes the museum as the visitor encountered it in communist Romania through the description of the party museum as “a museum that seeks to explain, to convince, to transmit precise knowledge; a museum that knows exactly what

the visitors should retain in their minds when they exit the exhibition halls” (Bădică, 2011b, p. 280). She describes the exhibition halls in communist-era museums as being “crowded with words, explanation and labels” (Bădică, 2011b, p. 281) that produced only “intellectual dead ends” for visitors (Bădică, 2011b, p. 283).

Bădică (2011b) suggests that the effects of communist museology did not end with the 1989 revolution.⁶ As she describes it: “the only obvious change seemed to be in the words surrounding the exhibits, and not in the exhibition style,” (Bădică, 2011b, p. 283) and these post-communist exhibits tended to produce similarly limited outcomes for museum visitors. But this is one way in which the MRP’s museum lineage has actively broken with the communist-era museum traditions and developed its museological approaches in response to this past. This third historical era provides the context in which to understand the challenges facing the museum makers, led by Horia Bernea and Irina Nicolau, tasked with the job of creating a new museum within the building from which this formerly national museum of art and ethnology had been evicted during the communist era.

2.1.4. Post-communist/democratic era (1990-2016)

This section describes the development of the MPR beginning from 1989, when the Romanian Revolution ended communist rule in the country. In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the Communist Party Museum was closed. On 5 February 1990, Government Decision No. 130, Appendix 2, Point 5 de-established the Party Museum and reestablished a new museum in its place—the Museum of the Romanian Peasant (Bădică, 2011a; Gheorghiu & Mateoni, 2012). In the words of Minister of Culture Andrei Pleșu in 1990, “The old building on the boulevard is thereby restored to the purpose for which it was originally built” (in Gheorghiu & Mateoni, 2012, p. 39). At this point in the story, two key

⁶ I have also observed several examples of official museums in Romania whose exhibits seem to have changed very little from how they may have appeared during communist times.

players emerge as the founders of the new museum in the old building on the boulevard: artist Horia Bernea and writer Irina Nicolau. The ending date of 2016 was chosen for this section because during the summer of that year, the MRP's permanent collections as conceived and installed by Bernea and Nicolau, were deinstalled and the main exhibition areas of the MRP were closed for extensive renovations.⁷ The remainder of this section introduces these key actors, describes their museological approaches and describes the effects of their work on the development of the MRP leading up to the Village Collections Program, discussed in Section 2.2.

Bernea was the son of notable Romanian sociologist Ernest Bernea, well educated in his youth and well-exhibited as a painter both nationally and internationally in the 1970s and again after the 1989 revolution (Gheorghiu & Mateoniu, 2012). Nicolau was trained in Romanian language and literature and worked as a researcher at the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore in the 1970s and was a prolific writer, particularly after the fall of communism (Gheorghiu & Mateoniu, 2012). For the purposes of this study, arguably the most important aspect of Bernea's and Nicolau's roles in this project is that they were not necessarily traditionally trained as "museum professionals." Though, as the story of the MRP unfolds, it becomes clear why alternative museum approaches were necessary to overcome the stifling effects of communist museological intervention and restore the museum as a public institution, bridging the ideological divides for museum professionals as well as for the public visiting this museum.

Nicolau describes the responsibility of re-forming the MRP as a response to "double crisis . . . provoked by the consequences of communist ideology and by the danger of badly appropriated occidental museology" (in Bădică, 2011a, p. 725). What would need to be

⁷ As of December 2019, the MRP's website indicated that renovations were ongoing and that the main exhibition area was still closed to the public.

repaired and reclaimed was not just a product of poor, uninformed or badly trained museum-making; it was an approach to museology that had been twisted and deformed by the communist mindset of complete control of culture. This approach even impacted the physical space of the museum in the building on Kiseleff Boulevard, whose ornate details had been covered over, simplifying the interior to make straight, white walls and boxy rooms (Bădică, 2013). In the face of such challenges, Bernea and Nicolau were instrumental in shaping the museology that would attempt to reach back – to become a “bridge” to the museum of Tzigara-Samurçaș’s time in order to reclaim his work, his goals and efforts, while subsequently carrying the museum forward (Bădică, 2013, p. 298). This was a time of repair and the kind of change that required different kinds of thinking about what a museum should do.

Nicolau (1996, in Bădică, 2011b, see also Nicolau, 1994/2018) introduces the concept of the mother museum as a kind of healing museum to overcome the destructive tendencies of the recent past. Most essentially, the mother museum restores the possibility of agency for the visitor. The mother museum, in Nicolau’s (1996, in Bădică, 2011b) words, is a healing museum, “a place where you see objects that you like” (p. 274); a museum of “look at that” that is “for people willing to invest imagination and time” (p. 275). As Nicolau (1996, in Bădică, 2011b) describes it, the mother museum both shows and hides; it is “antidote to the hyper-amnesia towards which father-museums push us together with all our society” (p. 274). The father museum, in contrast, only reveals according to a “single master narrative” that leads to a “museological dead end . . . the father-museums give explanations, produce reasoning, educate . . .” (Nicolau, 1996, in Bădică, 2011b, pp. 274–275). As has been discussed in the previous section, it can be said that the communist museum typified the worst kind of example of the father museum (Bădică, 2011b, 2013).

Nicolau's ideas about the mother museum are entwined with Bernea's ideas of the testifying museography employed within the MRP. This approach encourages a dialogue with objects, in which the objects are allowed to "speak for themselves, letting them conquer the space and find the most appropriate place in the display" (Bernea, 2003, in Bădică, 2011b, p. 286). As such, it also restores a sense of agency for the objects as much as it does for human beings. Bernea (in Gheorghiu & Mateoni, 2012) stresses that the MRP is "not a museum of masterpieces but a museum of contexts, of relations (between objects, between objects and spaces), of rhythm" (p. 154). It is a space of movement and proximities, a space in which to play with and to "tame" heritage:

What we have done and wish to go on doing in the Museum of the Peasant has nothing to do with gratuitous play, with certain 'liminal' phenomena from the contemporary world, such as 'installations', montages, etc. even if there are common features. What categorically sets them apart is the given element, heritage, which is titanic in its action, but which we 'tame' with love and knowledge, providing the sensation of a light and graceful movement, despite the tension that arises over the course of the discourse. (Bernea, in Gheorghiu & Mateoni, 2012, p. 206).

What Bernea describes here evokes both the problem of the scale of heritage as well as the role of human beings and objects in gaining some semblance of mastery over the force of heritage, it must be tamed responsibly. In terms of museology, this suggests a very open and free approach that encourages and seems to demand active and engaged participation from everyone involved.

The open museological approach employed by the MRP since 1990 has been described by former Romanian Minister of Culture Andrei Pleșu⁸ as:

... a museum by which its very nature constitutes a polemic with the idea of the museum in general. This is the aim of the institution: to create a non-museum kind of museum, to engage in an ethnography that transcends academic methodologies, without losing rigour or a precise intuition of the object. But it is extremely difficult

⁸ The Museum of the Romanian Peasant was awarded with the Council of Europe's European Museum of the Year Award for 1996-1997, and these statements were possibly made in conjunction with a related event.

and takes great courage to undertake something of this kind. I think that in the field of museology and ethnography today there was a great need for such a breath of fresh air and so I think that what is happening here is an event with the potential to resonate far beyond the local aspect (ca. 1995, in Gheorghiu & Mateoni, 2012, p. 158).

This approach is experimental, but Pleșu (in Gheorghiu & Mateoni, 2012) goes on to describe how:

“Experiment” is one of the key concepts of modernity, but here it acquires a rather odd meaning. As a rule, one experiments with something new, but [in the MRP] one experiments with something old, an experience that was once lived and now no longer exists or is on the verge of extinction and ought to be re-strengthened” (p.158).

This “something old” is past ways of life, the ways of being and knowing of peasants (Mihăilescu, 2006). The question the MRP seems to be answering is not how to preserve a static notion of “the peasant” and all its constituent heritage and patrimony for all time; but how to keep aspects of peasantness available and open moving forward, available for reinvestigation and reconnection within inevitably changing life contexts and dialogues. Its goal has not been to become an ethnographic museum; the MRP itself has continued to work to push the boundaries of museum typologies (Mihăilescu, 2006). The notion of experimentation with the peasant as an autochthonous substrate echoes Tzigara-Samurcaș’s museological approaches designed to foreground the essential qualities of the Romanian nation beyond direct interpretations.

2.1.5. Summary of the history of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant

This section has traced the development of the MRP from its roots as a national museum of peasant art and ethnography conceived by Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș and housed in the building on Kiseleff Boulevard; its eviction and replacement from this building with a state-run party museum during the Communist era. Since the 1990s, the museological approaches at work within the MRP that stressed healing, imagination and experimentation

created the contexts for museum-making that were carried on under the next succession of directors through Romania's opening to democracy and its entry into the EU in 2007. It was this museological climate under which the Village Collections Program, discussed next, was conceived and enacted.

2.2. The Village Collections Program

Researchers at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant took notice of examples of what they named local museums or village collections based on personal observations and publications, as an outcome of fieldwork in the 1990's and early 2000's⁹ (Mihăilescu, 2009; Mihalache, 2009a, 2012). MRP professionals eventually applied for state funds to create the national level cultural program *Colecții Sătești din România - 2008 – 2013* (Village Collections of Romania - 2008-2013, hereafter Village Collections Program or VCP). The VCP was funded by the Romanian Administrația Fondului Cultural Național (National Cultural Fund Administration, hereafter AFCN) (Mihalache, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Muzeului Național al Țăranului Român, 2012). The MRP's goals and motivations for creating the VCP were summarized by Vintilă Mihăilescu as director of the MRP during the development and implementation of this cultural program:

Thus, we particularly adopted an institutional approach in order for these museums to gain recognition: the fact that they exist without (almost) any institutional and official support is a good thing, we claimed, and it is worth being legitimised. It is also a proof – and a premise – of grass-roots decentralization of heritage which allows us, a central national institution, to challenge the mainstream of museography (“big museums” usually become aware of such petty collections only when picking up selected items in order to enforce their own collection). Helping them to move to the front stage was also a way of self-legitimizing our own “democratic” approach and status by “voicing the locals”, instead of exploiting them in a domestic-colonial kind of supremacy. (Mihăilescu, 2009, p. 11)

⁹ References to when these museums were discovered are consistently vague throughout the existing literature that discusses local museums as part of the Village Collections Program. The most specific reference I have found to date is that examples of this kind of museum seemed to proliferate since the 1989 revolution (Mihalache, 2012). Founding dates for most of the museums are identified by proprietors most often in the early 2000s, as noted in Appendix B.

Mihăilescu's quote describes how the overarching goal of the five-year Village Collections Program (2008-2013) was to create outcomes designed to confer recognition and expertise upon these museums and their proprietors in support of democratic approaches to heritage. Through creation of the VCP, the MRP sought to amplify local voices that might not otherwise be heard as valid in their own right within the heritage realm. This program had the added benefit of legitimating not only such local museums and their collections, but it also worked reflexively, legitimating the MRP's own non-traditional museological approaches that stressed healing, imagination and experimentation (Section 2.1.4). However, the goal of the MRP was not to create carbon copies of itself within these local museums, a point that Mihăilescu (2009) also stressed: "It is obvious that whatever these [local] museums really are or should be . . . they are not and should not be small-scale clones of our museum!" (p. 17). In other words, the MRP's goal in legitimizing local museums and village collections was not to impose its own approaches to museum-making upon local museum makers; it was to help them become whatever it was they needed to become. In line with the imaginative and experimental approaches of Bernea and Nicolau discussed above (Section 2.1.4), the VCP shepherded these museums through a process of discovery about what their museums could be. The goal was to provide museum makers with enough guidance to allow them to gain some recognition and potential for funding without an attempt to fundamentally change what made them special in their own right.

These sentiments are reflected in the description of the relationship between the MRP and the VCP by project coordinator and MRP researcher Carmen Mihalache (2009a):

. . . the [MRP] tried to offer consultancy, national visibility and future opportunities to collection owners: they can become professionals and develop their collections if they observe a few basic (scientific, aesthetic and economic) criteria in compliance with the ICOM norms (the International Council of Museums) and do their best

not to lose the ingenuity and originality which make these collections unique. (p. 124)

This quote by Mihalache confirms the role of the VCP as a legitimating program. First, it provides museum makers with a set of basic criteria building from those of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), a European-based body that, if followed, would allow these vernacular museums to be recognized as “professional” museums. Second, it stresses the VCP’s desire to support these museums as they are and for their own sake, and not somehow in service to or under the tutelage of the MRP as the master museum. This intention expressed in this way seems to reify that the goal of the MRP in creating the Village Collections Program was not to lead these museums but to allow them to amplify their own voices, to provide them their own space on the museological stage. According to Mihalache, this could be done by standardizing aspects of their collections’ practices just enough but not so much that the uniqueness of these institutions would be lost.

In this way, it seems that the MRP foregrounded village collections as institutions in their own right. However, what these collections are remains a motivating question for the current study. Section 2.2.1 considers the outcomes of the VCP in order to lay the groundwork for understanding the distinctness and related effects of vernacular museums.

2.2.1. Summary of Village Collections Program goals and outcomes

This section summarizes the goals and outcomes of the Village Collections Program presented in Appendix A. In 2008, the Village Collection Program’s focus was on describing and understanding examples of local museums and village collections as an emergent type of museum. Fieldwork carried out by professionals from the MRP identified eight collections appropriate and willing to be included in the program (Mihalache, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Programming provided personalized training and group workshops for this group of eight collectors designed to promote their collections locally and as part of heritage tourism

initiatives. The local collections were included in an exhibit at the MRP, field reports were published in the 2009 issue of *Martor*, the MRP's annual review of anthropology, and a partnership was formed with the Institutul Național al Patrimoniului (the National Heritage Institute, hereafter CIMEC) to incorporate these eight museums into the official list of Museums and Collections in Romania (hereafter CIMEC database). The CIMEC database can be accessed in Romanian at: <http://ghidulmuzeelor.cimec.ro/> and in English at: <http://ghidulmuzeelor.cimec.ro/selen.asp>.

In 2009 and 2010, the VCP incorporated additional collections and collectors into its program to participate in trainings, workshops and special exhibitions, as in year one, with trainings expanded to include a wider selection of regional professionals and specialists as well as local collectors (Mihalache, 2009b, 2011). In 2011, twenty-four Romanian vernacular museums were brought together as Rețeaua Colecțiilor și Muzeelor Etnografice Sătești Particulare din România (the Network of Ethnographic Collections and Private Village Museums, hereafter RECOMESPAR), representing one of the major outcomes of the VCP. This association was originally led by Eugen Vaida, one of the local museum proprietors in the village of Alțâna (Asociația RECOMESPAR, 2013; Mihalache, 2011). Working in partnership with the VCP, RECOMESPAR members participated in several conferences that focused on various aspects of museological training. Members were also involved in regional group exhibitions at “official” museums, including one at the MRP in Bucharest as well as in other regional centers. A RECOMESPAR website was created at <http://recomespar.ro/> that describes the member museums and documents the activities of the association, describing two projects sponsored by RECOMESPAR and linking out to others in which the association participated as a partner. The activities of RECOMESPAR

are summarized in Appendix B. The next section provides an overview of the RECOMESPAR members, describing characteristics of the makers and their museums.

2.3. The RECOMESPAR Association

This section provides a list of the museums and their makers who were RECOMESPAR members at the time of this writing. This information has been gleaned from the RECOMESPAR website and from relevant database entries in the official CIMEC database listing Romanian museums. Appendices C and D compile data from the CIMEC database that has been supplemented with details from the RECOMESPAR association website.¹⁰ I have arbitrarily assigned ID numbers to sites based on their geographic location, numbering from north to south and west to east (Figure 2A). The site numbers on the map correspond to the ID numbers that appear in the format MUS_XX in Appendices C and D and that are used to refer to museum sites throughout the dissertation.

2.3.1. Vernacular museums: A RECOMESPAR survey

The RECOMESPAR museums are geographically dispersed across Romania, as shown in Figure 2A. There seems to be some attempt to capture a level of regional diversity because the museums are located across different provinces and counties. Approximately half of the museums note in their CIMEC database entries that they are working to represent an ethnic group or groups, with one noting “no specific ethnography.” Location information is extensive in this database, including a street address and written instructions on how to travel to the museum. Each database record also includes a link with geospatial

¹⁰ The CIMEC database includes the following fields: Museum Code; Name; County; Locality; Commune; Postal Code; Telephone; Access; E-mail address; Time table; Collections; Category; General profile; Web address; Contact person; Position; Founded; Position; and a link to map the museum. Records are included both in Romanian and English, with the Romanian version of records often containing a more extensive description of the museum’s collection and sometimes containing slightly different information (for instance, showing a slight difference between the Romanian and English version of the museum name). As with all databases, information is not included in all fields for all institutions.

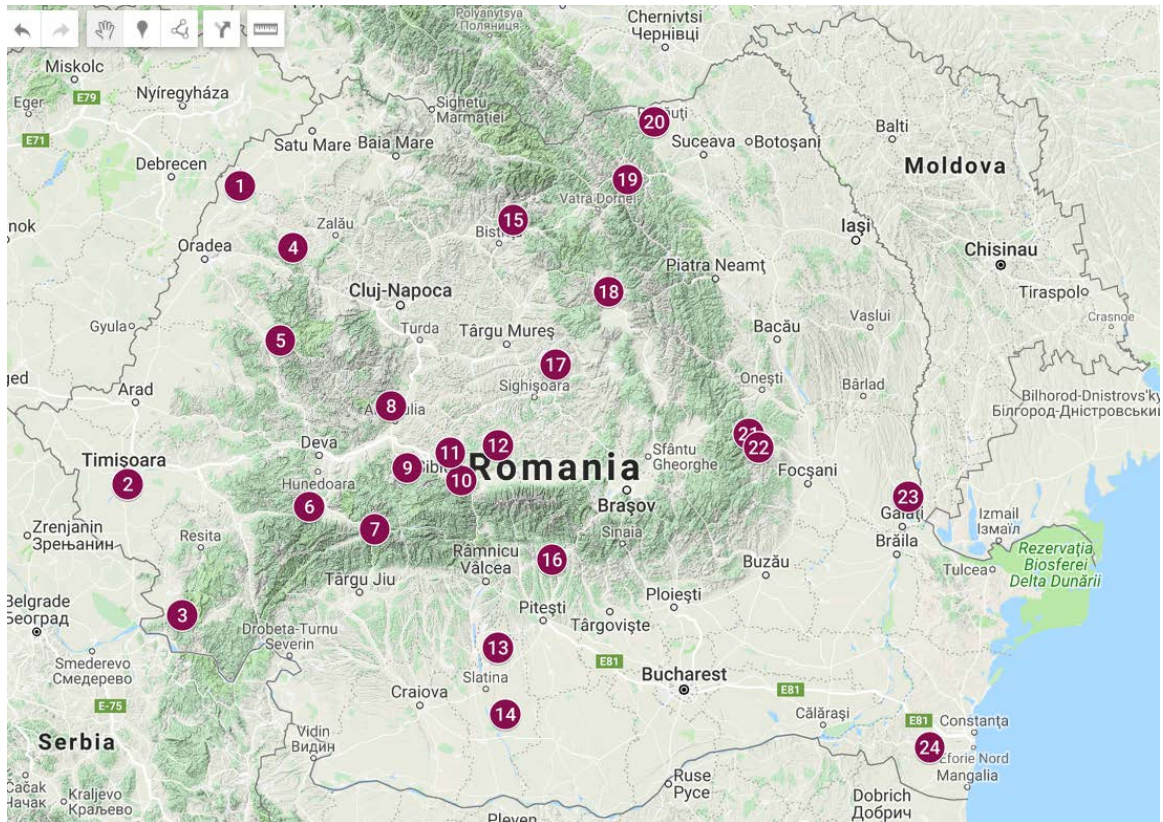


Figure 2A: Map showing locations of RECOMESPAR museums. Site numbers correspond to museum ID numbers assigned to sites listed in Appendices C and D in the format MUS_XX.

data that maps the museum. The level of location information makes these once “hidden” museums much more accessible in their localities. This, coupled with the fact that another outcome of RECOMESPAR membership was that signs were put up in the village localities for each museum, further enhances the visibility of these museums (Asociația RECOMESPAR, 2013, proiecte page). The process of legitimization then seems to rely on enhancing findability of these museums by providing information on where they are located (discussed in Chapter 8).

The data found in the CIMEC database about the RECOMESPAR museums (Appendix C) can be briefly summarized as follows: 15 of 24 museums have a founding date between 2000 and 2006, with one (which was listed as closed at the time of writing) from

1990. The Category field sorts these museums into roughly two types: Museum/local collection [15] or Communal museum [4], with one museum noting that it is under the jurisdiction of the local county council and regional national museum. The field General Profile (used for searching museums from the site's home page) also sorts them into two categories: Ethnography [20] and Ethnography and Local History [3] (with one not profiled). These categorizations seem to suggest that the goal of the database listing is to incorporate these museums into existing museum categories and profiles as opposed to creating any special designations that allows them to be recognized within the database as a group of their own.

Perhaps more interesting is the way these museums have been named. According to the earlier definition, Romanian local museums are self-named and self-described by their owners (Mihalache, 2009a). The most common official names of the association member museums include *casa-muzeu* (house museum), *colecția etnografică* (ethnographic collection), or simply *muzeu* (museum), sometimes with qualifiers such as a *Muzeul Satului* (village museum), *Muzeul-Viu* (living museum), *Muzeul Etnografic și Religios* (museum of ethnography and religion). The variety of terms used to describe these museums shows their self-identification as idiosyncratic, suggesting that they are not only different from more traditional museums, but that different vernacular museums may be different in nature and kind from others within the emergent typology. This project assumes that this varied ontology has implications for the epistemic nature of these new institutions.

2.3.2. Characteristics of RECOMESPAR museum makers

A typology of local museum makers (Appendix D) seems to be just as difficult to arrive at as a typology of vernacular museums. The data presented here has been gleaned from a review of descriptions of the museums found in their CIMEC database listings,

which sometimes duplicate information found at the RECOMESPAR website; and supplemented with from information on VCP project reports posted on the MRP blog (summary of VCP activities included as Appendix A). Of the twenty-four member-museums listed on the RECOMESPAR website, the makers were often retired from a variety of professions, ranging from teaching/academia, public service, agriculture and manual labor. An initiative in 2011 focused on training younger collectors (aged 19-30) who might have their own collections or who might someday inherit an existing collection from their parents. At least three of the makers are younger people (under 40) and devoted to developing and presenting their own collections. In the CIMEC database, individuals were generally listed either as proprietors [17] or directors [2] of their museums, with six not indicating a position. Each entry also listed a contact person, mainly men [16] with five women and three couples listed. My own prior visits to museums in 2011, 2014 and 2016 have revealed that some museums are created and presented as a family affair, with spouses, children and even extended family joining in the presentation if they were present. Others, however, seem to be more singularly the work of the individual proprietor as a more solitary endeavor. The current study builds on this demographic information through the analysis of each maker's RECOMESPAR website description towards an understanding of how museum-making emerges as a knowledge-making endeavor for individual proprietors that will be discussed in Chapter 5. How this activity meshes with each maker's personal story and their approaches to museum-making and their interactions with others in the making of their museum are dimensions of museum-making that have been gleaned through interviews with makers that will be discussed in Chapter 6.

2.3.3. RECOMESPAR museum visitors

Although it is generally acknowledged that Romanian vernacular museums have visitors, less is mentioned within the vernacular museum literature about the experiences of specific visitors. One of the VCP project reports describes the intended audiences for these museums as: “heterogeneous, made up of locals, pupils, journalists, local high officials, visiting personalities, native or foreign tourists” (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 123). Proprietors of museums visited by this researcher most often mentioned foreign tourists and local school children as their most common, frequent or important constituencies. During prior visits, my own brief reviews of the guest books on display at several of the local museum sites featured inscriptions by foreign tourists, often from Europe but also from North America and Asia as well as inscriptions in more regional languages including Romanian, Hungarian and German. On only one prior occasion did I encounter other visitors at a local museum site, and this included a Romanian tourism marketer and photographer documenting the museum to feature it in regional tourism literature. In the current study, interviews with vernacular museum visitors are complemented by analysis of visitor guestbook entries made at museum sites as well as one museum’s Facebook reviews to add to the literature on the impressions and experiences of vernacular museum visitors in Chapter 7.

2.3.4. State of the RECOMESPAR association and museums in 2018

As of 2018, twenty-three of the RECOMESPAR museums of the twenty-four recorded in the survey were still open, with one site officially closed after the proprietor passed away. No updates have been posted to the association’s website since 2013. As of May 2016, RECOMESPAR’s leadership was in a state of flux, with the original president moving on to pursue other personal and professional ventures (E. Vaida, personal communication, 26 May, 2016). During field visits in 2018, proprietors made statements that

indicated to me that the association was no longer active. With its original cultural funding program complete, the association appears to be currently in stasis. Nevertheless, the remaining member museums persist, with makers maintaining their museums and, in some cases, developing their own websites and related tourist ventures designed to further increase visibility of their museum enterprises. Yet another goal of this project is to investigate the effects of cultural programs like the VCP with limited duration and funding, most notably the outcome of RECOMESPAR as a civil society organization emerging in the contexts of legitimization of Romania's heritage as one distinct period, discussed in Chapter 8.

2.4. The European context of vernacular museums

This section provides a sketch of the institutional landscape and shifting the cultural climate that helped to fund the VCP and RECOMESPAR. It situates Romanian vernacular museums within the European context by presenting some key cultural policy developments since 1990 that culminated in Romania's accession into the European Union in 2007. This period of Romania's history is described by historian Keith Hitchins (2014) as a turn towards Europeanism. It is characterized by a movement away from heavily centralized state ownership and control of all political, economic and social sectors towards openness and transparency that align with democratic ideals and open economic markets (Chelcea, Becut, & Balsan, 2012; Hitchins, 1992). This European turn began officially with an association agreement between Romania and the Council of Europe in 1993. More complex negotiations between these two entities between 1999 and 2004 led to the signing of Romania's formal EU accession treaty on April 25, 2005. Between 2005 and 2007, negotiations between the European Commission and Romania worked "to bring Romanian institutions and procedures into full conformity with EU standards" (Hitchins, 2014, pp.

308–309). This included an extensive reorganization of the Romanian government cultural sector.

This pre-accession period of institutional alignment with EU standards required a shift in how culture was understood and expressed through the realignment of cultural policies. Under communism, the production of culture and its forms were highly centralized and heavily controlled by the state. Within the new European influence, culture was redefined as a vital and productive force, as a “dynamic public service” and a “force for social inclusion” (Chelcea et al., 2012, p. RO-3), definitions which contrasted strongly with previous understandings of culture as an economic drain on society (Chelcea et al., 2012; KEA European Affairs & Media Group (Turku School of Economics), 2006). This realignment of culture as productive and vital within a more open and transparent political landscape eventually led to the expansion of the cultural realm’s participatory constituencies. In Romania, it meant a complete reorganization and renaming of the Ministry of Culture and National Patrimony.¹¹ It also meant the creation of an independent cultural funding body, the Administrația Fondului Cultural Național (Administration of the National Cultural Fund, hereafter AFCN). The AFCN’s mission is to “finance projects that support the Romanian contemporary creation and the valorisation of the heritage, which contributes to the good understanding of the artistic phenomena as well as to the widest access of the public to the culture” (“Administrația Fondului Cultural Național (AFCN),” 2019, descriere page). Decentralization of heritage at the state level within the EU’s democratic frameworks meant not only development and inclusion of different working groups within the realm of culture that included participants from cultural institutions, civil society groups and professional

¹¹ This office has previously been known as the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs; it is sometimes translated as the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

associations (Chelcea et al., 2012). It also meant increased and transparent access to funding for culture for these new constituencies.

This study investigates the legitimization conferred through VCP and RECOMESPAR at national and state levels and provides the rationale for the selection of cultural program and policy documents selected for analysis (Appendix E). RECOMESPAR was created as a national-level non-profit association set up to develop and promote its member vernacular museums. In turn, this created opportunities for members who could then potentially take a proverbial “seat at the table” within these cultural working groups at the national level as active participants in the cultural realm. This example of tracing cultural policy and its outcomes to understand the interactions between legitimating actors at local, national and European levels are related to the recognition of vernacular museums as a recognized museum form and are discussed further in Chapter 8.

2.5. MRP, VCP and RECOMESPAR summary

This section has presented the historical development of the national-level Museum of the Romanian Peasant, the key legitimating actor for RECOMESPAR museums, in order to describe the institutional climate that set the stage for the development of the Village Collections Program. It has also briefly described the VCP as well as the development, motivations and activities of the VCP as the key legitimating cultural program for Romanian vernacular museums. It has discussed the RECOMESPAR association, a key outcome of the VCP, including a survey of its member museums and museum creators that will be the subject of this study. Finally, it has presented a brief introduction to developments within the realm of cultural policy at the national and state levels that provide the backdrop for understanding the effects of legitimating efforts of vernacular museums the MRP through the VCP and RECOMESPAR and related to cultural policy. Keeping these origins in mind,

the next section presents my personal observations related to my own previous vernacular museum visits in Romania as the impetus for this research study.

2.6. Vernacular museums: A personal journey

This section presents a description of my experiences visiting vernacular museums in Romania as foundational to the current study. Section 2.6.1 recounts my first experience or “discovery” of a RECOMESPAR museum in 2011. Section 2.6.2 describes justifications for previous site visits in 2014 and 2016. Section 2.6.3 presents personal observations that, together with the previous sections, further situate the research project at hand.

2.6.1. “Discovering” vernacular museums

This section recounts my first experience visiting and essentially “discovering” a RECOMESPAR museum. An audio recording of the museum tour narrative, images taken by myself and a research colleague, field notes and recollections helped in this remembering as a launching point for the current study. It was 2011, and I did not yet know about the RECOMESPAR association, its museums or even about the Village Collections Program. I had visited Romania several times before and, on several occasions, had stumbled upon small displays of traditional objects in people’s homes, described by them as museums. It was these prior experiences that led me to ask our Romanian guide if she knew about any such displays in the region in which we were currently working. She said she did and led me and three of my research colleagues to the museum in Câmpulung Moldovenesc (identified here as MUS_19 in Appendices C and D).

We had driven past this nondescript turnoff that led to the museum at least half-a-dozen times over the past few weeks, yet I could not have guessed that such an involved and engaging collection of objects would be found there. The museum, situated along the gravel road as we drove up, stood out to me as an atypical property along a typical village road. The

entranceway of the property was flanked by two large carved wooden *muzeu* signs. It was further marked by a smaller, somewhat ornate metal painted sign that bore the museum's name: "Muzeul de Artă Etnografică 'Ioan Grămadă'." Through the entrance gate, I saw a number of small buildings decorated with traditional objects and artifacts. Its visual appearance signaled to me that it was a place that would appeal to me because of the eclectically arranged abundance of old objects. Our guide asked us to wait outside while she went in to call on the owner. But by now my curiosity was certainly piqued and I remember it felt like we waited forever to get inside.

I was in Romania as a research assistant with anthropologist James M. Nyce, a professor of information science, leading a team of students studying effects and outcomes of Biblionet – Global Libraries Romania (Biblionet), an information and communication technologies (ICT) project in public libraries throughout Romania between 2008-2013 (Klimaszewski, Bader, & Nyce, 2011; Nyce, Bader, & Klimaszewski, 2013). This 2011 visit was our second time in the field studying Biblionet and my fourth with Nyce. I first visited Romania in 2007, when I signed up for Nyce's introduction to ethnographic fieldwork course co-taught with anthropologist Gail Bader. This course offered the opportunity to spend three weeks on a community study of Viscri, a remote, rural Transylvanian village. The research in which I engaged with Bader and Nyce began as community studies that focused on information and technology use in relatively under-developed or underserved village settings (Klimaszewski, Bader, Nyce, & Beasley, 2010; Klimaszewski & Nyce, 2009).

My first fieldwork experience in 2007 also provided my first experience observing and experiencing the relativity and plurality of "heritage" in the context of the Romanian countryside. This was in the historically Saxon (ethnic German) village of Viscri, the site of a fortified church that is one of Romania's twenty-five named UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Though only a small number of village residents identified as Saxon (the majority identified as Romanian or Roma), several residents were working with a British NGO to restore the village's Saxon heritage as part of a broader regional ecotourism development initiative (Klimaszewski et al., 2010). These efforts were visible within the village itself where a number of traditional houses were being historically preserved and restored for use as tourist guesthouses and were widely featured in tourism marketing literature (in English, French and German). The effects of these preservation efforts for me, as an outsider, made the village's appearance visually charming. At the same time, the uneven effects of this development emerged as problematic as we talked with residents (including some involved in the project). For example, while the British NGO provided training and work in historical preservation methods, this was seasonal work and the training did not necessarily transfer to other work opportunities outside the village. And the tourist season was mainly limited to the summer months, leaving residents with less income during the winter. Hearing firsthand from different villagers about the complexities of development in this village created both curiosity and conflict within me related to this tension between economic development, tourism and "heritage." The visual and felt impressions of this dubious notion of what counts as "heritage," particularly in the form of traditional handicrafts like those displayed in the historically preserved homes and at the fortified church in Viscri, most appealed to me as I traveled through Romania. Yet what residents conveyed to us about the unevenness of development and seasonal work during fieldwork in Viscri marked for me the beginning of a deepening awareness of heritage as an inherently problematic concept, one that had both positive and negative effects for the local communities who often had limited involvement in the planning and execution of heritage development projects driven by outsiders.

Nevertheless, it was my desire to experience the material aspects of “heritage” as I saw it that found me waiting for our guide outside Ioan Grămadă’s museum with three of my American colleagues. Our Romanian guide finally emerged with the museum’s proprietor and we entered to his warm welcome, our guide acting as interpreter. Ioan approached us smiling happily, extending his hand to welcome each of us personally. He was obviously pleased to have visitors and it seemed to me that his excitement at our very presence matched mine. His welcome is one I have come to recognize elsewhere as “typically Romanian.” In my visits to Romanian villages, I have time and again been part of small groups of foreigners who show up on the doorstep of a village home, often unannounced, only to be welcomed in and entertained for some amount of time, especially by pensioners who seemed to enjoy a somewhat captive audience receptive to knowing about his or her life story and experiences. In characteristic Romanian fashion, this man was just as open and welcoming, telling us that he was happy to have us as guests in his home, and ready to show us his museum on a detailed tour that, unbeknownst to us, would last just over two hours.

Ioan began, and our guide translated his words, with a brief history of the museum, because, he explained, the first question that everyone who visits wants to know is why he and his family started this museum. He explained that it was for three reasons. First, the collection included things from his family that had ethnographic value in addition to their sentimental value as he judged it. Second, it provided an example of a traditional home from Bucovina, which is the region in which the museum is located. As he explained it, people from this region were proud and hardworking and they wanted to have their own complete households so that they did not have to borrow things from others, so his effort was to emulate these qualities in the form of a home that would be owned by a wealthy family in the region. The final reason was that the museum spoke for his family. It was made up of a

collection that has been amassed over 34 years, and now numbers more than 8,400 pieces displayed in more than 16 rooms. If he hadn't collected these items, he told us, they would have been lost. And it was with this introduction that our tour of the museum began.

The first area we visited was the *sala de port popular* (room of folk costumes) a large room containing an extensive collection of traditional clothing hung along the walls and displayed as the outfits would be worn—minus the bodies that would normally flesh them out, though there were some small dolls modeling doll-sized peasant outfits. This was an area that, according to him, “belonged to the woman” that included a weaving room and the materials and tools that would be used to make the clothes on display – from yarn-making implements and weaving looms to early examples of sewing machines. Our proprietor described in some detail the women's and men's clothing, how they were made, how they were worn for different events, ceremonies, holidays, and seasons. His extensive and detailed descriptions focused on the age of items, emphasizing the length of time and amount of labor to complete each piece and often noting what good shape they were still in.

At one point our guide translated, “It was not only necessity that was pushing the women to work but also for the love for beauty and for things that were nice for the eyes.” This notion grabbed me as a visual artist and knitter who dabbled in spinning, weaving and other needlecrafts. But I engaged in these crafts in a time when the raw materials—yarn and thread—were readily available for purchase. Despite not having to card, dye and spin my own wool, my interest in textiles gave me an insider understanding of how much time it took to create each piece, even with such technological shortcuts. I no longer had the need to make my own sweaters, but I did so precisely because of the beauty and uniqueness of the end product, which allowed for a kind of self-expression unparalleled by mass-production. My field notes from that time indicated that this led me to imagine the peasant women who

made the objects I saw at this museum as being fueled by a similar aesthetic desire. I started to feel a kinship with these women through an affective surface created in the moment.

I took every opportunity offered to look more closely at the details of and to touch the garments, because when else would I have been able to come into such close contact with such amazing objects? And while I was very interested in what the proprietor had to say, I remember finding myself listening to him with a sort of dissociated interest as I personally connected to these material objects. While I wanted to understand the details of what and how these objects were used, how these clothes were made and worn, I also just wanted to be with them. As I touched and handled the textiles, I found myself thinking more about what it was like to be a woman in this village in these past times, *pe vremuri* in Romanian, translated as “past times” by this guide. What was it to have the skill and the time to make such beautiful objects? Where were they worn? Did their husbands and sons appreciate the labor that their wives put into making their clothing and other household objects? How did these things survive so long, to make it here to this museum in the 21st century? As I re-listened to the audio tour of this museum, these questions floated around in my head, as I vaguely remembered them doing during the visit, keeping me from noting any of the details being provided by the proprietor. As reflected in my field notes, at times I was more interested in the craft and material dimension of these objects than I was with the mechanics of their life stories. Listening again to the audio recording of the tour visit, even nearly six years later, evoked within me the feelings that I had while moving through this local museum.

Our time in the room of folk costumes was done after about forty minutes, and we assumed that this was the end of the tour. Somewhat to the chagrin of my male colleagues, we moved next into another building, a traditional house, which our proprietor described as

an extension of the “woman’s space.” Several generations of his family, including he and his wife, had lived in this 200-year-old house, which contained an entrance hallway, a kitchen and pantry, a sleeping room and a *sala mare* (“big” or “great” room). The tour continued in the kitchen, describing how different implements were used to make traditional dishes, suggesting a symbiotic relationship between household implements and food products. I tried to focus on the proprietor as he was speaking, listening for Romanian food words that I might recognize. While I was still captivated by the house and its onslaught of objects, covering the kitchen from floor to ceiling, I was also getting hungry and my attention waned. I did my best to keep my focus, especially knowing that our guide was working hard to translate this proprietor’s museum story.

We moved into the next room, which was the most overtly personal. It contained religious icons, in memory of his parents, especially his father, who was a church cantor and “who prayed for hours each day.” The room included a large selection of personal photographs as well. I read in my notes that I felt a bit lost in this room, which I described as being somewhat dark and small, and I noted my compulsion to study the array of personal photographs, trying to make connections between my knowledge of Romania and of what I observed in the small, framed black and white images. Ioan told us the photos were from the 1940s and 1950s and showed his friends and family members, engaging in life celebrations like weddings or holidays, but also some more candid snapshots. I wanted to find connections with these people and their pasts but could not do it with Ioan’s narrative. I remember wanting to take everything in, the visual field of the museum objects, the smell of fresh country air tinged with the scent of animals, the sounds of dogs barking in the distance, the feeling of the breeze wafting into the house on the strong beams of late day sun that felt cool and fresh in contrast to the still, warm air of the house. My field notes revealed that

visiting these old spaces lovingly prepared made me feel alive to the sense of meaning available to me within this museum because of this proprietor, his memories and his knowledge of village and peasant life. It stirred something in me that went beyond simply understanding the history of Romanian villagers or even the history of this village or this family or this man providing the commentary. In my notes, I recognized the experience as a special opportunity, that I could stand in the space that had been inhabited by members of this family for over two hundred years, in which they lived their lives, which were often physically demanding lives. The contrast between this imagined peasant existence and my own life was in so many ways an orientation that is very typically American when placed within the contexts of a European peasant one. I felt connected to this place, this museum and Ioan, its proprietor, but also to this sense of peasantness that his museum and narrative conveyed to me. As I noted in my field notes, “Does anything like this [museum] experience exist in the US?”

My contemplation was interrupted as we moved into another room which the proprietor also called the *sala mare* or big room. This was the room for showing off, where guests were received and shown the most beautiful, valuable and impressive things a family owns. I was enlivened, as this room felt a bit cheerier than the last. It included artifacts ranging from rugs, textiles and traditional furniture to coins, painted eggs and books, and we were getting shorter descriptions of each from Ioan. The tour was lengthy and we were all getting tired, it seemed, though Ioan’s energy carried us. The tour’s sequential logic emerged through Ioan’s story-telling performance. To rush out would have been rude. Since our guide knew this man and would be visiting him again, we had to be patient. And even though I, too, was getting tired and somewhat numb to all the descriptions, knowledge about

the past exceeding my ability to comprehend, I still wanted to take in every moment of being in the space of this museum.

We moved outside towards several smaller outbuildings at the rear of the property, old barns and sheds, to what our proprietor called the *sala de barbate*, translated by our interpreter as “the area of the men” (perhaps somewhat to the pleasure of my male colleagues). In this area, we learned about agriculture, carpentry, making fires, sleighs, wheel-making, barrel-making, and bee-keeping—all those things that men do that often keeps them busy outside of the home and in the fields. I dissociated from the tour somewhat at this point, in part because I was less interested in these activities but also because by now, we had been touring this museum for an hour and a half. I listened less to the descriptions and instead focused on looking at all the tools and implements on display, hung floor-to-ceiling. These old objects were beautiful to me because of their patinas of use, rust, decay. Yet they still held together and many of them could still be used today, if there were a reason to use them.

There was one last surprise for us at the end of the yard—a small outbuilding that could be called the technology room, as it included various gadgets and devices from the 20th century such as telephones, a telegraph, typewriters, copiers, cameras and darkroom equipment, items related to the railroad, phonographs and radios. In my field notes, I noted that one of my colleagues referred to this room, somewhat affectionately, as a Romanian version of a “man-cave.” Our proprietor explained that he included these objects in the museums to show visitors that people in the region were open to new things; that “they wanted to hear the news and to be involved.” So these objects as much reflect a history of life in the region as all the others I saw during our visit.

Finally, the tour ended and we were ushered to the gift shop near the front of the property. This was the time to purchase souvenirs to remember our visit. As we walked towards the shop, our guide told us that while they do not charge a visitor fee, we should leave something for them. At her suggestion, we each donated twenty lei (equivalent then to \$6 US), which was a bit more than what we might pay to visit other ethnographic museums of a similar size. I was personally happy to pay extra for this experience because of the energy that Ioan had put into his museum and for the time he spent with us during the tour. Eager to cap off my museum experience with a purchase, I was unable to find anything that stood out to me from the small selection of mass-produced Romanian regional handicrafts—carved wooden spoons, textiles, ceramics—that I had seen before at other tourist shops. However, I did locate a few postcards for purchase and the museum proprietor gave me a copy of a full-color booklet about the museum (in Romanian) as well as a DVD, which upon watching later I learned featured a tour of the local museum given by the proprietor and his wife in full traditional peasant costume, also in Romanian.

My colleagues and I, and especially our guide, were exhausted from this lengthy, immersive museum tour. It felt like we had just run a marathon, and in a way we had. Our museum maker Ioan Grămadă moved us through huge swaths of the past, through gendered representations of what daily life might have been like, the kinds of work we might have done, where and when certain outfits would have been worn and tools used, and how we would have been absorbed into the patterns of life in past times. He described memories of his family, his loved ones, as well as more generalized memories of a shared past that has since become for me emblematic of Romania. My exhaustion at the completion of this visit to Ioan Grămadă's museum was overcome by how the overall experience stood out to me as worthy of further investigation. I had the presence of mind to audio record this museum

tour and took field notes both during and after the museum visit. And as it turned out, the visit to Ioan Grămadă's museum in Câmpulung Moldovenesc represented a first step in pursuing more in-depth study of this kind of museum in Romania and ultimately my dissertation.

2.6.2. Preliminary Research: Visiting RECOMESPAR museum sites

Since the initial visit to Ioan Gramadă's museum described above, visits to four additional RECOMESPAR museums in 2014 and 2016 have informed this study. These subsequent visits established the importance of the tour narrative as an essential component of the vernacular museum experience and allowed me to further develop the research methodology, especially autoethnography. These visits are briefly described below.

In 2014, using the RECOMESPAR website, I identified the museum in Horodnic de Jos (MUS_20) as a good site for a pilot study because of my familiarity with Suceava County from field work in 2011. I had also visited the area as a tourist in 2007 to see the painted monasteries for which the region is known. I felt that my previous knowledge of this region would allow me to contextualize my findings within an understanding of the region as a tourist destination. Sites were also chosen for convenience. For instance, because the airport in Suceava was closed, I drove to Suceava from the city of Cluj. Using the RECOMESPAR map, I was able to learn that the museum in Feldru (MUS_15) was somewhat on the way between Cluj and Suceava, so I added it as an additional site of study though I had relatively little knowledge of the area. The experiences in 2014 revealed the knowledge orders of the makers in Horodnic de Jos as that contrasted old and new, gendered labor and the different areas of the property that defined the museum and those that did not (Klimaszewski, 2016a). This visit also tested the methodology and research process employed in the current study (presented in Chapter 4).

The success of the pilot project led me to return to the field in 2016 for visits to museums in Sibiu County, an area which I had visited in 2007 and 2008. Sibiu County held several RECOMESPAR museums in relative proximity to each other and the demographics of the museum makers in these cases provided good contrast to the museums visited in 2014. Where the 2014 museums visited were family affairs, where married couples and extended family participated in the making of the museum, the 2016 museums included individual proprietors. One of the 2016 proprietors (MUS_12) was an architect in his thirties interested in historic preservation who also acted as the president of RECOMESPAR during that time. The second 2016 proprietor (MUS_09) was an older woman who had once served as the town's mayor who worked on her own to maintain her museum. Findings from these two museum visits were employed in a comparative study that illustrated how these makers create spaces in which seemingly peripheral knowledge finds its place through the personalization of institutionalized museum practices (Klimaszewski 2018). A summary of these previous RECOMESPAR museum site visits is included in Table 2.1.

The recounting of site selection over the years of my recurrent field visits demonstrates how attempts to select a museum sites arose within the context of ethnographic research approaches and prior travel experiences. This account of my experiences visiting museum sites in 2011, 2014 and 2016 also helped to frame site selection for the current study.¹² This information is presented to ground the personal observations presented next.

¹² Findings from 2011 fieldwork were published in Klimaszewski and Nyce (2014). Findings from the pilot study in 2014 were published in Klimaszewski (2016b). Findings from 2016 fieldwork were published in Klimaszewski (2018).

Table 2.1: Museum sites visited 2011-2016

Date of visit	Local Museum (ID)	Location (County)	Proprietor	Criteria/justification for inclusion
22 June 2011	<i>Muzeul Etnografic Ioan Grămadă</i> (MUS_19)	CÂMPULUNG MOLDOVENESC (Suceava)	Ioan Grămadă	“First contact” site; introduced by Romanian tour guide. Knowledge of this site led to knowledge of RECOMESPAR program and selection of remainder of museum sites. Maker is pensioner, former mayor of the town.
10 May 2014	<i>Colecția Etnografică George Nechiti</i> (MUS_15)	FELDRU (Bistrița-Năsăud)	George Nechiti and family	Geographic location (on the way to study site); proprietor includes his own artworks/creation in museum; former policeman; son and wife are also involved in collecting/museum.
13 & 22 May 2014	<i>Colecția Etnografică Felicia și Dionizie Olenici</i> (MUS_20)	HORODNIC DE JOS (Suceava)	Felicia & Dionizie Olenici	Familiarity with location; proximity to existing tourist routes; entrepreneurial spirit: guesthouse and amateur astronomy activities also on property.
26 May 2016	<i>Muzeul Interetnic al Văii Hărtibaciului</i> (MUS_12)	ALTÂNA (Sibiu)	Eugen Vaida	Proprietor was first head of RECOMESPAR; young (mid-30s); professionally trained architect; village is former Saxon village.
27 May 2016	<i>Muzeul PASTORAL</i> (MUS_09)	JINA (Sibiu)	Ileana Morariu	Different tourism opportunities in Sibiu county (i.e. not Saxon tourism); female proprietor, former mayor of the town.

2.6.3. Vernacular museums as a phenomenon of study: Personal observations

My first visit to a Romanian vernacular museum in 2011 stood out to me because of the aesthetic connection it created in the experience of vernacular museum objects. This connection was created not only through the appeal of these traditional objects but also in the more classical sense of aesthetics as the felt or perceived sensory qualities of Romanian handicrafts that resonated with me. It is these lasting sensory (visual as well as tactile) impressions that my visits to Romania have left upon me that continue to resonate. While in

Romania, I could experience examples of the country's traditional handiwork displayed, it seemed, anywhere I might look, often in cities, but even more so in the countryside.

Traditional, hand-made items were displayed quite commonly both formally and informally along the routes that I traveled. These might take the form of decoration at guesthouses where we stayed or stopped for a meal; they could be a "museum corner" in the village's city hall or in a local school; an in-situ museum-like display in a historic church; or a woman's dowry consisting of handmade and hand-embroidered household textiles (blouses, rugs, blankets, pillows, doilies, etc.) displayed in the "good room" or "clean room" in a villager's home (Iuga, 2010). This was in addition to the relatively numerous ethnographic and village museums that I visited both in small towns and larger cities. But it was also in addition to a couple of small, private museums of various degrees of formality that I had come across, usually located in a portion of the proprietor's home or property that are the object of this study. My experiences of these displays felt unexpected and random, as if they existed as spontaneous expressions of identity and memory, heritage and tradition. These encounters added to my overall impression of Romania as something of a magical place (a sentiment that was and continues to be pervasive in Romanian tourist literature). In many of the public and private spaces I moved through in Romania, handicrafts were not precious and isolated or placed within vitrines to be admired from a distance (though there certainly were examples of this type of more formal museum display). Rather, they were integral to the textures of the countryside in restaurants, cafes and shops but also even in libraries and city halls as well as in people's homes. Handmade items were used, worn and admired. I saw them being shared and experienced often on display but sometimes even in use as I was served coffee or a meal in traditional (or at least traditional-looking) ceramics. These objects remained in circulation or were recreations of lost pieces that remained as part of the fabric

of everyday routines. Romania was a place that resonated with me because of the experiences it afforded me, especially those punctuated by what I have come to recognize as a particular Romanian style. It felt to me as if this traditional aesthetic saturated all aspects of daily life.

Though I could not have expressed it at the time, two things stood out to me about my museum visit that I understood later as my impetus for pursuing research of vernacular museums as a phenomenon of study: the unexpectedness of finding such an extensive collection on display in a seemingly random village property, and the level of involvement and enthusiasm of the proprietor displaying and sharing his collection with visitors. These characteristics also stood out to the researchers who, as part of the VCP, worked to legitimate these museums. It seemed to me as if the museum space represented some sort of a culmination in that it somehow took all of those disparate visual and sensory bits of heritage and tradition and made them all of a piece. The vernacular museum felt to me like a space that cohered and amplified the effects of traditional objects. What was their appeal?

One notable discovery came during a research visit in 2014, when I noticed that my Romanian friend and translator often interpreted a Romanian phrase *pe vremuri* as “back in the day” during a visit to the local museum in Horodnic de Jos, the site of the pilot study (Klimaszewski, 2016a). When I asked her for the Romanian equivalent that she was translating, she explained that the phrase was *pe vremuri*, more literally “past times.” A different interpreter translated this phrase as “days of yore” and yet another translated it literally as “past times” or as “in the past.” *Pe vremuri* seemed to refer to a nonspecific, a temporal sense of the past—the “before time.” It seemed to point to a time that encompassed a way of life that was disappearing if it was not already lost, a nostalgic space. Vernacular museums seemed to create spaces in which one can experience *pe vremuri* or

temporality by design. These were spaces locally situated in the present that created links to this generalized past through the collection and arrangement of objects. Some of these objects might link to specific points in time, either through a recording of their age or because they bore their year of creation. Other objects were marked through a connection with more specific and datable personal or historical events. Overall, these moments of relational time created for me a kind of museum experience free from excessive labeling and the product was in need of explaining in the vein of Nicolau's (1994/2018) mother museums and not father museums (Section 2.1.4).

Vernacular museums are expressions of identity, tradition and heritage, but my visits to these personal and local museums were distinct from my experiences at more official museums in Romania. These experiences led me to consider a number of questions. Why and how did my experiences visiting vernacular museums feel fundamentally different to me from the official museum visits I had experienced before? Was it the informality of the museum tour, the novelty of experiencing someone's home-turned-museum and the enthusiasm and passion of the museum makers that made these places into a special experience for me? Still other questions began to emerge: What drives a person to undertake the monumental task of starting their own museum? What does it mean when objects—many of which were originally intended for the trash heap—are collected and given new life in these museums? In the 21st century, why is it meaningful for me, as an outsider, to experience how village life in Romania might have been *pe vremuri*? And why does this matter to the collectors or to other visitors to these museums?

These guiding questions formed the basis for the current study, beginning with the review of literature that will situate this study within the literature on vernacular museum and new museology that emphasizes museums as experiences of meaning-making for visitors.

CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The phenomenon of Romanian vernacular museums conceives them as spaces of knowledge-making for visitors and makers and in the broader contexts of legitimization of Romania's cultural "heritage" institutions. This literature review first presents the relevant trends and developments in the literature on the phenomenon of vernacular museums (Section 3.1). Subsequent sections build on the discussions of vernacular museums to interpret them in the context of museums as grassroots expressions of culture (Section 3.2); of museum practices around which aspects relate to vernacular museums (Section 3.3); and museum visitor experiences (Section 3.4). Section 3.5 summarizes the findings of the literature review and identifies gaps in the literature that will be addressed through the research objectives of the current study, presented in the conclusion (Section 3.6) of this chapter.

3.1. Literature on vernacular museums

This review centers around a small but growing body of literature that studies vernacular museums. The term vernacular museum itself has been used by Maja Mikula (2015) as discussed in the introduction (Chapter 1, Section 1.1.1). The literature encompasses a number of studies across disciplines and traditions of museum scholarship, including: anthropology (Mateescu, 2009; Mateoni & Marinescu, 2009a; Mihăilescu, 2009; Pănoiu, 2017); heritage studies (Klimaszewski & Nyce, 2014; Mikula, 2015; Moncunill-Piñas, 2017); history (Stone-Gordon, 2010); and museum studies (Candlin, 2016; Jannelli, 2012; Klimaszewski, 2018; Taimre, 2013). The literature on vernacular museums is theoretically diverse and distributed across disciplines suggesting that the relevance of this emergent institutional form is a new object of knowledge just being established in museology. Relevant works were located through footnote chasing and word-of-mouth as well as through

searches on Google Scholar and Academia.edu, indicating that in many instances, scholars studying this phenomenon are finding and building upon each other's work through an informal network, given that the object itself is an emergent form.

The instances of vernacular museums are geographically dispersed, and studies focus on museums in: Colombia and Spain (Moncunill-Piñas, 2017); Estonia (Taimre, 2013); Finland (Mikula, 2015); Germany (Jannelli, 2012); Romania (Klimaszewski, 2018; Klimaszewski & Nyce, 2014; Mateescu, 2009; Mihăilescu, 2009; Pănoiu, 2017); the United Kingdom (Candlin, 2016); and the United States (Klimaszewski, 2018; Stone-Gordon, 2010). The majority of studies focus on a small number of a specific type of museum, analyzing between one and ten cases. Candlin (2016) and Stone-Gordon (2010) each survey several dozen examples of the phenomenon. Scholars diversely conceptualize these museums and forms of museum-making as: amateur (Moncunill-Piñas, 2017); do-it-yourself (Taimre, 2013); emergent (Klimaszewski, 2018); everyday (Moncunill-Piñas, 2017; Stone-Gordon, 2010); local (Mihăilescu, 2009); micromuseums (Candlin, 2016); naïve (Pănoiu, 2017); proximity heritage (Mateoni & Marinescu, 2009b); vernacular (Mikula, 2015); wild (Jannelli, 2012); and unofficial (Klimaszewski & Nyce, 2014). That no unified terminology yet exists to capture this phenomenon emphasizes the contrasts between the practices employed and knowledges presented in these alternative museums when contrasted with those of established institutional museums. At the same time, the breadth of examples of this type of museum found internationally emphasizes how these private, personal museums represent an ongoing emergent and recognized cultural trend.

A shared set of characteristics emerges from these works to identify vernacular museums as a recognizable form, including: their small physical size (e.g. often displayed in one room or one home); their limited staffing (e.g. run by one or a handful of unpaid or

minimally paid staff); their limited scope, usually displaying objects around a single, localized theme or subject; and that they are privately-owned and funded (and that some are not commercial enterprises). They may not receive funds directly from government sources and are self-named and designated as “museums” by their creators whose makers who have little or no professional museum training.¹³ These characteristics further juxtapose vernacular museums with their institutional counterparts, particularly as they relate to the scope and scale of these museums, as well as to the kinds of knowledge they present.

Vernacular museums are designated as museums by their makers/owners, whose individual adoption of museum practices are made visible in part through the physical appearances of these museums. Described by Candlin (2016) as distinctive in their “radical peculiarity” (p. 170), the micromuseums she studies are described as: “materially and visually embedded in their environment. They are not removed from other types of buildings and are not immediately recognizable as museums” (Candlin, 2016, p. 151). The self-designation of “museum” does not appear to correlate with a standardized outcome for what these museums look like (see also Mikula, 2015). Instead, makers curate and display collections according to their own distinctive vision and at the same time, their creations may appear naturalized within the existing physical settings. Anthropologist Oana Mateescu (2009) describes something similar in the Romanian museums she has studied, explaining that “mechanical decontextualization of artifacts is minimal . . . or even nonexistent” in these museums and that “it is almost incorrect to identify them as museums, precisely because the use of this word is part of their technology of persuasion” (p. 55). These observations suggest that the transformation of museum practice by these makers relies to some extent on

¹³ This review excludes literature on museums created by artists. Though these works are often cited by the studies reviewed here, I have omitted them because artists-as-museum-makers often demonstrate a familiarity with formal museum practices in a way that is different from the absence of familiarity demonstrated by the makers who are the subjects of the current study.

the contrasts between the personal museum creation and its institutional counterparts, a repositioning of museum practice outside of the institutional milieu.

That their creations are self-designated as museums (Mihalache, 2009a; Mikula, 2015; Moncunill-Piñas, 2017; Taimre, 2013) also suggests that vernacular museum makers attach their creations to the museum form intentionally. This seems to be at least in part a way of conferring legitimacy upon their creations through their own interpretations of what counts as museum practice (Mikula, 2015). However, some museum makers are not able to provide definitive answers as to why they chose to create a museum and to name it as such (Taimre, 2013). This may be a reflection of what Susan Crane (1997) describes as *Musealisierung* or the “internal awareness of the museum function” (p. 57) which shapes a shared assumption about how museums are supposed to work and how museum experience is supposed to happen. This awareness is internalized by museum makers when they craft their museums based on their own understandings of what a museum should be. In the current study, vernacular museums are considered not only as expressions of their maker’s understandings of tradition, history and the past; they are also expressions of how their makers have internalized the notion of what counts as a museum. In other words, studying vernacular museums becomes a study of how the museum form itself becomes meaningful within personal contexts. Legitimizing not just the museum maker’s worldview or aspects of the museum form, but at the same time this becomes a statement about where this form falls short of the idealized and internalized image of a museum. Self-designation also suggests that vernacular museums may mediate a particular kind of distinctiveness, resonating with the uniqueness ascribed to vernacular museums by their makers, that is at once covert and overt in the expressions found in the spaces of these museums.

It is possible that the intimate scale and personal interpretations at work in vernacular museums more readily allow these self-designated institutions to exemplify visitor-centric, experience-based, grassroots and inclusive approaches characteristic of the “new museology” (Heijnen, 2010; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 2000; Silverman, 2010; Vergo, 1989). Within the new museological contexts, museums are correlated less with place, as a building or collections storage facility, and more as spaces of processes, activities and experiences (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006a). This shift in understanding what museums are for has been conceptualized in the museum studies literature describing museums as a “social technology” (Kratz & Karp, 2006). Corrine Kratz and Ivan Karp (2006) employed the term social technology in order to:

. . . shift attention toward the ongoing complex of social processes and transformations that are generated by and based in museums, museological processes that can be multi-sited and ramify far beyond museum settings. ‘Museum frictions’ incorporates the idea of the museum as a varied and often changing set of practices, processes, and interactions. This sense of the museum as a social technology is a crucial addition to considering the museum as an institution of public culture and the different meanings and histories of the concept of the museum. (Kratz & Karp, 2006, p. 2)

“Frictions” suggests museology’s self-awareness of museums as sites of conflict and contrast while “social technology” positions the institution as a systematic mode of participation comprising a set of “practices, processes and interactions” that have become emblematic of the museum experience. From this perspective, the museum as an institutional form parallels how its processes and practices reflect and refract the wider social fabric within which they are embedded. Vernacular museum makers similarly engage with the museum concept in how they self-designate their creations as museums and in how they apply museum practices. The choice to create a museum thus inserts each individual maker’s interpretation of the museum’s function into the wider conversations about what Kratz and Karp (2006) describe

above as the “different meanings and histories of the concept of the museum” (p. 2). This direct and intentional engagement by their makers means that vernacular museums are emerging within this ‘classic’ friction recognized by museum theorists because they exemplify how individuals select, interpret and apply museum practices. Therefore, vernacular museums and the literature dealing specifically with grassroots museums needs to be contextualized within the larger concerns and debates of the new museology.

Though vernacular museums contrast with the scope and scale of institutional museums, vernacular museums exemplify one way of understanding how these processes and practices play out writ small, as the museum as a social technology is employed and appropriated by individual citizens towards their own self-defined goals, which is discussed next.

3.2. Vernacular museums as grassroots culture

Several of the studies on vernacular museums describe them in terms of inclusive or grassroots cultural participation (Mihăilescu, 2009; Mikula, 2015; Stone-Gordon, 2010) as discussed in the following quotes. Their makers draw on the cultural and social capital inherent in the museum form in a way that challenges the established dichotomies of public/private and amateur/professional as they tend to operate in institutional museums (Candlin, 2016; Mikula, 2015; Moncunill-Piñas, 2017; Taimre, 2013). Mikula (2015) describes the museums she studies in Finland as vernacular in order to emphasize how they “encapsulat(e) the ‘domesticity’ of the [museum-making] practice, while at the same time pointing to [their] grassroots public politics and its role within the broader ethno-national discourse” (p. 757-8). In other words, museum practices occur within the domestic space of the home but are adapted in a way that enables democratic participation, providing the maker with a voice within wider public/political realms. Historian Tammy Stone-Gordon’s

(2010) study of private history exhibits within the United states parallels Mikula's (2015) study of vernacular museums. Stone-Gordon (2010) conceptualizes her work studying local history exhibitions established within privately owned spaces made publicly accessible as presenting "neglected history" which she describes as "a broad attempt to replace the grand historical narrative not with bits and fragments of a fractured national history but with a fundamental belief in the necessity of intergroup dialogue to the survival of democracy" (p. 115). What both of these scholars emphasize is in part the small, intimate scale and local scope of vernacular museums. These are the sites that allow museum makers and visitors to interact on a person-to-person level. Employing museum practices within private, domestic spaces contrasts with the production of grand narratives (Bennett, 1995) and authorized heritage discourses (Smith, 2006) that have historically been privileged within institutional museums. Both Stone-Gordon (2010) and Mikula (2015) emphasize how the vernacular museum form becomes a way to insert private or personal histories that are often neglected or otherwise marginalized in a way that demonstrates the faceted nature of interpretive history, heritage and memory at the personal level. From this perspective, vernacular museums represent the efforts of small, private museums as a mode of democratic participation through which both makers and visitors can interactively share stories and create dialogues around the facets of history and heritage that are important to them.

In a parallel vein, museum professional Liisi Taimre (2013) describes the makers of the "do-it-yourself" museums she has studied in Harju County, Estonia as inserting themselves into existing cultural dialogues in a way that could generate conflict between themselves and institutional museums. The tension has been present in institutional museums as they have shifted from the "great collecting phase" to one that focuses on

visitors, a shift described by museum studies scholar Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's (2000) as the development of the post-museum, which she describes as:

The production of events and exhibitions as conjoint dynamic processes enables the incorporation into the museum of many voices and many perspectives. Knowledge is no longer unified and monolithic; it becomes fragmented and multi-vocal. There is no necessary unified perspective - rather a cacophony of voices may be heard that present a range of views, experiences and values. The voice of the museum is one among many. (p. 152)

The post-museum Hooper-Greenhill describes is no longer preoccupied with presenting essential truths as museums encourage a “cacophony of voices.” Vernacular museums add their voices and perspectives to this dissonant conversation in a way that seems to further distribute museal power because each vernacular museum reflects the vision of an individual maker that, when added to this open conversation, further widen the “range of views, experiences and values” as knowledge that can be included in the post-museum. This assertion dovetails with how vernacular museums have been conceptualized as sites of democratic cultural participation within the extant literature. In Hooper-Greenhill's (2000) post-museum, knowledge is fragmented, decentralized and varied. In the context of participatory culture, the production of knowledge through vernacular museums as alternative museal spaces amplifies the voices of individual citizens who are active within this realm because they are set apart from mainstream cultural institutions. This emphasizes a distinction between vernacular and institutional museums, the nature of which the current project intends to illuminate, in part through the study of the bottom-up museum-making approaches described next.

3.3. Adopting and adapting museum practices

Though most of the makers of the vernacular museums presented in the selected body of literature seem to have self-designated their creations as museums, they have not

appropriated the museum concept wholesale, but have adopted and adapted museum practices selectively towards the maker's own ends, defining for themselves how museum expertise is qualified within individual examples of the phenomenon (Candlin, 2016; Klimaszewski, 2018; Mateescu, 2009; Moncunill-Piñas, 2017; Pănoiu, 2017). In her comparative study of experiences visiting three emergent museums in Romania and one in the US, Klimaszewski (2018) describes in part what these museum makers do as a “personalization of institutionalized museum practices” (p. 138) that situates knowledge through an individual maker's agency and maker as a locus of knowledge that is expressed through the museum. It is the relationship between the museum maker and his or her created environment that allows the maker to express his or her knowledge, particularly through the museum tour. The museum maker assembles a collection of objects and arranges them in a way that allows the maker to communicate his or her worldview to visitors. Personalization emphasizes the adaptation of museum practices according to individually expressed and constructed defined needs and requirements for the museum and not necessarily towards the standards of accepted best practices more common in institutional museums, with which vernacular museum makers may or may not be familiar. The museums in Spain and Columbia (Moncunill-Piñas, 2017) are described as being emblematic of Michel de Certeau's model of simultaneous production/consumption, with the maker emerging as the main beneficiary of these applied museum practices. The amateur makers in Moncunill-Piñas (2017) studies are conceptualized as being both empowered by and beholden to the museum concept as they: “(perform) microscopic modifications in the historical functioning of the institutionalized practice” (p. 15). Microscopic reflects the intimate and personal scale at which vernacular museums operate, where their effects and impacts are highly localized and individualized around their makers (Klimaszewski, 2018).

This intimacy of scale is further foregrounded in art historian Fiona Candlin's (2016) study of micromuseums, her term for the small, independent, mainly single-subject museums located throughout the United Kingdom. Candlin (2016) presents the makers of micromuseums as exemplifying a different quality and a kind of expertise that is "rarely acquired . . . through scholarly learning and indeed it would be difficult to know where to study some of the subjects covered in these collections" (p. 156). Both the scale and scope of these museums can be narrow and specialized, but that is robust because of how the expertise emerges through the intensive knowledge work of the maker, a quality also emphasized by anthropologists Maria Mateoni and Rodica Marinescu (2009b). Another anthropologist Anca-Maria Pănoiu (2017) describes something similar. Using the term naïve museology, Pănoiu (2017) observes how the practice of Romanian museum makers she studies: "does not keep step either with the time period in which it is produced, or with an artistic tradition that has been fixed ever since antiquity, or with the expectations and demands of elite" (p. 150). This knowledge as a form of expertise seems primarily concerned with telling a story according to its own logic, echoing Andrea Jannelli's (in Mikula, 2015, p. 768) notion of wildness, where an individual maker's knowledge need only relate to its own rationality. This is another way of suggesting that the adoption of museal practices in vernacular museum contexts is primarily concerned with the museum maker as the locus of knowledge around which vernacular museums need to be studied.

The degree to which individual knowledge is foregrounded as the unique ordering feature in vernacular museums matches individual preferences that are also at work in institutional museums. In her study of how museum processes are implicated in the production of knowledge in institutional museums, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1992) argues that decisions around collecting and display of objects are driven by factors including but

which are not limited to the “interests, enthusiasm and expertise of curation” (p. 6). Hooper-Greenhill reminds us that individual perspectives are always at the core of any interpretive project, even those grounded in established institutional expertise and practices. Vernacular museums allow us to study such practices as they exist in the proverbial wilderness, adopted and adapted by individuals according to their own needs and reflecting their perception of the meaningfulness or usefulness of such processes at a personal, intimate or “micro” level, such museums are understood as a complement and not just a contrast to institutional museums. But what has been less of a focus is the effect of these museums on visitors, which is considered in the next section.

3.4. Museum visitor experiences

Much of the literature on vernacular museums describes visitor experiences generally and with minimal reference to specific impressions of individual visitors. Key findings emphasize the direct interactions of visitors with museum makers towards the co-creation of knowledge in situ (Candlin, 2016; Mateoniu & Marinescu, 2009b; Mikula, 2015; Stone-Gordon, 2010). Most if not all of the vernacular museum literature reviewed here emphasizes how these museums cannot exist without their makers as the binder who not only articulates but embodies the museum’s overall mission, which is one quality that makes these museums captivating for visitors (in particular noted by Mateescu, 2009). Candlin (2016) describes how micromuseums “conjure a connection (with the collector) whose collection forms the basis for the display” (p. 173). Mihăilescu (2009) describes vernacular museums as productions of “individual, compulsive heritage” sometimes bordering on madness in contrast to more traditional, collective, “rule-governed heritage” (p. 12), as shown by Jannelli’s (2012) wild museums and in Pănoiu’s (2017) naïve museology. Candlin (2016) further emphasizes how these kinds of museums position themselves as “a world

apart. [Their] rather uncanny quality is intensified when the visitor is surrounded by the packed displays that prohibit any narrative construction” (p. 182). Candlin (2016) further employs Michel Foucault’s idea of the heterotopia to describe her micromuseums as spaces that “lie outside all places and are simultaneously localizable” (p. 182) in a way that contrasts with historic universalizing tendencies of institutional museums. These characterizations of vernacular museums as other worlds that transcend place and time suggests that further study is necessary for a deeper understanding of the ways in which individual visitors relate to the idiosyncratic knowledge found within these museums and whether or how these personal, individual expressions of heritage knowledge matter to visitors. Because of the intimate settings in which they are created, vernacular museums represent an instrument for understanding museum visitor experiences within new and experimental museological contexts, even those in institutional museums. As part of this conceptual shift initiated by new museology, visitors to institutional museums are now understood as engaging in acts of meaning-making with museum objects (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 2000; Silverman, 2010). This shift means that visitors are no longer characterized as passive receivers of discrete messages conveyed by exhibits of objects selected from the repository by a curator and arranged in order to tell a specific story that conveys an essential truth; in contrast, knowledge is understood to be co-created by visitors and curators alike (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000), echoing the vernacular museum studies cited above. Nevertheless, because of the prevalence of the transmission model of knowledge transfer assumed to happen within museums in the professional museum literature, the tendency in the curatorial literature has been to focus on museums in the more Foucauldian sense as sites of power that attempt to control how knowledge is presented and received in the museum (Bennett, 1995, 2004;

Stocking, Jr., 1985). These are classic studies that influence the curatorial practice and critical studies.

Part of the problem is that elements of museum experiences, while deeply felt by the visitors, are often difficult for them to describe. In her work on numinous experiences between visitors and objects in museums, Kiersten Latham (2009, 2013) describes museum experiences as “dynamic, transactive . . . holistic and lived through every part of a person’s senses and intellect” (2013, p. 17). This is in part because the museum experience goes well beyond the goal of education and learning that have tended to be the focus of museum programming. Jan Packer and Roy Ballantyne (2016), for instance, have developed a multifaceted model of the visitor experience that identifies ten facets: physical, sensory, restorative, introspective, transformative, hedonic, emotional, relational, spiritual and cognitive (p. 136). These findings emphasize how museum experiences create new knowledge, made meaningful through a wide variety of deeply personal and embodied experiences with objects. The question then becomes how to get at these deeply meaningful yet hard-to-pin-down experiences through phenomenological inquiries that provide a thick description of the phenomenon as in the representations of the visitors themselves.

It is also important to remember that visitors do not arrive at museums and heritage sites as blank slates but “carrying with them the rest of their lives, their own reasons for visiting and their specific prior experience” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995, p. 5). In other words, visitors bring their life stories with them to museums and heritage sites. It is through their biographies that visitors to heritage sites “cast an intentional arc around themselves” (Selby, 2010, p. 51). This intentional arc of individual biography provides the context through which meaning and knowledge arise in a particular way for each visitor to a heritage site. Duncan Light (2012) describes the cultural work performed by visitors to heritage sites in the

overlapping of practices of being home and away from home, of traveling to and from tourist sites, all of which are framed through each visitor's sense of home. In a somewhat similar sense, David Crouch (2012) describes the experience at heritage sites as one of "flirting" (p. 24) through which he describes these sites as spaces of possibility where visitors can try out something new or different "through a number of threads that connect everyday living and our feeling and thinking" (p. 24). What all of these authors convey is the relation between heritage experiences and visitor's everyday lives. Visits to museums and heritage sites become a way to encounter that which is not familiar. Actively going from familiar to unfamiliar spaces of experience creates possibilities for different kinds of meaning-making precisely because of the disorientation that these new and different spaces provide. As information scholar Theresa Dirndorfer Anderson (2006) has found, such moments of uncertainty are essential to the creative processes of knowledge building in professional settings. In the context of travel, vernacular museums can present opportunities for new relationships between the experiences of home and the everyday, where the experience of the vernacular museum itself is born through how its makers physically link the museum space itself to the space of the home that can then be reinterpreted by visitors.

Visitor experiences at vernacular museums can become interwoven and integrated as meaningful within individual biographies because of how museums and heritage sites offer visitors the opportunity to experiment with different ways of being and doing that might not be possible elsewhere. Further, they offer these experiences in ways that are not incongruous with familiar and new notions of the everyday, as a way to understand through embodied participation in the reality of another, even momentarily. Missing this view of how experiences at museum and heritage sites are deeply intertwined with our everyday lives means missing how visitors become engaged and immersed in the process of understanding

happening at museum and heritage sites. Meaning does not happen to visitors at these sites but is made through them. An increasing number of heritage sites and the potential experiences they may afford leads to what Jerome de Groot (2010) describes as “the development of a visitor body increasingly confident in a multiplicity of heritage experiences and engagements” (p. 102). In other words, the museum experience now has a variety of ways to become located within the context of visitors’ lives. Within the context of this study, vernacular museum visits are understood within the wider travel experiences of visitors.

3.5. Review of literature summary and conclusions

This review has situated the relatively small but growing body of literature on vernacular museums according to themes identified within the museum studies and cultural heritage literatures that reflect how vernacular museums will be investigated in the current project. Research will add to the literature on vernacular museums as an emergent phenomenon and as grassroots expressions of culture in order to better understand how and why museum makers adopt and adapt museum practices for personal ends and as museums are conceptualized within new museology. These themes highlight the dimensions of Romanian vernacular museums as one focus of the current study, which are to further the understanding of museum-making as a personal, individual endeavor of knowledge-making. Romanian vernacular museums exemplify one way in which the naturalized museum concept is employed by a relative museum “amateur” to organize and exhibit objects to tell a personal story in his or her own voice. As such, these amateur museums extend inclusive approaches to museum-making that stress grassroots or democratic roles, blurring the lines between whose voices are “authorized” to speak within the museum realm. In doing so, they have attracted the attention of museum professionals. It is within these developments that

Romanian vernacular museums are emerging and within which they need to be studied as a unique phenomenon but also in the context of this new field of museology.

The literature on vernacular museums also features the meanings of museums for their creators and less directly for (assumed) visitors. Apart from an occasional mention in the literature of what these vernacular museums might mean for an imagined or generalized visitor, the means of interaction and museal experience for specific visitors has not been a focus. Therefore, this study also seeks to identify and describe the experiential opportunities these museums provide for visitors, including the researcher, thus completing the understanding of vernacular museums as individual endeavors of knowledge-making. In that way, this study will fill a gap in the museum studies and new museology literature about visitors' experiences while at the same time adding to the literature on vernacular museums as a phenomenon and in the contexts of new museology more generally. The research objectives used to achieve these goals are presented next.

3.6. Research objectives

The main research objective of this study is to understand vernacular museums as a cultural form and knowledge institutions emerging in Romania's post-communist period.

The main objective will be accomplished through four subsidiary objectives:

- RO1: Understand vernacular museums as a phenomenon
- RO2: Understand vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making for visitors
- RO3: Understand vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making for museum makers and the researcher-as-visitor interactively in the context of the museum tour narratives
- RO4: Understand vernacular museums within contexts of legitimation of Romanian "heritage" through which they are emerging as a new institutional form

Together, these research objectives will provide an understanding of vernacular museums as a phenomenon, as interactive spaces of knowledge-making for visitors and makers, and as an emergent institutional form within the contexts of legitimation of Romania's cultural "heritage." In support of this research objective, the next chapter details the theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and methods that support this study, and outline the research steps and process.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODS

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks, methodologies and methods that informed the research process and fulfilled the research objectives for this study of vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making for museum makers and visitors and the institutional legitimization of these emergent institutions. The chapter is organized in four sections. Section 4.1 presents the suite of theories that ground the conceptual frameworks of knowledge-making and institutional legitimization. Section 4.2 presents the methodological frameworks that describe the ethnographic approach to research that has incorporated autoethnographic methodologies. Section 4.3 presents an integrated summary of the theoretical framework and methodology. Section 4.4 presents the research processes and methods used to accomplish the main and subsidiary research objectives.

4.1. Theoretical frameworks

This research project operates under two assumptions that have guided the selection of theoretical frameworks. The first is that Romanian vernacular museums are spaces of knowledge-making and experiential opportunities for museum makers and visitors. These experiences are compared and contrasted with those at institutional museums. The second is that the legitimization of vernacular museums has developed within contexts of Romanian cultural “heritage” frameworks and the work of experts—established museum professionals—and related cultural policy developments. Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 present the theories that ground these assumptions about knowledge-making and institutional legitimization within this project and the research objectives of this study.

4.1.1. Theories of knowledge-making

Knowledge-making is the term employed to describe knowledge as an embodied, creative process of relating new knowledge to an individual's existing knowledge world (Johnson, 1990), emerging as the individual moves through and interacts with the world. This concept will be used to investigate ROs 1, 2 and 3. Knowledge-making stresses the individual's active participation in crafting their knowledge world through their engagement in embodied activities and related to spatial movement in the museum, for example. The subsidiary theories of: 4.1.1.1) embodied theory of meaning; 4.1.1.2) cultural motion; 4.1.1.3) museum as navigable space; 4.1.1.4) travel as translation; and 4.1.1.5) excess of memory are presented, concluding with 4.1.1.6) a synopsis of how they have been applied to accomplish the research objectives of this study. These theories allow for the discovery of the uniqueness of experiential opportunities vernacular museums afford their makers and visitors.

4.1.1.1. Embodied theory of meaning

One goal of this study is to describe the conditions for knowledge-making engendered by vernacular museums. Vernacular museums are spaces that create distinct environments for knowledge-making for both their makers and visitors. Mark Johnson's (1990, 2008) work on the embodied theory of meaning positions meaning and, by extension, knowledge as arising because of:

the character and significance of a person's interactions with their environments. The meaning of a specific aspect or dimension of some ongoing experience is that aspect's connections to other parts of past, present, or future (possible) experiences. Meaning is relational. It is about how one thing relates to or connects with other things. (Johnson, 2008, p. 10)

Within this study, vernacular museums shape the "character and significance" of interactions within and around these museums. Understanding museum visits as relational encounters

between makers and visitors interacting with objects and with each other within vernacular museum environments reflects what Mark Johnson (1991) describes as “knowing through” the body. Here, “knowing through” would imply relational knowledge through an individual’s experience of interacting with vernacular museum environments and also interacting with others within these spaces. This will include encounters with objects arranged spatially and temporally as well as in symbolic terms figuratively (through the overlapping and interlinking of individual knowledge worlds of makers and visitors).

Johnson, both individually and later in his work with George Lakoff (2003) on metaphor theory, provides two ways of understanding how embodied knowledge arises for individuals that are relevant to the current study, i.e. the museum makers and visitors. These are conceptualized here as patterns of experience and as metaphorical imagination, described in the next two sub-sections.

4.1.1.1.1. Patterns of experience

An understanding of the museum as a pattern of experience undergirds this study of vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making. Johnson (1990) describes how patterns of experience “operate as organizing structures of our experience and understanding at the level of bodily perception and movement” (p. 20). These felt patterns both form and inform an individual’s way of having a world. My approach to understanding patterns of experience contrasts with Johnson’s understanding of image schematic structures referenced as specific orientations of the body in space. Within this study, I employ patterns of experience at a more general conceptual level, where the museum itself represents a familiar or expected pattern of experience that engenders experiential expectations in makers and visitors in how these spaces will feature objects, spaces and temporality, and with different preconceptions for makers and visitors. The perceived distinctions between the expectations and realities of

vernacular museum experiences from the perspectives of makers and visitors form the basis of inquiry for the current study.

4.1.1.1.2. Metaphorical imagination

Within this study, metaphorical language employed by museum makers and visitors to describe their museum-related experiences is understood as evidence of embodied knowledge-making, where conceptual metaphors are “grounded in *correlations* within our experience” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, pp. 154–155, emphasis in original). Lakoff and Johnson (2003) describe the metaphorical imagination as being “in large measure, the ability to bend your worldview and adjust the way you categorize your experience” (p. 231). Metaphorical imagination here foregrounds the descriptions of vernacular museum experiences that often rely on metaphorical language and understandings expressed in relevant documents and interviews.

The embodied theory of meaning describes how individuals know through their bodies, through the overlapping and interlinking their knowledge worlds with others, and through correlations with previous experiences as felt patterns of experience or expressed metaphorically. Together, these concepts ground knowledge-making as a creative, embodied process of how individuals craft their knowledge worlds. Objects, spaces and temporality are also essential to the museum experience. How these elements of the museum experience figure in knowledge-making in the context of “cultural motion,” or in how material objects act as carriers of cultural knowledge, is presented in the next section.

4.1.1.2. Cultural motion

Cultural motion provides a framework for understanding how objects, spaces and temporality, integral to the museum experience, become imbued with meaning as holders of cultural knowledge about the past that are integral to experiences of knowledge-making in

vernacular museums in the present. Cultural anthropologist Greg Urban (2001) defines cultural motion as a process by which “the immaterial aspects of culture [becoming] lodged within the material” when immaterial culture is carried between sensory objects and “the stuff moving through space and time is an abstract form or mold for the production of something material” (Urban, 2001, p. 3). Within vernacular museums, what appear to be predominantly old objects are collected and arranged as the material carriers or receptacles in which the immaterial aspects of the past or other forms of temporality have become lodged, effectively indexing the past. Cultural motion is essential to understanding how knowledge-making is generated in vernacular museums because of how this theory conceptualizes objects and spaces as carriers for and thus embodying immaterial qualities, such as temporality, essential to vernacular museum experiences.

The vernacular museum space itself, as a navigable space through which visitors are guided by museum makers, is theorized next.

4.1.1.3. Museum as imagined world made navigable

Performance studies scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) conceptualizes the museum as a refuge for utopian thought, which is emblematic of the “ability to imagine a world in a particular key” (p.1) that resonates here with the concept of the individual’s way of having a world described by Johnson (Chapter 1). The ability to imagine, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) states, “[catalyzes] a kind of envisioning, a kind of modeling, that reflects on what is, by projecting what could be, either in the spirit of critique or in the hope of a transformative program” whereby vernacular museums become active in this process as “neither models of something that already exists nor necessarily models for something to be brought into being” (p. 4). Vernacular museums are understood as imagined worlds of makers that manifest their maker’s knowledge world. By actualizing their vision as a physical

museum, vernacular museum makers enact an essential component of the museum experience: the need for the visitor to walk and to move through and navigate the space (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). But visitors to vernacular museums are most often guided through these museum spaces through a guided tour accompanied by the maker's narrative. The tour narrative is an integral aspect of the vernacular museum experience that will be analyzed here. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, museums themselves are metaphorical as spaces for reflecting and projecting through imaginative transformation.

Visitors to vernacular museums must also move to arrive at these spaces. Their activity of travel is conceptualized next.

4.1.1.4. Travel as a process of translation

Visitors to vernacular museums most often visit these spaces in the course of travel as part of a wider itinerary. Travel has been employed by James Clifford (1997): “. . . [as] an inclusive term embracing a range of more or less voluntarist practices of leaving ‘home’ to go to some ‘other’ place” (p. 66). Home, as a familiar, known space, is contiguous with the way of knowing the world that visitors carry with them. In contrast, travel is an activity of moving temporarily away from home to “some ‘other’ place” in a way that creates opportunities for encountering that which is unknown, unfamiliar, different. By juxtaposing the known and the unknown, travel becomes a process of translation through which “you learn a lot about peoples, cultures, and histories different from your own, enough to begin to know what you're missing” (Clifford, 1997, p. 39). One outcome of travel, then, is that it exposes the incompleteness of an individual's knowledge world and fosters opportunities for creating new relationships between the known and unknown, creating enhanced possibilities for knowledge-making. This frame is employed to understanding the visitor experience at vernacular museums.

Through travel, visitors also leave their impressions in the form of guestbook inscriptions, which are conceptualized in the subsequent section as an excess of memory.

4.1.1.5. Excess of memory

Visitors bring their knowledge worlds with them to vernacular museums. Crane (1997) has described how museum guestbook comments contain “a lingering excess of memory from other times, other museums, and other knowledge” (p. 47) as evidence of their knowledge worlds, reflecting more than the visitor’s reaction to the current, in-gallery museum experience. Within this study, Crane’s excess of memory is employed to the analysis of visitor guestbook comments as reflective of visitor’s personal knowledge worlds, their expectations of what the museum visit should be and how the current visit compares with that expectation. As an excess of memory, the guestbook comments analyzed here not only create a record of who has visited the museum and when and where they came from; these comments can also express how these visitors relate their vernacular museum experiences to their existing understandings of museums and the past through their museum visits.

4.1.1.6. Theoretical frameworks for knowledge-making conclusions

The preceding section describes the suite of theories undergirding knowledge-making as an embodied, relational endeavor at the individual level for makers and visitors moving through, interacting with and traveling to and from museum sites. This section also described the role of objects, spaces and temporality to knowledge-making as a form of cultural motion. These theories will be used to understand vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making at the individual level for makers (RO1), for visitors (RO2) and for the maker and researcher interactively (RO3). The next section describes the theories employed to understand vernacular museums within contexts of legitimation of Romanian cultural “heritage” through which they are emerging as a new institutional form.

4.1.2. Institutional legitimization

Section 4.1.2 describes the theories employed for this analysis of vernacular museums as an emergent institutional form within the broader contexts of legitimization as Romania's cultural "heritage" objects in support of RO4. It includes the following sections: 4.1.2.1) institutional legitimization; 4.1.2.2) culture: aesthetic and anthropological registers; and 4.1.2.3) heritage as transvaluation. Section 4.1.2.4 provides a brief synopsis of the section and its relevance to the current study.

4.1.2.1. Institutional legitimization

Institutional legitimization provides a framework for understanding how vernacular museums as an emergent heritage form are being incorporated into the wider contexts of culture and heritage in Romania during the period preceding Romania's 2007 accession into the EU and overlapping with the Village Collections Programme (2008-2013). The primary focus of legitimization efforts are those led by museum professionals at the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant. These experts are trained to operate within the institutional museum realm, employing museum practices as habitual activities to maintain the museum as an institution. Within the sociology of knowledge, legitimization describes the processes that "[produce] new meanings that serve to integrate the meanings already attached to disparate institutional processes" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 85). In this case, analysis investigates how the MRP professionals applied museum practices as established and codified expert knowledge to confer legitimacy on vernacular museums, as these activities were presented in VCP program documents and related publications. Legitimation describes the processes through which MRP expert activities made visible and incorporated vernacular museums as a new institutionalized form.

Vernacular museums are emerging as a personal heritage form that can be recognized and incorporated into cultural policies. Sections 4.1.2.2 and 4.1.2.3 describe frameworks for understanding culture and heritage relevant to institutional legitimation.

4.1.2.2. Culture: Aesthetic and anthropological registers

Vernacular museum makers employ the museum as an expressive form that conveys their personal understandings of belonging and identity. In this way, vernacular museum making corresponds with how cultural theorists Toby Miller and George Yúdice (2002, p. 1) define culture in the policy realm as working across two “registers”: aesthetic and anthropological. The aesthetic register or range encompasses a realm of expressive output that governs and is governed by status and taste that allow for the marking of similarities and differences within social groups; while the anthropological range understands culture as a way of life and traditions or patterns of living that allow for differentiation between groups (Miller & Yúdice, 2002). From this perspective, vernacular museums can be understood here as demonstrative of a hybrid of processes of expressive output that involves judgement of aesthetic value and ways of life through which their makers express belonging and social identity. How this hybrid role positions these makers within the cultural realm is one problem that is investigated in the current study.

4.1.2.3. Heritage as Transvaluation

Vernacular museums have been described throughout the VCP program literature as institutions integral to Romania’s cultural heritage at local and national levels (see, for example Mihăilescu, 2009; Mihalache, 2009a, 2012). Heritage is understood here as a host of multiple and interwoven processes through which cultural elements gain visibility and continuity both within and outside of the groups that share customs and other social practices, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006a) describes:

Heritage is a mode of cultural production that creates something new, namely, a new relationship to what comes to be designated as heritage. That new relationship arises from the conversion of habitus (unconscious culture) into heritage (self-conscious selection of valued practices). The result is a transvaluation that ‘preserves’ custom without preserving the ‘custom-bound self.’ This is why heritage figures so prominently in official cultural policy. (p. 40)

Transvaluation suggests that the role of heritage is to reconsider and repudiate contrasting understandings and representations of the past as an ongoing process. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006a) further explains how museums are implicated in processes of selecting those material and/or symbolic customs as heritage that happen through “metacultural operations that extend museological values and methods (collection, documentation, preservation, presentation, evaluation, and interpretation) to living persons, their knowledge, practices, artifacts, social worlds and life spaces” (p. 161). Within the context of this study of vernacular museums, these independent makers participate in cultural production through their appropriation of the museum concept as personal expressions of heritage. The recognition of these personal expressions by a national-level institution and the resultant effects and outcomes are also investigated in Chapter 8.

4.1.2.4. Institutional legitimization conclusions

The preceding sections describe theories for understanding institutional legitimization, culture and heritage. These theories will be employed to investigate the institutional legitimization of vernacular museums from within Romanian heritage institutional contexts.

4.1.3. Theoretical frameworks conclusions

Understanding knowledge-making as embodied and relational and in contexts of legitimization describes an interwoven system of understanding how knowledge works relationally at embodied individual and at institutional levels through the study of vernacular museums. As such, this study requires a methodological approach that reveals processes of

knowledge-making for museum makers and visitors. To this end, the next section describes how an ethnographic research approach that incorporates aspects of autoethnography and facilitates the gathering of knowledges including that of the researcher.

4.2. Methodologies

An ethnographic approach to research emphasizes the relational processes through which the researcher comes to understand cultural phenomena. This approach fits with the approaches already presented in the theoretical framework. Ethnography implies iterative/interpretive research that is immersive and embodied. Research phases often happen concurrently, interacting with and influencing each other (O'Reilly, 2012; Pink, 2013, 2015). Autoethnography is a subgenre of ethnography that foregrounds the researcher's role in crafting knowledge about the phenomenon of study, highlighting the role of personal knowledges and experiences and shared knowledge about a phenomenon (Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2015; Chang, 2008). This section will outline the understandings of ethnography and autoethnography that inform the methodological approaches employed in this study.

4.2.1. Ethnographic approach

By employing an ethnographic approach to research, the researcher works to craft a story that presents a particular kind of academic or expert knowledge (Pink, 2013) about “the meaning and purpose of human actions, of what people do” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998) with knowledge-making understood as the creative outcome of embodied human experiences. However, at the same time the researcher constructs expert knowledge about a phenomenon, she concurrently (re)constructs her ethnographic self (Clifford, 1986/2010), resulting in the shifting and re-shaping of the researcher's existing personal knowledge. Understanding ethnographic research as the researcher's relationally constructed story of

culture forms the foundation for understanding the ethnographic approach employed in this study. It is informed by my experiences as a researcher visiting and actively engaging with local museum creators in the spaces of their museums and the ultimate outcome is an account that provides insights through what Clifford Geertz's (1973/2000) has termed thick description. The ethnographic approach thus understood describes an omni-directional process of making knowledge about culture through the untangling of overlapping, messy myriad ways of knowing as they are embodied and spatially-situated across the phenomenon of study.

Because ethnography reflects an understanding of phenomena as constructed and emergent, it employs methods responsive to capturing multiple modes of knowledge-making that move beyond those that are verbal or language-based to include visual and sensory modes of knowledge production (Pink, 2013, 2015). One way this will be done is through the capturing moments of self-reflexivity of the researcher through an autoethnographic approach described in the next section.

4.2.2. Autoethnography

As it sounds, autoethnography interweaves ethnography, the study of culture, with autobiography, the self-reflexive experiences of the researcher from the first-person perspective (Adams et al., 2015). While autoethnography has often been used in the past to focus on research around traumatic personal experiences, more recent scholarship has extended the use of this method towards foregrounding the personal experiences of researchers in a wider variety of fields, including LIS (see Guzik, 2013; Michels, 2010). Most essential to this study, autoethnography foregrounds the production of stories, echoing the connection between knowledge and one's way of having a world as found in Johnson (1990). As such, it features characteristics typical of stories or biographical narratives: research

partners emerge as “characters” set within scenes and involved in a plot that moves towards a resolution in order to leave the reader with a meaningful point or moral (Denzin, 2014, p. 4). Key to the creation of such stories are epiphanies – “interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people’s lives” (Denzin, 2014, p. 52). In this study of vernacular museum, such key moments are described as leaving marks in a particular way, discussed next as notable moments.

4.2.3. Notable Moments

In this study, I have reconfigured this notion of the epiphany to what I have come to term “notable moments” (Klimaszewski, 2016b). This augmented terminology is meant to reflect those meaningful moments or events that stand out to me as the researcher and become charged with meaning over time. It is based on the Richard Kearney’s idea of the “epiphanic instant” as a moment of vertical time or jolt as a moment of phenomenological intending (Kearney, 2008; Merleau-Ponty, 2012; Sokolowski, 2000). Here, notable moments are understood to be inherently meaningful and worth noting (through a photograph or a mental note, for instance) to make available for later review or consideration. Epiphanies are moments or periods saturated with meaning; notable moments stand out from experience and are captured as photographic moments of self-reflexivity in which the said (the museum tour narrative) connects with the seen (the photograph, as seen by the researcher) in a moment that acts as evidence of a relational experiential/knowledge connection for the researcher.

Notable moments are epistemological tools to understand vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making for museum makers and visitors interactively in the context of the museum tour narratives (RO3). These “moments” bring together physical and non-physical modes of experience, revealing the in-process emergence of meaning in relation to

patterns of experience and metaphorical imagination as experienced by the researcher.

Identifying and analyzing notable moments aligns into life stories. Notable moments will be analyzed in the context of patterns of experience and metaphoric structures and patterns of meaning and knowing and phenomenology.

4.3. Theoretical framework and methodology summary

A theoretical framework has been described that employs a theory of knowledge that understands knowledge-making as an embodied, relational endeavor of individuals moving through and experiencing vernacular museums. A sociology of knowledge understanding of institutional legitimation and related understandings of culture and heritage relevant to this study of vernacular museums has also been conveyed. An ethnographic approach to research incorporating aspects of autoethnography has also been explained. These theoretical concepts and research approaches together describe a framework for understanding the phenomenon of vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making and within contexts of legitimation related to cultural heritage policies and programs. The understanding of the phenomenon of vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making will emerge through narratives of museum making and descriptions of in-person visits. Evidence of legitimation is a different dimension that will emerge through analysis of relevant VCP program literature and related EU and Romanian cultural heritage policy documents.

The theoretical framework and methodologies described above facilitate this study of knowledge-making in and institutional legitimation of vernacular museums at personal levels (for individuals and in interactions between museum makers and visitors) and institutional levels (within the legitimating contexts of cultural programs, policies and institutions). As Pink (2013) describes it, this kind of research approach works to “make[s] explicit the ways that many researchers already find that . . . other types of knowledge or ways of knowing

become interwoven in their projects” (p. 146). The goal of this project has been to collect these meanings and knowledges in order to craft them into my own presentation of academic knowledge of the phenomenon of vernacular museums, making my role in the process explicit.

Next, I describe the research steps and methods that will be employed to carry out the research objectives according to these theoretical/methodological frameworks.

4.4. Research process and methods

Data was collected as part of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in June 2018. Because fieldwork and analysis are generally not taken as separate and distinct stages of the research process (O'Reilly, 2012), the research process included steps and constituent sources of material, my own knowledge-making processes as well as those of museum makers and visitors. In-person site visits to vernacular museums involved documenting the museum tour, holding interviews with museum makers that sought to understand their experiences creating their museums, and interviews with visitors that sought to capture recollections of their experiences through interviews and photographs. The researcher's, visitors' and museum makers' impressions are presented through thick descriptions towards the goal of conveying the research-process-as-experience, crafting both personal and academic knowledge of the phenomenon of Romanian vernacular museums.

An ethnographic approach does not define a standard way of “doing” ethnography (O'Reilly, 2012). However, it does include standard methods that have become hallmarks of ethnographic methodology: field notes, interviews, and participant observation gleaned through fieldwork. This section describes how these commonly accepted ethnographic methods were applied during the course of this study layered with autoethnography and textual and visual analysis.

4.4.1. Ethnographic approach and methods

4.4.1.1. Defining “the field” (MRO)

The field comprised twenty-four vernacular museums, which are members of RECOMESPAR. These sites are all contained within the geopolitical boundaries of Romania and somewhat scattered across regions, as previously illustrated in Figure 2A (Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1). The field of study, however, is not only bound by space or geographic location; many of these museums have a mediated presence on the internet, including self-produced websites, social media sites and videos. In addition, these local museums have inspired some visitors to create and post descriptive accounts in the form of videos, photographs and blog posts that extend the presence of these vernacular museums beyond their localities. Whether produced by the museum makers or by enthusiastic visitors, these websites create opportunities for mediated experiences of vernacular museums. Further, the RECOMESPAR association’s website acted as a virtual research site, a nexus linking the group and its activities together and documenting related activities of the VCP. In addition to having a page on the RECOMESPAR website, each local museum has an entry in the CIMEC national museums database (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1). In addition, as of May 2017, Google and Bing searches revealed seventeen of these museums to have additional modes of virtual presence. Searches revealed four museums with self-produced websites; ten with public Facebook pages; six with YouTube videos; thirteen with some form of official journalistic coverage (e.g. articles or blog posts from formal media outlets); two with coverage on Flickr; two with coverage on tourism sites (e.g. Trip Advisor); and five listed on Google Maps. In addition, two sites have produced DVD recordings of the museum tour that were available for purchase at the museum site. A chart of the virtual presences or mediated presentations of these local museums is included in Appendix F.

Because “the field” is conceptualized as a multi-sited space of dispersed multi-modal data, this study was informed by multi-sited ethnographic and case-study approaches. Paula Saukko (2003) describes multi-sited ethnography as “a practice of studying how any given phenomenon takes shape in and across multiple locales or sites” (p. 176) that emphasizes the fact that social phenomena cannot be typified. This approach decouples ethnography from the notion of the discrete, bounded field sites (Clifford, 1997). In doing so, research processes expand to study movements between as well as within sites (Marcus, 1995). In the case of local museums, this included the movements of visitors, makers, artifacts and their stories and knowledges.

Like multi-sited ethnography, case studies are also grounded in an epistemology of the particular, where “enduring meanings come from encounter and are modified and reinforced by repeated encounter” (Stake, 1995, p. 195). Each visit to a local museum represents an instrumental case (Stake, 1995), meaning that each case provides insight into the understanding of knowledge-making in local museums as it happened in situ. Once the sample of case studies were individually analyzed, cross comparisons could be made. Case studies also accounted for the fact that knowledge about cases is cumulative, so that initial cases were approached and experienced differently than subsequent cases. In my visits to local museums, each case represented a unique encounter that happened within a particular museum and was unique to that museum, with the goal of understanding how vernacular museums as an emergent institutional form are being typified (or not) by legitimating efforts of their makers, by the visitors and in a broader context.

In support of the ethnographic approach to research applied here, both multi-sited and case study approaches informed and encouraged the emergence of a nuanced and faceted ontology of vernacular museums. Applying multi-sited ethnography and case study

approaches “insists on the primacy of context and resists a flattening out of detail and difference” (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014, p. 445) in a way that is necessary to the study of a phenomenon where these museums are prized essentially for being alike in their uniqueness (Mihalache, 2009a).

4.4.1.2. Site selection and fieldwork (RO2, RO3)

The physical locations of in-person museum visits for this study included museums in Galoşpetreu (MUS_01), Sasca Montană (MUS_03), Iaz (MUS_04), and Haţeg (MUS_06). These sites were chosen through a process that spanned several months. Factors that drove site selection included: 1) my desire to visit sites in areas of the country that I had not visited during prior visit in 2011, 2014 and 2016; and 2) my preference to select museums located so that we could drive by car between field sites. With these goals as a starting point, and after obtaining the IRB approval,¹⁴ I began reaching out to museum makers via email and phone with the help of my translator, AC,¹⁵ in March of 2018 using the approved recruitment email as a template (English version as Appendix G; Romanian version as Appendix H). I was able to confirm a date for a visit with the museum maker at Galoşpetreu, Bihor County (MUS_01) very early, and that helped to focus on other sites of contact in the western part of Romania. I also learned around this time that maker at Iaz, Salaj County (MUS_04) would be available during June, but that I should contact her closer to the date when we would arrive to schedule a visit. In some cases, we could not connect with makers at all because they neither responded to emails or social media messages nor telephone calls.¹⁶

¹⁴ Rutgers Arts & Sciences IRB Protocol Number Pro20170001855 was approved on 12/14/2017 and renewed on 10/15/2018 and 8/12/2019.

¹⁵ Dr. Alexandra Coţofană is a cultural anthropologist who also worked with me in the field as a research colleague and translator in 2011, 2014 and 2016.

¹⁶ We used contact information found in the CIMEC national museum database and confirmed that this information was correct with VCP's director Carmen Mihalache.

Nevertheless, these two early points of contact with museum makers in Galaşpetreu and Iaz helped to organize travel logistics that located the trip in the Western part of the country, because that would also put us within reasonable proximity to at least three other museums so that we could schedule visits after I arrived in Romania. This description of the process of planning fieldwork is meant to show how research visits take shape over time and often not until the last minute, requiring flexibility and faith on the part of the researcher. For instance, a visit to one location in Petroşani had to be cancelled when the unpaved road to the museum became impassable because of heavy downpours. A visit to MUS_06 was substituted at the last minute. Museum and proprietor names, city and county locations and justifications for inclusion in the current study are summarized in Table 4.1. Museum sites visited and the driving route are shown in Figure 4A.

Table 4.1: Sites of 2018 fieldwork

Local Museum (ID)	Location (County)	Proprietor	Criteria/justification for inclusion
Casa-Muzeu Galaşpetreu (MUS_01)	GALOŞPETREU (Bihor)	Dr. Kéri Gáspár	Ethnic Hungarian proprietor; dentist; multiple museum sites near the Hungarian border; active in tourism circuits.
Punctul Muzeal Victor Tatău (MUS_03)	SASCA MONTANĂ (Caraş-Severin)	Victor Tăutu	Proprietor is a retired geologist; museum located near border with Serbia.
Casa-Muzeu Iaz (MUS_04)	IAZ (Sălaj)	Ligia Bodea	One of the three younger RECOMESPAR proprietors recruited; integrates eco-tourism into her museum experience; featured on YouTube; active on Facebook.
Muzeul Satului Haşegan (MUS_06)	HATEG (Hunedoara)	Anton Socaciu	Alternate site chosen while in the field because of proximity to other sites.

All of the museum sites visited were located in rural villages. Romania is one of the least urbanized EU countries, with 46% of the population living in rural areas (The World Bank, 2018). Further, 70% of the population who reside in rural areas live in poverty and

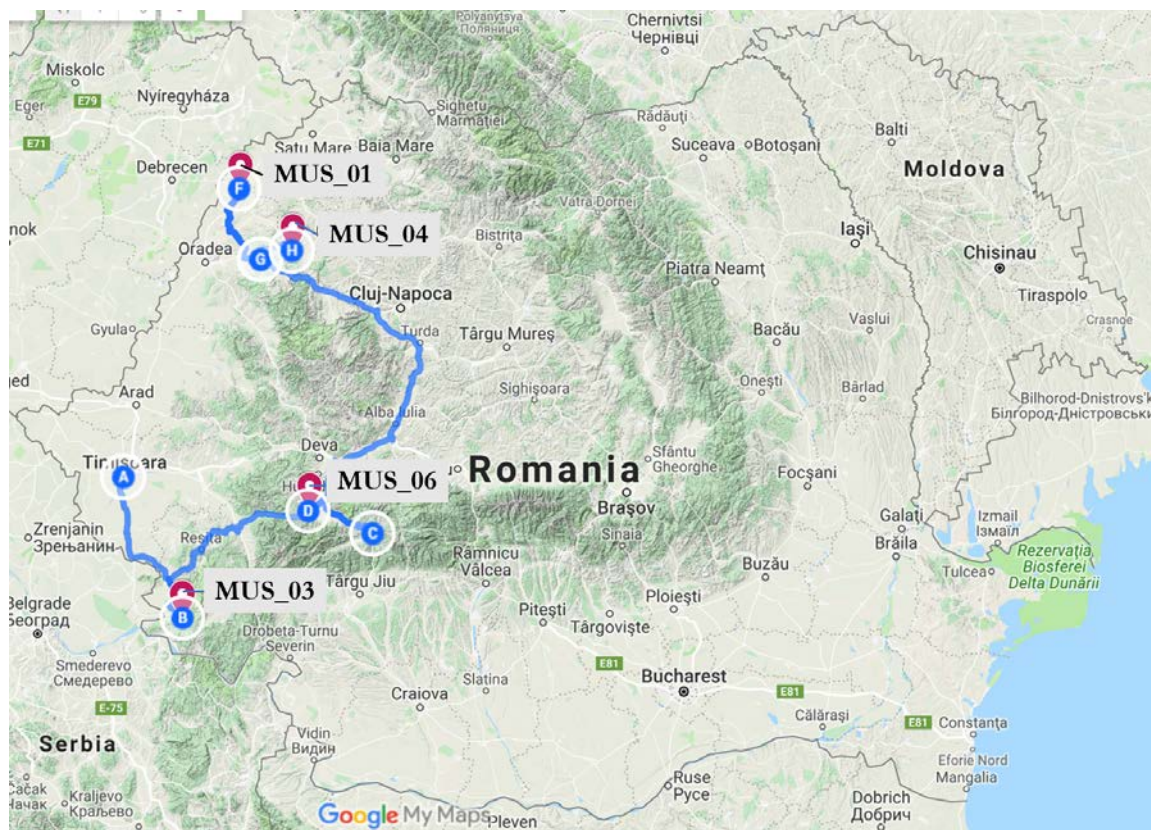


Figure 4A: Location of RECOMESPAR museum sites visited in 2018 (purple) with driving route shown in blue

with under-developed infrastructure and limited education and economic opportunities (de Rosa & Kim, 2018). Romanian villages are organized with neighboring villages into administrative units called communes. Commune populations for the villages I visited ranged from 1,500 to 2,900 inhabitants spread between three and seven villages, as reported by the Romanian Institute of Statistics in 2011.¹⁷ These statistics are backed-up by my personal observations that reveal village populations as skewing older as the high school students and young and middle-aged adults who can tend to move to towns and cities (or other countries) for better educational and economic opportunities. Further, traveling to these villages emphasizes their relative remoteness, which, though it is part of the appeal of visiting these places for a foreigner like me, can also demonstrate their varying degrees of

¹⁷ Found at: Institutul National de Statistica *Recensământul Populației și al Locuințelor* (Census of Population and Housing) website at: <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/>

infrastructure development. Nevertheless, navigating to these museum sites was relatively easy, as all of the sites were mapped and findable using GPS technology. Hașeg and Galoșpetreu were both located relatively close to main highways and towns and felt slightly less remote. Iaz and Sasca Montană, in contrast, were reached after longer drives on country roads farther away from main highways or roads and in what appeared to me as more dramatic landscapes. All of the communes recorded the presence of museums, between 8 and 18 according to 2017 statistics.¹⁸ It is unclear from the statistical database, however, whether this number includes the vernacular museums that I visited. This information contextualizing the nature of the villages is summarized along with additional researcher impressions about each village in Table 4.2.¹⁹

Prior field visits in 2011,²⁰ 2014²¹ and 2016²² (Chapter 2, Section 2.6.2) also informed site selection for the 2018 fieldwork. Though data collected during these field visits is not included in the current study, these prior field experiences shaped the story of how the current series of field visits came about.

4.4.1.3. Participant observation: Museum tours (RO2, RO3)

The primary goal of museum site visits was to document the museum tour narratives that have been described as the highlight of any vernacular museum visit (Mihalache, 2009a). These visits provided me with the opportunity to experience the uniqueness of each

¹⁸ Found at Tempo Online Statistica Databases found at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

¹⁹ See also Chapter 2, Sections 2.1.1. and 2.4 for more information on Romania's villages and Romania's development in re: EU accession.

²⁰ The visit in 2011 was covered under the IRB through Ball State University with James M. Nyce as principal investigator.

²¹ 2014 fieldwork was covered under Rutgers IRB 14-556Mx. This study was partially funded by a Rutgers Graduate School New Brunswick Pre-Dissertation Study Grant in the amount of \$1,940.

²² In 2016, IRB 14-556Mx was amended to include additional study sites. This study was partially funded by a Rutgers TA/GA Professional Development Fund grant in the amount of \$1,940.

Table 4.2: Village information for sites of 2018 fieldwork

Local Museum (ID)	Village information	Researcher impressions noting relevant economic activity and tourism sites
Casa-Muzeu Galoşpetreu (MUS_01)	Galoşpetreu is located in Tarcea commune (ca. 2900 inhabitants across three villages). 14 museums in the commune.	This is a majority ethnic Hungarian area near the Hungarian border. Historic economic trades included viticulture, reed braiding and fishing. Museum maker described how in communist era, lakes and swamps were drained to increase agricultural production in the area, dramatically changing the landscape. Currently the area is also known for its mineral springs that also draw tourists to the area. I did not observe much activity in the village beyond the area of the museum during my visit.
Punctul Muzeal Victor Tătău (MUS_03)	Sasca Montană is located in the commune of the same name (ca. 1500 inhabitants across five villages). 15 museums in the commune.	Located near Nerei Gorge-Beuşniţa National Park. Historic economic activity included mining at the copper mine that closed for good in 1998. While traveling to the village, I observed many vacant houses and old buildings in some state of ruins. We were unable to find anyone on the street to ask for directions to the museum. Museum maker told us that many people were purchasing homes in the village as vacation or summer homes.
Casa-Muzeu Iaz (MUS_04)	Iaz is located in Plopiş commune (ca. 2400 inhabitants across three villages). 8 museums in the commune.	Area known for nature tourism, situated at the foot of the Plopiş Mountains. Natural reserve in the area Iaz Marsh (Mlaştina de la Iaz) and also thermal springs at Boghiş. Area known for Romanian, Hungarian and Slovak ethnicities. Driving to the village felt more isolated or remote than others visited. The drive to this village was arguably the most scenic, as we traveled through rolling hills and could see mountains in the distance. It also felt a bit more remote because of its distance from the main highway and larger towns.
Muzeul Satului Haţegan (MUS_06)	Haţeg is located in Densuş commune (ca. 1500 inhabitants across seven villages). 18 museums in the commune.	Touristic area known for the country's first geopark, the Haţeg County Dinosaurs Geopark and the archaeological site Dacian Ruins of the Fortress at Sarmizegetusa, as well as several churches dating back to the 13 th -16 th centuries. These sites are very visible, marked clearly with signs and much tourism information can be found online and in print that features this area felt the most touristic and populated of those I visited on this research trip.

vernacular museum site as an embodied experience. I audio recorded the tour narrative while simultaneously photographing those moments that stood out to me, attempting to capture the “said” and the “seen” of the museum tour as notable moments (Section 4.2.3). Museum tours were given in Romanian with a Romanian native speaker²³ employed as an interpreter.²⁴ I took written field notes during and after the museum tour visits to document my experiences. I typed these handwritten field notes while in the field as part of developing analysis. I transcribed audio recordings of the tour narratives upon my return home, at which time I correlated these transcripts with images to identify notable moments (Section 4.4.3.1). Participants provided oral consent for recording and photographing the museum tour and participating in interviews as part of the study, with consent forms in English (Appendix I) and Romanian (Appendix J).

In the course of fieldwork, travel to and from these museum sites provided opportunities for observing the development of tourism infrastructures, particularly those emerging in the rural milieu. Therefore, while the primary locus of participation was the museum visit, my experiences as a repeat visitor to Romania also informed this study and were documented in field notes, digital photographs, tourist brochures and related ephemera and inform the autoethnographic account presented in Chapter 6.

4.4.1.4. Interviews with museum makers (RO3)

At museum sites, I employed emergent interviewing (Adams et al., 2015, p. 54) with museum proprietors. Emergent interviewing describes a process of semi-structured

²³ Dr. Alexandra Coțofană is a cultural anthropologist who also worked with me in the field as a research colleague and translator in 2011, 2014 and 2016.

²⁴ The use of translators in ethnographic research is not uncommon, though it has been largely ignored in the literature likely because the use of an intermediary during the course of fieldwork is seen as challenging the ethnographer’s authority (Borchgrevink, 2003). It has been a common occurrence historically within fieldwork in Romania that generally led to more productive cross-cultural exchanges and understandings (Hedeșan, 2008). Further, within the context of the Local Museums Pilot Study in 2014, the translator’s experiences at this museum visit acted as a productive analytic tool (Klimaszewski, 2016b).

question-and-answer sessions that take place within the context of a particular environment, which in this case was the vernacular museum. Most often, I asked interview questions as they naturally fit into the museum tour. Museum makers were not informed of interview questions in advance. These questions focused on eliciting details about how proprietors went about making their museums. Also, it was customary after the museum tour to sit and have coffee with the proprietors, so this provided a relaxed and informal setting in which I could ask additional questions about their museums in situ. As such, interviews flowed quite naturally from the museum tour itself and in some ways acted as an extension of it, with the results of these interviews included in the autoethnographic account of vernacular museum visits presented in Chapter 6. As with participant observation (Section 4.4.1.3), interviews were conducted in Romanian with a Romanian native speaker employed as an interpreter. These post-visit interviews were also audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Interview questions are included in Interview Protocol for Museum Makers attached as Appendix K (in English) and Appendix L (in Romanian).

4.4.1.5. Interviews with museum visitors (RO2)

Additional interviews were carried out with eight visitors to Romanian vernacular museums and their experiences are described in more detail in Chapter 7. Though visitors identified in the literature include: “locals, pupils, journalists, local high officials, visiting personalities, native or foreign tourists” (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 123), the group represented in this study distinguishes “native” Romanian and “foreign” American tourists. Participants were recruited in different ways. Two participants were recruited via email after I read an account of their trip published in a local newspaper. Three participants were previously known to me or my translator and we visited museum sites together. In only one instance did we encounter visitors, three members of a Romanian family, at a museum site who were

willing to participate in the project. Visitor interviews followed a semi-structured format that focused on understanding the research participant's motivations for visiting and experiences and impressions of at least one local museum. Interview questions were made available in English (Appendix M) and Romanian (Appendix N) as appropriate. When possible, these interviews elicited photographs taken by the interviewee to document their museum visit. Interviews were conducted in person (7) and via teleconferencing software Skype (1) and averaged 15- to 45-minutes in length. When possible, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. All participants provided oral consent for their participation in the project and for their interviews to be audio recorded, with consent forms provided in English (Appendix O) and Romanian (Appendix P) as appropriate.

4.4.1.6. Field notes (RO3)

The primary source of data for crafting the autoethnographic account of visiting vernacular museums (RO3) came in the form of field notes. The purpose of field notes is to capture the details of fieldwork so they are available to inform future analysis (O'Reilly, 2012). Field notes comprise the act of extensive (and sometimes obsessive) journaling and photographing while in the field in order to not only capture small details and observations but also to record questions and insights that drive the research process as they arise (O'Reilly, 2012), capturing impressionistic moments and events and thoughts about my experiences. Photographs were an integral part of my field notes, extending participant observation and interviewing to all aspects of time spent "in the field" and acting as a first-line of research analysis/interpretation. The ethnographer's job is to be looking, observing, paying attention to the small things, taking photographs, having conversations, and recording what might be important for the research project at hand (O'Reilly, 2012). Within

the context of this study, fieldnotes also recorded emergent observations related to the photographs that shaped analysis for RO3.

Data collected according to these ethnographic methods informed RO3. The next sections outline additional research methods that were applied to carry out the research objectives.

4.4.2. Identifying documents and images for analysis (RO1, RO4)

I collected and analyzed a number of relevant documents and accompanying images about Romanian vernacular museums listed in Appendix E. These documents fall into three categories:

1. The RECOMESPAR website. This includes the website descriptions (Appendix E) analyzed in Chapter 5 that include textual descriptions as well as photographic images. Analysis of RECOMESPAR programs (Appendix B) is also included in Chapter 8. The website is in Romanian and has been translated into English by Sebastian Priotese, a native Romanian speaker.
2. Village Collections Program documents published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant (Appendix E) are analyzed in Chapter 8. These documents include: three VCP progress reports posted as blog entries on the Museum of the Romanian Peasant's website; select essays from the 2009 issue of the MRP's journal *Martor* as well as essays from two published monographs entitled *Robii Frumosului (Slaves to the Beautiful)* published in 2008 and 2013. These documents have been translated using both Google and Bing translate tools with translations reviewed by Mr. Priotese.
3. European Union and Romanian cultural policy and related legislative documents (Appendix E) are analyzed in Chapter 8. Analysis began with

program literature related to the EU Cultural Programme 2007-2013 which ran concurrently with the Village Collections Program (2008-2013). It also included a selection of legislative and policy documents referenced within the EU Cultural Programme literature that historically contextualize developments within and around Romania's accession into the EU related to cultural heritage. EU policy documents were generally available in English. Romanian policy documents were either available in English or were translated using both Google and Bing translate tools and checked by Mr. Priotese.

4.4.3. Analysis

Textual and visual analysis carried out across research materials for ROs 1-3 identified patterns of experience and metaphorical expressions that described felt qualities and impressions of making and visiting vernacular museums with a focus on descriptions of vernacular museums as spaces of experience. Textual analysis for RO4 focused on how VCP and RECOMESPAR programs and activities informed and were informed by processes of legitimization within the various institutional contexts as reflected in cultural heritage policy and programs documents produced at state and EU levels.

4.4.3.1. Notable moments

During site visits (RO3), images were taken by the researcher to supply evidence of notable moments. Photographs capture moments within a context that moved the image-maker to physically click the shutter. Images analyzed for this project mainly include those taken by the researcher during the local museum tours.

4.4.3.2. Patterns of experience/metaphorical imagination

The theoretical concepts of patterns of experience and metaphorical imagination shaped the creation of analytic categories for ROs 1 and 3. I identified repeated patterns of experience and metaphorical expressions expressed by visitors and makers related to their museum-making and visiting experiences. I also focused on their impressions and observations of objects, spaces and temporality employed to convey their experiences. These concepts were employed to understand knowledge-making at the personal level for museum makers and visitors and reflected through their impressions of these museums.

4.4.4. Research processes and methods summary

Taken together, these activities comprised the research process that accomplished the main research objective of this study, which is to understand vernacular museums: as a phenomenon; as spaces of knowledge-making for visitors and makers, interactively; and as an emergent institutional form within the contexts of legitimation of Romania's cultural "heritage." A summary of how research activities accomplished the research objective through its subsidiary objectives is presented in Table 4.3. In support of RO1, Chapter 5 presents a thick description of vernacular museums as a phenomenon and an example of personal knowledge-making from the museum maker's perspective through analysis of RECOMESPAR website descriptions and photographs attributed to these proprietors. Chapter 6 presents the stories of four vernacular museum tour narratives as examples of maker's and visitor's interactive knowledge-making through an ethnographic account of the researcher's experiences of vernacular museums recording and analyzing notable moments for RO3. Chapter 7 investigates RO2 by presenting a thick description of visitor experiences and impressions visiting vernacular museums, collected through interviews and visitor comments written in on-site guestbooks and through social media. Finally, in support of

RO4, Chapter 8 employs document analysis to understand the processes of institutional legitimation happening around vernacular museums in the contexts of Romanian cultural heritage.

Table 4.3: Summary of research activities and objectives

MRO: Understand vernacular museums as a cultural form and knowledge institution emerging in Romania's post-communist period.					
	Research Objective	Evidence/Sources	Research activity	Theoretical frames	Analytic focus
Knowledge-making	RO1: Understand vernacular museums as a phenomenon	-RECOMESPAR member museums website descriptions (Appendix E).	Textual and visual analysis	Knowledge-making; patterns of experience and metaphorical imagination (Johnson, 1990, 2008)	Textual analysis to identify and describe patterns of experience and metaphorical expressions employed by makers to describe their motivations and museum-making activities.
	RO2: Understand vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making for visitors	-Interviews (transcribed) with vernacular museum visitors. -Guestbook comments inscribed by visitors found at museum sites. -Facebook reviews for one museum site.	Review of visitor interviews; guestbook comments; social media reviews.	Travel-as-translation (Clifford, 1997); excess of memory (Crane, 1997).	Textual analysis to identify patterns of experience and metaphorical expressions that convey visitor impressions of their experiences visiting vernacular museums.
	RO3: Understand vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making for museum makers and visitors interactively in the context of the museum tour narratives	-Audio recordings (transcribed) and images taken by researcher to document museum tour narratives and emergent interviews.	Museum site visits & emergent interviews with proprietors happening in conjunction with the museum tour.	Cultural motion (Urban, 2001); museum as imagined world made navigable (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004).	Autoethnographic account situating and relating notable moments as evidence of knowledge-making within the story of each museum visited by the researcher.
Institutional legitimization	RO4: Understand vernacular museums within contexts of legitimization of Romanian "heritage" through which they are emerging as a new institutional form	-Village Collections Program documents and associated Romanian and EU policy documents (listed in Appendix E) -Interviews with museum makers and one MRP professional.	Document review and analysis; fieldwork.	Institutional legitimization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966); culture's anthropological and aesthetic registers (Miller & Yúdice, 2002); heritage as transvaluation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006a).	Textual analysis of program documents to identify activities related to legitimization of RECOMESPAR museums by MRP experts as part of the VCP; review of related policy and legislative documents to identify and describe policy and program developments at national and international levels that enabled VCP's legitimizing efforts as a cultural program.

CHAPTER 5: THE PHENOMENON OF ROMANIAN VERNACULAR MUSEUMS

This chapter describes the motivations of Romanian vernacular museum makers as described in the RECOMESPAR association website in support of RO1. The goal of RO1 is to investigate vernacular museums as a phenomenon and to understand these museums as spaces of knowledge-making for their makers. Textual and visual analysis of these website descriptions as a form of self-presentation provides an understanding of vernacular museum-making from the maker's perspectives that will complement autoethnographic and visitor perspectives presented in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively. Further, the presentation found on the association's website act as a form of legitimation for these emergent institutions, discussed in Chapter 8.

The chapter outline is as follows: details of the evidence and approach to analysis for this chapter are presented in Section 5.1. Section 5.2 discusses the names of vernacular museums and epistemic objectives present in these museums. Section 5.3 discusses passion of collectors/makers towards their objects. Section 5.4 illustrates the relationships between the buildings that house these museums and structure and the orders and arrangements of objects. Section 5.5 identifies three ways in which vernacular museums provide commentary on life in the present. In conclusion, Section 5.6 discusses vernacular museums as expressions of knowledge-making.

5.1. Evidence and analysis

The analysis of statements describing museum-making activities and images included within the twenty-four RECOMESPAR museum website descriptions (listed in Appendix E) taps into the self-presentation from within an institutionalized context (the cited quotes and

their translations are included as Appendix Q). These descriptions are included on the RECOMESPAR website and discussed next.

5.1.1. RECOMESPAR Website

The RECOMESPAR website provides a publicly accessible record of the activities of the RECOMESPAR association as a recognized legal entity, by itself a form of institutional legitimization for these emergent institutions (discussed in Chapter 8). The website's homepage (Figure 5A) includes a header, main navigation bar, main content area, sidebar content area, footer and search box, and a common and recognizable website layout. The header includes the association's logo and acronym above the full association name. The header is centered above the main navigation bar that includes three headings: *Cine Sntem* (Who we are); *Ce Facem* (What we do); and *Unde Lucram* (Where we work). Clicking each main navigation heading reveals an extensive list of sub-headings for navigation, however only three of the nine sub-navigation headings function as links to additional content not found on or linked to the homepage. At the time of writing, a sidebar features *Stiri* (News), that features two posts from 2013 and links to three additional posts that describe RECOMESPAR's activities (summarized in Appendix B). Links to this information are also found under the sub-navigation links of *Projeete* (Projects) and *Expositii* (Exhibitions). The page footer indicates that the site's content is Copyright 2013 RECOMESPAR and that the site was designed by design firm EOA. Though the firm's name includes a live link to the EOA website, many of the links found on the EOA website were inoperable as of August 2019 and no additional information on this firm's role in designing and executing the RECOMESPAR website could be found. The search bar located in the upper right corner of the RECOMESPAR website also appeared to be non-functional. The most recent update to the webpage seems to be from February 2013 and no changes or updates to the website have

been observed by this researcher since at least 2015. The lack of ongoing maintenance seems to reflect the general inactivity of the association more generally (discussed further in Chapter 8).

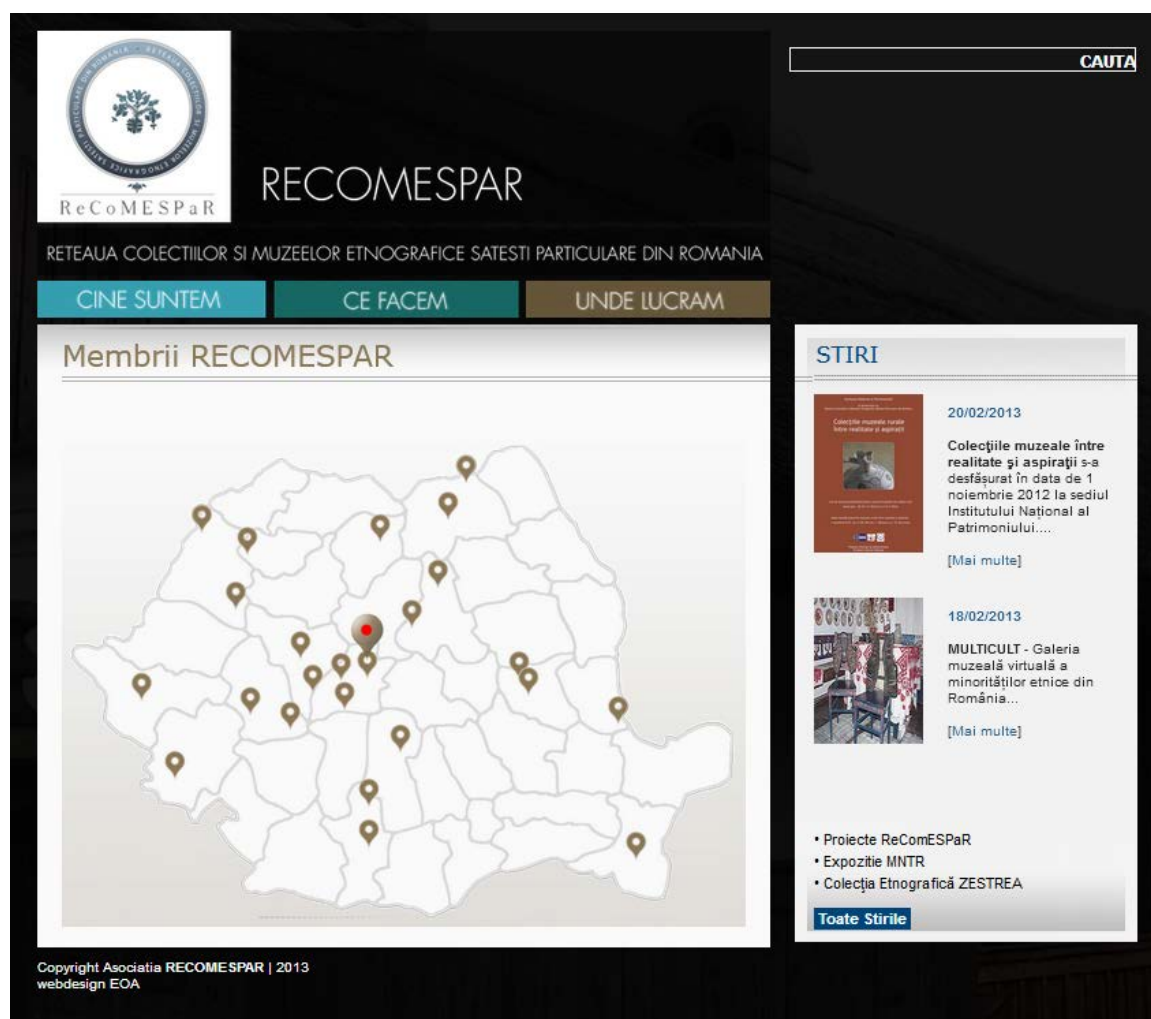


Figure 5A: RECOMESPAR association homepage showing the header, main navigation, main content, sidebar, footer and search box.

The most prominent content on the homepage is the map of Romania located in the main content area under the title *Membrii RECOMESPAR* (RECOMESPAR members). The map shows an outline of Romania's political boundary and presents the country decontextualized from the surrounding countries. Romania's internal county boundaries are delineated, however, and map marker icons locate each of the twenty-four RECOMESPAR

member museums within the country. Clicking on any one of these map marker icons leads the user to the website description for each museum. As the largest area of content on the homepage, the map and its links to the museum descriptions both visually and functionally position this information as the RECOMESPAR website's primary content. The website descriptions are presented in more detail in the next section.

5.1.2. RECOMESPAR website descriptions

As the primary content on the RECOMESPAR website homepage, the interactive map that locates each RECOMESPAR member museum and links to a description for each museum suggests that a primary function of the website is to connect users of the website to information about and the locations of the member museums. Providing an extensive textual and visual description for each member museum also presents these descriptions as a collective story about the activities of RECOMESPAR association museums. This is done in part through layout and formatting of the textual and visual descriptions. All but one of the twenty-four museum website descriptions consist of an individual description page that names the museum and describes it according to three themed sections: 1) geographic and cultural landmarks; 2) the collector and 3) the collection. Four images are interspersed throughout the text of each description, positioned between the thematic sections. However, images featured alongside the textual descriptions are not explicitly referred to in the text, nor are they captioned or otherwise annotated, leaving the viewer to create her own connections between said and seen (not unlike the experience of visiting vernacular museums). Each description concludes by listing the museum maker's name, implicitly attributing authorship of the written description as well as the featured images to each individual maker. This contrasts with the descriptions of these museums featured in the printed volumes published by the MRP (Appendix E), where authorship is explicitly

attributed to MRP museum researchers and curators. These descriptions were selected for analysis because of their availability via the web, which makes them the public and easiest-to-locate presentations of these museums as a group.²⁵

The website descriptions are not composed of boilerplate text but instead communicate the perspective of each museum maker expressed in the third person as reported speech. Having visited now ten of these museum sites, I can attest that the narratives presented within the written descriptions resemble closely the narratives as told to me by makers during my museum tour experiences in 2011, 2014, 2016 and 2018. However, the fact that these descriptions are presented in the third person and the uniformity of their overall formatting suggest that descriptions have been edited to make their presentation consistent on the website, though it is unclear to what extent these descriptions were edited and by whom.²⁶ Because I could not discern who was responsible for editing these descriptions, they are considered here as the RECOMESPAR story of these museums, each representing the maker's expressions as filtered through some level of institutional editing intended to enhance the legitimation of these museums through their uniform presentation on the official website. The effect of reading these website descriptions suggests that they represent neither strictly maker nor expert constructions of these museums.

This analysis focuses on reading across the descriptions to identify emergent themes related to vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making from the maker's perspectives. Themes emerged based on the structuring of the text as narratives expressing relations between the spaces, people, objects and temporality presented within these museums. Descriptions were read through the embodied theory of meaning to identify

²⁵ Website descriptions are published only in Romanian and were translated into English by Sebastian Priotese.

²⁶ When I inquired about who was responsible for the RECOMESPAR website, I was told that it was the product solely of RECOMESPAR and instructed to contact the former RECOMESPAR president. (C. Mihalache, personal communication, 24 April 2019). Additional inquiries went unanswered.

patterns of experience and metaphorical descriptions that emerged across these descriptions. Because they are not explicitly referred to in the website description text, images were analyzed in addition to the written text, applying the thematic categories and theoretical frameworks used in the analysis of textual statements. Findings are presented in the following sections: 5.2) Naming vernacular museums; 5.3) Passion uniting makers and objects; 5.4) Arranging objects and spaces; and 5.5) Vernacular museums as a commentary on the present. The following section begins with an analysis of how the names of these museums reflect the kinds and qualities of knowledges presented in vernacular museums.

5.2. Naming vernacular museums

Vernacular museum names are analyzed here as expressive of the nature of relational meanings these spaces engender. Each vernacular museum has a name and is designated as a museum or collection. The names further suggest to visitors the kind of experience they might expect in these spaces. The accounts are enlivened by encounters with arrangements of objects that reflect the experiential patterns found in the museums. Names include additional descriptors that further suggest the type(s) of knowledges or ways of knowing that are featured within these museums, such as *Colecția Etnografică Casa cu Amintiri* (The House of Memories Ethnographic Museum). Analysis is limited here to the museum names featured on the RECOMESPAR website, though there are others.²⁷ Analysis identified three trends in naming vernacular museums: 1) naming after the maker, geographic location or ethnic group

²⁷ The RECOMESPAR member museum names can differ slightly based on where they are published. For instance, the names analyzed here can differ from those published in the CIMEC national museums database, which has listings in both in Romanian and English. One common difference between the museum names listed on the RECOMESPAR website and CIMEC is the replacement of more abstract or conceptual notions with the maker's or place name (e.g. in the CIMEC database, the Muzeul de la Raspantie is listed as Colecția privată "Iordăchescu George Adrian" in the Romanian listing and "Iordăchescu George Adrian" Private Collection in the English listing). Still other minor (or major) differences in names might also be found on signs posted at the at the museum sites themselves. There, the most common difference is to call the space a "museum" on signage hung at the site, even if the website name omits this term. These differences in names between "official" sources and "on the ground" at museum sites perhaps suggest something about the nature of legitimation, discussed further in Chapter 8.

that expresses an emplaced perspective such as *Colecția Etnografică Constantin Nițu* (the Ethnographic Collection of Constantin Nițu); 2) naming after a process or pattern of experience, such as *Muzeul Pastoral* (Pastoral Museum); and 3) naming with a metaphorical construction such as *Muzeul-Vin Vatra cu Dor* (Longing for the Hearth Living Museum). A summary of museum names is presented in Table 5.1 and discussed in the three sub-sections that follow. The titles of these sub-sections are modeled on researcher interpretations of how the museum names reflect anticipated patterns of experience of vernacular museum-making as an outcome of embodied knowledge-making.

5.2.1. Emplaced perspective

Museum names that evoke emplaced perspective are those named for their maker, the village or town where they are located, or after an ethnic group. Nine museum names include the maker's name: Ethnographic Collection of Marius Matei (*Colecția Etnografică Marius Matei*); Victor Tatau's Museum Point (*Punctul Muzeal Victor Tatău*); Ethnographic Museum of Aurel and Horea Flutur (*Muzeul de Etnografie Aurel și Horea Flutur*); Ethnographic Collection of Anuța and Aurel Achim (*Colecția Etnografică Anuța și Aurel Achim*); Ethnographic Collection of Constantin Nițu (*Colecția Etnografică Constantin Nițu*); Ethnographic Collection of Ionel Constantin-Lele (*Colecția Etnografică Ionel Constantin-Lele*); Ethnographic Collection of George Nechiti (*Colecția Etnografică George Nechiti*); Ethnographic Collection of Ioan Gramada (*Muzeul Etnografic Ioan Gramada*); and Ethnographic Collection of Felicia and Dionizie Olenici (*Colecția Etnografică Felicia și Dionizie Olenici*). Six museums follow the naming convention including a place name: House-Museum Galoșpetreu (*Casa-Muzeu Galoșpetren*); House Museum Iaz (*Casa-Muzeu Iaz*); Hațegan Village Museum (*Muzeul Satului Hațegan*); Ethnographic and Religious Museum of Bucerdea Vinoasă (*Muzeul etnografic și religios Bucerdea Vinoasă*); the Cisnădie Ethnographic Collection (*Colecția Etnografică*

Table 5.1 Analysis of RECOMESPAR museum names

Naming categories		Museum names (Romanian) (ID)	Museum names (English)
Personal/Regional Perspectives	After person (maker)	Colecția Etnografica Marius Matei (MUS_02)	Ethnographic Collection of Marius Matei
		Punctul Muzeal Victor Tatau (MUS_03)	Victor Tatau’s Museum Point
		Muzeul de Etnografie Aurel și Horea Flutur (MUS_05)	Ethnographic Museum of Aurel and Horea Flutur
		Colecția Etnografică Anuța și Aurel Achim (MUS_11)	Ethnographic Collection of Anuța and Aurel Achim
		Colecția Etnografică Constantin Nițu (MUS_13)	Ethnographic Collection of Constantin Nițu
		Colecția Etnografică Ionel Constantin-Lele (MUS_14)	Ethnographic Collection of Ionel Constantin-Lele
		Colecția Etnografică George Nechiti (MUS_15)	Ethnographic Collection of George Nechiti
		Muzeul Etnografic Ioan Grămadă (MUS_19)	Ethnographic Museum of Ion Gramada
		Colecția Etnografică Felicia și Dionizie Olenici (MUS_20)	Ethnographic Collection of Felicia and Dionizie Olenici
	After place	Casa-Muzeu Galoșpetreu (MUS_01)	Galoșpetreu House Museum
		Casa-Muzeu Iaz (MUS_04)	Iaz House Museum
		Muzeul Satului Hațegan (MUS_06)	Hațegan Village Museum
		Muzeul etnografic și religios Bucerdea Vînoasă (MUS_08)	Ethnographic and Religious Museum Bucerdea Vînoasă
		Colecția Etnografică Cîsnădie (MUS_10)	Cîsnădie Ethnographic Collection
		Muzeul Interetnic al Văii Hărtibaciului (MUS_12)	Interethnic Museum of Hărtibaciului Valley
	After ethnic group (people/ place)	Muzeul Momârlanului (MUS_09)	Momarlan Museum
		Casa Țătareasca Zulfie Totay (MUS_24)	Zulfie Totay Tatar House
Processes		Muzeul Pastoral (MUS_09)	Pastoral Museum
		Muzeul Pălăriilor de Paie (MUS_17)	Museum of Straw Hats
		Colecția Etnografică Zestreă (MUS_18)	Dowry Ethnographic Collection
Metaphorical constructions		Muzeul de la Răspantie (MUS_16)	Museum at the Crossroads
		Colecția Etnografică Casa cu Amintiri (MUS_18)	The House of Memories Ethnographic Collection
		Muzeul-Viu Vatra cu Dor (MUS_23)	Longing for the Hearth Living Museum
		Muzeul Rădăcina Vrancei (MUS_22)	Root of Vrancea Living Museum

Cisnădie); and the Interethnic Museum of Hărtibaciului Valley (*Muzeul Interetnic al Văii Hărtibaciului*). Two museums include the name of an ethnic group: the Momarlan Museum (*Muzeul Momârlanului*) and the Zulfie Totay Tatar House (*Casa Tătărească Zulfie Totay*).

Emplaced perspective foregrounds how these museums' names suggest their self-presentation and positioning within a place or according to a viewpoint, such as *Muzeul Interetnic al Văii Hărtibaciului* (Interethnic Museum of Hărtibaciului Valley). This example emphasizes the maker's interethnic perspective that casts a vision of how he engages with the ethnic groups that populate the geographic space of the valley where his museum is located. Whereas personal names emphasize the personal origin and scale of these museums, place names locate the museums geographically and spatially. Names of ethnic groups reflect their localized character. Vintilă Mihăilescu (2009) has recognized that vernacular museums are not the collective expressions of a community in the way that naming after a village or ethnic group would suggest but represent "individual initiatives" (p. 11). Instead, naming after a person, village or ethnic group expresses how these museums are located and framed. Emplaced perspective captures how these museums become spaces that house the personal collections and the local perspectives reflected in each museum. Further, each museum circumscribes the space of a home. Each maker's knowledge world has been shaped through his or her relationships with different aspects of their locality as space and place, particularly where ethnicity tends to combine a group historically and culturally linked to place. The maker's spatially situated vantage point becomes the relational frame that structures the object arrangements, providing points of comparison for how life around each museum has changed over time. Presented together in individual pages on the association website, these individual, emplaced perspectives emphasize the different facets of knowledge contained within these museums that make them unique and worth visiting.

5.2.2. Patterns of experience

Three museum names refer to objects, customs or ways of life: the Museum of Straw Hats (*Muzeul Pălăriilor de Paie*); The Dowry Ethnographic Collection (*Colecția Etnografică Zestreă*); and the Pastoral Museum (*Muzeul Pastoral*). Each example relates the museum to a pattern of experience that instantiates a way of making (straw hats); a custom (supplying a dowry) or a way of life (pastoral) that the maker presents within the museum. These patterns structure the museum maker's presentation of objects as a way of knowing about how things were made or how life was lived in the locality. The Museum of Straw Hats demonstrates an entire process, from cultivating and processing the raw materials, to production of a useful and usable end product: the straw hat (as well as related handmade straw crafts). This maker's family has practiced this craft "for four generations" after it was "brought to the village by a Hungarian teacher who married a local [woman]. Now almost any local can braid" (Quote 1: MUS_17, sect. 2, para. 1). Within this museum, the history and knowledge of this craft is captured and presented as a mark of deep local knowledge for residents.

In a different way, the Dowry Ethnographic Collection presents handwoven and embroidered household and personal textiles related to the marriage custom. Towards her goal of "envision(ing) the exhibition to mirror a local traditional household" (Quote 2: MUS_021, sect. 3, para. 1), maker Maria Chiriță focuses on the dowry as a foundational element in which each handmade piece acts as evidence of different modes of handmaking, reflecting both embodied processes of making (human hands at work creating clothing, bedding, and other household textiles) as well as the literal production of patterns (flowers, tree of life) through decorative embroidery. Historically, the dowry reflected a family's wealth, as well as the value, skill and knowledge of the woman who created it. Within the

context of Chiriță's museum, the dowry is one way of "wishing to highlight the beauty of an old, local culture" (Quote 3: MUS_21, sect. 2, para. 1) and foregrounding the value inherent in these beautiful handmade objects from the woman's world of the past.

In yet another way, the Pastoral Museum suggests a pattern of experience related to shepherding as a traditional local way of life. The Pastoral Museum is located in a region "famous for its natural beauty, old history and pastoral life of its inhabitants, so similar to that of past generations who migrated seasonally with their sheep" (Quote 4: MUS_10, Sect. 1, Para. 1). In Romanian, "migrated seasonally to graze their sheep" is expressed using the term *transhumanță*, or transhumance, emblematic of a pastoralism identified with this seasonal movement of animals indigenous to this region known for its production of cheese made from sheep's milk. The museum seeks to capture something of the envisioned idyllic nature of a lifestyle based on subsistence and self-sufficiency through the production of much of one's own food and other raw materials, such as wool.

The names of these three museums suggest the patterns of experience associated with ways of making, customs and ways of life through the human production of things (hats, dowry objects, foodstuffs, wool). The objects collected and presented by these and other makers are linked to "passion(s) for folk traditions" (Quote 5: MUS_21, sect. 2, para. 1); "area(s) heavy with history, where crafts are still practiced" (Quote 6: MUS_17, sect. 1, para. 1); and the maker's desire to "present the cultural endowment of (the local people)"²⁸ (Quote 7: MUS_09, sect. 3, para. 3). In this way, these museums focus on sustaining popular traditions as part of a total cultural inheritance that is active and alive, whether through passion or practice, and connecting them to patterns of experience that are still active but seen as changing by the museum makers. Naming these museums after patterns of

²⁸ Where inheritance is expressed using the same term for dowry: *zestre*.

experience emphasizes how these museums feature knowledge about crafts as an accumulating cultural inheritance inherent in a village or region as these inheritances are envisioned and expressed by their makers.

5.2.4. Metaphorical constructions

Four museums include metaphors in their names: Museum at the Crossroads (*Muzeul de la Raspantie*); House of Memories (*Colecția Etnografică Casa cu Amintiri*); Museum of Longing for the Hearth (*Muzeul-Viu Vatra cu Dor*) and Root of Vrancea Museum (*Muzeul Rădăcina Vrancei*). Each metaphor suggests a way of relating to place and/or to the past. “House of memories” invokes home as a space that is populated by memories as much as it is the product of a memory process and a site of memory. The “Root of Vrancea” suggests how the museum acts as a grounding and nourishing space where visitors might connect to different aspects of life in this village, in the same way a root connects a plant to the earth and provides sustenance. “Longing for the hearth” emphasizes the stove as the center of the home, its necessity in cooking and warming the home, as well as a desire for its warmth and its pull upon the body as a source of physical comforts. The “museum at the crossroads” implies something about the figurative as well as literal location of this museum: it may be situated at a fork in the road or at the intersection of past and present, but it is unclear whether this intersection is a point of convergence or divergence. The activities of remembering, longing, and grounding happen within these spaces where one can contemplate different aspects of life in the past. The past is considered in its relationship to felt qualities and experiences of uncertainty living in the present. These metaphoric names convey how vernacular museums can curate conceptual journeys through the activities of remembering and longing that create connections to place and to the past that are all

suggested within this subset of museum names, with the museum space itself acting as a locus for these perspectives.

5.2.5. Museum names conclusions

Vernacular museums can be understood as a model for knowing through the emplaced perspective and patterns of experience that arise through the interactions between makers, objects and spaces. Museum names communicate both the types of knowledge encountered in vernacular museums and how that knowledge might be consumed. The curated concepts of emplaced perspective or ‘being there’, patterns of experience and metaphorical constructions describe different aspects of these knowledge spaces. Emplaced perspective emphasizes the personal, situated perspectives presented within these museums. Patterns of experience describe the ways of making, customs and ways of life that can be presented through processes and are expressed through arrangements of objects. Metaphors included in museum names, such as “museum at the crossroads” or “longing for the hearth” suggest experiential dimensions of remembering and longing related to spaces of home that can connect and sustain visitors to the museum. They emphasize knowledge worlds in which vernacular museums are embedded, personal and local, suggesting ways of life and ways of being implied through patterns of experience and metaphorical names that foreground novel dimensions of museum experience. Passions of makers are one way the affective dimensions of museum-making are highlighted on the website. There are references to “passion(s) for folk traditions” quoted above and building museums “with great passion” quoted below, which are discussed next.

5.3. Passion uniting makers and objects

Passion emerges from the website descriptions in the ways in which collectors/makers describe their objects and museums discursively. For example, in

references to collecting objects and making museums represent how museum makers “welcome guests at their museum, which they built with great passion” (Quote 8: MUS_011, sect. 1, para. 1). This formulation conveys the emergent relations between makers, objects and spaces. An analysis of a selection of exemplary quotes and particular terms signaling intense emotional states, such as joy, excessive optimism or even obsession about their creations. The following sub-sections discuss quotes organized in the following sections: 5.3.1) passion and makers; 5.3.2) passion and objects; 5.3.3) passion shared through close ties between family and friends; or 5.3.4) passion as a response to a perceived lack of interest in others, all of which point to emotions. Together they illustrate that the “affective” dimensions of the vernacular museum experience being an essential and integral component of embodied knowledge-making and of this kind of museum-making.

5.3.1. Passion and makers

Passion can be a force fundamental to the creation of the museum, flowing from the makers into their museums and motivating them to learn more about their objects. The website description for Anuța and Aurel Achim’s museum states how: “It is with great joy that (the Achims) welcome guests at their museum, which they built with great passion, and now wish to share with others” (Quote 8: MUS_011, sect. 1, para. 1). For the Achims, “passion” is a key ingredient in the building of their museum and its existence. Maker Zulfie Seidali expresses another emotion: “And yet, to whom does all this spiritual richness belong? Who else could have revived the Tatar traditions, if not a Tatar woman who radiates optimism, whose eyes spark with the joy of belonging to this ethnic group? The author of this fairytale world is Zulfie Seidali” (Quote 9: MUS_24, sect. 1, para. 3). Seidali’s joy and optimism are an outgrowth of her ethnic identity. Her museum becomes an imaginative space through which she can share her feelings of belonging and identity as a Tatar. In both

these examples, “passion” that flows through the makers towards their museums is fundamental to the museum’s construction as a social space.

Makers also want to know more about their objects. Maker Antonin Socaciu, for instance “is passionate about history but also about local traditions, which he knows better than anyone else because no other local [person] spent so many hours doing research in the archives, researching crosses in the cemetery, the stones in the river, in search of human and geological histories” (Quote 10: MUS_06, sect. 2, para. 1). Socaciu’s “passion” for the place where he lives leads him to look extensively in unexpected places for knowledge about his objects and their ties to his locality. He has honed his vision to see traces of “history” and “tradition” that others might overlook. Another maker, Marius Matei, was driven by a sense of loss:

Seeing how the village loses its treasures woke a nostalgia in his soul. Although he was nothing more than a teenager, Marius Matei decided to compile a collection of ethnographic objects. More than ten years have passed since then, time in which he’s rummaged through villages with patience and he’s done passionate research, becoming a connoisseur of the traditional culture of the Banat. (Quote 11: MUS_002, Sect. 2, Para. 2)

Matei pursues his collection of ethnographic objects in response to the impending loss of local “treasures” that underlie regional identity and are of traditional culture of the Banat region of the Romanian plain. To stem this loss, Matei collects objects, an activity that allows him to cultivate over time a set of skills that elevated his level and quality of knowledge about his locality. Both Socaciu and Matei are initially motivated by their passion for the past that becomes honed through activities that demonstrate collecting as a knowledge-making activity: gathering evidence of the past in ways that are conventional (research; archives) and innovative (searching through cemeteries and stones in the river; rummaging through villages) and developing expertise, both extensive (knowing more than anyone else) and refined (becoming a connoisseur). The “passion” that initially motivates him is strengthened

through collecting as an activity both generated by and generative of knowledge gathering that influences the maker.

These four quotes illustrate the motivating force that encourages their museum-making endeavors, illustrating how feelings and emotions are integral to each museum maker's knowledge world expressed through their museum spaces. Each maker's passion is often further enlivened by the ongoing activities of research and collecting in which they engage to expand their own knowledge as well as the museum's material foundations. The vernacular museums harness this knowledge so that it can be shared with others, effectively harnessing intense emotions, like joy, and the intensity of activity, such as "endless hours" searching for knowledge about the past that Quote 10 refers to. Taken together, these quotes illustrate how vernacular museums cultivate intense emotional states and originate from them. Vernacular museums are expressions of what it means for these makers to know and to have a world. But "passion" can also appear to emanate around and through objects, which is discussed next.

5.3.2. Passion and objects

Objects are inducing "passion" within makers to learn more about the objects, to interpret and understand them. One quote describes in the third person how, for maker Aurel Flutur, "The interest in old objects led to a passion for knowledge. Being self-taught, Aurel Flutur researched for a long time to unearth every piece of information concerning his objects" (Quote 12: MUS_05, sect. 2, para. 3). This quote expresses a connection between objects and knowledge. There can be no museum without objects, they are essential, but it is not only the presence of objects that make collections. The process of "making" the collection draws from the nature of certain objects. Flutur's interest in assembling his collection has been indicated as driving him to knowing more about the objects. However,

Flutur's wife, Lucretia Flutur, was drawn to collecting by her husband but also by a particular object: "[Aurel Flutur] started to collect early, passing the passion on to his wife, Lucretia. It was not easy, as money was scarce, yet Lucretia Flutur has been wearing the same bead necklace for more than 40 years, the first collected item, that made her truly feel the beauty of this passion" (Quote 13: MUS_05, sect. 2, para. 1). Lucretia Flutur was not only drawn to collecting by her husband; her interest was linked to a specific object, a glass bead necklace, that spurred her interest in collecting and that eventually created a museum. Further, Mrs. Flutur's felt experience of the glass bead necklace is linked to aesthetic dimensions of the necklace as an emblem of collecting, suggesting that passion and aesthetic dimensions of objects are interconnected for this maker.

These two quotes illustrate what compels makers to collect and to seek knowledge about specific objects. Objects are perceived to attract and propel people and passion appears as emanating from the objects. Aurel Flutur's collection of objects sparked his interest in researching them further. For makers Matei and Socaciu in the previous section (5.2.1), an intent to know more about the past, history and traditions is symbolized by the objects in his collection. For Aurel Flutur, having the objects motivated him to know more about them. Further, Flutur transferred his desire for objects to his wife (to be discussed further in Section 5.3.3), who described how collecting was rooted in the aesthetic dimensions of her first object, a glass bead necklace. Objects themselves thus appear to engender relations within vernacular museums. Emotion between family members or other close ties is also shared.

5.3.3. Shared passions

In her website description, maker Maria Chiriță is described as "infecting" fellow museum maker Paul Buța with the passion for collecting:

Together with her research and supported by her family, she has been collecting objects for over 40 years. Her contagious passion soon affected others. She told Paul Buța, her friend in Tecuci of her wish to start an ethnographic museum. Fate made it that both of them fulfilled the same dream. (Quote 14: MUS_21, sect. 2, para. 1).

The close friendship between makers allowed their shared interests in collecting and museum making which is often described as an affliction. Chiriță's "wish" for a museum was strengthened through this shared vision, compelling the outcome of a museum for both makers. Maker George Nechiti reportedly transferred museum-making to his son: "His son similarly developed a hobby for collecting ethnographic objects, and started roaming the villages, looking for them" (Quote 15: MUS_15, sect. 2, para. 3). As with the passion for objects leading to knowledge in Section 5.3.2, Nechiti's passion also encouraged his son to engage in more active collecting pursuits. In this way, this strong enjoyment of collecting is shared between friends around museum making activities but also between family members where, in this RECOMESPAR story, a son is influenced by his father's collecting activities. Nechiti's son sets out to "wander through villages" on quests to find ethnographic objects as an inevitable outcome of his familial affliction that concerns them with objects from the past in an attempt to remedy this affective state. The positive sentiments focus the attention of these makers on the past. The sharing of interest is seen as a societal role, as shown in the next section.

5.3.4. Passion as a response to a perceived lack of interest

The reference to a general lack of interest in old objects for maker Doina Dobrean prompts didactic work: "She has always been an avid worker, and became even more determined by her hardships and the ignorance of some of her fellow locals; she started buying and gathering pieces that she cleaned up and restored, giving them back their radiance." (Quote 16: MUS_18, sect. 3, para. 1). Dobrean perceived those around her as

“ignorant” of the past. This became a motivating force that encouraged her to collect objects. Maker Dobrea “cleans” and “restores” objects in her collection, “giving them back their radiance.” These activities suggest the renewal of objects, improving their condition and imbuing them with a brightness, a new life. Renewal corresponds with notions of salvage and value that will be discussed in Section 5.5. Here, restoring renewal and brightness are relevant to understanding how the passion for collecting can be motivated by a proximity to those who neither share nor understand a love for old objects, who cannot see a value in them beyond their current condition. Thus, the core results in a change of state for objects, effectively changing their appearance.

5.3.5. Passion conclusions

This section has described different dimensions of how affect has pervaded the RECOMESPAR stories told about the makers in their website descriptions by emphasizing the motivations for vernacular museum making. Objects themselves are presented as eliciting aesthetic responses in makers. The objects are represented in these stories as active agents in encouraging their makers to know more about them. The maker’s activity is infectious and transferable to family and friends. The objects motivate a maker to collect and restore them in ways that both revive objects and are perceived to benefit the maker.

Section 5.3 has focused on motivations makers have to collect objects and make museums. The next section focuses on how objects and spaces are presented in the RECOMESPAR website descriptions.

5.4. Arranging objects and spaces

This section focuses on how perceived “traditional” orders are presented through textual analysis of the website descriptions and visual analysis of accompanying images. Analysis describes how the buildings that house the museums structure the orders and

arrangements of objects within museum spaces. The spatial arrangements are presented in three sections, focusing on categories resulting from the analysis of the website text and images. The themes in the first two categories 5.4.1) recreating a household and 5.4.2) the complete household rely on the website descriptions. The third category, 5.4.3) displaying temporality, is an analytic theme used to describe the relationship of object displays to temporal orders and descriptions, particularly through visual depictions of objects.

Recreating a household and the complete household are categories that emerged through the RECOMESPAR stories. Displaying temporality refers to how the effects of time are displayed and conveyed visually in images of these museums presented on the RECOMESPAR website.

5.4.1. Recreating a household

Four makers were reported to find their inspiration to create a museum in a traditional household: “[Anton Socaciu] knew from the very start what he wanted: *to rebuild a household from Hațeg*” (Quote 17: MUS_06, sect. 3, para. 1, emphasis added); Paul Buța is reported as having “created a hands-on museum organized as a *functional traditional household*” (Quote 18: MUS_23, sect. 3, para. 1, emphasis added); “Ileana Morariu wanted to envision a *traditional Jina home of the past*” (Quote 19: MUS_09, sect. 3, para. 1, emphasis added); and “[Maria Chiriță] wanted her exhibition to *mirror the image of a local traditional home*, but took the liberty of furnishing the house according to her own instincts – instincts owed to her studies of ethnology, meaning she could understand local culture in all of its fluidity, together with its influences and resemblances, rather than in a limiting way” (Quote 20: MUS_21, sect. 3, emphasis added). These quotes illustrate how the idea of the recreation of a traditional household acted as the guiding concept for these museum makers in the RECOMESPAR narrative. The traditional household in these stories further adds to the emplaced perspective

(discussed in Section 5.2.1) because those households are recreated in relation to the personal space of the makers' everyday lives. What is arguably more important here is that “envisioning” of traditional households is presented as the maker's interpretation of this concept. The idealized traditional household from the past is reimagined and reinterpreted by these makers dependent on the quantity and kinds of objects they have on hand. Their display is shaped by the spatial divisions and orderings defined by the arrangement of the vernacular buildings that serve as their reception. The quality and kind of household in amassing of objects is discussed next—as the idea of collecting a complete household.

5.4.2. Collecting a complete household

The interplay between objects and spaces within vernacular museums expresses another important idea described within several of the website descriptions of a complete, functional household. Vernacular museum makers do not necessarily strive to collect objects according to institutional interpretations of museum significance. In contrast, vernacular museums assemble objects from everyday life for which the museum provides the narrative of a traditional household, as in: “[Ionel Constantin's] passion with textiles grew as he collected shirts, towels, scarves (and other textiles). He later started collecting ceramics and so on . . . managing to exhibit all the objects that the locals would use in their everyday life” (Quote 21: MUS_14, sect. 3). For this maker, activities of collecting extended his focus from textiles to ceramics and other household objects that were used in everyday life. The goal is not to assemble a display as much as to invoke how the use of these objects shaped the nature of everyday life as well as the household environment.

George Nechiti's website description describes how: “working tools [are displayed] in the courtyard, tools that would have been available in any household until not too long ago” (Quote 22: MUS_15, sect. 3, para. 2). That certain objects were necessary to document

a household is emphasized by the contrasts of life of the past compared to households of the present to the past. In his website description, Vasile Polgar, is portrayed in terms of: “[having grown] up in a rich and industrious family, who always made sure they had everything a household needs. This idea marked him, which is why he makes sure his own collection never lacks anything” (Quote 23: MUS_10, sect. 2, para. 2). The completeness of household implies wealth or class of a family who did not want for anything. These quotes express how the desire to recreate a complete household points to difference and distinctions between life past and present and class and freedom. Possessing such a complete household means that a family was “rich and industrious” and that maintaining a household required knowledge and skills. Further, the complete household also communicates a feeling of fulfillment, as in this description of Maker Ioan Gramada: “His ambition was to depict a traditional household from Bucovina. Seeing how locals took great pride in having everything their houses needed, the collector himself makes sure no aspect of the local traditional life is left unrepresented.” (Quote 24: MUS_19, sect. 3).

The value of objects is further restored through the recovery of as many of the details of life associated with the objects, as expressed in the following quote:

The over 2500 items tell the story of a local culture of unprecedented beauty and history. No aspect of it has been forgotten, neither traditional occupations, nor those of today. Walking through the rooms and courtyards is like going back through 100 years of history, sharing in the details of people’s lives. (Quote 39: MUS_05, sect. 3, para.1)

The reference to the number and type of objects in this museum is arguably larger than would have been in an actual household at any time in the past, demonstrating how the goal of the complete household often overflows into excess. This excess of objects shows how the goal of the complete household overlaps with a somewhat obsessive desire to capture the completeness of a way of life, as it suggests how the details of life orders becomes

faceted through the extensive and iterative typologies offered through a sheer quantity of objects.

The previous two sections have described how the household provides the space and frames assembled objects to convey life in the past in contrast to the present. Section 5.4.3 considers how the patterns of experience play out through the arrangements of objects within these restored, functional, traditional and complete households to visually convey different relationships to time.

5.4.3. Displaying temporality

Vernacular museums present the distinction between present and past through the appearances of objects and their arrangement as they have been constructed in the RECOMESPAR website descriptions. Different patterns of objects are revealed through the images included alongside the website descriptions that are presented in this section. Visual and textual analysis will show two ways in which objects embody time: 1) by stating their age as part of their pattern of decoration and 2) by displaying visually their age through a patina. The images analyzed in this section are included as part of the website descriptions for MUS_02 and MUS_11-14. However, as noted in Section 5.1.2, the images are not captioned, nor are they referred to in the text nor is any other information provided on the RECOMESPAR website to suggest who has produced these images. As with the descriptions, the maker's name listed at the bottom of each website description page suggests that the images have been provided by the museum makers themselves. Because of the lack of integration of website images with the descriptive text, the images selected for analysis included objects self-labeled with dates or other evidence of making (Figures 5B, 5C, and 5D) as well as two that displayed similar types of objects that showed their age differently (Figures 5E and 5F). The appearance and juxtaposition of objects within these

museums suggest other ways that time is represented in vernacular museums. Where time is suggested in 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 as the generalized, idealized past contrasted with the present, sections 5.4.3.1 and 5.4.3.2. demonstrate how time is communicated by and through individual objects and their juxtapositions visually within the museum displays and descriptions.

5.4.3.1. Patterns of decoration

Some vernacular museum objects, ceramics as well as painted trunks and others, are labelled with dates, shown in the examples pictured in Figures 5B, 5C and 5D. The ceramic jug in Figure 5B shows the creation date for this object, 1913. This object's age is further emphasized in this image through its visible coating of dust. Figure 5C displays a group of five ceramic pieces, with one in the foreground displaying a date of 1947. Its display near four other ceramic pieces suggests an approximate age of the nearby ceramic pieces by association and offers comparison of glazes, colors and shapes. The chips and other signs of wear are visible (e.g. as in the chicken-shaped pitcher next to the labeled jug). Visual associations suggested by the proximity of objects and their wear as a sign of age. It also illustrates how these objects have not been restored but left as-is. Figure 5D presents a piece of furniture decontextualized from any background that suggests a distinctiveness for this object. This is further emphasized in how it displays the name of a previous owner or maker and the date 1852, both included as part of its painted finish.

Objects marked with a specific year are anchored to time, as their year of creation more easily positions them within linear historical narratives. In some cases, the inclusion of a maker's and/or previous owner's name(s) can further link objects to the history of a craft localized and documents information about provenance. These dated objects are connected to particular points in history. Depending upon how an object is contextualized in relation to

other objects, this specificity of age can shape the viewer's perception of historical age of the objects displayed around them.



Figure 5B: Object showing its date of creation as part of its decoration, emphasized by the layer of dust in the image (Source: MUS_14 website description)



Figure 5C: Display of five ceramic pieces. The date and maker information on the ceramic jug in the foreground illustrates how age transfers to nearby objects (Source: MUS_13 website description)



Figure 5D: A decontextualized image of this piece of furniture emphasizes the object's distinction as it displays its date of creation and the name of its owner or maker (Source: MUS_12 website description)

5.4.4.2. Patinas

Two belts shown in Figures 5E and 5F are remarkable for how they have weathered time. Patina is understood here to indicate changes in appearance due to age or use. The belt in Figure 5E is pristine and has survived with limited damaging effects while Figure 5F shows a close-up of a belt that displays the effects of time and emphasizes them through a closeup view of wear and tear. Preciousness is further exacerbated in Figure 5E by how the object is photographed imitating a more formal mode of institutional museum presentation: with the object decontextualized on a black background. Figure 5F's depiction suggests a different level of attention paid to foregrounding this subject: the belt as a survivor of use, but its aura is still strong despite areas of missing stitches. Some objects have not been used, while others have weathered and worn. Though the term is not employed within the website

descriptions, patinas denote the passing of time and history of use while at the same time suggesting aspects of connection to use of these objects.



**Figure 5E: Image of a well-preserved belt showing limited effects of time
(Source: MUS_02 website description)**



**Figure 5F: Image of a belt showing its wear-and-tear as evidence of its life story
(Source: MUS_11 website description)**

5.4.3.3. Displaying Temporality Conclusions

The appearances and juxtapositions of objects within vernacular museums can reflect different ways of showing time in website imagery and iconography even when these images are presented without captions or references in the accompanying text. Objects whose ages are communicated through their year of creation as an integral part of decoration are situated within historical time and the inclusion of their owner's or maker's names also provide an interesting provenance dimension that can localize objects in origin or use contexts. Patinas communicate age differently, through the object's appearance and whether or how it illustrates evidence of use or wear (or not), suggesting something about an object's life story beyond what can be captured through a calculated age. In this way, displaying temporality communicates a sense of how objects age beyond a simple calculation of years passed. Ordering objects in vernacular museums as they are depicted on the website, then, also orders and combines the life stories of objects that inhabit these museum spaces, shifting temporality within these spaces to communicate different effects and experiences of time.

5.4.4. Arranging objects and spaces conclusions

Sections 5.4.1-5.4.3 have emphasized how vernacular museum displays act as expressions of their maker's desire to re-envision traditional households of the past. Recreating a household becomes a guiding concept for makers who also reimagine these households as complete and containing everything a family would need to thrive in the past. However, this is often done by collecting and displaying many more objects than would have been present in an actual household from the past. This excess of objects conveys the knowledge and skill that were required to maintain a traditional household in a way that emphasizes the differences between life today and in the past. This contrast between traditional and contemporary homes also implies distinctions between ideas of freedom and

class status, for instance, where the ability to actualize a model of this reimagined complete home is made possible because museum makers (more often men or married couples) own their property and have the financial means to create and maintain their museums. This suggests how the ability to recreate the past even at this grassroots level can continue to mirror or replicate existing class hegemonies.

Time is also expressed through these object displays as calculated age and as patinas. Objects show their calculated age through their patterns of decoration that connect them to history. Age is also shown through the patinas of the objects as evidence of wear and use and that suggest the life stories of objects. Both calculated age and patinas overlap with notions of emplacement (Section 5.2.1) that visually and temporally ground objects within the overarching narratives that emphasize everyday life and how it was lived in the traditional, complete household as a pattern of experience.

Where Section 5.4. has focused on how vernacular museum makers collect and arrange objects to display aspects of the past, Section 5.5 focuses on the creation of vernacular museums and emphasis on how life was lived in the past by contrast to the present.

5.5. Vernacular museums as a commentary on the present

Vernacular museums also provide a commentary on the present. Textual analysis of the RECOMESPAR website descriptions identified three ways in which vernacular museums are responding to makers perceptions about life in the present, as commentaries on: 5.5.1) deficiencies in expert knowledge, as in the case of “experts” who put forth the idea that certain localities have no notable traditions; 5.5.2) how knowledge about the past is lost as we turn towards *modernitate* or “modernity”; and 5.5.3) shifting values and associated meanings evidenced by the discarding and reclaiming of objects from the past.

5.5.1. Deficiencies in expert knowledge

Several makers were reported on the website as perceiving academic or scholarly regional ethnographies to be incomplete or inaccurate. Maker Kéri Gaspar's website description states:

In his efforts, [Dr. Kéri Gaspar] was long-driven by the desire of proving the ethnographers that considered the Ier Valley as an area without a culture of its own wrong. He is also displeased by the fact during the communist period, the cultures of the minorities were almost altogether ignored. (Quote 25: MUS_01, sect. 2, para. 2)

As a lifelong local, the idea that ethnographers had overlooked or omitted any cultural specificity for this region stood in contrast to what Kéri knew based on his own experience reported on the website of the RECOMESPAR organization. This spurred in him a desire to prove the experts wrong as well as to fight against oppression of ethnic Hungarians under communism. Kéri was “driven” by these errors or omissions in the existing knowledge record and towards correcting this record. This was done in the following terms:

. . . for many years, he researched, he read history, religion, and ethnography books, he gathered information from archives and elders for several years, as well as objects specific to the region . . . when he feels that he has a strong foundation, he opens the first private museum in the area, in [his maternal grandparents' house]. (Quote 26: MUS_01, sect. 2, para. 2)

What is important here is how Kéri engaged with the existing scholarship as well as with physical objects in the world in order to refute these omissions. He read books, used archives, collected and researched local objects, and gathered information from the older generation. He relied on traditional evidence of ethnography and history (books and archives) but also reported through storytelling and by material culture. Through these embodied interactions, Kéri was able to build his own case and show it through his museum as testimony of what is missing from the official record.

In a similar way, maker Maria Chiriță's website description also describes her as questioning specialist findings about the area in which her museum is located:

[Maria Chiriță's] passion for popular traditions was deeply influenced by the fact that the specialists from Iași – where she studied philology – would always say there were no important folkloric traditions south of Bârlad. She became determined to research the Covurl local culture, and she continues to prove that the folklorists were wrong. (Quote 27: MUS_21, sect. 2, para. 1).

The expert claims of “no important folkloric traditions” in her area spurred Chiriță to undertake her own scholarly research. This positions her work in the museum not simply as a one-time refutation of error; museum-making becomes an affirmation of how the experts can be wrong. For Chiriță, creating and maintaining her museum becomes an ongoing, embodied activity located within a particular space and time, focused on maintaining and renewing popular traditions that some experts have disregarded as “unimportant.” This illustrates a kind of activism, where expert knowledge claims are challenged through personal efforts. This also suggests that the RECOMESPAR website voices these challenges and tensions and represents the new and emergent approaches tied to democratization and legitimization of vernacular museums as a grassroots form.

The challenges to expert knowledge by museum makers become a call to action towards researching and collecting, which is also seen in maker Paul Buța's website description:

A local of the village of Rai (Murgeni commune), from Vaslui county, Paul [Buța] lived in Tecuci for a long time. As he was studying local culture there in the (19)80s, he was surprised to discover that folklorists don't consider Galați county to have particular ethnographic elements. He started studying the topic as personal research, and continued his research after the revolution, as a graduate student in ethnology. He first unearthed local funeral masks, then dances and old traditions – in a nutshell, an entire local culture. (Quote 28: MUS_23, sect. 2, para. 1)

As with Kéri and Chiriță, Buța is also spurred to action to disprove this expert belief that his locality does not have its own ethnographic identity. Buța was moved to physically engage in research about his locality. This knowledge emerged through his engagement with objects (funeral masks) and activities (dances and customs).

As a response to what they refer to as local culture that has been “ignored” or absent (“an area without a culture of its own” or without “particular ethnographic elements”), Kéri, Chiriță and Buța became amateur folklorists in search of local traditions and local identity told by local historians in grassroots efforts emerging from below. As such, these makers developed their own expertise that competes with the findings of questioned institutionalized expert knowledge, with their museums becoming a locus for knowledge that challenges an official record as perceived by the makers and reported in the RECOMESPAR website. These makers actively supplement knowledge about their region through research of individuals, and through creating museum spaces. The authority and expertise are placed in the museum and constructed as a grassroots effort. But it is not only expert knowledge that can be deficient; the ways of knowing in the present can also be problematic, and vernacular museums can act as a remedy to this problem, according to what the RECOMESPAR website reports and curates about the motivations of museum makers.

5.5.2. Recovering knowledge of the past

Aurel Flutur’s museum-making objective is based on showing people the past:

After he retired, he decided to start a new life and moved to Ocna Sibiului, where he bought an old, 19th century home . . . in which he decided to start a museum, where those living today can experience the past, as he strongly believes people who do not know their past cannot enjoy their present. (Quote 29: MUS_11, sect. 2, para. 2)

“Deciding to start a museum” expresses this maker’s understanding of how the museum is the medium through which the past can be materialized, visualized, or otherwise represented and shown to the public. This maker resolved to create his museum in order to help people around him who do not know about the past to live a better life in the present. The creation of the museum is meant to reform the links with the present.

Links between past and present are reformed is through the recovery or maintenance of cultural identity that is perceived as receding. For instance, Buța's website description states that he is:

Worried that the school system provides students solely knowledge and skills for the future and concerned with the rapidity with which the past - the foundation of our ethnic identity - is vanishing, he created a hands-on museum, organized as a functional traditional household. (Quote 30: MUS_23, sect. 3, para. 1)

This statement expresses Buța's desire to actively connect past to present through his museum activities because he perceives knowledge about the past as "vanishing." Similarly, Marius Matei's website description reports his collecting goals as a "fight against (cultural) erasure/forgetting by collecting the last pieces of local attire" (Quote 31: MUS_02, sect. 1, para. 2). Matei's collection focuses on local popular costumes, which are material expressions of local identity. Matei expresses his work as a struggle for the survival of cultural identity of his region, where his museum work sustains the knowledge associated with these garments that, when worn and/or displayed, indicated the ethnic identity and social status of their owners as well as the technologies of production these garments embody. The statements within the descriptions of these two RECOMESPAR museums suggest that an active intervention is required of makers to stem the "erasure" of the knowledge of the identities literally and figuratively woven into these remnants of material culture.

The RECOMESPAR website description further states that Matei attributes the changes he sees as a product of change brought about by "modernization" that results in "the rapid change of mentalities and the abandonment of the values of the old local culture, where agriculture was the basic occupation, and celebrations and customs were the soul of community life" (Quote 32: MUS_02, sect. 1, para. 2). "Modernization" here correlates with rapidity of changes to ways of thinking that leads to the "abandonment" of emplaced values and associated ways of life. The increasing rate at which the old values and ways of life are

being abandoned, from Matei's perspective, are encouraging him towards a more intensive intervention through the collection of "local attire" as evidence of local identity. This scenario posits Matei as a witness to this willing abandonment of the past, creating the effects that encourage his collecting and museum-making activities. Makers Elena Mălinesc and Petru Gălăţan are said to express a similar sentiment in their website description:

Pained by the fact the Momarlan would so easily renounce their traditions in favor of modernity, they decided to save the remains of their culture, buying, often at hefty prices, objects that would have otherwise been thrown away by their owners. (Quote 33: MUS_07, sect. 2, para. 1)

For these makers, "tradition" and "modernity" are made. "Modernity" becomes synonymous with rapid change and loss of knowledge while "tradition" is associated with nurturing a better kind of knowledge enjoyment in the present with local origins. What is worth keeping versus what should be discarded is presented as "painful" for these makers and roots their actions.

Vernacular museums can counteract rapid change:

Nowadays, when modernism is in vogue and excessively promoted, traditions seldom find their place. Still, while you find yourself inside the Zulfie Totay traditional house, furnished in the style of a Tatar family from Cobadin, you completely forget about fashion and modernity, and you let yourself be carried away into amazing stories, told patiently by the host. (Quote 34: MUS_24, sect. 1, para. 2)

As expressed in this quote from Zulfie Seidali's website description, an encounter with the confluence of objects arranged in a manner reflecting the traditions of a Tatar family,²⁹ an ethnic minority group in this area for centuries, can actively entice visitors to "completely forget about fashion and modernity" and entice visitors to "let [themselves] be carried away" through stories and traditional ways of being in the past through the arrangement of the

²⁹ The Tatars are one of the pre-national ethnic minorities that have historically inhabited Dobruja, an area between the Danube River and the Black Sea Coast that is located today in both Romania and Bulgaria.

museum spaces. This stresses the integration of people/things/spaces in a vernacular museum.

Taken together, these quotes illustrate how “modernity” (*modernitate*) expresses the museum maker’s perceptions of rapid changes in the value of objects and contrasting experiences of life in the past as different from life in the present. *Modernitate* signals a distancing from the past that these makers have known, a distance they seek to lessen through their museum work. These vernacular museum makers seem to thrive on this tension between *modernitate* and the past and their museums become spaces that resists changes to what and how we know in the present.

5.5.3. Discarding and reclaiming objects from the past

The movement of many of these makers to collect arises from their desire to save objects that have been essentially abandoned in attics and other liminal spaces, such as basements, abandoned buildings or in the trash. For instance, Constantin Nițu’s website description expresses how: “He collected items for their beauty and history; he retrieved everything he could from attics, rescued fragments of discarded objects” (Quote 35: MUS_13, sect. 3, para. 3). For Nițu, age and beauty applied to fragments as well as complete or whole objects, to anything that might have been discarded. This was expressed in a different way in the website description of George Nechiti:

Steadily, the passion for sculpting gets him interested in the beauty of other objects, and he first starts to collect hunting trophies . . . then old objects, familiar to him from his childhood, that people nowadays simply throw away. (Quote 36: MUS_15, sect. 2, para. 2)

Objects are “hunted” by this maker, first as hunting trophies and, later, as objects he remembers from childhood. Similar to these hunting trophies, the objects that once surrounded him in abundance in his youth are becoming rarer, being discarded. As this maker’s collecting vision has developed over his lifetime, he responds to the sparsity of once

plentiful objects. Both of these quotes express how once useful objects are being “thrown away” as they are no longer needed in the practices of modern life. To collect something that was discarded, however, reclaims its value.

Once salvaged, the objects would be restored by the collector, as noted in one website description by the reference to “. . . the collection [that] also includes numerous embroidered samples, many cut out of textile fragments too damaged to be restored. Many of them were damaged by mice, by mold or even by being used as dishcloths. Considering this, Doina Dobrean’s restoration itself becomes a value in itself.” (Quote 37: MUS_18, sect. 3, para. 2) Here, acts of intentional and unintentional awareness have diminished these textiles. However, this quote illustrates how Dobrean’s diligence restores value even in the smallest fragments of old objects. This quote emphasizes how a particular sort of vision is required to understand the hidden value inherent in old things; even when they are destroyed, the value is never completely absent; it can be reclaimed and restored by someone who has the appropriate vision and proper frameworks of knowing, as these makers do.

The website stories of the RECOMESPAR museums note that still other collectors express acts of renewing objects through their continued use:

Eugen Vaida wants to give the objects a new life. To him, objects become valuable through use and that is why he imagines an eco-museum in a neighboring village, with guesthouses where the old objects could be used again. He also wishes to build . . . an interethnic museum for the most precious objects, that could host the history of Hârtibaciu. (Quote 38: MUS_12, sect. 2, para. 3)

Vaida differentiates between different uses for objects: 1) a sense of practical use in an eco-museum setting and 2) another inter-ethnic museum that protects objects. This differentiation between objects for use and priceless or protected objects suggests how vernacular museums can maintain the lifeways of objects through their use and at the same

time it preserves these objects as evidence of the past. This is another way vernacular museums mediate the past, by recirculating them in the present as an experiential museum.

Vernacular museums are spaces of remembering the details of the way of life through extensive representations of the past. The website description of Ligia Bodea states how she: “present[s] local culture to the visitors, contained in an ethnographic museum that is filled with memories” (Quote 40: MUS_04, sect. 1, para. 1). This expression reflects how objects become synonymous with memories in what fills museum spaces, where this maker “gathered her first objects when she was 11 years old, after the passing of her beloved grandmother, whose memory she wanted to perpetuate by keeping the interior of the house she lived in all of her life unaltered” (Quote 41: MUS_04, sect. 2, para. 1). The idea of unchanging spaces and the desire to keep not just a disembodied memory of a loved one but a deeply embodied sense of visceral remembering that overlaps with how the personal spaces of life are ordered and arranged in the present. Remembering a loved one by keeping a space as she created and arranged it expresses the commemorative dimensions of vernacular museum making.

The statements reported in the RECOMESPAR website descriptions express how these makers learn to see the value of collecting and its impacts for what and how we can know about life in the present. Salvaging discarded objects from liminal spaces sets in motion processes of restoration and arrangement as ways to further reclaim and restore the associated knowledges and ways of life inherent in the ordering and arranging of objects discussed in Section 5.4. To keep and restore objects and then to place them in a museum is an active and determined attachment through relocation. For vernacular museum makers, this attachment to the past serves a real purpose of keeping alive in the present a past that is

perceived as diminishing. The creation of a museum becomes a way to mitigate this feeling of loss and to share these reclaimed values with others.

5.5.4. Vernacular museums as commentary on the present conclusions

Sections 5.5.1-5.5.3 focused on the activities of vernacular museum-making in terms of tensions with expert knowledge and “modernity” (*modernitate*) as a contrast to the past. The tension reverberates within these museums, positioning them as spaces that resisting what and how we know in the present and that nurture knowledge about the past. The work these collectors perform in rescuing discarded items are represented in the RECOMESPAR narrative as an overall purpose of museum making. By reclaiming discarded objects no longer useful in the present, vernacular museum makers actively supplement and reorder knowledge of experts through research, and through creating museum spaces. In doing so, they reify their own authority and expertise conveyed through the act of museum making.

5.6. Conclusions

This chapter has presented the ways in which vernacular museum makers organize and present their museums as conceptual journeys. Museum arrangements relate maker’s personal interpretations of traditional, complete households of the past. Objects themselves convey their own life stories through calculated age and patinas of use that visually and temporally ground objects within makers’ overarching narratives that emphasize how everyday life was lived in these reimagined households. “Passion” also refers to motivations of makers and objects interactively involved in presenting the personal knowledge worlds of museum makers and the life stories of objects. Objects themselves are presented as eliciting an aesthetic response in makers and in encouraging their makers to know more about them. The maker’s activities are infectious and transferable to family and friends. The objects

motivate a maker to collect and restore them in ways that both revive objects and are perceived to benefit the maker.

Museum makers often construct their narratives to foreground tensions with expert knowledge and “modernity” (*modernitate*) to convey knowledge about the past by reclaiming discarded objects no longer useful in the present. Vernacular museum makers actively supplement and reorder knowledge of experts through research, and through creating museum spaces. In doing so, they reify their own authority and expertise conveyed through the act of museum making and reclaim the value of discarded objects by restoring and relocating objects within their museums as ongoing interventions. Knowledge-making in vernacular museums emphasizes the affective and material dimensions of experience as intrinsic components of museum-making as an epistemic activity and as a kind of activism that seeks to mitigate the loss of knowledge about the past. The findings presented here have foregrounded how knowledge is embedded in and emerges through embodied interactions between objects and makers and in relation to their museum spaces conceptualized as traditional, complete households. These makers exist in a world of living evidence through which they seek to reconnect objects and reconstitute the past as a way of sustaining knowledge they perceive as diminishing. The emplaced, personal and everyday scale of vernacular museums foregrounds their grassroots nature and highlights the idiosyncratic and novel dimensions of museum experience.

The next chapter will focus on my visits to four of the twenty-four RECOMESPAR museums.

CHAPTER 6: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF VISITS TO VERNACULAR MUSEUMS

This chapter presents an autoethnographic account of the museum site visits to four RECOMESPAR museums during fieldwork in June 2018 in support of RO3. The first-person perspective of the researcher-as-visitor to these museums complements the understanding of vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making as they are presented in RECOMESPAR website descriptions discussed in Chapter 6 and provides a basis for comparison of visitor experiences presented in Chapter 7. The process of museum site selection has been detailed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.4.1.2). My overarching goal was to observe museums in areas of Romania that I had not yet visited. I also wanted to travel by car between sites which would allow me to observe how museums are embedded within the local landscape and wider tourism and heritage networks (discussed in Chapter 8). My goal was to visit museums in the western part of the country, traversing the historical regions of Banat, Crișana and Transylvania. I visited four RECOMESPAR museums in the villages of Sasca Montană, Caraș-Severin County (MUS_03); Galoșpetreu, Bihor County (MUS_01); and Iaz, Sălaj County (MUS_04); and the town of Hațeg, Hunedoara County (MUS_06).

The visits to four vernacular museums during this three-week fieldwork are presented as stories structured around sequences of notable moments (Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2) that captured moments of self-reflexivity in which I photographed what I was seeing in response to the museum proprietor's spoken narrative. These panels are presented as an ensemble of texts and contiguously with the text of this chapter. This sequence of impressions through which I recalled vernacular museum visits are the case studies in which I relate stories of four museum visits. By presenting how my observations and impressions developed through fieldnotes during fieldwork, I am making connections among cases.

These accounts are autoethnographic because of the notable moments that form the basis for representing museum stories documented by moments that were meaningful to me, embedded in and shaped through my embodied and situated perspective as an American woman, traveler and researcher. At times, my travel companion's and translator's (referred to as AC) impressions are included as they, too, emerged from these museum visits as shared experiences (discussed further in Chapter 7). My main means of communicating with museum makers was through AC's translation. Therefore, AC and her autoethnographic positions are integral to my understanding of these museums, particularly because she has now visited with me at least seven RECOMESPAR museums. The chapter concludes with a discussion that contextualizes deeply individualized and personal findings within the theories of the museum as an imagined space made navigable (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004) and cultural motion (Urban, 2001).

6.1. Story 1: Punctul Muzeal Victor Tatău, Sasca Montană (MUS_003)

Our visit to Victor Tatău's *Punctul Muzeal* (Victor Tatău's Museum Point, MUS_03) was scheduled by phone just a couple of days before we were to arrive in the village of Sasca Montană, in Caraș-Severin County close to the border with Serbia. I knew from his RECOMESPAR website description that Tatău was a retired geologist who traveled extensively throughout Romania for his work, eventually relocating to Sasca Montană to work in the mine there, where he met his wife and decided to settle. His interest in old objects and the history of the region is an outgrowth of his drive to learn more about his adopted home (cf. MUS_03 website description, Section 2).

Tatău provided his house number to us but also warned that the house numbers in the village went in no particular order. Arriving mid-afternoon, we drove up and down the main street several times, trying to find the museum on our own, in part because we could


not find anyone on the street to ask for directions. After parking near the village center and walking in what we hoped would be the right direction, we finally located the museum, labeled with a small brass *muzeu* sign too small to see from a moving car. However, I barely had time to notice this museum's surroundings, as Tatău was waiting for us at his front gate. I noted a vague impression of a courtyard thick with plants and flowers as he encouraged us to step out of the hot sun and into the cool and diffused lighting of the house that held his museum.

It took a moment for my eyes to adjust before I could take in the small room and its thick yet orderly cache of objects. Tatău explained that we were in the former home of his wife's grandmother. I asked how this home became the museum. "Most of the objects [here] were hers," he told us, reinforcing how the current space reflects the past and continuity (V. Tatău Interview, 11 June 2018). But Tatău also explained that he had reorganized the objects. As he described it, he "reconceptualized the space because I had new objects that I had to find space for. This used to be the kitchen and now as a museum it represents the kitchen" (V. Tatău Interview, 11 June 2018). This suggested that he was not interested in maintaining the kitchen as it appeared during his in-law's lifetime; instead, he was portraying the space according to the kinds of objects and related activities that would have taken place there, idealized as the trope of traditional household from the RECOMESPAR website discussed in Chapter 5. I could see how this room's adaptation into a representative kitchen filled the space with a quantity of objects in a way that would make it unusable as an actual kitchen, its impact assessed less from a specific biographical connection of the original owner and her everyday life and more through the quantity and kind of objects it held.

Tatău guided our attention to a collection of ceramic bottles displayed together, exemplifying a type of flask used in the custom of initiating a wedding celebration. Villagers

would carry the bottle, filled with homemade *pălincă* (plum brandy), door-to-door and offer neighbors a drink as a way of calling them to a wedding. Located right next to the door, this display was the first set of objects pointed out to us (Notable moment 1):

Notable moment 1

	<p>Victor Tatău (VT): “These are for calling people to your wedding . . . from the next village.”</p> <p>AC: “I really like this one a lot.”</p> <p>VT: “The village that’s a kilometer away from here – the Romanian Sasca (we are in the Mountainous Sasca) was the third largest pottery center in all of the region and even in the interwar period there were still twelve potters working full-time.”</p> <p>CK:” So are many of them from this region?”</p> <p>VT: “Yes – they’re from the next village . . . It’s a simple style. Not very complicated, not too embellished. It’s very functional.”</p> <p>AC: “I said those three are beautiful . . . I want the blue one really badly.”</p>
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I was familiar with this style of flask and the related custom but had not seen examples of ceramics that looked quite like these from the village of Sasca Română. I, too, was pulled in by the bottles that AC “liked.” Her expression of “wanting one” made me aware that I was most drawn by the glazes that flow across these bottles in abstract, freeform splotches of color. But the power was in their collective display: a visual list that enumerated a variety of types of pottery, foregrounding the local style through repetition. The regional style was more visually striking than, for instance, the three pitchers on the top row that featured

flower motifs. All of this happened in an instant as Tatău told us what the bottles were for; how they related to the locality; about the uniqueness of their style and how the style embodied the aesthetic sense of the people who made, used and kept them. I was attuned in this moment to how Tatău's narrative provided just enough information for us to appreciate these bottles. His words generated a connective moment during which all three of us came together to regard these bottles, to reconsider their makers, to share the joy of admiring their aesthetic.

Directly below the ceramic bottles was a display of coal- or fire-heated irons that became our next focus. The irons were more numerous than the ceramic bottles (including some located in another part of the kitchen) but also arranged to present a visual typology that encompassed the history and development of these implements, a technology familiar to me used to accomplish a common household task (Notable moment 2). The maker injected purpose into these objects by focusing on two examples, one "basic" and one "luxury" model and describing their different modes of operation. The basic model that the maker held in his hand had to be continually reheated during the task of ironing, plunged into the fire itself. In contrast, the "luxury" model, displayed apart from the typology and pictured among a variety of objects set atop the old stove, would stay hot longer as one placed a piece of coal inside of it. This comparison alluded to different levels of quality and standards of living that are easily lost in an understanding of everyday life in the past. These irons, along with the fact that this maker is a trained geologist, evoked the region's identity as a mining area. It occurred to me that I did not recall seeing so many irons during prior vernacular museum visits.

Therefore, the meaning of these irons, made from raw materials extracted from the earth, is that they are from this region, as with the clay that formed the ceramic flasks

Notable moment 2



VT: “These are irons. And you would heat this up, you’d put it in the fire, but you wouldn’t pick it up with your hand, of course, because your skin would burn! This is the old generation of irons. This is a generation where the iron is just one piece – there’s not a piece inside . . .

VT: This one’s copper and that one’s iron, I think [the copper one] was the luxury version and this [the iron one] was the cheap man’s version.”

(Notable moment 1). Though their methods of extraction of clay and ore may differ, these local products have modified the very landscapes of the localities which they have come to represent because of extraction that shaped the landscape. Tatau’s display that juxtaposed examples of handmade craft and industry, illustrating also the lifestyles of different social groups: those who crafted in clay versus those who worked in the mines; those who could

afford basic versus “luxury” models of the irons. As we continued the tour, life events at different scales (from the mundanity of ironing to the celebration of the wedding) evolved into a story of the loss of the area’s mining industry and the juxtaposition of modernity/tradition that hastened changes within the town.

“All the small towns with mono-industries,” he lamented as we moved together into the next room, “tend to be abandoned after the industry is no longer productive” (V. Tatau Interview, 11 June 2018). As we entered the living room, AC and I were both captivated by the collection of *florile mele* or mine flowers. These geologic specimens had been extracted from the mine by our proprietor and were now arranged on the floor in the corner of this museum living room, reflecting both the town’s and this maker’s history as a geologist who relocated to this region because of the mine. He explained this in Notable Moment 3.

Notable moment 3

	<p>VT: “These are from the mine here. This is lead Sulphur . . .” [He lifts one specimen and hands it to us so we can feel its weight and smell the traces of Sulphur.]</p>
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As he spoke, Tatău lifted the specimen with two hands. We took turns holding this piece of ore, smelling the faint scent of Sulphur it emitted, surprised by its heaviness. These natural artifacts were displayed below a selection of mining lamps and helmets hanging from the ceiling, some well over a century old. This juxtaposition of these specimens or “mine flowers” alongside an historical progression with headlamps and other personal equipment the miners and geologists wore provided a glimpse into the material culture of the processes of extraction that were used to obtain these samples. Though it only filled a corner of the living room, this installation showcased an important aspect of local life within Victor Tatău’s vision of a traditional home.

We were all quiet for a moment, looking more closely at the specimens and equipment, and it seemed like a good time to ask this maker why he started his museum (Notable Moment 4). Recalling the past experiences of mineworkers contrasted with Tatău’s description of loss exemplified by the current-day silence within the town, an impression emphasized by our own experience of being unable to locate anyone to ask about how to find this museum. In this way, Tatău’s narrative not only described the past; his inclusion of natural and industrial artifacts was a way for us to fully sense differences between past and present, to share in this feeling of loss of the way of life within the town and contrast a nostalgic past and modernity.

Tatău invited us to sit down in the third and final room of the home. We settled into straight-backed chairs around a formal dining table. This room at the front of the house was as a variation on the *camera buna* or the good room because it displayed on its walls a few examples of popular local costumes hung as ensembles. Gathering around the table allowed us all to relax during this later afternoon hour, when the natural tendency on a warm summer day was to begin to wind down. At this point the tour morphed into a

Notable moment 4



CK: “Why did you start your museum?”

VT: “I wanted to pass on the culture of the people. Otherwise, they would have lost everything although a lot was already lost. I want [people] to remember that this was a very important center for copper mining.”

CK: “Why is this important?”

VT: “Because it keeps the memory of a town that was and no longer is. And now the town is empty. If you go on the street, no one is there. There is no village life and there are no people anymore. Back in the day, groups of women would come sit around someone’s gate and talk. They had animals. The animals came back from herding. Now you hear nothing. It’s silence.”

conversation where AC asked some questions so that we could understand the region better.

She was curious about a regional group he mentioned, the Oltenians. Tatãu described this group in Notable moment 5. These embellished, patterned costumes of the Oltenians contrasted with the heavy, dark wooden German and Austrian furniture comprising the bulk of the room’s décor. The Oltenians who wore these clothes until only a decade ago lived in the forest and away from the mine, managing to resist the changes

Notable moment 5

	<p>VT: “The Oltenian population in two villages that are . . . in the forest, they still kept their traditional garb until ten years ago, but the Oltenian population in this village just forgot about theirs in the 1900’s because of all the contact they had with the German population.”</p>
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brought about by the more intense migration into Sasca Montană, where different groups had settled. The Oltenians were not immune to lifestyle changes brought about by a free-market economic system and changing regulations on agriculture and forestry brought about by EU membership. It was often no longer practical nor possible for younger generations to maintain even a subsistence lifestyle in the village setting. As was common in Romania and elsewhere in the world, rural areas were subject to depopulation brought about in part because of a lack of educational and job opportunities in villages. This exacerbated the problem of younger generations needing to relocate to more urban areas to go to school and/or to find gainful employment. The same relative isolation that allowed the Oltenians to hold onto their traditions also made it problematic for this group to maintain their isolated lifestyle within the changing economic model brought about through EU membership.

As the conversation waned for a moment, he pointed out an object that had come from the U.S. in Notable Moment 6. This chest presented more evidence of the movement

Notable moment 6

	<p>VT: “And this is an <i>American</i> [chest]. After the 1900s, part of the population emigrated to the US. And the ones that came back, some of them brought their things in boxes like this. There were several models of this box and this is just one model.”</p>
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of people to and from this region as a further reflection on how it had changed. At the same time, I recognized this emphasis on the “American” connection to this chest’s origin as Tatău’s way of bringing me into his museum. He was pointing to something I could claim as a relatable object in a way that other objects could be claimed, for instance, by my translator, who, as a native Romanian, has the requisite knowledge to recognize different kinds of connections. Our discussions around Oltenian traditions and the changes brought about by migration within and outside the region suggested that “forgetting” traditions is an outcome of acculturation between different social groups as they adapt to changing life situations. Tatău’s museum displays evidence of these changes, emphasizing more on showing us what the history has been and less the need for maintaining tradition or conveying authenticity. Further, Tatău himself had been an outsider who had relocated to the area and became local.

I inquired as to where the collections of objects that did not belong to his family came from. He explained:

From people's attics, because a lot of houses – people left the village. I had a passion for collecting since forever. Stamps, coins and then all of this (gesturing at the room). And once I retired, I collected all these things and I exhibited them. It's not an ethnographic museum per se, but it's an eclectic collection. It has a bit of everything" (V. Tatău, Interview, 11 June 2018).


Tatău's description of how he found objects revealed his collecting principles relied on salvaging what was available, selecting objects based on objects that had been discarded, abandoned, or otherwise left behind indiscriminately by others. This collector was saving objects that fit in his museum, reflected in Mr. Tatău's explanation that he is not still collecting because he is "out of sources," (V. Tatău, Interview, 11 June 2018) meaning that he has gone through the existing homes and spaces that were once filled with abandoned objects and he had found no more discarded objects to include in his collection

We asked about visitors to his museum. Tatău noted that locals do not visit his museum, with the most frequent visitors coming from Bucharest as part of organized tours for river rafting in the nearby national park. These groups stopped to see his museum as a complement to an outdoor activity. Tatău also told us that: "Individual tourists come too. They see the sign outside and they come in. I don't have a schedule. If I'm here, they come in" (V. Tatău Interview, 11 June 2018). He noted that, with groups: "Not everyone who comes is interested. Some people don't even come into the building, but some people are very interested. I like people who ask questions, who talk to me. But I can also tell who is interested" (V. Tatău Interview, 11 June 2018). We asked whether or how he might engage those visitors who seem less interested, to which he responded: "I don't have the time to talk to people because they only come for fifteen or twenty minutes. I have no time. The length of their visit doesn't allow me to say anything, but I understand that people have different passions" (V. Tatău Interview, 11 June 2018).

He explained the selective interest of visitors this way: “People today have an appetite for extremes. They either go to the British Museum or the Louvre or they do nothing. They climb Mount Everest or they stay home. There is no in-between” (V. Tatău Interview, 11 June 2018). His description of how he engaged with visitors made me aware of our interpersonal connection based on our shared interest in his displays and in learning more about the region I had sought his museum out for a visit and he responded to my interest by offering his tour but also by sitting down with us for a relaxed chat within the museum space. He welcomed me into his space of interest. His museum intention seemed focused on connecting with those who shared his interest in the past and, by implication, those who could overcome their “need for extreme” forms of engagement who were willing to come inside and pay attention to his comparatively modest museum. Our personal connection defined the museum experience I had at Tatău’s museum.

Tatău continued in Notable moment 7:

Notable moment 7

	<p>KG: “People have passions, either soccer or stamps or something. Some people fish . . . I have a lot of books. Religious books from the 1700s. They’re in Cyrillic, from the time when the Romanian language was still in Cyrillic. This one was restored by the Peasant Museum . . . I’m part of a museum network, but it hasn’t really been active in a few years . . . and the people from the [MRP] asked each of us for an object that they would restore for us. But you can tell [because] the pages are [stiff]. They cleaned each page . . .”</p>
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This provided an opportunity for this maker to show us some of his 18th and 19th century religious books, including one that was restored as part of the RECOMESPAR program. As our visit quietly moved toward a close, we all sat together, turning the pages of these very special books, written in Romanian but using the Cyrillic alphabet.³⁰ Even my translator is unable to read these pages. I was becoming lost in a sense of amazement that we could encounter such a remarkable volume in this inviting yet understated museum, tucked into this small, quiet village, slowly flipping through pages we could not read.

6.2. Field Analysis 1

The visit to Victor Tatău's *Punctul Muzeal* (MUS_03) was under an hour in total, and, in retrospect, was one of my more understated vernacular museum experiences. This was in part because of how we spent about half of our time talking while sitting at the table in one of the museum's rooms. This contrasted with other museum visits that comprised more of a show-and-tell monologue by the maker. At Tatău's museum, the act of sitting down together at a table opened a space for conversation. Sitting together also provided this maker with the chance to include a conversation about what seemed to be his most prized possessions, his early printed volumes in Romanian Cyrillic. This created an environment for intimate, direct knowledge exchange with this museum maker. His interest in and knowledge of local history overlapped with his biographical experiences as a geologist and local historian. The eclectic nature of displays and presentation of objects mirrored this maker's approach and showcased his deep knowledge of the locality.

³⁰ The Cyrillic alphabet was used in Romania from the 16th century until 1860 when, after the Union of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (forming the core of the Romanian nation state), the Latin alphabet was designated the official alphabet. Some scholars characterize the change from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet as reflecting shifts in Romania's national identity as the new nation navigated between Eastern and Western influences. See, for instance, Angelescu (2011) and Boia (2001a, 2001b).

Tatău transformed his mother-in-law's home into a museum by combining the inherited possessions with a collection of salvaged objects which were abandoned, as he described them, elsewhere in the town. This maker did not simply rearrange the existing objects found within the home to recreate how the room was used during his relative's lifetime; he introduced them as a self-described "eclectic" mix of old objects from other spaces into his interpretive space. The assemblage of objects in typologies (the ceramic flasks); progressions of history and technology (the irons; mining equipment); as well as the tokens of rural depopulation of this area (popular costumes; the American chest), were constructing a narrative display of Sasca Montană history.

As a longtime inhabitant of the village, Tatău conveyed aspects of his lived experience where he represented the changes in the life of the village. His collecting-as-salvage was a way of coming to terms with loss through the maintenance of material connections to the details from the daily lives of former inhabitants of this region, like the Oltenians whose culture had changed in part because of their contact with Germans who settled in the village. His collecting connoisseurship was on the scale of the everyday culture, particularly as he recalled the bustle of the town, of people meeting and talking in the streets. Tatău found value in collecting that which had been discarded or abandoned as a way to convey these lost details of aspects of everyday life to his museum's visitors.

The interactions between AC and the owner around admiring objects in this vernacular museum resonated with me. AC's admiration of the ceramic bottles and her expression of wanting "the blue one really badly" foregrounded how the vernacular museum cultivates a shared experience. The act of considering individual objects taken out from within the group, and foregrounding distinction over uniformity-of-type and the act of selecting a favorite. These exchanges illustrate how vernacular museums cultivate aesthetic

sensibility. The act of considering which objects held the most appeal for each of us connected me, my translator, the museum maker and the arranged objects in an intimate, close experience that balanced visual/aesthetic and verbal modes of perception through a shared perception.

6.3. Story 2: *Muzeul Satului Hațegan*, Hațeg (MUS_06)


The visit to *Muzeul Satului Hațegan* (MUS_06), located in the town of Hațeg, was not scheduled in advance. We stopped in Hațeg as an alternative to visiting another RECOMESPAR museum near Petroșani that we could not reach because of heavy downpours that made the unpaved, hilly road to that intended goal not safely passable. This alternate site was chosen out of convenience because it was along our route to other scheduled RECOMESPAR museum visits in Iaz and Galoșpetreu in northern Romania. However, we could not be sure whether the maker, Anton Socaciu, would be at home. As we drove, I reminded myself that an unscheduled visit would provide an insight into the dynamics that an unannounced visit can offer, a spontaneity and improvisation that is anyway the defining dimension of vernacular museums.

The museum itself was easy to locate. The turnoff from the main road was clearly marked by the RECOMESPAR-sponsored sign. We easily identified the museum property because of the presence of a traditional house sitting at the front of the yard. Standing at the gate, we heard voices. A moment later, the proprietor emerged from inside the traditional house with three visitors in tow. He was in the middle of giving a tour to a Romanian family (whose impressions are reported in Chapter 7). AC introduced us and explained our reasons for visiting and asked if he would show us his museum. Socaciu obliged, explaining that he would “tell me the story” (A. Socaciu Interview, 14 June 2018) of his museum just as he

would to any visiting group. “The only difference,” he said, “is that you are getting a doctorate” (A. Socaciu Interview, 14 June 2018).

The tour began across the yard from the traditional house, next to a collection of moss-covered stones. This museum’s story, it turned out, would be this maker’s personal interpretation of Romania’s origin myth, entwined with elements of geologic time evidenced in fossils and shells embedded in the rocks and stone artifacts that surrounded us, remaining from the Pannonian sea that covered this land during the Miocene and Pliocene epochs and described in Notable moment 8. This maker’s narrative began with the geologic past, and my first encounter with the idea of the Pannonian Sea in a vernacular museum. In the next sentence, the narrative swiftly moved back into pre-historical time ca. 100 CE and the more recent past in Notable moment 9. I listened with mild interest here, focused more on the rocks and fossils as natural materials than on the funerary customs of the Dacians, though it

Notable moment 8

	<p>Anton Socaciu (AS): “70 or 80 million years ago, this used to be a sea bed, from Hungary to Turkey. There were dinosaurs on top of the hills. There were fish, bugs and other animals caught in the sand and then petrified. They’re more visible there. That’s a petrified tree, just like you have in the US.”</p>
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Notable moment 9



AS: “Our old people, the Dacians and the Gaeto-Dacians, used to work stone. They had different funeral habits. They would burn the body on the top of a hill. The spirit would turn into a bird and they would bury the ashes a foot under the soil and they would put one of these stones on top of it. And this stone would represent the sky. . . The Romans came here like everywhere else in Europe in 105 and 106 AD . . . Around the 1800s, people started using Roman stones in their yards . . .”

was unclear exactly how this maker was able to identify differences between Dacian and Roman stones, or what he meant when he said that people were “using Roman stones in their yards.” I let the details of this narrative wash over me and took Socaciu’s story at face-value as a light rain began to fall.

Making connections across millennia to jump into recorded history had the momentary effect of making the other parts of the yard disappear. The focus on natural objects provided a welcome break from the usual man-made artifacts and handicrafts I expected (and wanted) to see at vernacular museums. However, this moment of being lost in a geologic time of this museum vanished as the proprietor led us across the yard and towards the traditional house, explaining how this home represented a kind of totality that at once contained and illustrated all aspects of peasant life in Notable moment 10.

Notable moment 10



AS: “[This house represents] the life of the peasant. This is where people would live. It could be a peasant or just a regular person who wouldn’t just do agricultural work.”

He presented the house and contrasted the lives of peasants and just a “regular” person. I was intrigued by how this maker’s contrast defined a difference in the two groups. Walking up the two small steps to the porch, we encountered the following photocopied sign tacked to the door as we prepared to enter the first room of the three-room house, shown in Notable moment 11.

Notable moment 11



[The sign reads: “Beyond the door, time begins – open the door.”]

This maker's narrative involved a series of beginnings and arrivals. He described for us the beginnings of the area as an ancient sea bed; the beginning of the Romanians from the Gaeto-Dacians; the arrival of the Romans; and now we stood at another temporal entry, suggested by a sign likely copied from one made by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, evidence of this museum's participation in RECOMESPAR. The proprietor described what we were looking at beyond the now-opened door in Notable moment 12.

Notable moment 12



AS: "In any peasant house, there wouldn't be a lot of furniture. You'd have the oven, this is the dowry box, that is where they would weave everything they needed."

Socaciu called this room the *camera buna* or the good room and explained that he arranged the objects as they would have been in a traditional house, the only difference being that he had more objects to show, so as to illustrate all aspects of life in the household. As we looked around the room, the proprietor gestured towards and enumerated the necessities: the ceramic pots for cooking, with the larger ones placed higher up so that the children would not break them; the stove that warmed the family and the home as well as cooked the food; the weaving loom where people made everything they needed; the dowry box; and the large collection of animal pelts placed across the floor. I was careful to step between these fur hides, as stepping on them, I noticed, gave me the unpleasant feeling of small animal

paws underfoot. I observed AC doing the same thing, as the maker explained in Notable moment 13.

Notable moment 13



AS: “People would put a lot of animal skins on the ground, but I added more because kids come here and they like to play with the fox and all the other animals.”

We stopped mid-way into the room and I was thankful for the break from stepping carefully around the animal pelts. “I always ask if there are any special interests,” Socaciu said to me, through my translator. “Are you interested in religion?” he asked. I responded that I was mostly interested in textiles and handicrafts. But my visit was a chance for this proprietor to tell me that which he believes is important for me to know; in this case, it was the history of religion in the area. I listened about the practices of different religions by the various ethnic groups that have inhabited the region as he showed us aged copies of Bibles and prayer books in Hungarian as well as Romanian. The proprietor pulled examples from a small stack of these books on a table near the window to demonstrate his points. My

attention waned because this maker's narrative began to contrast with some of my own understandings of Romanian history and because I was less interested in religion. However, these kinds of facts and historical accuracy were second to how important it was for Socaciu to articulate this information to both of us through his story.

Rain continued to fall and the sky darkened, making the day look like early evening instead of late morning. Our maker's story was interrupted as his cell phone rang, and he excused himself to answer it. This provided us some time to sit quietly in this good room, to absorb the space in a way that was not possible during the guided tour. I moved around the room (still stepping carefully between the fur pelts on the floor) to examine up close the few woven blankets, embroidered tablecloths and crocheted curtains on display. Several were draped over a weaving loom set up in the corner, linking method of production to end-product. I sat down on the bed covered with a red, green and black checkered wool blanket across from this loom adorned with textiles and immersed myself in a feeling of what it might have been like to exist within this household, on a gray and coolish summer morning, to feel and smell the dampness coming up through the floor, perhaps getting ready to cook the day's food in those clay pots. What else would I be doing on a day like this, a day too rainy to work outside, in this household? My nostalgia for handmaking romanticized my vision of life in this home at the same time my body, feeling the dampness coming through the wool blanket upon which I sat, reminded me how life in this home would also have been difficult. But I only had a few moments with these contrasting impressions of the past when AC suggested we could use this time to peruse the guestbook, which sat on the table next to the bibles and prayer books the maker had described for us earlier.

It was not long before our maker returned and moved us on to the next room of the museum, focused on getting back to the tour at hand. This room, smaller than the first,

contained a bed upon which some newer traditional costumes had been laid out.

Embroideries made in the latter half of the twentieth century hung on the walls, clothing and crafts handmade but of synthetic fabrics and not the wool, linen and hemp that were more prevalent in the first room. I looked at the embroideries as AC spoke to the proprietor in Romanian. She was drawn by a group of black-and-white photographs hanging on the opposite wall and was inquiring about them. AC called me over: “Cheryl, look at these. He took these photographs. They are of people in the village.” The proprietor seemed pleased at her interest. He explained that because of his failing eyesight, he no longer took such images. As I joined them for a shared moment of looking, he also explained that these images show life in the village, and that they were of things that “no longer exist” (A. Socaciu Interview, 13 June 2018), providing further detail as in Notable moment 14:

Notable moment 14

	<p>AS: “These are photos that I took . . . this is where they would make alcohol, this is where they would work the fields. They all disappeared – people don’t do this anymore, just the funeral habits. This is just a regular woman gathering onions.”</p>
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Both AC and I were enamored by the “regular woman gathering onions,” her head covered with a black scarf, a sweater draped around her shoulders and the telltale basket of onions hanging from her elbow. This woman was one of the “regular people” whose time was not consumed by subsistence farming but who still gathered onions as an everyday activity. This maker’s earlier distinction between peasants and “regular” was made visible to me by his own explanation. This group of photographs communicated the ways of life in this community I understood now as the way of life familiar to this museum maker circa the 1950s. These black-and-white photographs cultivated an awareness of the intimacy of personal histories of “regular” everyday life and individuals that these sorts of museums engender.

As we entered the next room, containing a mixture of old and new objects, we asked how the museum started, to which Socaciu replied: “It started in the beginning, intensively in the last five or six years. We finished one room, then another. But it wasn’t anything urgent” (A. Socaciu Interview, 13 June 2018). This maker’s matter-of-fact expression of his museum-making process has been an organic undertaking that gained momentum over time, organizing the existing objects. Once a room as a unit of display and organization was designated as finished, the maker moved on to the next room.

But I wanted to know more about his processes of collecting, developing and maintaining a museum. Trying to dig more deeply, I asked about where the objects that surround us came from. Socaciu explained how: “All of the objects here are from this region. Eighty percent are from the village and twenty percent from towns and villages around. But they are all from this very region – there is nothing from another region” (A. Socaciu Interview, 13 June 2018). To illustrate his point, Socaciu provided some specific

examples of how he acquired certain objects. He explained how one embroidery was donated by a local woman in Notable moment 15.

Notable moment 15

	<p>AS: “Yes, [locals] bring things to me. A woman brought me [embroideries] because she said it is better to exhibit them here instead of [having them] just in her house . . . Someone brought me [the Crucifixion needlepoint, far left] because she didn’t like it in her house – it has too many colors. And in 100 years, we’ll sell this at an auction and it will be worth 1,000 Euros.”</p>
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Another object, a traditional blouse made of nylon, was included in the museum because it was made in the village, even though it is of synthetic materials, which our maker explained made it “kitsch” in Notable moment 16. Socaciu’s commitment has been to showing local, sited history in all its dimensions. He was open to showing the development of the region in all its forms, even “kitsch” items. People in the town participated in the making of this museum seeing it as a community repository for items that held value for them though they no longer wanted them in their homes. This proprietor collected contemporary embroideries because he felt that the value of such objects would be bestowed in part through its perceived “authenticity” in the future. Socaciu’s openness to acquiring locally produced crafts imparted an open aesthetic as he considered these objects as important remnants of a disappearing “regular” life. Through the maker’s self-described collecting practices, the

Notable moment 16



AS: “This is from the 1960s, but I think it’s kitsch because it’s made from nylon thread . . . but you have to put this in a museum because it’s one of the last made by a woman from the village.”

museum at Hațeg became a receptacle for objects of a community, a repository through which things can be reinterpreted and recirculated. Instead of abandoning objects, people within this village donated them to the museum. The museum became an open-ended space for creating new relationships to form through the maker’s interpretations of each object’s connection to time. In this way, local history was maintained through a grassroots exchange between the museum maker and townspeople. Further, this maker understood objects not only in terms of their current and local but of their potential future value in the marketplace.

Socaciu then picked up an old military helmet and described to us its interesting history, demonstrating another way he finds objects (Notable moment 17). This interaction illustrated something important both about how Socaciu has learned to see as well as about how objects can survive by becoming invisible. Hidden for years in plain sight, this metal military helmet that might otherwise have been lost managed to make it to the 21st century

Notable moment 17



AS: “And this is for the military mountain rangers in Romania. After 1947, when communism takes over, all of these were melted down into something else. All the regimes destroy what came before.”

CK: “How did that one survive?”

AS: “Someone – it was lost and someone just thought it was a bowl so they were using it to put [plaster or stucco] from one bucket to another . . . so I asked if I could have it and when I cleaned it, I saw what it was.”

CK: “So it was hidden in plain sight.”

AS: “And it’s been here.”

because of becoming a utilitarian object of everyday life. This maker’s sensitive perception allowed him to see this object as something worth including in his museum.

We asked Socaciu how his museum might look five or ten years into the future. He explained that his museum “is not finished. But I’m the only one working on it . . . And a museum like this never ends because you always have to add something, to find something new, another story, another object. You enlarge the space, you progress, you make a flyer” (A. Socaciu Interview, 13 June 2018). At this, he gestured at and moved us towards the door and out on to the covered porch. It was raining heavily now, leaving no opportunity to

explore the outside areas of the property, to meet the animals or to walk down to the river. We thanked this maker, bid him farewell and told him we would have to come back on a nicer day to see what his museum would become.

6.4. Field Analysis 2

The Hațeg museum visit was remarkable primarily because of its temporal scope: from geologic epochs and ancient periods through a generalized past up to the present. Created by the land itself, rocks and fossils are found alongside the more traditional handmade peasant goods born of natural materials. The anachronistic vision of this museum maker contrasted with both my and my translator's understandings of Romanian history. The version of history that was presented reflects the maker's understanding. What I witnessed in Hațeg was this proprietor's personal story and a view of history that suited the objects he had collected. The dates and historical facts recounted by this maker became a distraction

The museum at Hațeg was a collection of contrasts, where new things comingled with traditional and even prehistoric objects. Socaciu's approach towards collecting focused on objects' potential future. Old and new objects were juxtaposed and mixed across a longer span of time revealing this collector's eye, style, and an ability to interpret these values as objects embodying daily life practices. This museum demonstrates how vernacular museums combine space, materiality and personal narrative and vision of their creator and attach them to a locality and a community.

6.5. Story 3: *Casa-Muzeu Galoșpetreu*, Galoșpetreu (MUS_01)

The visit with Kéri Gáspár³¹ began at a restaurant near his home in the town of Săcueni where we met for lunch before spending the day visiting his multiple, geographically

³¹ The Hungarian languages employs Eastern name order, listing family name followed by given name.

distributed museum spaces (MUS_01) and learning about his extensive collections. I was interested in visiting this museum because of its location near the Hungarian border. Kéri, a dentist with a family practice located in this region, and also where he grew up, arranged his time to welcome tourists with advance notice. We had scheduled our visit in April, via email, at which time Kéri suggested that we plan a full day to visit the five sites that he had to show us. Upon our arrival at the restaurant on another gray afternoon, we ducked inside and, after quick introductions, we each ordered the lunch special of pork soup and cabbage with noodles.

Over lunch, Kéri needed little prompting as he told us about how his interest in collecting began. His focus, as he saw it, was on the past, from history, and how “. . . everything is from the past – and the past always decides the present” (G. Kéri Interview, 14 June 2018). He demonstrated this by explaining how his interest in history and collecting grew from his early encounters with the collection of his grandmother’s brother, who he told us was a Catholic priest who was also a collector. Kéri described his relative as a “1956 sympathizer”³² (G. Kéri Interview, 14 June 2018) who had been killed in prison. After his death, Kéri’s grandmother kept her brother’s things in storage, where Kéri encountered them as a child. He said he was always interested in books “about history, religion, ethnography” as well as in “old things” (G. Kéri Interview, 14 June 2018). His relative’s books and things became the way for him to learn about the past that was shaping the present, particularly during a time when access to books about “Hungarian history” were increasingly “prohibited by the socialist regime” (G. Kéri Interview, 14 June 2018). These omissions in his formal education, particularly the absence of local history lessons in school, led him to be active in promoting local history for young people and visitors. He was also

³² A supporter of the Hungarian Revolution or Hungarian Uprising of 1956.

involved in several initiatives working to foster improved relations between Romanians and Hungarians more broadly.

I asked Kéri whether or how his museum activities figured in his goals of improving interethnic relations, to which he replied: “[My museums] present to Romania the other perspectives . . . I feel richer for knowing about Romania. It enriches you to learn about others instead of hating them” (G. Kéri Interview, 14 June 2018).³³ The museum form, it seemed, became a way for this maker to present to others knowledge about the locality that had been historically muted. Through his museums, he attempted to convey to visitors the feeling of enrichment that this knowledge brought to him. As Kéri saw it, local identity was forgotten when people “lose their awareness of this [local] culture” (G. Kéri Interview, 14 June 2018). For Kéri, it seemed, fostering awareness of the value of local culture by making it more visible has tangible results: if you have this awareness, he reasoned, “you won’t leave the country so fast and will put up with hardships instead of just going elsewhere for better work opportunities” (G. Kéri Interview, 14 June 2018). Pointing to himself as an example, he noted that he could have easily gone to Austria, but instead chose to stay and establish his dental practice in his native hometown. His decision to stay amid these complexities motivated this maker in his work of showing local history through his collections and museums as an act of amplifying knowledge about the multiethnic history of the region in a way that could overcome those contested aspects of history and abandoning the region in search of opportunity. With that in mind, we finished our meal and set out on our museum tour.

This tour encompassed five geographically dispersed properties. We stopped first at Kéri’s current home, minutes from the restaurant, where he pointed out notable pieces in his

³³ He was referring to the tensions between ethnic Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania that were exacerbated under the communist regime. See, for example, Vedery (1983) or Brubaker (2006).

collection of antiques, including German and Austrian furniture as well as chandeliers made by a well-known local glass factory. He had amassed most of these furniture pieces as an adult. I was intrigued to learn about how he developed his knowledge of collecting these examples of what I, as an American visitor, would describe as finer examples of antiques (Notable moment 18).

Notable moment 18

	<p>CK: “How did you learn about these furniture styles?”</p> <p>Kéri Gáspár (KG): “I learned myself. I was interested and I learned from books. When I was a child, Hungarian history was prohibited in schools, so that is something I learned myself, as well. In the socialist regime, it was prohibited, but I learned from the books of my grandmother’s brother, a (Catholic) priest.”</p>
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I recognized from past museum visits that this kind of show-and-tell positioned the maker’s contemporary home as evidence of his family heritage and social status. These furniture pieces also demonstrated something of the world he learned about from his great uncle’s collection of books. This aspect of the visit also provided me with a point of comparison for the past that we would see in the dedicated museum spaces. Within the context of this region’s multiethnic history, visiting this maker’s home allowed me to observe the intersections of social class and ethnicity as they emerged in this contemporary middle-class home of a local dentist.

Now back at the car, I drove as Kéri guided us to *Casa-Muzeu Galoșpetreu* (MUS_01), his museum with which I was most familiar from the RECOMESPAR website. As we navigated the two-lane roads between towns and villages, Kéri explained how the landscape we traveled through was irreparably changed in the late 1960s when the marshes once found on these agricultural fields were drained. This had effects on the way of life of the local people. Integrating the landscape between museum sites into the tour narrative created for me a deep contextualization by explaining how the landscape as it exists today was transformed through intensive human intervention during the communist era. It was not long before we arrived in Galoșpetreu, at his grandparents' former home, the place where he lived as a young child and where he encountered his grandmother's brother's collection, the experience that essentially spurred him to become a local historian and collector.

The tour of this site began right outside of the entrance gate to the property, as in Notable moment 19. The fence was built using what Kéri described as “traditional techniques” (G. Kéri Interview, 14 June 2018). He emphasized how not replacing the entire

Notable moment 19

	<p>[We stop at the gated fence, where KG explains how the fence is constructed so that one can replace just the worn parts at the bottom without having to replace the entire thing.]</p>
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fence saved not only time but materials, suggesting efficiency and sustainability that seem to be bound up with narratives of traditional technologies. I looked closely at how this had been done, wanting to take this technique home with me. After a moment, we stepped together into the space of the property. I saw a relatively large traditional house to my left that comprised the main living space. To our right were several wooden outbuildings in forms common to the region, including the entrance to an underground cellar typical of the area. Five white ducks rambled through the open space of the yard.

Kéri located the correct key from a collection of skeleton keys and opened the door to the main house. We entered a small room (Notable moment 20). As she had done during visits to several traditional homes before, AC referenced this sensory connection. We paused in this small in-between room, which had a larger room off to either side. I was immediately taken by the embroideries hanging on the wall and I walked over to the ones that featured storage pockets. Seeing me admire these textiles, Kéri commented in Notable moment 21. Hand-embroidered, handmade, designed and executed typical patterns of the time, these two utilitarian pouches were made to hold combs and brushes (*jésűk* and *kefék* in Hungarian). Keri's comment suggested a contrasting perspective on how younger generations spend time. The contemporary activity of "scrolling through a phone" was not seen as meaningful where time spent embroidering was "actually doing" something. For me, evidence of this difference in value was that embroidery had produced tangible evidence of time spent in a finished, handmade product that had persisted and that could now be admired.

Notable moment 20



AC: [As we enter] “Ah, it smells just like my grandpapa’s house.”

Notable moment 21



KG: “That’s handmade . . . from when girls weren’t scrolling through their phones, they were actually doing things.”

As we wandered into the next room, we asked how often Kéri changed his displays (Notable moment 22).

Notable moment 22



KG: “I change things sometimes. But I want to change the furniture now because I found more authentic furniture. What’s here will just be stored.”

[AC asks whether these are the things that were here when his grandmother was here or with what he sees as authentic, to which KG responds]: “My grandma had similar things to these but they were really broken down, so I changed them with these [things in better shape]. But now I want to replace these [current] things with something else.”

I ask him to clarify what he means by authentic: He uses as an example a piece of furniture, explaining, “The paint job on this is correct, but the paint job on the thing he’s bringing is original . . . If I find things that have been messed with less, I will change them with what I [currently] have here.”

KG also explains how one of the doors “was cut and I fixed it and made the door [whole] again. There was glass here (in the center of the door). My grandma made a window here and created a problem for me. I wanted it to be beautiful but my grandma ruined it.”

Kéri's interpretation of authenticity as the degree to which an object has not been changed over time or had not been subject to outcomes of normal wear-and-tear. Where use left traces, Kéri wanted objects returned to an original state. I had not considered whether or how a practical decision, to cut a hole into a door to create a window made by Kéri's grandmother, could create a "a problem" for this museum maker. I made a note to remind myself to consider further these contradicting perspectives and the constructions of authenticity by different individuals.

The visit to this house was quite long, as Kéri took us to visit the outbuildings and the traditional basement that served as his wine cellar. We tasted wine he made as he dispensed small amounts into cleaned, reused plastic water bottles to take with us. We watched the antics of some of the ducks (it was mating season, it seemed) and picked and ate cherries from a tree at the back of the house. Kéri's narrative was woven through these activities as my ability to hold onto the details weakened. We had been together for over two hours and we still had three more sites to visit. But there was still one more room to visit here, located at the back of the main house. This was the room that housed the collection of his grandmother's brother, the grouping of objects that were formative to Kéri's collecting activities. A wave of emotion washed over me as we entered this space and I had to gather myself to keep my eyes from welling up with tears. Standing among these objects, being in such intimate proximity to them and to the life they represented, their connection to a difficult history and for the role this all played in creating the museums we were visiting today created a core of intensity around this museum experience. I asked one more question (Notable moment 23). Kéri's response framed my encounters with these objects, revealing the museum as a vehicle for cultural and aesthetic enrichment through its objects. For this maker, the value of objects is known when they are visible, when they are seen by others.

Notable moment 23



CK: “What is the importance of having all these different types of things together?”

KG: “Because they’re lost. And if they're lost, the culture of the Hungarian people will be impoverished. And they are things you cannot replace because they don't make them anymore. And they have an aesthetic value as well. There is history in them. They were made by craftsmen who are dead now. Even if someone tried nowadays, they can't make them like this. Exhibiting them in the museum is the only way you can show them. There is no point in keeping them in an attic because no one would see them.”

Reflecting on my encounters with these objects and “the history in them,” I considered my experiences of knitting and weaving as the metaphor for how knowledge is woven. The threads connect through the histories that these objects embody. As I stood with Kéri, his relative’s tragic fate was contrasted with the presence of his life left behind that inspired this maker. The intensity of my experience with these objects arose in part because they were a representencing of this man and his life. It was also because, in the space of this museum, my own life was now interwoven with his through my encounter with these objects.

As our visit to Kéri's grandparents' house came to an end, I had reached a level of saturation that muted the experiences at the other sites we visited. We stopped at a newer building across the street from the grandparents' house that stored a collection of antique wood-burning stoves. This storage area, Kéri told us, sat next to a manor house he recently purchased and was in the process of renovating, though we would not see this space because "there was nothing to see there" (G. Kéri Interview, 14 June 2018). It was then a short drive to a locally administered Culture House in the town of Otomani, where more of Kéri's collection was displayed in a space arguably more aligned with an institutional as opposed to vernacular museum space. That visit lasted perhaps twenty minutes, during which Kéri explained how he was invited by the town's mayor to fill its galleries with his objects that previously only held two-dimensional displays hung on its walls. Finally, we arrived at the location of Kéri's most recently acquired sites in the village of Salacea: a "19th century peasant country house" (G. Kéri Interview, 14 June 2018) and, on an adjacent plot of land, three additional underground wine cellars. The cellars did not provide much opportunity to see anything beyond the structures themselves and the peasant country house currently lacked electricity, and because the sky had darkened and a soft rain had started to fall, we could not effectively see the displays inside. These sites were illustrative of Kéri's plans for the future of the museum complex and his related activities that will give a reason for tourists, particularly those from Hungary, to come to this region and learn about its past.

6.6. Field Analysis 3

The museums at Sasca Montană (Story 1) and at Hațeg (Story 2) displayed different aspects of the past, each focusing on a region or locality within the space of a home and a property, respectively. In contrast, Kéri's distributed museums required us to move between spaces to experience the past displayed: in traditional and contemporary homes and

buildings; in a regionally-specific form of underground cellar; in a building converted into collections storage facilities; and in a culture house administered by local authorities. These different sites were unified in the maker's narrative, combining personal and historical details into a story of local tradition and personal history.

Kéri's museum story originates from personal interest in a collection belonging to his relative, a Catholic priest who was likely persecuted for his religious and political views, his ethnicity and his family's class status. This self-taught maker integrated his personal narratives on history, interethnic relations, and the importance of the past told through traditional objects and spaces he had collected. Further, the story extended across the landscape as we drove between his multiple museum sites. The integration of this maker's family story lived on in the form of one individual's material possessions that spurred a curiosity in Kéri. As Kéri saw it, once these objects and their inherent knowledge and value are gone, they cannot be reclaimed because it represents loss of the embodied knowledge that produced these objects in the first place. And it should not be overlooked that this maker's profession as a dentist provided the economic and social capital upon which he could establish and expand his museum-making efforts into a tourism enterprise.

Kéri contrasted the past with the present in how girls used to spend time "actually doing things" embroidering utilitarian objects versus now when they are "scrolling through their phones." While both activities involve repetitive gestures, the activity of embroidery leaves tangible evidence of how time was spent in the form of a material object that survives. In contrast, "scrolling through phones" is a gesture with a seeming lack of value for this maker. The embroidered objects made to hold brushes and combs are a sign of difference between "then" and "now."

This maker expressed a specific vision of the past that emerged through his desire to feature objects within certain spaces that were “more authentic,” meaning less modified (e.g. preserved but not restored or repainted) or otherwise subject to less intervention over the course of their utilitarian lives. And although he was restoring his grandparent’s house, he did not wish to preserve the window that his grandmother had cut into one of the interior doors. Instead, he had repaired the door to make it as it had been originally (at the time the house was built). He saw changes his grandmother had made as “a problem” in the context of his museum project. This house, then, was not being restored to reflect the aesthetic specificity of his grandmother’s life. Instead, this maker has developed an idealized aesthetic vision of the past.³⁴

6.7. Story 4: Casa Muzeu Iaz, Iaz, Sălaj County (MUS_04)

Casa Muzeu Iaz proprietor Ligia Bodea joined RECOMESPAR as part of an effort to involve museum makers aged 19-30 in 2011 (see Appendix A). Her collecting activities also led her to pursue a master’s degree in Research, Preservation and Valorization of Historical Cultural Heritage at the university in the city of Alba Iulia. She was preparing to take her exams to complete this program in June (2018) but still found time to welcome us, scheduling our meeting by phone a week or so in advance. However, this visit was different because it also included our guesthouse owner who was a carpenter and who relocates and renovates traditional homes to his own property for use by tourists. He asked if he could accompany us because he had heard about Bodea’s museum but had not had the occasion to visit it. I was happy to become a liaison between these two makers. I also thought it was

³⁴ This maker’s approach seemed to align with the Hungarian Tajhaz or landscape house, which I have been told is represented by an active association throughout that country (C. Mihalache, personal communication, 27 June 2018).

interesting that our guesthouse owner seemed to feel more comfortable going to this museum with us as opposed to visiting on his own.

Bodea's museum has an origin story, recounted in the RECOMESPAR literature. Her grandmother passed away when Bodea was twelve years old, and this event was a catalyst for her keeping objects, as she explained to us, "not to make a museum, but to keep a memory of my grandma" (L. Bodea Interview, 17 June 2018). We arrived at the property and were immediately greeted by the Bodea family, including her father, mother and fiancé. She told us that she would be married in a few weeks and it was apparent from the outset that her museum was very much a family affair. Despite the intensive family involvement, however, her father emphasized that the ordering and display of objects is entirely up to his daughter. As he stated, "Financially we support her but she does all the labor of maintaining, conserving – she arranges everything here" (Bodea Father Interview, 17 June 2018).

The tour began in what was her grandmother's house, painted a traditional blue on the outside and with a porch overflowing with wooden artifacts and flowers. I felt a rush of excitement as I stepped into this dimly lit space crowded with an abundance of traditional textiles as well as other objects. I was aware that I had not felt this particular rush at the other RECOMESPAR museums I visited during this trip, for they were not as saturated with textile handicrafts as this one. This was my preferred mode of display: many, too many objects made of cloth, woven, embroidered, beautiful to see in part because of how they evidence a record of female labor, the time and thought spent in the processes of making. Bodea explained why the room was arranged in this way in Notable moment 24. She began pointing out the differences in regional styles of embroidered woolen coats, and our guesthouse owner chimed in to embellish this story, explaining how one of these styles was once "stolen" by a French designer in 2010 or 2011 and shown on the runway in Paris,

Notable moment 24




Ligia Bodea (LB): “The house would not normally have as many objects but because we have so little space, we put here as much as we could.”

linking these objects to the present.³⁵ His tone and his use of the word “stolen” expressed his disapproval of this theft of intellectual property. Bodea described in some detail the purpose of the dowries, the patterns on the pillows, weaving facts and details into a fast-moving narrative that went quickly through the objects displayed around the house. I was curious about the coats (Notable moment 25). I found it interesting that this bit of knowledge about the coat-making process was now lost while the coats themselves remain. But more so, I was intrigued by this notion of women working their fingers to the point of bleeding, the physical pain in the production of new garments for the holidays she emphasized. Though Bodea had not stated it explicitly, I assumed that the woman who had worked until their fingers bled were not producing coats only for their own use, though I had no way of confirming my assumption. Considering this, I shared my guesthouse owner’s disapproval at the idea that an elite designer in the 21st century would appropriate this style

³⁵ I confirm later that the offending designer was Christian Dior, though other designers have also been implicated (Larbi, 2018). Bihor Culture is a Romanian brand developed to work with and promote the production and sale of clothing by traditional, local designers. See: <http://www.bihorcouture.com/>


Notable moment 25

	<p>LB: “There are specialized people who make the coats and then the woman who would embroider [them]. All the embroidery is thin colored wool thread.”</p> <p>CK: “How long would it take to make?”</p> <p>LB: “I wouldn’t know. I haven’t met anyone who still makes them so I have no one to ask. But it was a lot of work because they used to say before the holidays their fingers were bleeding because everyone wanted to have something new.”</p>
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as a commodity for his own gain, as his own invention in the form of contemporary fashion. We spent more time looking at the textiles and moving slowly through the crowded space. I wanted to touch every object, to absorb the textured details of these embroideries, these woven and felted cloths. There seemed to not be an empty space in the room, which was not unlike the details on some of the embroideries themselves. I faded in and out of Bodea’s narrative, catching bits and pieces of the details as my eyes moved and settled, trying to spend a moment looking at each bit of embroidery. Eventually we all paused around a small table near the door where Bodea engaged us around an old photo album (Notable moment 26). I was quite taken by this idea of the family photo album capturing her imagination, a reminder of a time when photographs were not ubiquitous. This activity of standing together, flipping through and looking at a family album that Bodea narrated with biographical snippets about who was pictured, what they did and how they lived. The story stopped for a moment on a photograph showing her grandmother standing on the front porch of the same house in which we currently stood (Notable moment 27). Seeing the

grandmother in situ in the photograph enlivened the biography of this woman who became the impetus for her granddaughter's collecting and conservation work.

Notable moment 26

	<p>LB: “This is the family album. My grandfather was a teacher. And I want this to be his room in the future. I want everything (in here) to be his. These are his glasses. His three children, my dad and his two sisters . . . As kids, we played with this (photo album) a lot and we ruined it a lot. This was our biggest pleasure, to look at the photos.”</p>
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This moment passed as we came to the end of the photo album. We prepared to move towards the door. From what I had read about this museum online, I assumed that our visit was basically complete. However, there was much more to see. The property was crowded at its front where the grandmother's house stood somewhat uncomfortably near a larger, newer house in which the Bodea family currently lived. “It was going to be torn down,” Bodea explained of her grandmother's house, “that is why [the two houses] are so close” (L. Bodea Interview, 17 June 2018). I was surprised, then, as we began to walk deeper into the property, which after a few steps revealed itself as a long, relatively narrow parcel of land comprising ample space for three more traditional houses as well as additional outbuildings, a pond, and multiple areas for sitting outside under covered areas or among the trees. As we walked, there were moments when our guesthouse owner and Bodea went off on their own to discuss the trials and tribulations of refurbishing old houses. During one of

Notable moment 27

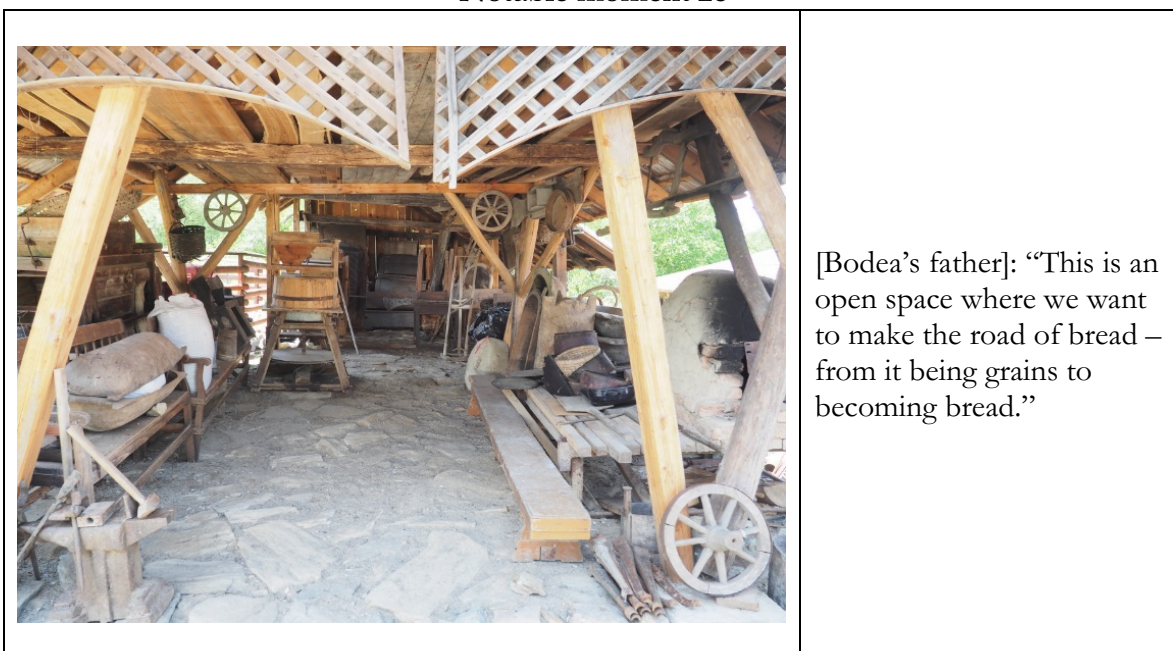


LB: “This is them on the terrace of this house – the family. This is how the house used to look.”

these pauses, Bodea’s father stepped in as our guide, showing us an open area in the process of becoming an organized display (Notable moment 28). Mr. Bodea described in some detail how each machine worked, often employing technical terms unfamiliar to my translator.

Eventually, we all came back together in front of the “road of bread” and made our way further up the property, towards a restored Slovak house on the property. I was unaware until the previous day of the presence of a large Slovak community in this region. My translator and I learned about this ethnic group after a visit to a well-advertised restaurant

Notable moment 28



specializing in Slovak food a short drive from our guesthouse. The museum maker explained: "This is a Slovak house. It used to be covered in straw, built in 1916 – they were colonized as woodcutters and they would migrate with the house. Take it down, go elsewhere and put it back together. This is its fourth move" (L. Bodea Interview, 17 June 2018). We saw the progress of the reconstruction, beginning with a picture of the former owners, showing the relocation and restoration process step-by-step through a series of two dozen images arranged on a poster board (in Notable moment 29). The Slovak house was visibly different to me, its outside color is tan versus the traditional Romanian shade of blue and the décor on the inside was also of a different style, featuring a more controlled selection of objects. On the porch, Ms. Bodea pointed out an example of Slovak handiwork in the form of traditional baskets (Notable moment 30). As we exited the Slovak house, I felt exhausted considering these present-day concerns related to modes of production and environmental sustainability.

Notable moment 29:

Father: “This is how the house was when they got it. That’s the singer (the former owner) . . .”

Notable moment 30

LB: “And these are the baskets the Slovaks make. It’s harder now with the wood: you have to cut it across the fiber, you have to boil them, it’s a lot of work. We sell them for 50 lei each (around \$12.50 US) but now [people prefer] to buy a plastic bucket for five lei instead.”

CK: “And sadly the plastic will last forever . . .”

But such thoughts dissipated as we arrived at the next refurbished traditional house, whose restoration was in-process. This skeleton of a house will become a dedicated activity space where Bodea can hold workshops with children from around the region. This made her one of the few museum makers on this trip who included locals on her list of visitors, as

she told us that she held workshops with children from ages eight to fourteen. For a few weeks each summer, they came from surrounding villages to the museum space in Iaz to learn to weave, to bake bread, to paint icons on glass and to make other kinds of traditional crafts. She said with some pride that of the fourteen children who came to her workshops last summer, twelve were scheduled to return in 2018.

She spoke at length about her experiences of working with the children who participated in these workshops, focusing on the challenges of teaching analog activities in a world increasingly saturated with digital technologies. She also explained her approach to working with children:

You always have to maintain their attention. You have to be an open person and you have to make them do the labor, to be involved. And you always have to do something new, and you have to give them what they make. (L. Bodea Interview, 17 June 2018).

Bodea also described the benefits she thought her workshop experiences gave to the children who attended:

It helps them to have a more developed aesthetic. And it helps them to know their identity with the customs and the traditions. You open a window for them not only to be on their phone all day. They live in a time when everything is boring, they're hyperactive. You have to play with them, you always have to change . . . and not all of them are equally interested. But if you slowly cultivate it, if they feel you're close to their soul, then they're interested. (L. Bodea Interview, 17 June 2018).

Her statements expressed how the development of cultural identity, aesthetics and tradition required active cultivation through the teaching of hands-on, varied activities. She had, through trial and error, found ways to connect with children so that they would be receptive to knowing about the past, to making deeper, felt connections through sharing the knowledge of making in hands-on, embodied participation in traditions. She made the past real to the children that she worked with, though their participation but also because they came away with evidence of their newfound knowledge in the form of handmade crafts and

foods. Traditions made tangible for the children seemed to be a key ingredient to the success of her workshops.

Bodea also expressed other visions for potential visitors to her museum as a creative space. She reflected: “There’s a little forest there. Maybe [people will come] for painting, maybe for artists, maybe they want to be here and . . . learn about painting and ethnography, to study and relax. For people who love tradition” (L. Bodea Interview, 17 June 2018). Like me, I thought but did not say this out loud. I could easily envision myself coming to a place like this to write and photograph for a few weeks someday, a break from my urban life. Bodea spoke about passion and vision and the importance of getting ideas for her museum-making activities through first-hand experience: “I go around – and when you go around and you see other things, how they’re made, you get ideas of what you should do,” she tells us (L. Bodea Interview, 17 June 2018). She explained that it is important for museum makers to “have a vision” for what they want to create (L. Bodea Interview, 17 June 2018). I wanted to know more about this, so I asked (Notable moment 31). At that moment, looking together at the covered area in her yard, I was able to perceive a difference between the categories of rustic and kitsch, with the former now understood as a version of the latter. Rustic, I realized, was part of the rural Romanian aesthetic I often enjoyed. But I also understood the sensibility she wanted to impart through her vision of “heritage,” honing her personal vision by incorporating professional, institutionalized standards of heritage presentation that she was learning about in her master’s program.

The tour was winding down. We headed back towards the Bodea residence at the front of the property. We made a brief stop along the way, entering a small space storing homemade preserves where Bodea presented us each with a jar of sour cherry jam. At the main house, we were invited in for coffee and sweets that her mother was quick to point out

had been baked by Bodea herself. In their dining room, we sipped coffee as I faded into the background, a less-active participant now as our guesthouse owner, my translator and this

Notable moment 31



CK: “What do you mean by ‘have a vision?’”

LB: “It’s hard not to do kitsch stuff or rustic. I think a lot of people think of this place as rustic. If you want this to be an inhabitable space, it’s important how you combine materials. So this shed here for example – now it doesn’t go [together] . . . I don’t like what’s on the ground because it doesn’t fit the vision of what’s going to be here. Especially how I did research on heritage and I understand what fits here and what doesn’t.”

CK: “What’s a better solution?”

LB: “Different stones or bigger pieces. And to have straw on this or a ceramic [roof] but not what’s on it now – a different color of wood. I don’t like that either, that’s what you’d call rustic.”

museum family chatted more freely in Romanian. I knew that AC would fill me in on any relevant highlights when we debriefed on the drive back. The maker’s mother showed us some newly made traditional blouses modeled after examples in their collection as our guesthouse owner tried on a men’s model. I looked around and saw that the home’s decor presented elements of tradition within its relatively contemporary construction, a comfortable space in which to have a snack and drink. I also noticed that the walls were lined with numerous examples of Bodea’s religious icons painted on glass, one of the

traditional crafts she taught young people in her workshops. The space clearly reflected the personality of the family and their pride in their daughter's interest in heritage work. The only thing that could be better, I thought, would be to have coffee in the grandmother's house that sat across the driveway from us.

6.8. Field analysis 4

Bodea's museum tour moved us through an unexpectedly expansive property punctuated by different ways of life expressed through the homes of her relatives, the Slovak ethnic house, and the site in which to observe the process of turning grain into bread. The most effective space on this property, for me, was the grandmother's house because of its personal connections. This traditional home represented not only the museum's origins through the maker's desire to keep a memory of her grandmother; it also focused on women's labor in collecting and arranging the spaces in a way that was different from the other museums I had visited whose proprietors were men. The thick layers of textiles displayed in the grandmother's home reflected for me the knowledge inherent creating a woolen coat from start to finish, as it was done in the past: shearing the sheep, processing the wool, creating the woven or felted fabric, constructing the garment, producing the yarns or threads for embroidery, dyeing the threads different colors, designing and executing the pattern, crafting the actual garment. Time was expressed in the skill it took to construct garments by hand and through the value of idiosyncratic hand-embroidered details. The knowledge of making became bound up in the garments themselves, imbuing them with the attraction of making that drew me to them.

I could imagine the past or connect it with the present through a direct comparison between the grandmother's home in the photograph. Again, the shared experience of looking together at the family photo album offered shared moments of remembering aspects

of a past that merged with my own vision of Romania-as-place which was deepened during this visit and learning about the Slovaks minority in this region. I could now recognize a difference between the material culture of these different groups, adding a dimensionality to my knowledge that felt different from what I might learn in an institutional museum in part because I encountered these cultures through personalized narratives while moving through vernacular spaces.

Bodea's museum making activities stood out to me as different expressions of cultivation of heritage (an idea developed in Chapter 8) in how she refined her museum vision to construct spaces from proper materials as well as representative objects to move beyond the categories of "kitsch" and "rustic." She developed her vision based on her education, what she learned observing the work of others, traveling to other official as well as vernacular heritage sites and bringing home those elements she saw that overlapped with her vision. She also worked to cultivate an aesthetic sense in children through her workshops, who she saw consumed by technology, by teaching them hands-on how to bake bread and learn traditional crafts. She offered her workshop participants a chance to work with their hands, to learn materials and methods of making and to keep what they made with their newfound skills. Her expression that she "opened a window" for these young people to "not only be on their phone all day" resonated with how vernacular museums keep open possibilities for new encounters with the present as well as the past.

6.9. Notable moments conclusions

Each maker's story reveals that maker's subject knowledge world. The notable moments presented in Sections 6.1, 6.3, 6.5 and 6.7 illustrated how each maker's knowledge world became perceptible to me as a visitor during the museum tour. Makers shared their understandings presented as typologies of objects (Notable moments 1, 2, 12, 24), of people

(Notable moments 5, 6, 10, 14, 29) and of time (Notable moments 8, 9, 11, 27); as technologies of making (Notable moments 19, 21, 25, 28, 30); and as exemplary of value (Notable moments 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 26, 31). Another category of moments shows how sensory experiences are involved in knowledge-making as part of the vernacular museum experience (Notable moments 3, 4, 13, 21, 23). These moments provide tangible examples of what fills each maker's subjective knowledge categories, capturing how their interpretations had become entwined with objects as part of their overarching narrative and making these categories discernible for me.

These notable moments demonstrate how each maker's personal categories of understanding are made real for visitors as exemplary of cultural motion writ small. Cultural anthropologist Greg Urban (2001) describes how cultural motion depends upon "the immaterial aspects of culture [becoming] lodged within the material" where the immaterial is carried between sensory objects and, "The stuff moving through space and time is an abstract form or mold for the production of something material" (Urban, 2001, p. 3). Within these vernacular museums, what appear to be predominantly old objects are collected and arranged as the material carriers of different aspects of the past communicated through the personal understandings of each maker. This in turn reveals how the embodied knowledge world of each maker, too, becomes "lodged" (Urban, 2001, p. 3) within material objects that become receptacles for their knowledge conveyed through the maker's tour narrative, conveying history and heritage at the scale of the personal. This process also reveals some of the relational, hands-on aspects of knowledge-making. Generalized categories such as regular, kitsch, or authentic were conveyed through the objects makers had collected, arranged and presented during their tour narratives. As a visitor, I could know through these newly revealed categories, feeling closer to the maker because of the intimated perspective I

could have in the vernacular museum setting. These ideas are expanded upon in the conclusions to this chapter.

6.10. Conclusions

Through these visits, each maker's perspective emerged as a distinct story of the museum as a world (Johnson, 1990). As the preceding stories show, these worlds revolve around presenting: aspects of a local way of life that "that was and no longer is" in Sasca Montană; linkages between a place from ancient to contemporary times in Hațeg; an ethnic Hungarian-focused perspective conveying ways of knowing that have been historically muted in Galoșpetreu and environs; and how the desire to keep a memory of a loved one has grown into a more formal project of fostering tradition and heritage across generations of visitors in Iaz.

These narratives exemplify the deeply perspectival way of each maker's world. As previously discussed (Chapter 4, Section 4.1.1.3), Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (2004) conceptualization of the museum as kind of utopian imagining that "reflects on what is, by projecting what could be, either in the spirit of critique or in the hope of a transformative program" (p. 4). As a transformative program, each story of these makers' museums expresses a vision presented through the display of material forms as evidence of alternative ways of being that may help us mitigate problems in our contemporary lives, whether it be an excess of technology, changing values, sustainability, ethnic and class tensions, or coming to terms with complex histories. This happens in a way that reflects how existing knowledge is projected through the museum tours as embodied experiences moving through these imagined worlds made navigable. Museum makers answers to what they see as relevant and/or common problems are presented visually through object displays as well as through the narrative that connects these spaces into the knowable experience of a museum.

Presenting their space as a museum enhances this vision, allowing them to construct categories through juxtaposition and arrangement of objects that convey how the maker's personal vision reflects his or her worldview.

My experience of vernacular museums was transformative for my knowledge world because of how the maker's personal story unfolded as we walked together through the intimate space of a home. Within this close proximity and in response to the arrangements of objects, the maker's narrative became entwined with the overall sensory experience that incorporated all my bodily senses, enveloping me in the maker's world. In this way, vernacular museums borrow an important component of the museum experience: the need for the visitor to walk and to navigate the space (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). But what is key here is now the experience is shared and how maker and visitor walk together.

Vernacular museums are a transformative program that operates on the scale, as the maker at Hațeg described it, of regular: visitors walk through homes. They may be caught by the maker's narrative, but it only extends metaphorically or metonymically beyond the scale of the individual, the intimate, the personal. Even though objects may be numerous, with rooms filled to capacity, the entire experience must still fit into the space of a home.

Knowledge in vernacular museums, then, becomes a product not just of walking, but of being guided through the museum space as a world whose rhythms have been ordered by its maker. The experience of being guided through these spaces materialized for me as moments of relationality, exposing knowledge-making as it was presented here through a series of notable moments that captured moments of the reshaping of my own knowledge in response to that of the maker.

The museum spaces visited here for me facilitated opportunities for knowing through the overlapping biographies and person-to-person connections between visitors and

makers that were more personal than experiences I have had in institutional museums. The interactive encounters described here have been traced through expressions of sensory experiences that engage with immaterial aspects of the past as they have “lodged” in material objects (Urban, 2001, p. 3) which suggests how material objects act as receptacles for or themselves come to contain or embody knowledge. This is both because of how objects are woven into the maker’s narrative as well as how I relate and incorporate them into my own way of having a world. Objects appealed to me because of how they offered palpable experiences of colors, textures, forms and even smells and tastes beyond the verbal. Urban describes this kind of motion through the senses as that which “transmogrifies” (Urban, 2001, p. 19) or transforms the immaterial past in ways that seems surprising or even magical; without such motion, these immaterial aspects of the past become victims of what Urban (2001) describes as deceleration, echoing the feeling of loss that these makers described. These museums themselves are described in the introduction of this dissertation as unexpected spaces – not just because they are non-institutional museums but evocative worlds writ small that appear in areas that museums should not necessarily be.

This chapter has focused on the visits to four RECOMESPAR vernacular museums and stories of the museum makers in an autoethnographic account organized around the notable moments that connect and document the personal experiences of myself and my colleague’s visits to four RECOMESPAR vernacular museums. The next chapter focuses on understanding the experiences of other visitors to these types of museum in Romania.

CHAPTER 7: VERNACULAR MUSEUMS AS SPACES OF KNOWLEDGE-MAKING FOR VISITORS

This chapter presents visitor's experiences of Romanian vernacular museums in support of RO2, which is to understand vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making for visitors. It builds upon the maker's perspectives of their museums presented in Chapter 5 and the autoethnographic account of the researcher's visits to tour museum sites presented in Chapter 6. Understandings of these museums at institutional levels will be the focus of Chapter 8. As previously discussed, (Chapter 4, Section 4.1.1), knowledge-making is a relational endeavor. Visitors find connections between their own existing and their emergent knowledge worlds in the context of museum visits. Therefore, visiting a museum becomes an expressive, embodied cognitive experience because of the kinds of connections visitors make. To draw on these experiences, this chapter analyzes three sources of data: 1) interviews with visitors; 2) written visitor comments included in museum guestbooks; and 3) reviews posted on the social media website Facebook. For interviews, the guiding research questions were: what and how do visitors make sense of their vernacular museum visits and how does this compare to their visits in institutional museums? James Clifford's (1997) theories of travel as a process of translation and Susan Crane's (1997) museum guestbook comments as an excess of memory situate the vernacular museum experiences of visitors within a scholarly literature.

The outline of this chapter is as follows: Section 7.1 focuses the forms of evidence analyzed. Section 7.2 briefly summarizes the methodology that shaped data collection and analysis. Section 7.3 presents the findings related to visitor interviews. Section 7.4 presents the findings related to guestbook comments collected at museum sites. Section 7.5 presents

findings related to the Facebook comments analyzed for one museum site. Section 7.6 presents the chapter conclusions.

7.1. Evidence

Analysis of visitor's vernacular museum visits employs three types of evidence: 1) interviews with eight participants who have visited vernacular museums (Appendix R); 2) written guestbook comments from vernacular museums at Hațeg, Galoșpetreu and Iaz (Appendices S-V); and 3) online reviews posted to Facebook for the vernacular museum at Iaz (Appendix W). The relevance of each type of evidence is discussed in sections 7.1.1 – 7.1.3, respectively.

7.1.1. Interviews

Ethnographic interviews lasting between fifteen minutes and one hour were conducted with a total of eight visitors recruited as research participants (Appendix R). To elicit such responses, interviews took place in-person (7) and via Skype video chat service (1). All of the interviewed research participants visited museums in the course of travel as the term has been employed by James Clifford (1997): “‘Travel’ . . . [as] an inclusive term embracing a range of more or less voluntarist practices of leaving ‘home’ to go to some ‘other’ place” (p. 66). Home, as a familiar, known space, is contiguous with the way of knowing the world that visitors carry with them. In contrast, travel is an activity of moving temporarily away from home to “some ‘other’ place” in a way that creates opportunities for encountering that which is unknown, unfamiliar, different. By juxtaposing the known and the unknown, travel becomes a process of translation through which “you learn a lot about peoples, cultures, and histories different from your own, enough to begin to know what you’re missing” (Clifford, 1997, p. 39). One outcome of travel, then, is that it exposes the incompleteness of our knowledge worlds and fosters opportunities for creating new

relationships between the known and unknown, and, extended through Johnson, creating enhanced possibilities for meaning-making.

Within the context of this study, research participants are conceptualized as travelers³⁶ who either journeyed from “home” to Romania or from their home near or within Romania to another part of that country, during which time they visited a variety of sites including vernacular museums. What differentiates these participants, beyond demographic differences, are 1) the distances they traveled from “home” and 2) the degree to which their proficiency with the Romanian language and related knowledge allowed them to travel independently. Participants 1 and 2 were an American couple living in suburban Philadelphia who traveled to Romania as part of an annual vacation. They had never visited Romania before and traveled with a private Romanian guide who arranged trip logistics and also acted as an interpreter. I recruited this couple after learning about their experience of traveling through Transylvania from an account of their journey published in a local newspaper. Participants 3, 4 and 5 were members of a Romanian family who had traveled to Hunedoara County from their home in Ploiești, a city north of Bucharest. These native speakers traveled in their home country by car to a region approximately four to five hours away from home as part of a family vacation. This family was recruited at a vernacular museum site during the June 2018 fieldwork. Participants 6 and 7 were another couple from the US who had been living and studying in Bucharest, Romania in 2018. Though not native speakers, they had fluency in Romanian and, for Participant 6, also in Hungarian (spoken in areas of Transylvania they visited) so they, too, traveled independently. This couple were my translator’s colleagues with whom we were able to visit a vernacular museum site together. Participant 8 was a former research colleague with whom I had visited at least four

³⁶ Implicit in this designation, though outside the scope of this study, all the travelers interviewed were of a socioeconomic class that provide them with the means and ability to travel.

RECOMESPAR museums, as well as other institutional and vernacular museums, during research trips between 2011 and 2014. As an American, she had minimal knowledge of Romanian and traveled on her research trips with a colleague who was a native speaker and who also acted as her translator. Participants 1, 2 and 8 received the interview questions in advance. Participants ranged from eighteen to fifty-five years of age. At the time of the interviews, all these participants resided in urban or suburban areas. Because the majority of research participants were foreign tourists or travelers, a selection of guidebook comments featuring impressions of Romanian and Hungarian visitors were also included and are discussed next.

7.1.2. Guestbook comments

Guestbook commentary by other visitors became an important supplement to interviews in part because of the limited number of visitors encountered during museum site visits and the difficulty in finding Romanians willing to be interviewed about their visits to vernacular museums.³⁷ Guestbooks at each site were relatively similar—the store-bought bound, hardcover books with blank letter-sized pages whose entries spanned multiple years. Guestbook entries were collected by taking pictures of guestbook pages at three of the four museum sites visited (those described in Chapter 6). I asked museum hosts for permission to photograph pages from their guestbook while I was asked to sign the guestbook to memorialize my museum visit. Images of the guestbook pages analyzed are included in Appendix S and relevant quotes are presented in Appendices T-V. A total of 37 pages were photographed across the three museums (10 at MUS_01 spanning years 2016-2018; 8 at

³⁷ My translator had a theory for why more Romanians did not want to speak with us as part of the study. In one conversation she had with a Romanian person, this individual held very strong opinions about what and how a vernacular museum should be presented, one that did not always agree with the maker's vision of the vernacular museum. From this exchange AC posited that because some Romanians might have had what could be construed as negative as well as positive impressions of vernacular museums, they were not inclined to share these views with me as an American, an outsider.

MUS_04 spanning 2017-2018; 19 at MUS_06 spanning years 2009-2018;). Analysis focused on 97 substantive comments (those consisting of more than a name and hometown) made by visitors in Romanian by visitors from Romania (8 at MUS_01; 25 at MUS_04; 53 at MUS_06) and, in the case of Galoşpetreu, a majority Hungarian village, comments also in Hungarian³⁸ (11 at MUS_01). Comments by visitors in other languages (English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish and three other unidentified languages) were omitted from this analysis. The number of pages chosen to be documented at each site was dependent upon the time I had to photograph pages in a way that seemed not to disrupt the flow of the museum visit. The one exception was at Haţeg (MUS_06), where the museum maker was eager to show us an entry from 2009 when a French family had visited his museum, encouraging me to photograph additional guestbook pages. For analysis, genders were assumed from names when they were provided as part of the guestbook entry, but in many cases it was difficult to definitively identify more detailed demographic information from these entries.

Museum guestbook comments left by visitors to institutional museum sites have been described by historian Susan Crane (1997) as follows: “Generally, one finds school groups' scribbles and drawings, inscriptions of names and hometowns, often only single words of approval or disapproval” (p. 44) The selection of guestbook entries reviewed here were similar, often containing entries by school groups [11] that consisted of a formal entry written by the teacher that was sometimes embellished with drawings or short comments written by students themselves. Other organized groups [8] who visited and who could be identified through their signatures (e.g. pensioners, scholars, religious or cultural organizations) followed a similar format of inscription. The majority of entries were made by

³⁸ Dr. Alexandra Coţofană translated Romanian guestbook comments. Jason Vincz translated Hungarian guestbook comments.

families or individual visitors [78], with comments and signatures made by one member of the family or group. Most generally, comments focused on offering words of praise for the museum maker, recognizing the value of the labor that had gone into making the museum as well as presenting the guided tour. However, unlike Crane, I came across no negative comments in the comments translated in my collected sample.

Crane (1997) has conceptualized museums guestbooks as containing “a lingering excess of memory from other times, other museums, and other knowledge” (p. 47), providing evidence of visitors’ personal knowledge worlds through which they refract their museum experience (Chapter 4, Section 4.1.1.5). This concept suggests how museum experiences recorded in guestbooks extend beyond the visitor’s reaction to the current, in-gallery museum experience to include their previous museum and life experiences. Within this study, Crane’s excess of memory reflects how visitors understand museums from within their personal knowledge worlds, through expectations of what the museum visit should be and how the current visit compares with that expectation. The guestbook comments analyzed here not only create a record of who has visited the museum, when they came and where they came from as a way of stating: I was here; these comments can also reflect expectations and understandings of how visitors understand museums in relation to their knowledge world. The guestbook can only be accessed within the physical space of the museum itself. Another way of connecting with these museums virtually is through social media.

7.1.3. Facebook reviews

The RECOMESPAR museum at Iaz (MUS_04) also had an active Facebook account at <https://www.facebook.com/casafeteidiniiaz/> that included reviews that supplemented Romanian impressions about this site. Analysis here focused on twelve reviews written in

Romanian posted during 2017. These reviews included seven posts from individuals who had visited this museum; three who indicated they would visit in the future; one from a repeat visitor; and one from the museum maker's father. Facebook provides an opportunity for visitors and potential visitors to create and maintain an interactive connection with the maker and his or her museum at a distance and create a more public record of their impressions of a place, with additional information that can potentially be shared with a much wider audience. One major difference between the guestbook comments and Facebook reviews was that Facebook reviews were not always based on the experience of an in-person visit to the vernacular museum but from visitors who had not yet visited the physical museum site. Therefore, visitor impressions of this museum also seemed to be formed in relation to this museum as it is presented on Facebook and the idea the commenter had of it as a virtual medium. Here, I consider these reviews as extensions of how visitors use the physical guestbooks, with the main difference being that Facebook reviews create a record of visitor understandings of the museum in a publicly accessible forum.

7.2. Methodology

With one exception (Participant 8), visitor interviews were conducted with multiple visitors at the same time (Participants 1 & 2; Participants 3-5; Participants 6 & 7) which allowed these participants to consider interview questions in relation to recollections and descriptions of their immediate museum visits through interactions with one another as well as with me. In a similar way, Participant 8 and I had visited multiple vernacular museum sites together, so there were several points during the interview when she relied on me to confirm the details of a museum encounter. Thinking through museum visits as relational encounters between visitors reflects in part what I have come to describe as “knowing through,”

following Mark Johnson (1991). In vernacular museums, knowledge-making happens not only between makers and visitors or visitors and objects but also between visitors, since none of these research participants visited vernacular museums alone; museum experiences often happened in relation to our own and to others' ways of knowing the world.

Knowing through emerges in different ways in the guestbook comments and Facebook reviews that were also analyzed in response to RO2. Guestbooks recorded visitor impressions in order to share them with the museum maker at the close of their in-person museum visit, which in my experience were encouraged by the museum maker. The shared nature of these statements reflects an intention by visitors to identify who they are and where they have come from as a record of their presence at the museum. However, the guestbook is a public record that can only be consulted by other visitors during an in-person visit. Facebook reviews present visitor impressions in a more publicly accessible format than the written guestbook and participants need to be Facebook users in order to review and comment on this site. By extending the reach of the vernacular museum into the virtual realm of social media, both in-person visitors as well as potential visitors can record their impressions as a review. As such, these impressions may be based on the experience of an in-person visitor or on the impressions of the museum gleaned through the maker's postings that include objects and arrangements in the museum as a setting or backdrop or other posts. In both the written guestbook and Facebook reviews, contributors may be influenced by what others have written or posted, as I sometimes read through the comments before crafting my own guestbook inscriptions.

Findings from analysis of these evidence forms are presented in Sections 7.3-7.5.

7.3. Findings: Interviews

Findings in this section describe visitor impressions related to their in-person experiences visiting vernacular museums and related to their overall travel experiences. Section 7.3.1. relates how research participants found the museums they visited: either through the suggestion of local guides and/or other travelers or through official and unofficial signs posted along the roadside advertising the museum. Sections 7.3.2 -7.3.6 categorize the knowledge-making experiences of visitors and interpretive frames that emerged through analysis of the interviews, including: serendipitous travel experiences (7.3.2); inventive knowledge (7.3.3); know-how (7.3.4); distinctive knowledge (7.3.5) and important knowledge (7.3.6). Collectively, sections 7.3.2-7.3.5 describe the experiences of travelers collected during interviews who are here conceptualized as relative cultural outsiders based on the distances they traveled from home to Romania, their language proficiency and the extent to which they could travel independently or required a guide/translator, and/or whose encounters were shaped in part through differences from home. As a contrast, section 7.3.6 describes the impressions of vernacular museum visitors who are relative cultural insiders who were traveling in their home country.

7.3.1. Finding vernacular museums

This section presents findings of how research participants found the vernacular museums they visited. This involved either being brought to a site by someone who had visited previously (word-of-mouth) for a planned visit or finding a museum unexpectedly in a town or village as it was indicated by a sign (chance encounter). Sections 7.3.1.1. and 7.3.1.2. focus on how three sets of visitors (Participants 1 & 2; 3-5; and 8) found the vernacular museums they discussed in their interviews. For this subset of research participants, vernacular museums were encountered in the context of their overarching travel

itineraries. Clifford (1997) describes travel itineraries as providing a “way in” (p. 31) to knowledge, gleaned as a person moves between and through those sites located along a prescribed route. Here, I focus on how the itinerary as form of travel knowledge creates ways in to vernacular museums and how the sign inserts these museums into existing itineraries along travel routes, allowing the museums themselves to find a “way in” to travel itineraries and, by extension, participants’ knowledge attention.

7.3.1.1. Planned visits to vernacular museums

Participants 1 & 2 are a married professional couple living in suburban Philadelphia. I learned about them after the husband (Participant 1) published an account of their trip to Transylvania in the travel section of my local paper, in which the husband mentioned visiting three museums located in people’s homes in different areas of the Romanian countryside. Our interview began with a discussion of their travel itinerary, a copy of which the husband provided to me, along with a link to their trip photographs, in response to the interview questions I sent to them a few weeks before our scheduled meeting.

The husband described how they developed their travel itinerary based on the experiences of another traveler as a kind of insider knowledge whose information he also found through research on the Trip Advisor website:

There was one particular woman who had gone [to Romania] by herself . . . she posted a lot of notes on what she saw when she was there. She highly recommended this [tour guide]. I don’t know whether I would have found [the tour guide] outside of Trip Advisor – it was word-of-mouth. She sent us her itinerary, and we added some things. We stayed a little bit longer than she did. So, a lot of it was things [the tour guide] recommends anyway – but she had done a lot of research on her own and had added some things to [the tour guide’s] itinerary. We basically took her itinerary and changed a couple things and added some days. (Participant 1 Interview, 1 May 2018).

The itinerary my participants found on a popular travel website was a mix of knowledge about sites to see in Transylvania.³⁹ Many were recommended by a Romanian tour guide, a kind of cultural insider, and others were vetted and then augmented by and through the impressions and experiences of an American visitor, a relative cultural outsider who traveled through Romania by herself, and independently. Similarly, the tour guide operated through “word-of-mouth” advertising from previous clients and independent from large-scale, commercial tourism operations (discussed further in Chapter 8). The itinerary as these participants described it blends insider and outsider perspectives—the Romanian tour guide who lives close to the space covered by the itinerary, travels it frequently, and has the navigational competency to follow it; and the American woman who traveled far from home to experience unfamiliar places. Both this guide and the female traveler were described as working “independently,” which suggests a desire for travel experiences outside of large-group or mass tourism endeavors and that vernacular museums are perceived as such found places. Participants 1 and 2 shaped their itinerary according to their own needs and desires in the choice of tour guide and perceived outcomes for travel and length of trip. The itinerary that Participants 1 and 2 used to find their way to vernacular museums illustrates one way these kinds of privately-owned, non-institutionalized museums are becoming embedded within wider contexts of independent as opposed to mass travel experiences. That visitors rely on insider and word-of-mouth knowledge to find these museums seems to enhance their appeal by positioning them as something hard to find, adding value to the overall independently developed travel itinerary.

³⁹ Participants 1 & 2 also noted a ten- or fifteen-minute professionally produced travel video about Transylvania that they viewed online as something that influenced their decision to travel to Romania. However, they could not locate the source of this video.

For other vernacular museums, the presence of official and unofficial roadside signs provided a different way into museums.

7.3.1.2. Indicated by signs

The Romanian family (Participants 3-5) and Participant 8's experiences of chance finding of vernacular museums expands on what has been described as the fundamental experience of unexpectedly finding these museums described by Mihalache (2009a). Neither of these participants planned to visit a vernacular museum; they came across a sign that pointed them to the museum. As will be discussed, both official and unofficial signs can encourage travelers to stop for a visit.

7.3.1.2.1. Official signs

We encountered a Romanian family (Participants 3-5) just finishing their visit at the vernacular museum at Hațeg as we arrived. This father (Participant 3), mother (Participant 4) and college-age daughter (Participant 5) had traveled by car from their home in a small city north of Bucharest, the capital, to Transylvania. This was a family vacation during which the father explained that they were "visiting the important places in Romania" (Participant 3 Interview, 13 June 2018) in this region. The family explained that they had come to the region to see the Dacian ruins at Sarmisegetuza, and would also be visiting the Densus monastery, Hunedoara Castle, and the city of Sibiu, all well-known tourist destinations familiar to me and my translator from guidebooks as well as prominent from road signs we had passed while driving through the area. These sites are also presented in mainstream tourist literature as well-known historic and cultural sites throughout the country.

The father explained that they "hadn't planned to stop at this museum; we just saw the sign" along the roadside and decided to visit (Participant 3 Interview, 13 June 2018). The posting of an official sign, one of the RECOMESPAR efforts towards institutional

legitimation (discussed further in Chapter 8) created a visual marker that locates the museum and directs visitors to it; it also connects the museum to existing sites of history and heritage, which are marked by similar brown and white colored signs that employ an internationally recognized symbol for museum consisting of a rectangular base upon which sit four rectangular columns topped with a triangular roof. This family encountered the official sign for the Hațeg museum while traveling between known sites on their planned route between visits to “important” Romanian sites.

7.3.1.2.2. Unofficial signs

Participant 8 recalled another way of finding an unexpected vernacular museum in 2012. As an American researcher visiting Romania as part of fieldwork, she and two colleagues (an American and a Romanian) saw a homemade *muzeu* (museum) sign posted by the roadside as they traveled by car between research sites during an unrelated study: “Were just driving and we saw the, you know, the old decayed sign on the side of the road that said [*muzeu*] . . . so we decided to stop there . . . we just decided to go knock on the door and see what they had” (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018). Participant 8’s experience shows how the museum can also be signaled in a way different from the Romanian family’s encounter with an official sign. Because she and her colleagues had traveled through Romania several times before and had visited these kinds of unofficial museums, her interest was piqued when she saw a sign announcing *muzeu* even though it was “decayed” and difficult to read. They had enough prior knowledge to know that it was appropriate protocol to stop by the museum maker’s home unannounced “just to see what they had.” When moving between sites along an itinerary centered around research work, she and her colleagues knew that even a worn *muzeu* sign still potentially signaled the possibility of something interesting to see, so they stopped and visited this site.

7.3.1.3. Finding vernacular museums conclusions

The experiences of participants finding vernacular museums unexpectedly through signs posted along the roadside and through word-of-mouth and insider travel knowledge confirms the literature (Mihalache, 2009a). Participants 1 and 2 found their way to vernacular museums because two were included on their travel itinerary based on the knowledge of a local guide, a cultural insider, whose itinerary was shared by another traveler in an online travel forum. Participants 1 and 2 perceived this itinerary as knowledge received by “word of mouth” or based on the in-person experiences of another independent traveler. This itinerary appeared to flow from outside of established knowledge circles sometimes referred to in travel contexts, which was part of the value of this discovery. Participants 1 and 2 found a third vernacular museum listed in a popular published guidebook geared towards independent travelers as another vehicle that could be used to modify and enhance their itinerary. For the Romanian family (Participants 3-5), the vernacular museum inserted itself into their itinerary through a known institutional form that made it visible to this family as they traveled between known history and heritage sites. For Participant 8, her previous experience of visiting vernacular museums meant that even a worn sign announcing a *muzeu* provided a reason to stop and see what this family museum had and to experience a chance encounter with a family that was novel, memorable and worthwhile.

Taken together, these examples illustrate how traveler’s knowledge emerges through their embodied itineraries, shifting their focus from knowing about place to being there as each set of participants followed, modified and/or deviated from their planned routes as a form of knowledge-making. This happened in response to insider knowledge or in response to signs marking vernacular museums in the landscape. These visitors planned and modified their itineraries based on the new knowledge and experiences happening along the way,

particularly as this new knowledge facilitated desired experiential travel outcomes related to their construction of place and how this added to their own knowledge world.

Sections 7.3.2 – 7.3.6 build on these findings related to how participants found the vernacular museums they visited to illustrate the ways in which their vernacular museum visits stood out as notable to them in the context of travel.

7.3.2. Serendipitous travel outcomes

Participant 1 & 2's visits to vernacular museum visit included two museums that focused on a specific feature. One museum showcased a functioning gristmill and the other a waterwheel—both examples of functioning objects. A third vernacular museum they visited was located in the home of a communist dissident and artist that they found published in a popular guidebook geared towards independent travelers. The husband explained to me that while: “Most of the recommendations” for places to visit along their itinerary, including these museums, “were [from our Romanian tour guide] or from the other traveler [on Trip Advisor] who found [these sites] on her own. There is some luck involved in this, too” (Participant 1 Interview, 1 May 2018). Participant 1 did not attribute the success of their itinerary to his skill as a researcher, but to chance. This echoes the sense of the unexpectedness of finding vernacular museums previously discussed while also emphasizing how a perceived serendipity pervaded the overall trip experience. Participant 1 further expressed that, “A lot of these places . . . even if we had an address, we would not have found them without a guide” (Participant 1 Interview, 1 May 2018). The guide's insider knowledge, it seems, further enhanced this feeling of serendipity because of how the guide's insider knowledge led these participants to hidden places. Traveling to hard-to-find places also correlated with this couple's reasons for traveling to Romania.

Participant 2, the wife, recounted her desire to experience travel in a way that would contrast with their previous travel experience on a river cruise, epitomizing commodified travel:

[On the river cruise] I felt like what I was missing was that I wanted to go to some place, to a different country and actually live like the people and not be a tourist. And it was so rush-rush-rush every day, you're just kind of skimming these big cities. And I'm more of a country girl and I wanted to be out where the country folk live, people who have heritage that goes way-way-way back in the same place they live now . . . (Participant 2 Interview, 1 May 2018)

For this visitor, the fast-paced tempo and the urban focus of this previous trip seemed to limit what and how this traveler could know about the places she visited. According to Participant 2, the structured, urban-centric itinerary promoted in her a feeling of being “rushed” from site to site without getting the time to “actually” experience life as she imagined a local person might. Her metaphor of “skimming” the cities suggests that her impressions of these places are of having only touched the surface, missing the chance to establish a connection to place. Participant 2 had the perception that a different tempo of travel could provide an experience of place that could allow her to overcome her feeling of being a “tourist,” an outsider, and connect her in some way with the local way of life.

One experience that made Participant 2 feel as if she had overcome this “tourist” boundary happened during their visit to the vernacular museum with the working grist mill, where Participant 2 recalled how the maker and his wife “showed us around and we sat on the porch and ate grapes that were hanging (above us) from the vines . . .” (Participant 2 Interview, 1 May 2018). Participant 2 later spoke about how she was:

. . . just tickled to be in the fresh air, and it was kind of exactly what I was hoping for . . . this little traditional cottage in the country with these people who were like third or fourth generation. And the fact that he . . . demonstrated milling corn and things and I thought it was cool – one thing I remembered was that people in the neighborhood still bring him grain [to process on his equipment] . . . And he took us into his living room. And I know [our tour guide] says he usually does not do that. (Participant 2 Interview, 1 May 2018)

Participant 2's primary recollections were not necessarily of the objects she saw while at this museum other than the main feature, the gristmill. Instead, she recalled sensory memories related to being outside and eating grapes. In contrast to the "skimming," in this moment, she was sitting down, outside "in the fresh air," picking grapes and listening to the maker tell her about what he had created and how things worked. For Participant 2, a vernacular museum she visited matched her stated expectations for her trip. Further, this maker added an additional level of intimacy for these visitors: inviting them into the maker's home, which overcame for Participant 2 a feeling of perceived distance between herself and the maker and created a space for her and her husband as special guests. This exemplifies how the boundary between insider and outsider is permeable and can be crossed in vernacular museums as they provide a more intimate way to experience of Romania-as-place, in this case, through close contact with cultural insiders in their home, welcomed as guests.

Participant 1 expressed his own ideas about what constituted the museum experience:

But we said (to our tour guide) we were interested in rural areas – agriculture, you know, we wanted to experience traditional Romania as much as possible. We are not museum nuts, by the way. . . You know, we don't want to go to the Metropolitan Museum and spend eight days reading every description . . . We like to get a flavor rather than knowing all the nitty-gritty. (Participant 1 Interview, 1 May 2018)

These travelers wanted to spend their time in rural areas where they felt they could better experience "traditional Romania" as a contrast to how they might come to know Romania through institutional museum visits located in urban centers. This participant's desire to "get a flavor" versus "knowing all the nitty-gritty" also suggests that there are limits to the level and kind of knowledge an institutional museum would provide, both because of the institutional museum's location as well as its mode of presentation/exhibition. These participants felt that time spent reading labels in an institutional museum would provide an

excess of information that they did not necessarily need and that could detract from the fuller, more intimate experiences of non-traditional museum spaces like vernacular museums.⁴⁰ That vernacular museums were found in homes in rural areas also matched these participants' ideas about where and how "traditional Romania" could be best experienced. In this way, vernacular museums provided for these participants the desired amount of stimulation and learning in the environment in part because the vernacular museum experience matched their desired style of learning in museums as well as their overall travel expectations about what "traditional Romania" should be more generally.

As Participant 1 perceived it: "I wouldn't say [the vernacular museums we visited] are technically museums. They are what I would call living museums. They might be in somebody's home who, you know, has a water wheel or has something like that, but it's a museum-in-effect, I would say. It's a living cultural snippet." (Participant 1 Interview, 1 May 2018). Participant 1's observations here illustrate how the museum need not strictly conform to a model institutional form to correlate with visitor expectations about what constitutes a museum visit. This participant's descriptions of vernacular museums as "living museums" and "living cultural snippet[s]" also suggests that the vernacular museums this couple visited felt alive to them, foregrounding their own emplacement in a way that contrasted with their characterization of the institutional museum experience as "spending . . . days reading every description." This felt distinction between the institutional and vernacular museums arose for these visitors in part because of their stated desire to experience "traditional Romania" and the location of these museums in rural environments.

As Participant 1 summed up his vernacular museum experiences, he stated:

⁴⁰ Vernacular museums can also overwhelm visitors with information through the visitor's lengthy, detailed narrative, as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.1 and Chapter 6.

I would say that everyone made us very comfortable. Everyone was very warm. And the guide, one of the advantages of being with the guide was that they have been to these places and in most cases they . . . have some relationship [with the maker]. But this was an example – at both these places, we were the only people there.
(Participant 1 Interview, 1 May 2018)

That the museum-maker-as-host was “warm” and made Participant 1 feel “very comfortable” enhanced this visitor’s experience in a way that stands out from an institutional museum. Further, Participant 1 could rely on the fact that his guide had “some relationship with the maker” which, combined with the fact that they were “the only people there” foregrounded the novelty of the experience overall. This likely also enhanced Participant 2’s ability to transcend the boundary between tourist and local by creating opportunities for personal connections. As museums-in-effect, vernacular museum visits seemingly had an expected effect of learning about traditional ways of milling grain and washing using a water wheel, as well as ethnography and, in one case, their participation in personal history of a communist dissident. But vernacular museums also connected these visitors directly with local people in an intimate setting, mediated by their guide’s knowledge, allowing the participants to be welcomed as guests who could sit down and relax and even share a snack with the host.

For these participants, the cumulative experiences within vernacular museums embedded within their wider travel experience in a way that encapsulates how they have come to know about Romania-as-place. This was perceived to be serendipitous, such as finding their guide whose insider knowledge and personal connections helped them locate what they perceived to be difficult-to-find places along their itinerary. Further, knowledges exchanged in vernacular museums flowed in a way that matched these participants’ desired museum experiences of “getting a flavor” of place in spaces located with where they perceived “traditional Romania”—the aspect of Romanian life they most wanted to

experience in their travels. They were able to connect with vernacular museum proprietors through their museum visits in part because the nature of these visits matched their desired outcomes of slowing their pace of travel and potentially overcoming the boundary between “tourist” and “local” as they were welcomed into these maker’s homes as guests. These enhanced sensory and environmental vernacular museum experiences allowed these visitors to accomplish their desired goals, enhancing the understanding and appreciation of Romania-as-place that were readily incorporated into their knowledge worlds as the kind of knowledge they desired.

7.3.3. Entrepreneurial spirit

At one point during the interview with Participants 1 and 2, I began to share my impressions of the resourcefulness of the museum makers that I have encountered during my visits. As I began to say, “It’s like you can give them anything . . .” the husband finished my sentence: “And they can turn it into something . . . They’re proud and they can take what they have and make it into things. The architecture, the rugs on the wall . . .” (Participant 1 Interview, 1 May 2018). This comment speaks to the ingenuity of museum makers as people who can transform everyday objects into something remarkable if not extraordinary. For this participant, this craft was evidenced in what he identified as his most memorable visit to a vernacular museum that featured a working water wheel. It also shows how vernacular museums allow makers and visitors to connect to an aspects of Romanian identity that links resourcefulness with sparsity and economic need (Coțofană, 2018) that is revealed through the museum performance.⁴¹ Participant 1 described as a “real character” (Participant 1

41 This theme of craft or inventiveness also emerged at the beginning of fieldwork, when a group of Romanian women we encountered working in an institutional museum in Timișoara quoted the saying: “Romanians invent and adapt; the rest of the world buys and throws away.”

Interview, 1 May 2018) this maker who built a museum around his working water wheel – similar to the other museum they visited that focused around a working gristmill, but:

He made pălincă⁴² in addition to the water wheel . . . and just talking about ingenuity, when you come up to his house, he greets you, and he's built - the façade of his house is all . . . wooden, with the big gate and this intricate carving but he has this hole in one of the support posts and you put a little cup in there and you get pălincă. So, he greets you with pălincă.”

Participants 1 and 2 described how this performance began their afternoon at this museum, which also included learning about how the water wheel worked, hearing about how traditional life was exemplified through crafts and singing as well as showing off this maker's project of assembling a ship in a bottle. This experience impressed upon Participant 1 the entrepreneurial spirit of the vernacular museum enterprise as he also noted how “the intention of the homeowner . . . is to make a few bucks showing people around” (Participant 1 Interview, 1 May 2018) in addition to capitalizing on the functionality of their working water wheels or grist mills by washing carpets or milling grain as services for the local community. This maker's entrepreneurial spirit seemed to deepen Participant 1 and 2's impressions of vernacular museum spaces as “living cultural snippets.” These relatable “snippets” punctuated this couple's itinerary, creating additional “ways in” (Clifford, 1997, p. 31) to different aspects of Romanian identity around sustainability that resonated with these American travelers in a way that also meshed with the kinds of traditional, local knowledge they seemed to be looking for along their travel itinerary as a whole. An entrepreneurial spirit of the museum maker was also described as know-how by American expats (Participants 6 and 7).

⁴² Pălincă is a Romanian plum brandy that Romanians often make at home.

7.3.4. Encountering know-how

Participants 6 and 7 encountered what they described as know-how at several small museums they visited. These participants were an American expatriate couple living in Romania who have traveled extensively in the countryside. They both spoke fairly fluent Romanian and Participant 6 also spoke Hungarian. Participants 6 and 7 both indicated that museums are important to them when they travel, and that they tend to frequent museums of all kinds. The vernacular museum we visited together was not a RECOMESPAR museum, although it was recommended to me by one of the RECOMESPAR makers. It differed from RECOMESPAR museums in that this space was located in the maker's relatively contemporary home. This proprietor was internationally-known as a traditional popular costume maker who displayed an extensive collection of historical examples of traditional clothing next to the showroom where she sold new versions of these costumes based on the traditional examples as well as contemporary clothing that incorporated traditional motifs. She designed these new costumes that were then made by local women she employed. It also turned out that, after we arrived, Participant 7 remembered that she had visited this maker's showroom several years prior on a university-sponsored Romanian cultural trip for college students through an American university. During the visit, I observed how Participants 6 and 7 were focused yet quiet, intent on looking around but mostly listening to the maker talk about the history of her collection and how she and her family established and grew their traditional costume-making business.

As we sat down to discuss our shared museum visit, Participants 6 and 7 began by recounting a list of museums visited on their most recent trip. Their itinerary, which they developed themselves by consulting guidebooks, researching sites online and taking suggestions from friends, included visits to well-known institutional art and ethnographic

museums as well as to some smaller museums. They also identified one other museum they now reconsidered as a kind of vernacular museum because of its intimate, local, ethnographic focus on everyday life. We also shared visits to vernacular museums featuring popular costumes in Bistrița-Năsăud County. I read this exchange as a process of relating the most recent visit to their experience of museum visits as a whole, an example of Crane's (1997) "excess of memory" that describes how visitors incorporate their singular museum experiences into their personal knowledge world, in part through relating vernacular museum visits to other museum experiences. We talked about whether or how the museum we had just visited together fit into the Romanian museum landscape and how to contrast it to institutional museums more generally. Participant 6's impression was that the space we had just visited was a "museum of craft and methodology – they were storing methods even if they're not storing physical objects." (Participant 6 Interview, 21 June 2018). For this participant, it did not seem to matter that the museum maker's goal was commercial enterprise. She sold and used historical examples as models. What did matter for Participant 6 was that this maker's work maintained the procedures, processes and orders of knowledge that produced the objects in the first place. Craft and methodology are kinds of embodied and tacit knowledge that produce artisanal material objects, corresponding to aesthetic forms as well as modes of production. This participant saw the storing of the objects in this museum as conveying the ongoing processes of production of tangible goods in the style of traditional craft forms, evidencing know-how through the practice of making and as inherent in the end-product.

Participant 6 related how he thought this museum of popular costumes was emblematic of his visits to other Romanian ethnographic museums: "Because to me, going to these [kinds of] ethnographic museums, if they had someone there who actually knows

how to carve a corn grinding machine and can show you how to make one and use one and you could actually start doing that again . . . I would probably be the kind of person who would be hanging out there learning how to make barrel stays.” (Participant 6 Interview, 21 June 2018). In these ways, Participant 6 correlated museums with the preservation of know-how as it is exhibited through performance in people’s skills as much as it is in material objects.

Discussions about such non-institutional museums led these participants to recall some examples of museums they had visited in Romania that might fit into this type. Participant 6 described vernacular museums as an extension of the kind of history/ethnography hybrid that allowed visitors to connect to place that “get(s) the whole thing done in one local museum:”

I think it’s certainly a way – if you’re going to history museums and ethnographic museums. The Brukenthal⁴³ is just a rich man buying paintings, but if you go to [ethnographic or vernacular museums], it has the history of the place . . . Every time I go to the museum in Miercurea Ciuc, I just listen to the old man’s accent . . . yeah, you’ve got the history and the ethnography of the place in one building . . . you can kind of get the whole thing done in one local museum. (Participant 6 Interview, 21 June 2018)

This demonstrates how vernacular museums reconnect tangible and intangible knowledge, as objects and know-how as part of the things collected and as emblematic of place. For Participant 6, this museum’s effect is enhanced as he listens to a local man’s accent. As someone learning the Romanian language, this participant’s interest attuned his knowledge world to the sound of the language and enunciation as much as the meaning of the words. The vernacular museum describes how these spaces become encompassing settings for sensory learning in which this visitor’s personal knowledge interests created a connection with another through an embodied museum and activity of listening.

⁴³ The Brukenthal National Museum, Sibiu, Romania: http://www.brukenthalmuseum.ro/index_en.html

For Participant 6, museums that provided opportunities to engage with know-how also provided a contrast to his own contemporary daily-life experiences:

The reason (open-air and ethnography museums) are so nice to me is because I think the poison of contemporary life is that everything is made of plastic, no one knows how to make anything. And as a kid I watched my dad and uncle take a pile of dirt and make a house out of it. I just think that has inherent value and, yeah, finding out how people made cheese, how people ground up their grain, did their weaving . . . (Participant 6 Interview, 21 June 2018)

To which Participant 7 added: “Yeah, the weaving. I loved seeing all the carved wood gates and everything – they’re so beautiful. It’s just beautiful. Hand-made.” (Participant 7 Interview, 21 June 2018). The perspectives of these two participants show how these museum encounters revealed deficiencies in their own knowledge worlds in different ways. Participant 6 perceived artisanal practices as being overshadowed by industrial production, evidenced through the prevalence of plastics that are not usually visible in vernacular museums. For Participant 7, the aesthetic qualities of objects stood out because of their being hand-made.

I asked what made a museum visit memorable and worth mentioning as a part of their list and they noted how the museum helped them feel a connection to place: the city or village visited that was enhanced by the quality of what Participant 6 described as a “nice setup” (Participant 6 Interview, 21 June 2018). This, he explained, referred to a museum having, for instance “multiple, very well-preserved seed grinding tools and seed grinding machines and everything from gigantic ones that were whole chunks of trees [to those] that were little hand cranks. Yeah – a very wide array, multiple exemplars of various kinds of machines, well-preserved” (Participant 6 Interview, 21 June 2018). In other words, being able to see objects lined up by type was an enhancement this visitor had come to rely on to round out his knowledge experiences in the museum. This kind of display foregrounded

objects that might describe all the ways a task was performed and/or how it evolved over time.

The recollections of Participants 6 and 7 positions them as visitors actively navigating the insider/outsider boundary as sound of language in ways that show how vernacular museums became a category for them that related to what they saw in ethnographic (institutional) museums but that they experienced in different ways in the smaller, more intimate settings of vernacular museums. Know-how framed the encounters through which these visitors described vernacular museums as active spaces, “museums of methodology” (Participant 6 Interview, 21 June 2018) that stored intangible knowledge of craft and making that would be lost without use. These embodied experiences had the effect of revealing self-identified deficiencies in the knowledge worlds of these visitors that connected with their desire for experiencing know-how, of knowing through gestures that contrasted with those they employed in their own ways of life.

Where know-how describes generalized knowledge about ways of making that can be presented in vernacular museums, another participant focused more on how she connected to the distinctive knowledge of makers and their families within these spaces, discussed next.

7.3.5. Distinctive knowledge

Participant 8 is my American research colleague who visited Romania on six short-term fieldwork visits between 2008-2015 (four of these visits were together with me). She now lives in Chicago. She considers herself “a museum person” (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018) and indicated that she visits institutional museums frequently, though she did not correlate this description with any number of visits. Participant 8 has also visited at least five vernacular museums in Romania, although her primary research focus was different

from mine. I began by asking her what she remembered about our shared museum visits beginning with our first one together in 2011.⁴⁴ She responded:

I just remember different themed rooms. And I went back and looked at my pictures and I must have taken pictures of the [rooms] that really stuck out to me, that I was really impressed with. But another thing I noticed when I was looking at those pictures was, you know, there were different historical pieces but there were also kind of knickknacks and . . . family pictures or family objects mixed in . . . with those historical pieces, too. So that's what I remember. (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018).

What stood out for Participant 8 as notable moments captured in her own photographs were the inclusion of family or personal objects with what she perceived as distinct from historical objects that she expected to find in a museum setting. Participant 8 did not share other impressions about the pictures of the rooms that she took at this first museum. She did, however, describe this mixing of the personal and historical objects as interjecting within the museum a distinct sense of the maker's personality and flair:

You really get a flair for the personality of the people but it's almost like you go and you meet their family, you create relationships with these people on a personal level. I think every (vernacular) museum that we went to we had conversations that went beyond showing us what they had at the museum . . . I mean, bringing out the *pălincă*, making sure they walk you to the end of the driveway, that sort of thing. (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018)

Showing the museum's objects, it seems, creates a reason for visitors, maker and family members or friends to come together, a reason for a relationship that extended from the maker's personality, emblematic of his or her character and unique perspective but also extending through the curiosity of friends and family who participate in the museum visit. For Participant 8, "flair" also captured "What [museum makers have] added to their collections – you know little porcelain dogs on the table, or Polaroids of family members. So, thrown in with all of the historical pieces, there's also kind of little things they think are

⁴⁴ This is the same museum visit described in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.1.

important to add in” (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018). The inclusion of personal objects across the taxonomies of defined historical orders of notable things indicates their importance and relevance to the maker’s knowledge world. Friends and family members were also compelled to inject their own distinct perspectives into the museum experience. Participant 8 recalled how during several museum visits, “When other family members would come around – you know, they would give their two cents with wherever we were in the tour at that point. ‘Oh, I have this fun fact to add,’ or that sort of thing” (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018). This blending of the personal context (family, home, relationships) and historical for this visitor foregrounded the distinctiveness of the maker’s knowledge world when the museum visit shifted between the activities of showing the museum and having a conversation. This created a feeling of connection between this visitor and the people she met during her visits.

For Participant 8, the perception of the museum visit as an integrated experience combining the museum performance, the hospitality and ceremony of a family visit and the welcoming nature and curiosity of the museum makers and their family and friends as hosts. Participant 8 thought that institutional museums:

Do create exhibits that try to create a more personal flair whether they have different articles or graphics that are explaining other human experiences, or they might have some self-reflecting questions as part of the exhibit that try to make it more personal. But I think they are lacking that one-on-one level. The person-to-person level.” (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018).

This echoes the sense of museum makers as authors (Mihalache, 2009a) not just of their museums but of the overall museum experience in a way that this visitor believes cannot be replicated in institutional museums. The presence of the personal maker as creator of his or her vernacular museum facilitates this feeling of direct connection between an individual maker and visitor.

Participant 8's focus on the person-to-person connections that vernacular museums foster was also reflected in how her photographing habits changed across the years as she visited additional vernacular museums, becoming more people- as opposed to object-focused:

So, I also noticed throughout the years that my picture taking dwindled as I visited museums and I remembered pictures through the people. I took pictures of the people, I didn't take pictures of the actual museum . . . So, I think that's what was important to me, what I got out of it, creating relationships with those people. (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018)

Participant 8 remembered this shift happening during the museum visit recounted in Section 7.3.1.2. where she and her colleagues unexpectedly came across a vernacular museum indicated by a homemade sign posted by the maker along the roadside. Participant 8 explained what was remarkable for her about this visit:

I started taking pictures of the people that were there. I don't even think I took a picture of the person who was showing the museum, but I took a picture of his wife. And there's an older gentleman who's sitting in the back. Another thing I remember, I really interacted with the animals. (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018)

Participant 8's description of how her focus shifted towards photographing people and animals and away from photographing the museum's objects and displays reflects a change in how she documented the interactions that were most meaningful to her, though she was unable to express a concrete reason for her fascination with animals:

I don't know – [it's] not from growing up in a rural area, but that's just, you know, I'm at a museum and I'm able to you know pet some sheep, pet a cat and the interesting thing is – I don't know if [the maker and his family are] even phased by us being there. I wonder if they think that it's strange that we're excited about [interacting with the animals]?" (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018).

The presence of animals added an additional dimension of novelty to the vernacular museum visit that already existed outside the realm of this visitor's everyday experiences. The intimacy of these encounters reveals how cultural boundaries become visible and malleable in the vernacular museum as a space of cross-cultural exchange. Participant 8's

experience stresses how the makers of vernacular museums act as a nexus of connections (Klimaszewski, 2018) between material objects and arrangements that includes the entire situated experiences of other living beings such as friends, family and animals. These assemblages become a medium for exchange within the museum-as-performance that is punctuated by the experience of being in-the-moment where attention is often shifted by serendipitous distracted actions.

This visitor also saw her vernacular museum visits as contrasting with her time in the field as a researcher, where she focused on studying other cultural phenomena: “But I think just at that time I was there [in Romania] focused on my research and I was like, well, this [museum visit] is . . . my fun activity, so I don’t have to take notes, I can just let it sink in.” (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018). These visits also held for her an escapist quality, providing a break from her more involved role as researcher observing and engaging with research participants in other venues that required her to take notes. She saw vernacular museums as a place to just be, a fun activity during which she engaged in lively and novel exchanges with people and interacted with animals that contrasted for her with the kinds of topics she would discuss with her research participants. Participant 8’s expectations about how she should behave within these museum spaces seemed to carry over from life, as when she stated:

Well, even though the museums are sometimes in a completely different structure than where the person actually lives, I always still felt like I was entering their home . . . I mean, I felt like, you know, sometimes walking through some of them, I needed to take off my shoes – the stuff is old, the stuff is important, I don’t want to touch anything – I’m walking through someone’s home” (Participant 8 Interview, 7 August 2018).

In other words, she immersed herself in the protocol of experiencing this type of museum.

7.3.6. Important knowledge

Section 7.3.6 provides an account of one Romanian family's vernacular museum encounter. This interview was brief. The Romanian family we encountered visiting the museum at Hațeg (introduced in Section 7.3.2.2) had driven from their home in Ploiești, an approximately six-hour drive from the museum at Hațeg as part of a family vacation. The father explained that the impetus for their trip was that their daughter would be "leaving Romania, the place where she is from" to attend college in the Netherlands at the end of the summer (Participant 3 Interview, 13 June 2018). Before his daughter left, the father told us, he and his wife wanted to explore the Transylvania region of Romania together with her because, as the father explained, and the mother emphatically agreed, they are "afraid [our daughter] will lose her roots" (Participant 3 Interview, 13 June 2018).

Family vacation is a kind of ritual that emphasizes the shared/bonding experience of travel. The father explained that they were "visiting the important places in Romania" (Participant 3 Interview, 13 June 2018). They came to this region because, as the mother described: "traditions and customs are still here" (Participant 4 Interview, 13 June 2018) which implies that she did not perceive such customs to be as present within the area where she lived. The father emphasized that it was most important for his daughter to see and experience this evidence of Romania's history and tradition directly: "This cannot be done through the Internet. You need to see things in person." (Participant 3 Interview, 13 June 2018). In other words, this family came to a place they perceived as having tradition and customs that they could not encounter or experience in the same way at home. These traditions and customs were further situated with historically and culturally important sites and cities located in Transylvania. Coming to experience "important" Romanian sites through a shared travel experience for this family also marked an important milestone in

their daughter's life, as she prepared to move to another country, distancing her from home and its commensurate knowledge world.

However, what was interesting from this exchange is that the college-aged daughter was quiet with us about her experiences visiting the historical sites as well as the vernacular museum.⁴⁵ Instead, she seemed the most excited about their plans to visit a newer attraction, *Castelul de Lut Valea Zânelor* (Clay Castle of the Valley of the Faeries⁴⁶), a house fashioned after the house in the *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* Disney story she found while searching online. The daughter went as far as pulling up the Facebook page for this attraction on her cell phone to show it to us as a place that she stated we should visit ourselves. It seemed that the imaginative and unreal nature of the Valley of the Faeries as a relatively new Romanian attraction was more remarkable for this daughter to share with us as an “important” site unique to Romania. This exchange also suggests that vernacular museums are also becoming linked in wider travel itineraries that include newly built sites popularized on social media.

Traveling away from home provided opportunities for this family to connect to different aspects of Romania-as-place that contrasted with their home region. The shared experience of a family vacation also allowed them to bond with each other through the protocol of visiting historical and novel attractions. The vernacular museum found a “way in” to this shared experience because it aligned itself with other tourist sites (Section 7.3.1.2.1). The next section presents the conclusions gleaned from across these interviews.

⁴⁵ The presence of her parents likely also limited her openness with us, a phenomenon I have experienced during other interviews.

⁴⁶ Known in English as the Clay Castle Hotel: <https://www.facebook.com/casteluldelut/>

7.3.7. Interviews conclusions

Sections 7.3.2.- 7.3.5. have focused on the experiences of travelers who were visiting vernacular museums constructed through itineraries that took them relatively far from home on a vacation or that had displaced them from home for a time as expats or researchers learning a language and/or engaging in fieldwork in another country. Vernacular museums in the context of travel experiences serve as a place away from visitor's personal, familiar knowledge worlds in a way that, to paraphrase Clifford (1997), made these visitors aware of what is missing from these familiar worlds and the differences from their everyday lives. From this perspective, vernacular museum visits as they were experienced by these research participants revealed how knowledge for these participants arose serendipitously through their travel experiences as well as through interactions with museum makers emblematic of entrepreneurial spirit, know-how and distinctive knowledge. The vernacular museum experiences reported here made an impression on this set of visitors that felt unexpected. Museum encounters were distinct in how they emphasized a liveliness of experience, expressed in phrases describing the museums as "living cultural snippets" that allowed visitors to "get a flavor" of place and as "museums of methodology" that foregrounded activities of making. Each maker's hospitality fostered a personal connection with visitors which was perceived as an aspect of vernacular museum experience that institutional museums could not replicate.

Section 7.3.6 provided a contrasting experience of a Romanian family who had traveled within their home country to see "important Romanian sites" as part of a family vacation. This family also expected to encounter customs and traditions they perceived as being more prevalent in this different region of Romania. As a complement to these in-person experiences, the next section presents the experiences and recorded impressions of

relative cultural insiders (Romanians and ethnic Hungarians) who have traveled within their home country.

7.4. Findings: Guestbook comments

This section describes visitor impressions of vernacular museum inscribed in guestbooks (Appendix S). These comments are understood here as the excess of memory (Crane, 1997) representative of visitors' existing perceptions of the role and function of museums through which visitors refract or reflect upon their current museum experience (Chapter 4, Section 4.1.1.5 and Section 7.1.2). This section analyzes the comments made in Romanian [86] and Hungarian [11] and because many of these visitors indicated they had traveled from within Romania or from Hungary⁴⁷ based on information contained within their guestbook entries. Analysis of these guestbook comments revealed that individual comments tended to include at least one if not all three of the following themes. First, visitors recognized and thanked the museum maker for their generosity as hosts and for their work making the museum. Second, visitors noted affective impressions related to experiences of time evoked during their visit. And third, visitors expressed a connection to identity also expressed as a recognition of tradition, customs and/or ways of life related to place. These themes are conceptualized and discussed in the following sections as: 7.4.1) acknowledging the labor of the museum; 7.4.2) engaging with temporality; and 7.4.3) connecting to identity. Section 7.4.4 summarizes the conclusions drawn from this analysis.

⁴⁷ Comments in Hungarian from the MUS_01 guestbook were included to capture impressions related to Romania's ethnic Hungarian minority at the museum at Galoşpetreu. It is possible that some of these visitors travelled from Hungary as well as from within Romania. However, because of the historically contested nature of Transylvania as a region for this minority group, I considered all of the comments in Hungarian as part of this analysis.

7.4.1. Acknowledging the labor of the museum

The labor of the museum describes the recognition by visitors of the efforts involved in making vernacular museums and hosting perceived by guests as impacting their visit in positive ways. Forty-one comments (Appendix T) were classified in this category, where comments read as expressions of appreciation in which visitors did some combination of: thanking the maker for his/her hospitality; recognizing the labor required to make and present the museum; acknowledging the maker's passion in creating the museum; and/or complementing the museum's appearance and overall effects. Examples of thanking the maker for their hospitality include comments such as: "Thank you for the visit and for (our) being able to visit the village museum" (MUS_01 Guestbook Comment, 2016) and "We thank you for your hospitality and for the fact that you've done such a great amount of work to start a museum in the area of Hațeg" (MUS_06 Guestbook Comment, 2010). These quotes demonstrate visitor appreciation for being welcomed by the museum maker while also showing that visitors accept these spaces as museums.

The maker's labor in creating their museum was also recognized in such quotes as, "We thank you for putting together this interesting collection . . . we wish you good health and strength in your self-sacrificing labor" (MUS_01 Guestbook Comment, 2017) and "Impressing, intensive (titanic) work" (MUS_04 Guestbook Comments, 2017). The use of the term "self-sacrificing" in the first quote shows an understanding for this visitor of the role collecting towards a greater (though unstated) good. The latter quote describing "intensive" or "titanic" work expresses an understanding of the scope and scale of labor required what it takes to create this kind of museum, where "impressive" captures the impact of this labor for this visitor. Visitors also recognized the passion of these makers, as in, "It would be good in these times that we live in if we would have more young people

with such beautiful passions . . . Congratulations to [the maker] . . . who finds time for such noble passion. We left beautifully impressed” (MUS_04 Guestbook comment, 2018). This visitor’s comment describing “beautiful” and “noble passion” communicates a recognition of the affective labors involved in creating a museum. Additional quotes from guests who describe their museum visits as “very beautiful and worthwhile” (MUS_01 Guestbook Comment, 2016) and as a “marvelous and special experience” (MUS_01 Guestbook Comment, 2018) that created “joy and enlightenment” (MUS_04 Guestbook Comment, 2018) within the visitor further capture the perceived aesthetic and intrinsic value of these museum visits.

But these museum experiences were also felt as distinct from visits to other museums. One visitor commented, “I saw more beautiful things that I could not see anywhere else. In other museums I don’t see these wonderful things” (MUS_06 Guestbook Comment, 2010). This suggests that vernacular museums have different effects for visitors because of both the quantity and kind of objects that would not be present within other museums. Yet another visitor stated, “Laudable initiative with extraordinary efforts . . . what a shame that it is not understood as such and supported by the officials. Thank you for offering the occasion to see ignored, forgotten objects” (MUS_06 Guestbook Comment, 2009). This quote, in its description of “extraordinary efforts” of the maker that “are not supported by officials” also conveys an awareness by this visitor of the challenges facing vernacular museums makers at the same time it reveals the perception that this museum visit made it possible to “see ignored, forgotten objects.” This statement conveys how vernacular museum complement the work of institutional museums as spaces that can feature a different class of objects, those not “important” enough to be collected for preservation purposes but still perceived as worth seeing.

As a group, these quotes express an understanding by visitors of the different kinds of labor involved in making and presenting this kind of museum. These quotes also demonstrate how vernacular museums impress visitors both as contiguous with their ideas of what counts as a museum while at the same time stand out to visitors as a distinct kind of museum experience.

Another visitor described the Hațeg museum as having “an impressive atmosphere” (MUS_06 guestbook comment, 7 July 2010). It is within this ambience that visitors perceive different relationships to time, mainly the past, which are discussed next.

7.4.2. Engaging with temporality

Engaging with temporality describes the reflective and affective perceptions of time that the visitors conveyed about their vernacular museum visits. Thirty-two visitors included comments that referred to their visits to vernacular museums as “time travel” or referenced the opportunity to “engage with the past” (Appendix U). For instance, one visitor wrote: “Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for a travel in time which filled our souls with happiness and made us nostalgic for a past more beautiful time – a time before time” (MUS_06 Guestbook Comment, 2018). Other visitors expressed how, “We came [to the museum at Hațeg] with an open heart, we went back in time, we observed, and we wondered [were in awe]. We wish that for our future visits we will be even more impressed. Thank you . . .” (MUS_04 Guestbook Comment, 2018). In return, their travel “back in time” provided an opportunity for observation and awe, echoing the resonance and wonder (Greenblatt, 1991) experienced by visitors to other kinds of museums. Further, they expected that during future visits, their experiences could be even more emotionally charged. By suggesting that they will return to visit in the future, the latter quote also suggests an expectation of these visitors for the longevity and future of this museum. Another visitor expressed how, “Here

with your help, sir, I felt I'm reliving the past. Thank you for the story.” (MUS_01 Guestbook Comment, 2018). For this visitor, that the museum maker sustained the past in a way that fostered a feeling of reminiscence that was enhanced by the maker's accompanying narrative.

These comments in which visitors expressed how they engaged with time illustrate how vernacular museums create affective engagements with temporality whereby visitors to these museums step out of their ordinary life trajectories and reconsider the meaning of the past and their relationship to it. These expressions of shifting proximities to the past did not appear to be destabilizing for these visitors. In contrast, the affective dimensions related to a longing for or awe and wonder about or a revisiting of the past that describes a formative experience in the knowledge worlds of these visitors.

Connecting to identity is another common component of vernacular museum experience discussed in the next section.

7.4.3. Connecting to identity

Connecting to identity describes a group of twenty-four guestbook comments (Appendix V) that express how museum visitors relate their museum experiences with aspects of their identity related to place, to customs and traditions, and to memories of ancestors. One visitor expressed her museum impressions this way: “Places like this remind you as a Romanian where you left from and make you meditate about the direction you're headed in. Thank you very much for receiving us so kindly” (MUS_06 guestbook comment, 22 June 2015). Another visitor expressed how, “The museum awakened unique memories, ideas and feelings that one does not come across very often . . . I hope with all my heart that other people discover the [lives and living habits of] of the inhabitants of Transylvania” (MUS_06 Guestbook Comment, 2015). This comment emphasizes how, for some visitors,

vernacular museums conveyed a feeling of emplacement perceived as happening for them less frequently. Identity was also referenced directly, as in, “Thank you for this walk in the past and through the identity of the people on these lands.” (MUS_06 Guestbook Comment, 2015). For this visitor the museum visit was “a walk in the past” that also registered a recognition of people who had lived in the region previously. Recalling the way of life of a group also figured in to this experience, where visitors at each museum commented: “We wish the Doctor and his family further blessings and strength for the work that they have done for the honor of our people” (MUS_01 Guestbook Comment, 2016); “We wish for [this museum maker] . . . to take forward and preserve for the future the customs and traditions of our people. We are Romanians.” (MUS_04 Guestbook Comment, 2017) and “Thank you for preserving the Romanian traditions. You’re a true patriot” (MUS_06 Guestbook Comment, 2018). These three quotes all mention the ties between preservation of shared customs and traditions and acknowledge the role of these museum makers in maintaining these shared aspects of identity.

Identity was also expressed as encounters with “ancestors.” One visitor stated, “We thank you kindly for this experience that we could spend a few minutes flying back into the past and . . . recreate the way our ancestors lived” (MUS_01 Guestbook Comment, 2017). This statement evokes a museum encounter that “recreates” or recalls a past way of life. Another visitor commented, “We thank you very much for the opportunity to go back into our grandparents’ rooms” (MUS_01 guestbook comment, 2018) and another, “I felt as if I was at my grandmother’s house in my childhood. Beautiful memories came to mind . . .” (MUS_01 Guestbook Comment, 2018). The recreation of the spaces of the past connected with the felt connection to grandparents and ancestors expressed here emerged through the ambience created by the tour through the ordered space of the museum. These expressed

connections to place, ways of life and ancestors illustrate how vernacular museum spaces evoke affective memories that call on visitor's personal connections to the past. These comments show how vernacular museums can be experienced as active, affectively charged spaces that resonate with aspects of visitor identity through displays that evoke customs, traditions and ways of life of a group relating to place.

7.4.4. Guestbook comments conclusions

The preceding sections (7.4.1-7.4.3) have discussed how visitors acknowledge the labor of museum-making, how they engaged with temporality and how they connected with identity as expressed in museum guestbook comments. Expressive of the excess of memory these visitors bring with them to vernacular museums, these comments also illustrate how these visitors relate their museum experiences to visits to other museums. Visitors seemed to accept the designation of these spaces as museums and recognized the amount of labor that went into creating and maintaining them. In some cases, comments demonstrated how vernacular museums impress visitors both as contiguous with their ideas of what counts as a museum while at the same time stand out to visitors as a distinct kind of museum experience.

The comments in which visitors expressed how they engaged with time illustrate how vernacular museums create affective engagements with temporality whereby visitors to these museums step out of their ordinary life trajectories and reconsider the meaning of the past and their relationship to it. These expressions of shifting proximities to the past seemed to be a stabilizing factor for these visitors. The affective dimensions related to a longing for revisiting the past that describes a formative experience in the knowledge worlds of these visitors. Further, these expressed connections to place, ways of life and ancestors illustrate how vernacular museum spaces evoke affective memories that call on a visitor's personal

connection to the past. These comments show how vernacular museums can be experienced as active, affectively charged spaces that resonate with aspects of visitor identity through displays that evoke customs, traditions and ways of life of a group relating to place.

This selection of comments also emphasizes how the maker's shared narratives and the museum as an atmospheric space work together to sustain the past in a way that resonates with visitors. This overlapping of tangible/material museum assemblages and intangible/embodied stories integrates with the visitor's personal knowledge world to produce an experience of the past that feels alive to many of them. Each museum embodies a narrative that becomes an ongoing story that sustains the past, continually re-presenting the past within their museums in which the maker is revealed as essential to this process. In this way, vernacular museums sustain the past through active presentations enacted in a way that resonates with visitor's understandings of museums, temporality and identity.

However, guestbook comments only capture the impressions of in-person visitors to these museums and can only be viewed in the space of the museum itself. Facebook reviews for one museum (MUS_04) are discussed next.

7.5. Findings: Facebook reviews

The Facebook reviews (Appendix W) for the museum at Iaz (MUS_04) reveal visitor impressions of this museum gleaned through in-person visits and impressions formed from the museum's Facebook social media presence. These comments echo the themes found in the written guestbook comments (Section 7.4). Arguably the most notable difference is that social media allows people who have not yet visited the museum in person to follow the museum maker's work and to share their intention to visit. Exemplary quotes include, "What you do there is absolutely extraordinary because it comes from the heart. Congratulations for having the courage of having invested in your passion. It's on my list of future places to go"

(MUS_04 Facebook Review, 11 October 2017) and “. . . everything is special . . . can’t wait to visit . . . [this maker] is our true born woman from Salaj – she’s the pride of Transylvania” (MUS_04 Facebook Review, 14 April 2017). These quotes demonstrate how the affective dimensions of museum-making expressed as “passion” and coming “from the heart” also seem to serve as an impetus for these two reviewers to express their desire to visit the museum. This demonstrates how this vernacular museum can also draw visitors by connecting, as in the guestbook comments, to aesthetic and affective dimensions related to national and regional identity. This one example also shows how these museums can extend beyond their local communities to foster and maintain connections with visitors as well as cultivating potential visitors and even engaging those who are not able to visit in person, potentially extending the reach of these museums.

7.6. Conclusions

Visitors connected their vernacular museum visits in ways that reflect their own internal logic of the museum visit and in relation to the “excess of memory” about museums, place and the past contained within their personal knowledge worlds. One consistency across the interviews was in how visitors tended to reflect on their vernacular museum visits as whole or complete experiences that related to their extended travel itineraries. This was evidenced mainly by one of the first questions I tended to ask visitors: to tell me about their vernacular museum visits. In each instance, visitors began by producing a list of the vernacular museums they visited often in the context of other museums and tourism sites they visited. Participants 1 and 2, for instance, provided me with a copy of their itinerary and a link to their trip pictures via email in advance of the interview; they also began the interview by referencing the printed itinerary. Participants 3-5 explained that they had come to the vernacular museum because they were visiting “the important places in

Romania” (Participant 3 Interview, 13 June 2018) and then listed several well-known historical sites in the region. Similarly, after our collective vernacular museum visit, Participants 6 and 7 started by listing all the museums they had visited on their most recent trip, to consider which of those might also be considered vernacular museums after I had introduced them to that term. This tendency to list shows how vernacular museums become ordered within wider knowledge contexts related to list making as a practical activity of cataloging and conveying experience. In these cases, the list becomes a way of ordering knowledge as it emerged from activities of visiting an itinerary of sites curated to create a desired travel outcome.

It was also rare for visitors to recall or describe in detail specific objects or arrangements of objects even when we were looking at photographs of museums together. Instead, accounts conveyed to me verbally tended to focus on the overall impression of the museum and recalling rich sensory experiences: Participants 1 and 2 remembered, for example, sitting outside on one vernacular museum’s verandah with their host, eating grapes picked off the vine. Participant 8 recalled her “person-to-person” connections with people, including friends and family of the museum maker and the experience of being able to interact with animals at one site. After reviewing her images from visits to five vernacular museums over four years, Participant 8 observed that she had, in fact, stopped taking pictures of museum objects after her first visit and instead focused on capturing images of the museum makers, their friends and family and even animals on the properties. Participant 6, an American expat who is interested in learning languages, remembered at one site “listening to [the museum maker’s] accent” (Participant 6 Interview, 21 June 2018). I originally thought this lack of recall might be due to the length of time between the museum visit and the interview. However, even when interviewing the Romanian family immediately

after their museum visit, they did not point to a specific object or area of the museum but seemed to connect their vernacular museum experience to the more authentic tradition and customs reified through tourism marketing, which ultimately fit with their goal of fostering a connection to Romania and bonding with their daughter, who would be moving abroad. This Romanian family's focus, as were those of the other research participants interviewed, was on how this museum experience related to their overall travel experiences. Collectively, this suggests that one strength of vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making for visitors is in how they create desired experiences through which travel knowledge and desired outcomes are viscerally formed and informed.

People are brought together within vernacular museum spaces who might not otherwise have a chance to meet: American tourists and researchers and urban Romanian families comingle with museum makers as these interactions are encouraged by and through the museum form. In vernacular museums as systems for knowing, cultural categories are negotiated on the person-to-person level. Visitors bring the unique perspectives that comprise their knowledge worlds and, working with the museum maker and his or her family members and friends, all work together to establish and transform the boundaries that form around understandings of people in a particular place. Within vernacular museums an intimacy of knowledge can be constituted around the ways of knowing of the maker who expresses their own ideas of identity through the performance of the museum that includes a level of ceremonial hospitality in which the maker and his or her family seem to take pride and which resonated with a number of the in-person visitors and was captured in the guestbook comments and Facebook reviews.

Visitor impressions expressed in guestbook comments and Facebook reviews illustrate how vernacular museums are perceived as affective spaces through which visitors

can reconnect to the past. Makers further enliven these spaces through their labor, acting as host and guide, connecting with visitors through their stories. Vernacular museums also mediate visitor relationships to time, expressed as “traveling back in time,” “reliving the past” or even “meditating on the future.” As an experience, the vernacular museum makes different aspects of the past accessible for visitors through which they can remember and refigure through their bodies. The reproduction of the past appears meaningful for these visitors based on their comments as details about the past are recalled within these visitors’ knowledge worlds.

Vernacular museums become a “way in” to knowledge as they provide a reason for people to stop along their travel itineraries. This exchange is made possible in part because of the institutional form of museum that these makers adopt to present their collections that is recognized by visitors. The next chapter seeks to understand how the processes of institutional legitimation happening around vernacular museums have worked to establish and maintain these emergent institutions.

CHAPTER 8: CONTEXTS OF LEGITIMATION FOR ROMANIAN VERNACULAR MUSEUMS

This chapter discusses vernacular museums as a new institutional form and as grassroots expressions of cultural “heritage” in support of RO4, which is to understand vernacular museums within contexts of legitimation of Romanian “heritage” through which they are emerging as a new institutional form. The activities of independent private makers who assemble and present their narratives of the home and vernacular spaces have been presented previously (Chapters 5 and 6). But it is also important to understand these emergent institutions through the institutional contexts of legitimation because of how these individual representations extend, refract and/or contrast with state-level symbolic heritage representations of the nation.

Vernacular museums are personal expressions of heritage that emerged in Romania in its EU preaccession, during the time the country was preparing for accession into the European Union in 2007. This preaccession period saw extensive changes to economic, political and social life as the country adopted the democratic economic, political and legal requirements for the state preparing for EU accession that would also provide access to cultural heritage funding programs. This included codifying and adopting inclusive and participatory approaches to culture and heritage expanding human rights and freedoms for individual citizens.⁴⁸ The inclusion of culture and emphasis on cultural diversity and understanding are in large part a response to large-scale destabilizing events of the twentieth century including WWI, WWII and the Cold War (see, for example, UNESCO, 2005). EU cultural policy documents delineate the ways that individual citizens are able to organize and

⁴⁸ Described in detail at the EU Commisison Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations website: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/conditions-membership_en

participate outside of official or established institutional realms within developing inclusive democratic frameworks. This chapter describes institutional legitimization of vernacular museums through two outcomes of the preaccession period: the development of 1) the *Colecții Sătești din România - 2008 – 2013* (Village Collections of Romania - 2008-2013, hereafter Village Collections Program or VCP); and 2) the association *Rețeaua Colecțiilor și Muzeelor Etnografice Sătești Particulare din România* (the Network of Ethnographic Collections and Private Village Museums in Romania, hereafter RECOMESPAR).

The chapter is presented in five sections. Section 8.1 describes how the theoretical frameworks related to institutional legitimization, culture and heritage (Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2) have been applied to the current analysis. Section 8.2 describes the documents and sources analyzed. Next, the findings of analysis are presented according to three curated themes that each foreground a different realm of legitimization for vernacular museums within the contexts of Romanian culture and heritage. Section 8.3 is entitled cultivating heritage and discusses the established institutional processes through which Muzeului Național al Țăranului Român (National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, hereafter MRP) experts legitimated this new heritage form as part of the Village Collections Programme (VCP). Section 8.4 is termed legislating culture and describes the wider contexts of cultural policy developments at Romanian state and EU levels in which the VCP emerged. Mobilizing heritage, Section 8.5, demonstrates how the creation of RECOMESPAR as an example of civil society positioned this set of vernacular museum makers and their museums as cultural actors and entities in their own right. In conclusion, Section 8.6 considers how the development of cultural policies at EU and state levels facilitated the creation of this association focused on a “new” form of grassroots cultural heritage.

8.1. Theoretical frameworks for analysis

Institutional legitimization of vernacular museums focuses on the expert development and application of museum practices and cultural legislation and policies that have been employed at institutional levels to incorporate vernacular museums and their makers as participants in the cultural heritage realm. As previously described (Chapter 4, section 4.1.2.3), Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006a) defines heritage as a process of transvaluation in which “habitus (unconscious culture)” becomes “heritage (self-conscious selection of valued practices)” (p. 40). This transvaluation becomes a process of repudiating other understandings and representations of the past, traditions and customs. Where the museum makers discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 have been described as creating heritage on the personal or grassroots level, from the bottom-up, legitimization here focuses on those top-down or expert institutional practices and processes that have been employed towards incorporating vernacular museums into the institutional consciousness as a known cultural form.

Building on findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6, institutional legitimization is investigated here by focusing on how the work of museum makers is being perceived and facilitated by established institutions (museums, cultural laws and policies) and through expert practices. As the national-level museum spearheading the Village Collections Programme, the MRP capitalized on its institutional position to act as the key legitimator for the vernacular museum phenomenon through the access it had to state-level cultural funding made possible through changes in legislation and cultural policy related spurred by EU accession and membership. Policy mediates the ideals it codifies in documents towards the means to actualize these ideals: namely, monetary funding. In this way, policy acts like a transparent layer of connective tissue mediating existing and new cultural forms that it

enables, where the outcomes of cultural programs are foregrounded more so than the policies upon which such programs are based. Here, the focus is on how the VCP developed as a cultural program and vernacular museums as a cultural form that can be understood in relation to policies and legislation at the state and EU levels.

Understandings of culture and heritage and cultural policy have been presented to situate the criteria for document selection and subsequent analysis and are presented next.

8.2. Evidence

This chapter analyzes cultural policy and program documents related to the VCP (Section 8.2.1) as well as to cultural legislation at EU and Romanian state levels (Section 8.2.2). It also includes observations and feedback gleaned through interviews with MRP professionals and RECOMESPAR members (Section 8.2.3). Selection and analysis of documents and interviews/observations is presented below.

8.2.1. VCP program documents

VCP program documents include cultural program reports authored and published by the MRP. This includes three project reports (published online as blog entries), two monographs and two articles published in one dedicated journal issue produced by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant published between 2008-2012 and listed in Appendix E. Except for the introduction to the dedicated journal issue authored by MRP director Vintilă Mihăilescu, the rest of these reports were authored by MRP curator and VCP's leader Carmen Mihalache. Documents selected are those that report on the VCP program activities collectively. Analysis focuses on how the MRP researchers employed known institutional processes detailed in program reports, and how these institutional actors partnered with vernacular museum makers across localities and towards the goal of creating a national association of collectors and museum makers known as RECOMESPAR. This analysis

omits articles produced as part of the program that report on individual collectors and collections. Program reports were published in Romanian and have been translated into English.⁴⁹ The two journal articles were published in English. I refer to this group of documents collectively as the program documents or the program literature. Analysis (Section 8.3) focuses on how the cultural program as a legitimating form emerges as a way of cultivating heritage.

8.2.2. Romanian and EU policy documents

A selection of key Romanian and EU policy documents were identified to illustrate how culture was included in the legislation aimed at fostering diversity and social inclusion, listed in Appendix E. The EU Culture Programme 2007-2013 and related documents were used as a starting point because this cultural program ran concurrently with the VCP and some of the program's language was mirrored within VCP program documents. This document identified 1992 as the first time culture was included in the Articles of the EU Treaty that forms the constitutional basis for the European Union. The spirit if not the law of this EU Treaty were adopted by Romania as part of the accession process, a requirement of all EU candidate/member countries. Relevant Romanian state-level cultural policy documents produced or amended between 2003 and 2006, the period immediately preceding Romania's accession into the EU on January 1, 2007, were identified in the Cultural Policy Compendium (Chelcea et al., 2012). The analysis (Section 8.4) focuses on how culture was defined in this selection of legislative documents to encourage participation at individual and state levels, including how the strengthening of the civil society is enacted in the state-level documents that legislated culture by widening the participatory sphere towards democratic ideals.

⁴⁹ Translations were provided by Sebastian Priotese.

8.2.3. Interviews and observations

Although VCP participation and RECOMESPAR membership were not the major focus of interviews during fieldwork, most if not all museum makers mentioned their participation in RECOMESPAR during field site visits. The observations of these makers are presented anonymously in this analysis because they shed light on some of the challenges to institutional legitimation and on the shortcomings of cultural policy that are an important finding of this study. I also met with Carmen Mihalache, the MRP curator and researcher who led the VCP, in June 2018, and during our conversation she presented her own observations about the history as well as the current state of RECOMESPAR. Analysis of these interviews (Section 8.5) is discussed under the curated heading of mobilizing culture.

Whereas cultural policy documents at the EU level and Romanian-state level organize and document institutional priorities so that they can be acted upon, VCP program documents describe the activities used to achieve or mobilize those priorities. The RECOMESPAR association (*Rețeaua Colecțiilor și Muzeelor Etnografice Sătești Particulare din România* or the Network of Ethnographic Collections and Private Village Museums in Romania) is a visible and lasting outcome of the VCP. Taken together, these documents and interviews/observations show how culture and heritage can be mobilized towards democratic ends by individual citizens as well as institutional legitimators (MRP experts and Romanian state and EU cultural policy documents). The subsequent sections present the findings of analysis of the documentary sources and interviews, demonstrating vernacular museums as a case for investigating the legitimation of a new institutional form from two perspectives – within the VCP as a cultural program and from within the wider sphere of culture and heritage legislated and mobilized through civil society.

With these understandings in mind, the next section outlines how the Village Collections Programme worked as a process of cultivating heritage.

8.3. The Village Collections Programme as an example of cultivating heritage

The VCP was a multi-year cultural program that ran from 2008-2013 in which MRP researchers and curators, vernacular museum makers and wider audiences participated through a series of known institutional practices designed to confer legitimacy upon village collections. Within the program literature, it is important to note that vernacular museum makers were generally referred to as collectors and their museums as village collections. I employ this terminology here to align with the language of the VCP program documents, though terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Analysis of the program documents (listed in Appendix E) identified institutional activities comprising the standard professional practices of: fieldwork; inventorying; selection; training and workshops, exhibitions; conferences and roundtables; and publications. These legitimating institutional activities identified through analysis of the VCP program documents (Section 8.2.1) are subsequently described, concluding with a synthesis of these findings characterizing legitimization within the context of the VCP activities shaping them as a process of cultivating heritage.

8.3.1. Fieldwork

MRP professionals were engaged in an extensive amount of fieldwork in relation to their overall museum service that often includes research, exhibition curation, collections management, programming and community outreach.⁵⁰ Fieldwork was part of their routine collecting strategy, standard operating procedure for these ethnologists and museum professionals, and not limited to the current project. In the case of village collections, these in-person visits are arguably what led these curators and researchers to discover the

⁵⁰ See, for example, issues of *Martor: The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal* at: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/>

phenomenon in the first place. Carmen Mihalache provides a typical description of fieldwork:

The selected collections were studied by mixed teams comprising researchers and curators. They tried to outline the profile of the collection (the history of its making, the inventory of objects, their preservation condition, heritage value, the social history of objects, etc.) and of the collector (professional background, his motivation to make a collection and open it to the local public or to tourists, his status within the community, his relation with administrative, local or central institutions, etc.). The teams also considered the impact of these collections on the local community (the manner in which they influence the community's life from the point of view of cultural consumption and identity constructions, the way in which the community values the cultural initiative of a fellow citizen, the community's readiness for support and involvement in this project. (Mihalache, 2009a, pp. 124–125, 2012, pp. 12–13)

Therefore, their own research was directed towards the social ecology and legitimation within these communities. In the context of the VCP, research was carried out as a team effort of researchers and curators in the same institution that could reflect different perspectives on museum work. Their methods were organized and procedural, exemplifying standard ethnological approaches of their professional practice. The MRP experts began by characterizing these creations as “collections,” grounded in an institutional understanding as the starting point for inquiry to develop a concise description of the phenomenon. They also focused on the collectors, focusing not just on his or her relationship with the collection but also how or whether the collectors engaged with others in their community through their museums, whether were they an isolated phenomenon or embedded within the locality and the “impact of these collections on the local community.”

This process of fieldwork regularly brought the experts outside of the museum and into local realms to investigate this phenomenon through first-hand experience and observation, contextualizing their knowledge of these emergent museums. These in-person visits allowed them to connect with collectors, experience museum narratives and observe

these museums within the contexts of their communities. One outcome of fieldwork was the process of inventorying, discussed next.

8.3.2. Inventorying

Inventorying describes the documentation of village collections through the creation of lists, such as a national database, by MRP researchers and curators. At the early stages of the program, for instance, Mihalache (Mihalache, 2009a) described how: "the general objective of this program is first of all the monitoring of private local/regional ethnographic collections (in order to build a database) . . ." (p. 126). Inventorying is a standard procedure within folklore and within the production of heritage more generally. In the context of heritage production, listing has been described as: "the most visible, least costly, and most conventional way to 'do something'" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006b, p. 170). Village collections were included in the CIMEC Guide to Museums and Collections in Romania online database (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1) where they are listed alongside institutional Romanian museums. In this way, inventorying served a double purpose: 1) to gather and order village collections so that MRP experts can keep track of them; and 2) to include them in the official CIMEC database (thus establishing a connection between village collections and more established institutional museums. Inclusion in this database provides information about village collections in Romanian and English, making these emergent institutions as findable and visible as any official Romanian museums. Inventorying, then, becomes one way to fix these emergent institutions on an existing cultural map through inclusion in a database, an example of transforming fieldwork observations through the "technologies of surveying and recording" (B. Anderson, 2006, pp. 184–185).

While the goal of fieldwork and inventorying was to gather knowledge towards an understanding of these museums, museum experts also got to know the collectors and to

gauge their interest in and “willingness to become partners” (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 125) with the MRP in a wider/more intensive cultural program, as discussed in Section 8.3.3.

8.3.3. Selection

MRP experts described the selection process for the Village Collections Project: “Apart from the collection's scope and its intrinsic value or its capacity to represent the local community, the selection process also considered the owners' interest in developing and capitalising on the collection as well as their willingness to become partners of the museum in this approach” (Mihalache, 2009a, pp. 124–125, 2012, pp. 12–13). Because the MRP experts were identifying and understanding a locally embedded ensemble that included a collector, a collection and a local community, it was not enough for MRP professionals to simply choose village collections for inclusion in their cultural program. Selection became a cooperative process that ultimately required a willingness on the part of collectors to “become partners” as participants in the VCP who can “capitalize on their collections.” “Capitalise” suggests that makers possessed a willingness to actively engage in developing their collections practices through the guidance of the VCP program offerings in order for them to gain the advantages offered by this program.

The selection process for the VCP was ongoing over its five-year run, as MRP experts annually “continue(d) the identification, research and promotion of new collections” (Mihalache, 2011, p. Sect. 1). This quote suggests that the MRP researchers had come to recognize village collections as a recognizable type that, once surprising to encounter in the field, they now expected to discover them as a form in the field. Self-identification through a posted sign advertising a museum (as discussed in Chapter 7, Section 7.3.1) contributed to this process of selection-discovery. Because of this fieldwork, MRP experts were engaged in an educated searching, looking for recognizable marks of identity, including self-labeling of

museums or knowledge through word-of-mouth, that facilitated selection and development of criteria in their publications.

Within the museum context more generally, selection is described as an essential task of museum professionals as “the act that turns a piece of the natural world into an object/museum piece” (Pearce, 1994, p. 9). From this perspective, selection, like heritage, is a process that changes an object’s status and valued. Within the VCP, it was contingent upon each collector’s desire to participate in the program.

Once collectors indicated their willingness to participate, they were able to take part in educational opportunities such as trainings and workshops that took place during the cultural program.

8.3.4. Training and Workshops

Training and workshops were activities that brought village collectors and MRP professionals together to exchange knowledge about museum practices. These activities often took place at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest and, later in the program with other established institutions around the country. In 2009 and 2010, MRP experts, through the VCP, provided “the support of a training workshop that provided the collectors basic knowledge of cultural heritage, heritage legislation, preservation means, capitalization, promotion of collections and fundraising for cultural projects” (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 124, 2012, pp. 13–14). For participants, this translated into corresponding training sessions:

The collectors participated in a one-week training session at the MRP, benefitting from a workshop course made up of five modules: (Cultural heritage legislation: Museums and collections; The fundamentals of preservation; general museology; museum promotion and marketing; cultural projects funding) and visits to the museum's collections, laboratories and exhibition halls. (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 125)

The first principles of museum practice were translated into five distinct training sessions in which basic professional knowledge could be communicated to participants. However, this plan does not seem to consider whether or how these individual museum makers could actualize the knowledge shared through these training sessions. These are broad and extensive knowledge areas around which museum practices are constantly evolving and even in a best-case scenario, a formally trained museum professional could not master all of these knowledge areas. Therefore, what these translations of museal knowledge areas through training sessions represent is an application of relevant terminology to some of the activities with which that museum makers were already engaged on some level. In this way, these quotes convey a sense of fundamental knowledge areas that conform to “ICOM norms and objectives” as a “model of good practice” (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 129) – a means to connect the existing work of these collectors to established practices.

Training sessions included between eight and thirty total participants and took place on site at the MRP in Bucharest (Mihalache, 2009b, 2009a, 2011). Project participants developed and experienced knowledge within an institutional museum space, particularly those areas of storage and laboratories that are generally off-limits to the public (e.g. learning about museum’s storage, care and display of collections). This had the effect of reframing the original project by inserting, at least for training purposes, these independent and self-taught makers into the physical spaces of professional museum practice. However, the extent to which this kind of contact impacted the collectors is not specifically reported in these program reports.⁵¹

The more important aspect of these in-person, on-site training sessions has been that they provided collectors with a chance to meet each other. This was noted by some of the

⁵¹ During field visits in 2014, 2016 and 2018, several museum makers noted that they had attended these workshops, but observations about how helpful they found them were difficult for me to elicit from makers.

collectors during site visits and interviews. It is expressed in the VCP program literature: “The collectors deprived of consultancy on the management of some common problems became deeply aware of the lack of dialogue between people from different areas of the country who share the same interests” (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 126). Group trainings could also create an awareness among the collectors that others were undertaking similar cultural endeavors and facing similar problems across Romania. Working together at these in-person training exposed the collectors to new collections and new ideas, establishing dialogues between collectors and demonstrating that their knowledge was worth sharing. Gathering the collectors together within a professional museum to discuss their museum-making activities itself confers legitimacy upon their museums and collecting practices.

Some early VCP project participants eventually became experts in these workshops, with their museums acting as training sites for newer (and often younger) VCP project participants. In 2011, the VCP specifically recruited a different collector demographic in order to:

Provid(e) professional support to those who manage (village collections) by organizing a summer school for young collectors (for the 2011 training session, selecting young people aged 19-30 who have their own collections or come from a family of collectors and take on the cultural mission of their parents). At the 2011 summer school, the young collectors participated in an itinerant training/information/communication stage, consisting of a blitz-krieg interactive insertion into three representative collections in the country belonging to collectors involved in previous MNȚR projects. (Mihalache, 2011, sec. 1)

Participants in the 2011 training:

... came into contact with three success stories of private pro-patrimony initiatives and participated with the hosts in arranging new exhibition halls in the museums of Petroșani and Jina. The MNȚR partners in 2011 were the ASTRA Sibiu National Museum Complex, the Petroșani 2009 Association, the Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Culture Morina, Jina (Jina, Sibiu) and the collector Paul Buța (Șivița, Galați). (Mihalache, 2011, sec. 1)

Based on the findings from previous years, the focus on involvement of collectors aged 19-30 to carry on the mission was designed in part to fill a perceived problem: “(Village) collections are at risk of ending up in bad hands or even worse, vanishing, after their owners pass away. There are many collections and private village museums whose founders have died or are very old and cannot take care of the objects they’ve collected anymore” (Mihalache, 2012, p. 19). In other words, this initiative worked to train new collectors at the same time it attempted to encourage the preservation and longevity of existing collections by generating interest in this kind of museum-making in younger family members to carry on the collection because the unofficial status of these museums offered no legal protections for the collections beyond the family’s ability and/or desire to main the collection.

Training for the younger age group of museum makers followed the hands-on models in the previous training, seemingly more so in involving a generation of new collectors interactively in promoting their collections. The program did this by employing the knowledge and skills of an older generation of collectors who had been involved in previous VCP trainings. The novice participants worked in tandem with expert collectors, learning directly from these established village collectors through the creation of exhibitions at established regional sites as expert partners in the initiative. The partnerships between established and new village collectors and between village collectors and regional established institutional partners had the effect of legitimating not just the village collectors as the prime makers of this phenomenon but also legitimating the prior exchange effects of the program and the heritage by elevating previous trainees as collector/trainers in their own right. These trainings allowed expertise to flow between established and new collectors in a way that valorizes the experiences of established collectors, further elevating their knowledge as a new form of expertise. In addition, a collector’s participation in each of these trainings and

workshops was certified by an official printed certificate documenting their participation in the program. I observed these certificates displayed within several of the museums I visited in 2014, 2016 and 2018.

One element of the training included working in tandem with MRP experts and fellow collectors on the creation of group exhibitions, which are discussed next.

8.3.5. Exhibitions

In the context of the VCP, exhibitions were created in spaces outside of the collectors' dedicated museum spaces. The making of exhibitions was described as: "Trainee collectors from 2008 and 2009 benefitted from an exhibition in Bucharest, with representative objects and photos from their own collections, in order to promote private initiatives at the central/national level" (Mihalache, 2012, p. 14). This quote emphasizes how these exhibits were conceived to feature the village collections on a national cultural stage. The exhibition-making process is further described:

Guided by curators, [collectors] worked in parallel on the organization of a representative exhibition where they brought their own objects. Consisting of an installation of objects and photos, this exhibition was conceived as a 'training period' or rather as a workshop for collectors whose representative objects promoted their own collections and the initiatives of this kind and, indirectly, the initiatives taken by the communities apparently represented by such collections." (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 125)

MRP experts assisted collectors, with the two groups working side-by-side, to create an exhibition of the objects from and photographs of their collections that collectors themselves chose to showcase. Training followed a demonstrative method, through cooperative efforts, so that collectors learned by doing. In later years of the program, different approaches to exhibiting were employed:

Other exhibits were created in 2010 and 2011 in other locations "in several cities throughout the country . . . The exhibition was made with representative photographs from the 14 collections that we have studied in previous years and the objects of collectors from around the cities where exhibitions were held (Oradea,

Sibiu, Miercurea-Ciuc, Slatina in 2010; Constanța and Galați in 2011). The purpose of this exhibition was to raise the awareness of the local cultural and administrative institutions with regard to the specific cultural treasure which, although belonging to private collectors, can be an important boost to local development." (Mihalache, 2012, p. 14)

Taken collectively, these quotes emphasize that production of exhibitions in the context of the VCP was the result of the efforts and initiative of village collectors for a wider public: museum experts were available to assist but the choice of objects and photographs documenting their collections to be included in the exhibitions were selected by the village collectors. As described in Section 8.3.3, collectors selected the objects and identified other aspects of their collections to highlight. Once again, the making of the exhibition as a cultural form provided an opportunity for hands-on training, a collaborative approach to promoting these collections on a national stage towards the goal of disseminating knowledge about the collections beyond their local proximate areas.

Here, the promotion of collections through the expert form and national exhibit is closely tied to where the exhibition is held: within established national and regional cultural institutions. This suggests that the space of the exhibition itself also confers legitimacy at a national level. The exhibition is an outcome of a knowledge exchange between collectors and MRP experts working “in parallel” to create a presentation designed to be enjoyed by and to present the phenomenon to the general public. The initial exhibit *Heritage and local identity: Identifying and promoting a few village collections of Romania* was held at the MRP, capitalizing on its standing as a national-level institution and presenting the phenomenon on a national stage in Romania’s largest city, which itself is a form of legitimation and institutionalization. This conferred prestige on the collectors, involving them in the creation of exhibitions as an outcome designed introduce the phenomenon of village collections to

the general public (particularly one that is already familiar with and receptive to museum exhibitions at known cultural institutions).

Village collectors, experts and the general public also had exchanges around the subject of village collecting at roundtables and conferences hosted by the MRP, discussed next.

8.3.6. Roundtables and conferences

Roundtables and conferences are public events that provide an opportunity for interested members of the public to engage with these collectors directly and not only through the filter of experts. VCP program literature describes how:

In 2008, MNȚR also organized a roundtable with the attendance of the first eight collectors included in the project, the specialists in the field and the general public, the debates focusing on the private initiatives related to the local patrimony and the financing methods/development of small private ethnographic museums." (Mihalache, 2012, p. 14)

This event, held at the MRP and organized around the program theme of “Heritage and Local Identity” was described as “a debate meant to bring the results of research and the problem in question to the attention of specialists and of all people interested in them” (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 124). These kinds of events provide a participatory stage of mediated conversations because they are hosted by the MRP and presented through the frame of this institution’s conception of village collections. Such events are designed to spur dialogue about village collections, though the extent to which this happened is not elaborated on extensively in the VCP program literature. However, photographs of these events included in the program documents (listed in Appendix E) serve as evidence of attendance and proof that these events took place. Village collectors’ participation in these events further raises their standing by featuring them as speakers on this public stage. Elevating the status of these collectors also has the potential to implant the idea of collecting and creating one’s

own museum within individuals as a viable as opposed to irrational activity (Klimaszewski & Nyce, 2014; Mihăilescu, 2009).

Arguably, one important outcome of these promotional forms is their publication in printed volumes and on websites in order to circulate knowledge about these collections. They are discussed next.

8.3.7. Publishing

Throughout the five-year run of the VCP, the MRP produced a number of printed materials documenting the village collections, including the durable forms such as printed monographs as well as ephemera like brochures and exhibition posters. Their purpose was described as “documenting and promoting the researched collections” that included a publication (*Slaves to the Beautiful* in 2008) and six leaflets (a set of leaflets Museums and Village Collections in Romania - I in 2009) . . . (and) "a special issue of the journal *Martor* (14/2009)” (Mihalache, 2012, p. 14). The title for original publication *Slaves to the Beautiful* (*Robii Frumosului*) was used again in 2012 to create a monograph including extensive descriptions of the 24 RECOMESPAR member museums as well as an essay authored by Carmen Mihalache describing the outcomes of the VCP. The repeated use of *Slaves to the Beautiful* as a title captures the inevitability of this phenomenon as it was perceived by the MRP experts, expressing how these makers are driven by the beauty of objects to create museums in a way that still emphasizes collecting as an irrational activity. Further, the repeated use of the title at the beginning of the program in 2008 and again at the close of the program, in 2012, brings the cultural program full circle in a way that links to the program’s origins, demonstrates its growth through the program and creates a bibliographic trace for future researchers.

Many of these printed materials were also made available via the web: “. . . in order to increase their visibility and more intensely promote them, we've established a partnership with CIMEC, an institution that put the 2008 publication on its site (it can be consulted online)” (Mihalache, 2012, p. 14). I experienced the effects of this “increased visibility” directly. These published volumes and websites are the documents that allowed me to research the phenomenon. For instance, when I first inquired about the development of the phenomenon at the MRP, the director of the archives there provided me with a copy of the 2009 *Martor* issue and later with a PDF copy of the 2012 edition of *Slaves to the Beautiful*. All other documents were available either directly or through links I found on the RECOMESPAR and/or MRP websites. I was able to continually connect to and discover this phenomenon through consultations with the RECOMESPAR website.

Taken together, these quotes demonstrate how published volumes, whether physical or electronic, create a lasting and portable/displayable museified form that signals legitimacy of the phenomenon. Village collections are now captured and preserved in published monographs and journals through which knowledge about the phenomenon can be shared, both through reading the document itself but also through simply observing the book displayed in situ in the vernacular museums themselves. For instance, on display in several of the museums visited on this and other research trips, I observed copies of MRP publications featuring the museum maker on display in the vernacular museums themselves, often featured alongside the certificates these collectors received for participating in trainings and becoming RECOMESPAR members noted in Section 8.3.4. These displays of official certificates and documents within vernacular museum spaces further demonstrates how collectors sought to establish and institutionalize their creations.

The next section summarizes the activities described in Sections 8.3.1 – 8.3.7 and conceptualizes them as a process of cultivating heritage. This expert legitimization is relevant because recognition by an established national-level institution like the MRP enhances the legitimacy of vernacular museums.

8.3.8. Cultivating heritage summary

Analysis and coding of the seven categories of the above institutional activities (fieldwork; inventorying; selection; training and workshops; exhibitions; roundtables and conferences; and publishing) according to who is involved (MRP experts; collectors; wider audiences/publics) and the directionality of knowledge flows between participants as well as from/to and within/between expert and pragmatic knowledge realms, revealed four meta-activities that, taken together, are described here as a process of cultivating heritage. These categories include research, exchange, promotion and documentation and are described next.

8.3.8.1. Research

Research describes the activities of fieldwork (Section 8.3.1), inventorying (Section 8.3.2) and selection (Section 8.3.3) that MRP were experts engaged in to discover and learn more about vernacular museums and extending their knowledge of village collections towards the goal of partnering with collectors as part of the VPC as a cultural program. Embedded within European traditions of ethnology, research comprises the sub-categories of fieldwork and selection, activities focused on gathering and organizing the experts' knowledge about the emergent phenomenon as they discovered it while in the field, through encounters with the museum-makers themselves. Learning about the phenomenon first-hand through fieldwork and recording and codifying this knowledge through an inventory of sites allowed the MRP experts to engage with and identify collectors who were interested in becoming project partners in the VCP through repeated contact with them in the field. As

experts learned about the phenomenon in situ, they were also able to partner with museum makers who expressed a desire to be involved in the program. In this context, selection became a process of understanding arising between MRP experts and village collectors that was mutually dependent upon the self-identification of the site (the agency of the collector) and the recognition of this designation or labeling from the expert perspective. The MRP experts make sense of the emergent phenomenon from within the expert knowledge realm. This is visible in their use of specialized vocabulary to (re)position the vernacular museums phenomenon. The goal of the VCP is “in support of decentralizing heritage and cultural actions” and in revealing to “the importance of their cultural heritage and identity as a valuable and prestigious source within the context of European cultural diversity” (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 129). The outcomes of research are situated within these larger institutional frames of understanding.

These research processes, in turn, informed knowledge exchanges between MRP experts and village collectors, presented next.

8.3.8.2. Exchange

Exchange denotes the sharing of expertise and knowledge between MRP experts (expert realm) and VCP participants (pragmatic realm) through training and workshops (Section 8.3.4). Sharing is demonstrated through statements that describe how village collectors were: “Guided by curators, [collectors] worked in parallel on the organization of a representative exhibition where they brought their own objects” (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 125) and in how the creation of the exhibition was conceived as a “training period’ or rather a workshop” (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 125), suggesting that this was a lesson in knowing-through-doing. The exchange across expert and pragmatic realms as well as between project participants in the pragmatic realm illustrates how knowledge moves both within and

between these realms. Experts and collectors worked “in parallel” and hands-on to create exhibitions (Section 8.3.5) at the sites of established institutional partners that could then be presented to the public. The movement of knowledge between pragmatic and expert knowledge realms further developed and circulated as participants moved to create exhibitions in different areas of the country. At the completion of trainings, the makers’ professionalization was recognized through the presentation of official certificates of participation that I observed being displayed within the museums themselves, as a signal of legitimation symbolizing these knowledge exchanges. The outcome of this knowledge exchange were the promotional forms, discussed next.

8.3.8.3. Promotion

Promotion describes the ephemeral or time-bound activities the VCP employed to bring visibility to collections through the engagement of new audiences. These included exhibitions (Section 8.3.5), roundtables and conferences (Section 8.3.6) as events created to open the phenomenon to audiences beyond the exchanges described above that focused on sharing knowledge between collectors and museum experts. The creation of the exhibits by collectors and their presence at and participation in discussions at the roundtables and conferences created new knowledge openings between collectors and wider publics, effectively extending village collections beyond how they are known in smaller circles, such as among their local communities or between other collectors as participants in the phenomenon. One outcome of promotion is that knowledge about the phenomenon circulates more widely, potentially making the phenomenon more conspicuous and “ensuring better [their] visibility” (Mihalache, 2012, p. 15) of these collections on regional and national scales (to be discussed further in Section 8.4). From this perspective, promotional activities confer legitimacy in two ways: they describe and present different

aspects of village collections to a broader audience (attempting to place the phenomenon in the minds of these audiences by making it visible or recognizable to them); at the same time, the production of “official” events further confers legitimacy on the phenomenon because these events employ the known forms of exhibitions, conferences and roundtables.

8.3.8.4. Documentation

Documentation describes the activities that resulted in knowledge about vernacular museums being published (Section 8.3.7) in a museified form that can circulate both within and apart from the museums themselves. These include physical objects such as printed publications; brochures; certificates; program reports; as well as virtual documents such as websites, official lists, databases and printed volumes made available in electronic form (as forms of inventorying, Section 8.3.2). These documents comprise a recognizable museum publication genre and through that form establish legitimacy particularly when an assemblage of these documents is presented within the context of the museum visit that makes this aspect of the museum visit standardized and uniform. Displayed alongside the certificates of participation provided to VCP collectors and findable on the internet as research materials, these documents collectively create a lasting visibility that documents and preserves the VCP program outcomes indefinitely.

Table 8.1 summarizes the activities of cultivating heritage, including describing who or what is involved and the directional flows of knowledge happening within the activity. Conclusions about these findings are presented in the next section.

8.3.8.5. Cultivating heritage conclusions

The meta-activities of research, exchange, promotion and documentation describe the VCP’s overall approach as one of cultivating heritage (Guthrie, 2013, p. 6), a term I have chosen because of how it resonates with nurturing this emergent cultural forms and “all the

Table 8.1: Summary of the institutional activities as a process of cultivating heritage

	Research	Exchange	Promotion	Documentation
Institutional Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fieldwork • Inventorying • Selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training & workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibitions • Conferences & roundtables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications • Inventorying
Who/what is involved	MRP researchers/curator	MRP researchers, curators & museum makers	Museum makers; wider public audience	Durable and known media forms
Movement of Knowledge:	towards the experts (from the ground-up) as they gather it in the processes of learning about the phenomenon.	between experts and museum makers as they learn about professionalization; between museum makers as they learn more about each other's processes.	towards wider audiences who have previously been outside the phenomenon, introducing this form of personal collecting and museum-making "museum-making," stressing its viability and relevance.	codified in documents that make it storable, findable and displayable, particularly as a form of evidence of participation in the cultural program.

originality that makes [it] unique” (Mihalache, 2012, p. 19). In the context of vernacular museums, cultivating heritage captures the MRP’s desire to foster the development of collectors and collections for what they were and to make them viable through known activities of dissemination and education. Cultivating also expresses a way of finding, sharing and disseminating knowledge about vernacular museums beyond their immediate proximities. Legitimation expanded the reach of these presentations of localized knowledge through the creative application of expert activities. MRP experts adapted and improvised museum practices, applying them to the growth of vernacular museums in ways that preserved and enhanced the unique qualities of vernacular museums. The museum makers were further encouraged to nurture their collections as they became more widely known as valid cultural endeavors. This overall process of cultivating represents for vernacular

museums a mode of incorporating them into the existing cultural fabric as real and viable cultural institutions. At the same time, legitimation demonstrates how institutional approaches can be adopted in generative, as opposed to isomorphic, ways.

Reframing the work of vernacular museum makers through the recognized institutional activities of the MRP also affirmed vernacular museum makers as designators of heritage at the grassroots level. Their labor extends those metacultural operations that transform everyday customs and practices into heritage (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006a) to the realm of the everyday. In this case, MRP experts have worked to provide these amateur museum makers with the tools they need to better support their collecting and museum-making endeavors within this framework. Legitimation is an outcome of the knowledge flows through which new museum practitioners could demonstrate their knowledge, ascribing them with a level of expertise shared with and now recognized by a wider public. Cultivating heritage illustrates how layers of knowledge held by museum experts, village collectors and collections and the public are combined to foreground a new realm of heritage knowledge represented by vernacular museums as a cultural form aimed at “decentralizing” heritage (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 128).

Where section 8.3 has focused on the legitimation between MRP and vernacular museums from within the phenomenon, the next section considers the development of the phenomenon from EU and Romanian state level cultural policy perspectives.

8.4. Legislating culture

This section considers the outcomes of the VCP within the contexts of culture and heritage emerging at the time when Romania prepared for its accession into the European Union in January 2007 (Chapter 2, Section 2.4). The MRP experts created the VCP as a cultural program, which was aimed to enact and fund culture as it is understood within the

EU. Using an EU-level cultural program as a starting point, I trace developments in the EU towards mitigating common European cultural differences between groups, often described as “social inclusion” in these documents, and how this legislation has been translated from EU to Romanian state levels. I follow these legislative cultural developments through a relevant selection of EU and Romanian cultural policy documents (described in Section 8.2.2) in order to construe how legislative processes positioned culture as a realm of activity for programs like the VCP and establishing the framework through which RECOMESPAR was created as a form of civil society. These documents have been analyzed through the frames of legitimation (Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2.1) as an integrative process that creates new meanings and culture understood as a form of expression that allows citizens to actively participate in the construction of social identity and belonging (Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2.2).

8.4.1. Cultural program as cultural form

The Village Collections Programme (VCP) was a state-funded Romanian national-level cultural program that ran from 2008-2013, beginning a year after Romania entered the EU in 2007. The EU also had an active cultural program during this period: the EU Culture Programme (2007-2013) (EU Culture Programme) that had as its general objective:

to enhance the cultural area shared by Europeans and based on a common cultural heritage through the development of cultural cooperation between the creators, cultural players and cultural institutions of the countries taking part in the Programme with a view to encouraging European citizenship. (European Commission, 2006, p. 372/4)

EU program goals emphasized the identification of common elements of heritage found by a widely cast group of stakeholders working together towards the goal of belonging as it extended beyond national borders, towards creating a space of cultural activity related to European citizenship. These developments around culture and heritage within the EU Culture Programme overlap with how the goals and outcomes of the VCP are expressed in

that program's literature. For instance, Mihalache (2009a, pp. 126–127) describes the VCP's approach to heritage as:

We started from the premise that any significant cultural heritage should be promoted as an identity mark and also as a civic cohesion factor . . . A component of local culture, a symbol of the factor, a point of reference and also an information source, material and immaterial cultural heritage should be a reason for pride. The reason should be strong enough for a community to value this heritage in all its aspects and to capitalize on it in order to become an effective means of promoting the community's values and image across Romania and abroad" (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 126-7).

The conceptualizations of heritage driving the VCP mirror those presented within the EU cultural programs and policies, namely that heritage can delineate cultural identities and can work toward social cohesion and mitigating differences between social groups. In the case of the VCP, this focus is on local heritage centered around a proximity to village collections. But this kind of heritage can also be used to signify connections and serve purposes or “capitalize” beyond this immediate, personalized locality. Mihalache's quote suggests that, as heritage resource, village collections could participate in the cultural field more generally, for instance, as a point of information about culture and heritage resources as well an identity mark and as a civic cohesion factor. Further, the spirit of Mihalache's quote echoes the EU Cultural Programme in that the kinds of cultural heritage presented and preserved within these village collections can help a community find its place within the scope of a wider regional, national and international realms.

Mihalache also employs specific terminology to describe the VCP as well as the collectors and the role they can potentially play within the cultural sector: as “an open *cultural action*, reaching its goal only to the extent that it will generate other cultural, scientific, organizational and media actions at different levels in order to promote and consolidate private collections and museums” (Mihalache, 2009, 2011, 2012, emphasis added). Within the EU cultural policy sphere, a cultural action refers to projects that are funded through

cultural legislation. Though the VCP and the EU Culture Programme were unaffiliated except by form, meaning that the VCP was funded through state-level cultural funding that was not related directly to EU cultural funds. The repetition of language in the two statements quoted above emphasizes the cohesion goals, particularly as the national programs seek monetary funding. That the VCP was modeled after this cultural program was not coincidental. Cultural programs like the EU Culture Programme provide the ultimate legitimization in the form of monetary funding that makes it possible to realize program goals. The next section describes briefly the processes of legislating culture in the EU context in order to sketch the frameworks through which culture can be enacted as civil society.

8.4.2. Legislating culture at Romanian state and EU levels

The EU Culture Programme (2007-2013) was born out of *Decision No. 1855/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 establishing the Culture Programme (2007-2013)* (hereafter, Decision 1855/2006). Within the EU framework, a decision is a particular type of document, defined as a legal act through which “the aims set out in the EU treaties are achieved” (Communication Department of the European Commission, 2019). This means that Decisions create legislation towards desired goals; they are codified within foundational documents such as EU treaties. Decision 1855/2006 was selected as a starting point for describing the European framework for legislating culture because it provides a snapshot of conceptualizations of culture and heritage within the EU developing concurrently with Romania’s preparation for accession into the EU by its form, function and content. Decision 1855/2006 embeds The EU Culture Programme within a history of developments within the EU that have emphasized the EU goals of creating an inclusive space of belonging for individual citizens.

8.4.2.1. Foundational Document: Maastricht Treaty

The EU Culture Programme documents describe culture as “a relatively new sphere of action for the European Union (EU), at least from a legal standpoint: the legal basis for EU action in this field was only introduced in 1992 with the Maastricht Treaty” (EACEA, n.d., p. 4). Article 151 of the Maastricht Treaty (1992) is cited as the legal basis within Decision 1855/2006. The first two numbered sections of this treaty describe how the EU will contribute “to the *flowering of the cultures* of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore” (Treaty indent 1, emphasis added). The EU’s stated goal describes the EU as a community made up of different member states and their regional and ethnic differences. The goal of EU membership is to encourage cultural growth and diversity while at the same time trying to find elements of Europeanness that might bind the states around common heritage elements. This demonstrates the connection between legislating culture towards the goals of social cohesion and inclusion among the member states. Culture serves a double-purpose: it fosters a sense of belonging through cultural elements identified as common heritage at the same time culture works to mitigate difference. As a foundational document, Article 151 of the Maastricht Treaty provides an example of how culture is conceptualized to overcome its own differentiating tendencies towards development of a democratic, participatory society. The next section considers how these ideals are translated at state levels.

8.4.2.2. Translating EU cultural policy at the Romanian state level

In preparation for accession into the EU, Romania, like all member states, must ascribe to the EU *acquis*.⁵² The goal of this process is not a wholesale imposition of EU legislation, but adoption in spirit, a “harmonization” of EU policies and legislation with that of the entering country. For Romania, this meant amending its constitution, a state-level foundational document, and incorporating culture into the *Program de Guvernare 2005-2008* (Chapter 22) (hereafter the Government Program) (Chelcea et al., 2012, p. RO-61). How culture has been incorporated into these documents is described below.

8.4.2.2.1. Culture in Romania’s Constitution

The references to culture in the EU Treaty documents are echoed in Romania’s Constitution (amended in 2003 to include Article 33) which reads:

1. The access to culture is guaranteed in accordance with the law.
2. A person’s freedom to develop his/her spirituality and to get access to the values of national and universal culture shall not be limited. The State has to make sure that spiritual identity is preserved, national culture is supported, arts are stimulated, cultural legacy is protected and preserved, contemporary creativity is developed, and Romania’s cultural and artistic values are promoted throughout the world. (*Constitution of Romania 1991 (rev. 2003)*, n.d., Article 33)

Article 33 does two things: it guarantees access to culture as a legal right and it provides each individual Romanian citizen the “freedom” to create and use culture. The state’s role is focused on ensuring access to culture for its citizens, however culture and spiritual identity are created by those citizens. Further, the state will foster access to culture by preserving and supporting national culture (in support of a sense of national identity or belonging at the national level) but also by stimulating arts and contemporary creativity as creative impulses,

⁵² According to the EU Acquis website, in order to join the EU, a country must agree to accept the the EU's '*acquis*' as “the body of common rights and obligations that are binding on all EU countries.” Further: “Candidate countries have to accept the *acquis* before they can join the EU and make EU law part of their own national legislation. Adoption and implementation of the *acquis* are the basis of the accession negotiations. For more information, see: the EU Acquis website at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/acquis_en.

including old and new forms; and will protect the shared cultural legacy of the state as heritage. The state's role is inward-facing, for the benefit of the state and its citizens; as well as outward-facing, providing a means through which Romania as a nation can present itself and connect with the world.

This repositioning of access to culture as a legal right and of citizens as having the freedom to create and use culture foregrounds the role of citizens as participants in culture as a process and activity. As such, this amendment to the constitution signals a primary shift as Romania prepared for EU membership. Translations of this article can be observed in state-level cultural policy approaches discussed next.

8.4.2.2.2. Program de Guvernare 2005-2008

The *Program de Guvernare* 2005-2008 (Government Program) is a Romanian government document that outlines all of the policy approaches being enacted in the period leading up to EU accession, with those relating to cultural policy described in Chapter 22 of that document. The Government Program describes the role of the Ministry of Culture and state institutions in the cultural policy field as:

... [ensuring] favorable conditions for cultural creation and the protection of cultural heritage. The Government of Romania will have as main objectives the continual improvement of the legislative, institutional and financing framework of the cultural field. (*Program de Guvernare 2005-2008*, 2004, p. 105)

At the state level, the creation of culture and protection of heritage are primary functions of cultural policy, where the government's role is to "improve" the administrative structures through which culture is legislated, managed and financed. This suggests that the Romanian government needed to work to overcome perceived deficiencies in how its cultural policies and programs have been run with regard to the past.⁵³ The document goes on to describe a

⁵³ These problem areas were outlined in Romania's cultural policy in the early 2000's that identified a lack of centralization and transparency in its cultural (and other) policies and programs more generally. For more

future path for culture, specifically how “cultural policies will be geared towards the information society and will be harmonized with other public policies” (*Program de Guvernare 2005-2008*, 2004, p. 105).

The Government Program document also outlines the principles:

The fundamental principles of the relationship between citizens and the cultural field are: respect for and promotion of fundamental cultural rights (access to culture and participation in cultural life); promoting diversity and cultural identity; recognizing culture’s role in cohesion and social inclusion.” (*Program de Guvernare 2005-2008*, 2004, p. 105)

These fundamental principles directly echo language of the EU Treaty and Romanian Constitution, previously discussed, describing a democratic approach to culture in which all citizens can participate freely, with culture working to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion at the same time as it works to mitigate difference.

The preceding quotes emphasize two ways in which preparation for EU membership worked to shape Romanian approaches to cultural policy and a climate for the vernacular museums reception as a democratic expression of citizen culture. Romania is developing and applying its own approaches to culture in the spirit of the EU foundational documents in a way that emphasizes consistency and compatibility of state-level policies with those of the EU. This is one way of showing how state-level cultural policy must align with that of the EU. Without this compatibility, the member state cannot be successful in entering this democratic union of nations or qualify for funding for activities in the cultural sector that comes along with membership. What is also needed are new participatory modes through which citizens can be involved in the cultural realm. One of those modes is civil society, discussed next.

information, see: *Cultural policy in Romania: report of a European group of experts* (Renard, 1999) and *Compendium cultural policies and trends in Europe: Country profile Romania* (Chelcea, Becut, & Balsan, 2012).

8.4.2.3. The role of civil society in democratic policy frameworks

The Government Program document identifies an additional cultural operator within the emerging cultural field in the form of “activities in the field of culture will be structured on . . . institutionalization of a system of regular consultations and cooperation with civil society” (*Program de Guvernare 2005-2008*, 2004, p. 106). Civil society is defined as:

society considered as a community of citizens characterized by common interests and collective activity; . . . that aspect of society concerned with and operating for the collective good, independent of state control or commercial influence; all social groups, networks, etc., above the level of the family, which engage in voluntary collective action. (“Civil society, n.,” 2018)

This definition stresses “voluntary collective action.” Within the contexts of belonging in a democratic society, civil society provides a legitimate mode of belonging that extends beyond immediate or extended spatial proximities and between private and public realms. Civil society allows new groups and associations to form voluntarily around “common interests and collective activity.” This can happen independent of the state and/or private/commercial interests. Civil society describes a mode of federated belonging existing between public and private whose status was elevated as Romania prepared for membership in the European Union.

Civil society is described in Romania’s National Development Plan as a form of “good governance”:

Good governance relies on efficient formal and informal structures being established in order to take and implement decisions. The central and local authorities are a group of ‘governance stakeholders’. The other players with a role to play in delivery of good governance in Romania are the economic and social partners, the civil society, including the NGOs, as well as other research institutions, financial institutions, media, lobby institutions. (Government of Romania, 2005, p. 297, emphasis in original)

The democratic frameworks being developed no longer only include the formal structures of the state but include an inclusive approach to government with power dispersed through a

variety of types of “governance stakeholders.” This includes both central and local authorities along with a host of other kinds of economic and social institutional partners, including civil society. An association represents one type of civil society actor comprising these formal and informal structures creating as part of an inclusive, participatory governance. An association is legally defined within Romanian Governmental Ordinance 26/2000, Article 4⁵⁴ as an entity:

constituted of three or more persons who, on the basis of an agreement, share, without being entitled to restitution, their material contribution, their knowledge and their lucrative activity, in order to accomplish activities of general interest, of collective interest, or, if such be the case, of their personal, non-patrimonial [not-for-profit] interest.

Within Romanian law, an association is a formal legal body recognized as “a traditional, civil law form” that is synonymous with civil society organization (“Nonprofit Law in Romania,” 2013). In this case, RECOMESPAR was an expression of civil society.

RECOMESPAR gathered vernacular museum makers as citizens around their common interest of collecting, creating and maintaining personal museums. When the VCP began, MRP experts were able to apply for annual cultural funds made available by the Administrația Fondului Cultural Național (Administration of the National Cultural Fund, hereafter AFCN), the Romanian state’s cultural funding body (Chapter 2, Section 2.4). After RECOMESPAR was established, the association itself was able to apply for the same cultural funds without the need for the MRP to act as its sponsor. In other words, civil society allowed the vernacular museums to organize as a legal entity which made this group eligible for the same cultural funding as a national-level museum. In this way, RECOMESPAR connected this set of geographically dispersed makers across localities and

⁵⁴ Made available by the **International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)**:
<http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Romania/ordinanceeng.pdf>

legitimated their work through this established legal form which created opportunities for funding their efforts as participants in foregrounding their particular form of heritage.

8.4.3. Positioning RECOMESPAR museums as alternative heritage

In the program literature, Carmen Mihalache often emphasized the importance of RECOMESPAR member institutions by contrasting village collectors with Romania's existing heritage realm. From the outset, the MRP positioned village collections as an alternative form of heritage. For instance, she states:

The available financial resources are quite unlikely to support the elements of this [private village collections] heritage. They differ from the heritage elements administered by various public institutions for the good of society because they benefit from more responsible management, a fair and motivated use of resources and a creative approach. (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 127)

This quote suggests that village collections provide access to heritage that is different from that presented at public institutions because of their personal, individualized and involved collector/managers. By contrasting vernacular and existing institutional approaches, Mihalache implied that the personal, involved management and administration of village collections makes them in some ways better positioned to serve cultural development initiatives like preservation and tourism in the EU context because these small, privately-owned institutions are managed by passionate, private collectors who are more involved and potentially more responsible than those in public institutions. This statement also suggests that the approaches of vernacular museum makers are creative, providing individualized, novel and innovative ways for presenting and preserving different heritage forms, essentially bringing the realm of heritage to the local level. Working to mobilize the heritage they cultivated through existing democratic means further connects the phenomenon of vernacular museums to stated cultural goals of unity-in-diversity (foregrounding the diversity of heritage found at the local level) and social inclusion (expanding the realm of who can

designate heritage beyond the expert from the EU context). The positioning of RECOMESPAR as a civil society organization then makes it possible to insert the emergent cultural phenomenon of the vernacular museums into the policy realm by creating a means of participation in culture.

Together, these developments around cultural policy foreground how culture has been positioned as a democratic realm of participation open to all citizens. This understanding also helps in part to explain why the VCP's could create RECOMESPAR as an independent organization, rather than maintaining these institutions under the MRP. As has been previously discussed (Chapter 2, Section 2.2), the MRP's goal was to foreground these emergent museums as a grassroots cultural form in their own right that would eventually be included in national-level legislation and cultural policy.

Drawing on some of these themes, the remainder of this chapter will discuss some of the effects and outcomes of the participation of vernacular museums within the cultural realm through the RECOMESPAR association as a form of civil society.

8.5. Mobilizing heritage: RECOMESPAR as an example of civil society

The RECOMESPAR association as an outcome the VCP demonstrates one way a grassroots effort can organize around a common interest, legitimated as a form of civil society. As has been discussed (Section 8.3), the MRP's impetus to legitimate village collections through the VCP was that village collections were not included in or addressed by any existing "coherent" cultural policy (Mihalache, 2009a, p. 124). Establishing RECOMESPAR as an independent association of village collectors provided a symbolic and lasting level of legitimation, creating a legally recognized entity through which members could become viable cultural actors according to the frameworks provided within state/EU cultural policies (Section 8.4). The cultivation of these museums as a heritage form by the

MRP fostered museum-making as a common interest around which these independent makers could come together. RECOMESPAR provided a real-world example of how culture idealized in policy and program documents can be mobilized on the ground. Here, I focus on the outcomes of this association as described in VCP program literature and through comments made by RECOMESPAR members during site visits. The lasting outcomes and limitations of RECOMESPAR as an example of civil society will be discussed in sections 8.5.1-8.5.4.

8.5.1. RECOMESPAR lasting outcomes

RECOMESPAR was officially established as a national-level association in late 2011. The association's existence is documented through its website, where it is described as “a non-profit association established in order to support, promote and develop the private, village-level ethnographic museums” (Asociatia RECOMESPAR, 2013, asociatia page). This legal association brings symbolic legitimacy through a legally established organizational name also represented through an acronym and a logo. These symbolic forms are replicated on RECOMESPAR's website. Legitimacy is further reinforced because the RECOMESPAR acronym disseminating this symbolic legitimacy which appears alongside the acronyms and logos of other recognized cultural associations and organizations. This enhancement of visibility is an important step because the goal of cultural funding is often to create projects that, in turn, develop the ability to become self-funding. RECOMESPAR was a partner in two Romanian conferences on local heritage in 2010 and 2012 and worked with the MRP and other national-level museums and schools in a program that restored and exhibited a selection of objects from the RECOMESPAR museums (outlined in Appendix B). Arguably the most visible and lasting program for which RECOMESPAR was the main sponsor was *Semnaliizarea colecțiilor și muzeelor etnografice sătești particulare din*

România (Signage for Private Collections and Museums in Romania). The project is described on the association's website as follows:

The project supports the increase of visibility and number of visitors for ethnographic collections and museums in the network by connecting to the informational tourist circuit and by facilitating the physical access of the public. This is a stage as important as infrastructure and the collection itself. (Asociatia RECOMESPAR, 2013, proiect page)

An example of this signage is shown in Figure 8A. These official signs list the museum name and point the direction and distance to the museum site. More importantly, they present this information next to the international symbol for museums, a way of publicly marking these sites as legitimate cultural institutions. While the conferences and exhibitions RECOMESPAR sponsored and/or participated in as project partners represent singular, ephemeral events, the signage project brings lasting visibility as well as practical accessibility to these museums in a more public and permanent way.



Figure 8A: Example of a sign observed during fieldwork, 2016
(Photo by C. Klimaszewski)

I observed these signs during fieldwork in 2018 and on several occasions relied on them to lead me to museum locations. As demonstrated in Chapter 7 (Section 7.3.2.1), the signs are a recognized marker that leads people to visit these museums who might not otherwise know about them. Some RECOMESPAR members provided observations about this program that could be described as perceived drawbacks. For instance, I was told by several makers during site visits and interviews that they were required to contribute to the cost of the signage (a match of funds), which was not an insignificant amount for some makers. Two other proprietors explained how they had to install security systems to protect their collections. One collector did so of her own accord, but another was told by the local police that the designation as a museum required him to install a security system in his museum after the sign was posted because making more people aware of the museum site could entice potential thieves. So, with this increased visibility also came potential additional costs and logistical complications for makers. Despite these developments, the lasting visibility of these signs continues to mark these museum locations along existing tourist routes as legitimate landmarks, which is important because RECOMESPAR itself, at the time of writing, was no longer active in an official or institutionalized sense, which is the focus of the next section.

8.5.2. RECOMESPAR challenges

As of 2018, my observations in the field confirmed that the RECOMESPAR association was not currently active. Some reasons for the lull in activity for this organization were provided, often unsolicited, by the RECOMESPAR members and others I spoke to. For instance, several participants indicated a problem of scale, meaning that they thought a national-level association did not serve members well because the museums were too geographically dispersed to make long-term and ongoing interactions between members

feasible. However, connections between makers who lived within closer proximity to each other did provide opportunities for longer-term interactions between some members, even though members generally did express satisfaction with the training and workshop activities that brought them into contact with other museum makers. The RECOMESPAR participants I interviewed all expressed positive experiences of meeting other museum makers. For instance, one maker explained that his work with other RECOMESPAR members allowed him to meet many different types of people than he would have on his own. Another older maker described staying in contact with one of the younger makers who lived in the same region. These positive reflections suggest that associating around a common interest is not entirely unrelated to access afforded by spatial proximity. It seems that creating a meaningful and lasting connection between association members was subject to the practical challenges (cost as well as logistics) of traveling between sites.

Another challenge described to me was the maintenance of the organization through stable and consistent leadership. Several members mentioned that ongoing leadership for RECOMESPAR could not be found.⁵⁵ Further, it was unclear whether RECOMESPAR members had established an institutional mode of communication beyond staying in touch via personal emails or telephone calls. It was also unclear to me who maintained the organizational website (Chapter 5, Section 5.1). These members seemed to recognize that leading such an organization and providing support, particularly in the form of fundraising, was not an easy task. Because these museums were often side-businesses and/or because makers were older, their time and energy were limited and what free time they did have they needed to dedicate to developing their own museums. In the case of RECOMESPAR, for

⁵⁵ During a conversation with the original president of RECOMESPA in 2016, he explained that he could not continue in the role in part because he was already leading and/or otherwise involved in at least five cultural associations related to local and regional interests. This indicates perhaps another problem of civil society: that professional civil society activists and resources for new organizations can be difficult to recruit and maintain.

instance, the original president was actively involved in organizing and spearheading multiple civil society organizations. This was beneficial in that his social capital carried over to RECOMESPAR, but it also meant that RECOMESPAR could not be his sole focus. Nevertheless, challenges at the association level did not seem to affect individual museum makers who remained active in maintaining and developing their museums (e.g. those described in Chapter 6). Further, for the time being, I was told that the association still exists as a legal entity (C. Mihalache, personal communication, 27 June 2018), suggesting that the association could, in theory, become active again in the future.

I was able to discuss some of these developments with Carmen Mihalache at the conclusion of my research visit in June, 2018, and her reflections are presented in the next section.

8.5.3. RECOMESPAR, an expert perspective

Carmen Mihalache confirmed that RECOMESPAR was “essentially inactive” (Personal communication, 27 June 2018) when we met in Bucharest at the MRP’s café in June 2018. Further, she reiterated several of the challenges expressed by association members (Section 8.5.2). In her view, the biggest problem that these museums faced is that they still were not fully incorporated into cultural policy. For instance, they were still not included in the official legal definitions of museums and collections found in Romanian legislative documents.⁵⁶ For her, because they were not directly addressed in the cultural policy, they still did not “count” as viable cultural institutions (C. Mihalache, personal communication, 27 June 2018). She explained that, while the MRP has tried to influence legislation, suggesting modifications to cultural laws to include these kinds of institutions, she felt that, at official levels, opinions about village collections were divided because the

⁵⁶ See Law No. 311 of July 8, 2003 of Museums and Public Collections at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/45161>

perception was that makers did not have the “know-how” of museum specialists (C. Mihalache, personal communication, 27 June 2018). This suggests that the kinds of heritage cultivation that the MRP have done through the VCP has limits to the level of legitimacy it can bring for grassroots participatory endeavors around culture and museums for policy makers. From the legislative perspective, then, the social capital inherent in museums that brought it visibility in tourism sectors that was too commercial seemed to act as a barrier to entry for the RECOMESPAR museums, where the museum form could not be decoupled from a specific definition of what counts as a museum that were tied closely to standards for professionalization.

Mihalache emphasized the importance of village collections as “local resources” and explained that most of them did not just collect, but they were “cultural activists” working on their own volition who take creative approaches to local problems, describing village collectors as performing a more “complex labor” than museum specialists do (C. Mihalache, personal communication, 27 June 2018). Reiterating sentiments from VCP program literature cited previously, Mihalache noted that the vernacular museums were embedded within their communities, which required them to become involved in development and cultural projects better than museum professionals who were perceived as outsiders in these communities. These village makers brought different perspectives on and creative solutions to problems that faced their local communities where their museums provided an attraction and reason for tourists to visit their villages as well as heritage-related educational opportunities like workshops for children (e.g. Chapter 6, Section 6.7).

Mihalache also noted that part of the problem is that RECOMESPAR has not been able to act as a supportive “nest” (C. Mihalache, personal communication, 27 June 2018) for

these collectors because the MRP is facing its own challenges.⁵⁷ In closing, Mihalache emphasized that the MRP's goal for RECOMESPAR was to create an independent organization that “would live and move by itself” (C. Mihalache, personal communication, 27 June 2018). In the short-term, at least, the MRP was successful in its endeavor. But for the time being, RECOMESPAR was in stasis. Despite the numerous outcomes previously discussed, she described village collections as “still outsider museums” (C. Mihalache, personal communication, 27 June 2018).

8.5.4. RECOMESPAR as civil society conclusions

Mihalache's use of “outsider” to describe village collections seems to capture their peripheral status within established policy realms despite the establishment of RECOMESPAR as a professional organization and the related legitimating efforts of the MRP more generally. Their role as outsider institutions positions the “complex labor” of these makers, as Mihalache described it, as a kind of cultural work that appears distinct from that done by expert cultural practitioners. As relative newcomers to Romania's cultural landscape, however, they are also situated to act as commentators on the state of institutional culture more generally because of the embodied, localized perspectives they provide. That these makers felt the need to take cultural production into their own hands by creating their own museums suggests that there is more to be said about heritage and culture than the narratives being produced at institutional levels in Romania. Vernacular museums in Romania, existing outside of but in conversation with mainstream institutional culture, provide one example of how culture can be mobilized from within established institutional and legal frameworks and at the same time it also exists outside of them.

⁵⁷ As of our meeting, the MRP remained closed, still under renovations that began in 2016, with no opening date scheduled, perhaps a symptom of larger cultural challenges at the national level. These kinds of challenges for museums were also reported by museum professionals I spoke to in other cities, suggesting that the position of cultural institutions at all levels are facing challenges not unrelated to the political climate.

8.6. Conclusions

Understanding vernacular museums and their institutionalization within contexts of legitimation has been presented through three conceptual frames of: 1) cultivating heritage; 2) legislating culture; and 3) mobilizing heritage. These frames capture different aspects of institutional legitimation of vernacular museums during a period when the culture was being enacted in democratic contexts that encourage access to and participation in culture for all citizens as a fundamental right. RECOMESPAR museums are an example of a grassroots cultural form whose legitimacy has been cultivated by experts. This cultivation happened with the guidance of the MRP as a national-level museum whose institutional ethos has been to adopt and encourage alternative approaches to museum making (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.4). The MRP's cultivating activities created a network of museum makers whose association elevates the status of its members as cultural operators through the form of RECOMESPAR as an example of civil society. This demonstrates to other potential practitioners that such individual interpretations of the museum can become viable as personal expression of cultural heritage. Vernacular museums provide legitimation-by-example of the metacultural operations through which the objects of everyday custom and practice are transformed into heritage as expressed and recognized by individual citizens.

In this Romanian context, legislating culture contrasts with culture's role as enacted under the communist regime (Chapter 2, Sections 2.2 and 2.4). Under communism, there was only one acceptable space of culture, a distorted public realm that consisted only of official, government produced and mandated forms under strict control of the regime that disavowed the private (or any contrasting views) and has been described as creating a rupture from the past (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.3). Legislating culture describes how the shift towards democracy developed at the Romanian state level in response to EU accession requirements

(Chapter 2, Section 2.4). The institutional frameworks of cultural policy and civil society support access to and participation in culture for individuals as well as institutions.

Vernacular museums are an example of how these policy frameworks play out, allowing these makers the opportunity to reclaim a feeling of continuity with the past through the making of heritage on their own terms. This participatory widening of the cultural sphere allows for the emergence of different interpretations of the past that can contrast with and even challenge more accepted historical narratives, revealing points of conflict as well as cohesion within a community. The application of participatory cultural frameworks suggests the need for institutions to work in partnership with bottom-up efforts of these museum makers as a way of actively supporting and encouraging a variety of different perspectives and to support additional avenues for reestablishing continuity for community members at all levels.

As for mobilizing culture, the institutional nurturing of vernacular museums as an emergent heritage form by the MRP arose in part because these makers present their creations as museums, a way of self-legitimizing their museum-making activities. From this perspective, the fact that RECOMESPAR museums have not been addressed in national cultural policy can be read as a positive outcome. A legal designation as a museum would carry with it layers of administrative responsibility that could act as a barrier for these museum makers and their small-scale museums that might discourage participation at the grassroots level. The appeal of vernacular museums is that they are not bound by those institutional constraints that are often difficult even for large-scale museums to maintain. Their outsider status seems to be a part of the identity of vernacular museums, as their makers continue to develop their museums and related activities, building on the visibility that RECOMESPAR membership has afforded them and further mobilizing their

participation in the heritage realm. These outsider institutions and their makers continue to welcome visitors because they have been inserted into tourism itineraries and have been institutionalized through the presence of official museum signs. This example demonstrates how association around a common interest and as civil society widens the participatory space of culture for ordinary citizens. From this perspective, vernacular museums are perhaps better described as hybrid institutions that insert the personal, local and individual into a strictly interpreted public/private binary as these museum makers work to establish their own sense of continuity of the VCP through their continued participation in heritage production on their own terms.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

The main research objective of this ethnographic study has been to understand vernacular museums as a distinct cultural form and knowledge institution in Romania's post-communist period. This overall objective was accomplished through four subsidiary objectives that focused on understanding Romanian vernacular museums: as a phenomenon (RO1); as spaces of knowledge-making for visitors (RO2); as spaces of knowledge-making for makers and visitors interactively in the context of museum tour narratives (RO3); and within contexts of legitimation of Romanian cultural "heritage" and a new institutional form (RO4). This multi-sited fieldwork involved ethnographic and autoethnographic observations of in-person visits to four vernacular museums. During these visits, self-reflexive moments were captured in photographs that recorded the researcher's responses interpreted in the context of each museum tour. Impressions of other visitors were collected through interviews and in guestbook comments at three museum sites. Fieldwork was complemented by textual analysis of documents including museum website descriptions for the twenty-four RECOMESPAR museums that took part in the Village Collections Program, the key legitimating program for these museums, as well as cultural program and policy documents related to Romania's accession into the EU in 2007.

The chapter includes four sections: responses to the research objectives based on the findings overall (9.1); the implications for theory and practice (9.2); the limitations of the current study (9.3); and suggestions for future research (9.4).

9.1. Responding to the research objectives based on the findings overall

The chapters of this dissertation addressed the research objectives. Chapter 1 introduced the study, relevant definitions and the outline of the dissertation. Chapter 2 provided historical background and context on the phenomenon of Romanian vernacular

museums and related institutions involved in their legitimation along with personal observations that grounded the current study. Chapter 3 presented the review of literature and identified gaps in the literature on vernacular museums. It also focused on new museology and museum visitor studies. Chapter 4 introduced the theoretical frameworks, methodology and methods for this research project. The findings and research objectives laid out in Chapters 5 through 8 are discussed in sections 9.1.1 – 9.1.4, respectively. Section 9.1.5 presents conclusions based on the responses to the research objectives.

9.1.1. Response to RO1: Romanian vernacular museums as a phenomenon

Analysis of RECOMESPAR website descriptions in Chapter 5 has shown that Romanian vernacular museums are the product of their maker's knowledge world and centered around the realm of everyday knowledge. As such, these museums reflect the idiosyncratic perspectives of their makers that may or may not be factual or accurate. These descriptions addressed proprietor motivations for collecting objects and creating museums. They emphasized affective and aesthetic dimensions of experience and how each museum reconstructed life in the past. Makers organized their museums according to their own interpretations. Reclaiming discarded objects and presenting them within a museum was an active intervention driven by a "passion" for recovering the objects and creating stories around them.

Museum makers constructed their narratives to foreground tensions with expert knowledge and *modernitate* (modernity) in order to convey knowledge about the past by restoring the value of discarded objects. Vernacular museum makers were presented in terms of actively supplementing and reordering the knowledge of experts (i.e. through research and through creating their museum spaces). By doing so, they intervened with their own authority and expertise conveyed through the act of museum making. According to the

museum website analysis, knowledge-making in vernacular museums was generated through these ongoing interventions between makers and objects. When makers sought to reconnect objects they also reconstituted and foregrounded their own personal perspectives that have been addressed. The activities of reordering and re-envisioning the past through the arrangement of objects emphasized the affective and material dimensions as intrinsic to museum-making as an epistemic activity. These museum makers were portrayed in these website descriptions as stewards of knowledge from the past.

9.1.2. Response to RO2: Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making for visitors

Chapter 6 addressed RO2 and investigated visitors' reception and responses to vernacular museums through the analysis of in-person interviews, written guestbook commentary and social media reviews. Visitor experiences gleaned through interviews often emphasized the unexpectedness of these museum visits and serendipity when visitors discovered them in the course of travel. They perceived visits as fortuitous and an added value to their planned travel itineraries because they emphasized the particularity of personal, local perspectives of museum makers through an intimate visit they experienced as an authentic experience of culture. These modes of locating the museum sites aligned vernacular museums with a particular kind of independent (i.e. not mass-commodified) and unique travel experience. Travel itineraries developed through unofficial channels, including the word-of-mouth of cultural insiders and other independent travelers and homemade signs, led to vernacular museums.

Within the museums, visitors' interactions emphasized embodied connections to the knowledge of museum proprietors. Visitors tended to recall them through rich sensory experiences—of tasting, seeing and hearing the maker's narrative—demonstrating how

individual knowledge worlds of makers and visitors entwined through the senses. Visitors were also impressed by the maker's ability to present their know-how and ingenuity about everyday life in the past and its contemporary value. The idea of the museum as a familiar institutional form was the draw for visitors but the personal and intimate nature of the museum tour, located in a home, contrasted with their expectations. The overall impression for visitors was that the vernacular museum hosted a knowledge encounter that enhanced their overall travel experience.

Guestbook comments and online reviews were also analyzed as part of RO2. This analysis focused on comments made in Romanian and Hungarian. Impressions captured in guestbook comments revealed how visitors acknowledged and valued the labor of museum-making. They saw these museums as including more and different kinds of objects than they would find in traditional museums. In guestbook entries, visitors also responded to the active presentations of the past performed in ways that resonated with their own expressions of national identity. Romanian visitors expressed affective engagements whereby they saw the museum mediating an experience of defamiliarization, stepping out of their ordinary life trajectories and reconsidering the meaning of the past and their relationship to it, creating a formative or generative experience in the knowledge worlds of these visitors because they could actively relate to the past in a way that was meaningful to them.

Within the space of a home, each maker's personal narrative engaged visitors and created a person-to-person connection. This emphasized how vernacular museums brought people together. Vernacular museums provided a reason for visitors to stop along their travel itineraries in places they might not otherwise visit and to relate to others through a 'museum' (learning) experience.

9.1.3. Response to RO3: Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making for makers and visitors interactively in the context of museum tour narratives

RO3 was addressed in Chapter 6. This chapter was structured around the stories of the four museums I visited, identified as self-reflexive notable moments that emerged in response to the museum maker's narrative. These moments are illustrative of knowledge-making as an embodied endeavor of how I related new and existing knowledge in response to the museum maker's narrative and objects as I moved through the space of each vernacular museum. For me, such notable moments provided a tangible evidence of what fills each maker's subjective knowledge categories and how their interpretations became entwined with material objects. Each maker's perspective emerged for me as a distinct story of the museum as a world that conveyed different aspects of the past important to these makers about potential remedies to problems in the present. In each case, the recovered past was related to the present.

Being guided through the museum space was through a world whose rhythms had been ordered by its maker. Both my and the maker's worlds overlapped during these visits. My experiences visiting the museums underscored knowledge-making as a transformative process enhanced by encounters with each maker's idiosyncratic presentation and understanding and how it was reflected in the material arrangements of objects. Navigating museum spaces and understanding them through the maker's narrative also demonstrated the creative dimensions of relational knowledge-making. How vernacular museums transmogrify (Urban, 2001) or transform knowledge in a way that felt magical or surprising to me further emphasizes the role that novelty can play in the development of individual knowledge worlds and the constructions of the past.

9.1.4. Response to RO4: Vernacular museums within contexts of legitimization of Romanian “heritage” through which they are emerging as a new institutional form

In Chapter 8, the findings focusing on RO4 presented the analysis of program documents from the Village Collections Programme 2008-2013 (VCP) and a selection of Romanian and EU cultural policy and legislative documents related to the country’s 2007 accession into the EU and interviews with the VCP’s director and museum maker’s statements about their participation in the VCP and RECOMESPAR. Reports by experts from a national-level museum, the MRP, who began encountering examples of vernacular museums during the course of their regular museum practice, were locating these unofficial, self-designated museums in different areas of Romania at that time. The MRP’s attempts to foreground these emergent museums worked to preserve them as grassroots interpretations of heritage. The expert approach was to nurture and guide these museums as they found them and to preserve their uniqueness, cultivating the work these makers had already done, by providing enough expertise and guidance to allow village collectors to grow their museums. The institutional cultivation by the MRP experts was designed to maintain the differences they perceived between vernacular museums and their institutional counterparts and to enhance their development as a cultural form through interaction with their founders. The VCP’s goal was to bestow upon these individuals enough professional knowledge so that their collections might eventually be recognized by and incorporated into state-level cultural policies.

Changes in the Romanian cultural landscape brought about by EU membership in 2007 that emphasized democratic approaches to culture also created a climate conducive to establishing the vernacular museum phenomenon on a national level. The construct of civil society codified a way for individuals to organize around a common interest as participants

in and creators of culture. The creation of an association of vernacular museum makers established and codified the work of these collectors in ways that foregrounded its members as cultural operators in their own right.

The work of the MRP and vernacular museum makers to legitimate this emergent heritage form did not necessarily align with the expectations of the VCP's director, who in 2018 still described them as outsider institutions because the program had not achieved recognition of this museum form in the official legal definitions of museums and collections. Nevertheless, the role and purpose of this group of vernacular museums was established, with individual museum makers continuing to welcome visitors and to develop their museums, capitalizing on the VCP's initial legitimating efforts and reclaiming continuity with the past by presenting heritage on their own terms. Vernacular museums are emerging as hybrid cultural institutions that insert personal, local and individual perspectives going beyond the strict public/private cultural binary. The institutional legitimization of these personal museums has allowed them to capitalize on their role as cultural sites that contrast with and offer commentary on more official institutional representations of heritage.

9.1.5. Conclusions of the responses to the research objectives

This study examined vernacular museums because they are an emergent cultural form of knowledge institution that demonstrates museum-making as participatory culture outside of institutional realms. Vernacular museums were found to be distinctive because they foreground personal interpretations of the past that contrast with understandings of the past featured in institutional museums, as reflected in studies of other types of vernacular museums described in the review of literature (Chapter 3). Visitors to vernacular museums included in this study perceived these museums as contiguous-with-yet-distinct-from institutional museum experiences and in how visitors accepted the designation of these

spaces as museums while at the same time valuing the personalized nature of their visits. Visitors expected to see displays of objects but these encounters impressed them through exchanges of knowledge that hinged on the maker's performance of the museum. Vernacular museum makers welcomed visitors with an inherent hospitality that demonstrated a pride of place and further expressed the proprietor's knowledge as distinctive. The impact of vernacular museum visits was conveyed more through the felt impressions and affective understandings of everyday life in the past and less on the exchange of accurate or factual information. The intimate and unconventional nature of vernacular museums and the personal and emplaced perspectives of their makers they manifest are an example of grassroots adaptations of the museum as a known cultural form. Makers conveyed their museums as conceptual journeys that engendered innovative approaches to knowledge-making for visitors. Vernacular museum visits fostered personal associations between makers and visitors that enhanced the value of the experience. These unexpected museums expand the sphere of cultural participation by opening up private-homes-turned-museums as hybrid spaces for fortuitous cultural encounters.

9.2. Implications of the study

This study of Romanian vernacular museums as a phenomenon, as spaces of knowledge-making for their makers and visitors and their legitimation within Romania's cultural "heritage" institutions is significant in its contribution to scholarship and its implications for theory (9.2.1), methodology (9.2.2) and practice (9.2.3).

9.2.1. Implications for theory

These findings add to the literature on new museology that foregrounds visitor-centric, experienced-based and grassroots approaches to museum making by illustrating how museum practices can be employed by non-professionals outside of the institutional

museum realm. These museums are grassroots endeavors and largely self-funded, conceptualized and created by individuals implementing their own idea of a museum. Further, the tendency of museum narratives and objects to foreground details about regular or everyday life in the past further emphasizes this grassroots aspect. Vernacular museums represent a radical example of how to incorporate deeply embedded and embodied personal perspectives of museum makers into museum narratives—by situating them outside of mainstream museums and in unexpected spaces. Maintaining their position apart from institutional museums amplifies the maker's individual voice and emplacement into museum narratives and fortifies their outsider status to be perceived as streamlined from institutional intervention. At the same time, these developments around vernacular museums suggest that future studies of museums need to focus on locating additional examples of how the museum concept is being interpreted and applied by individuals outside of and away from institutional contexts. Future studies should also consider what roll idiosyncratic knowledge can play within museal contexts, since the vernacular museums studied here suggest that there is a place for this kind of ordinary or everyday knowledge within the cultural realm.

The vernacular museum makers studied here have adapted and improvised with the museum concept by developing and presenting their museums according to their own understanding of what a museum is. Part of the process of making a vernacular museum is in how each museum's maker navigates the tension of their creation being at once a museum/not-a-museum. Vernacular museums are tethered to their official institutional counterparts, gaining visibility from that association (e.g. calling themselves museums and through official signs marking their presence in the tourist landscape) while also benefitting from a freedom from the bureaucratic, administrative and policy constraints that might limit their ability to operate as officially sanctioned museums. Vernacular museums advocate for

knowledges that are often backgrounded or marginalized: ordinary, everyday or even outsider knowledge. The museums are often located in spaces that have been brought back from disuse and disrepair and transformed into their makers as a kind of roadside attraction that relies on novelty of display. These findings add to and build upon existing studies of vernacular museums developing in other countries discussed in the review of literature (Chapter 3).

Vernacular museums rely on the museum's recognizability to invite visitors to stop and develop an unexpected connection through the museum maker's immediate narrative. The vernacular museum makes possible an encounter that brings people together in an intimate way that also contrasts with visitor's prior experiences of institutional museums. The personal narratives that these makers put forth about heritage and the past contrast with the authorized or grand narratives and heritage discourses that are imposed from the top-down (Bennett, 1995; Smith, 2006; Stone-Gordon, 2010). Heritage that is experienced through individual perspectives and non-institutional interpretations creates a bonding moment where both maker and visitor are unbound by museum convention. Where Hooper-Greenhill (2000) has emphasized museum knowledge as a reflection of the fragmented and multi-vocal nature of knowledge in the 21st century, this study of vernacular museums further emphasizes how museum knowledge arises outside of and as a commentary on the role and function of institutional museums.

The institutional legitimization of vernacular museums examined as a part of this study emerged over time and in response these museums as they were; the VCP did not attempt to make them fit a predefined mold of what a museum should be. This example demonstrates how the MRP professionals also worked to adapt and improvise the museum concept to accommodate the needs of vernacular museums whose visibility they sought to enhance.

The creation of an association around grassroots museum-making widened the participatory space of culture in which these ordinary-citizens-turned-museum-makers raised their status as recognized cultural operators. Membership in RECOMESPAR as a legally recognized association provided opportunities for these makers to participate in projects as official partners, now on par with national-level museums like the MRP. What was important was that the experts encouraged legitimization of vernacular museums in ways that did not change the essential or unique qualities that drew them these museums in the first place. In this way, the vernacular museums described here provide an example of how legitimization of a grassroots cultural form requires adaptation and improvisation with institutional practices by experts and amateurs alike.

This study explored the phenomenon of vernacular museums by employing an autoethnographic methodology, whose implications are discussed in the next section.

9.2.2. Implications for methodology

The current study has demonstrated how vernacular museums foreground personal interpretations of museum purposes and functions that change the meaning and role of these institutions by reinserting each maker's personal interpretations and by employing what are perceived as novel or idiosyncratic approaches. As spaces of knowledge-making, vernacular museums locally and personally embed and recontextualize objects within the maker's narrative as it moves visitors through the space of a home, creating embodied connections between visitors and these worlds. The ethnographic approach to research undertaken here was sensitive to uncovering these particulars of knowledge-making by individuals, both by museum makers in the creation of their museums and by visitors to these unique spaces and how these experiences were refracted through my own impressions in the dual role of researcher/visitor. Because interpretive projects like museum visitor

studies are always framed through such individual perspectives of the professionals who design them (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Pink, 2013), this methodological approach provides an example of how to make explicit the self-reflexivity of researchers in response to their own sense of embodiment and relational knowledge-making within museum settings.

Highlighting the effects of these already implicit researcher/expert assumptions as knowledge worlds active within the broader frame of museum visitor studies can act as a generative starting point for reevaluating museum experiences within new museological contexts that emphasize multivocality in museums. Including the varying visitor impressions of different museum professionals at all levels could further illuminate how institutional museums, too, speak through multiple voices and multiple perspectives based on the different backgrounds of museum professionals.

Revealing knowledge-making as it emerged through idiosyncratic spaces and encounters are also relevant to the implications for practice, discussed next.

9.2.3. Implications for practice

The current study has implications for professional museum practitioners and expert curatorial staff, for existing and potential vernacular museum makers and for tourists in how and why idiosyncratic knowledge should be incorporated into museums and travel experiences. For professionally trained and expert museum practitioners, this study presents vernacular museum makers as engaged cultural producers who can serve as cultural partners for institutional museums. This is particularly relevant where the missions of established museums seek to incorporate the values of new museology that encourage grassroots approaches and inclusivity. Museum experts can reconsider how to support novel individual or small-scale museum-making efforts by recognizing the contribution of vernacular museums as exemplifying diversity in their presentation of multiple perspectives and

representations of different ways of knowing. This study has also emphasized how such idiosyncratic presentations of knowledge can enhance opportunities for meaning making for museum visitors. As emergent grassroots institutions, vernacular museums exemplify the values of new museology and emphasize the need for institutional museums to incorporate individual interpretations of the museum as a communicative cultural form and how this form is employed outside and away from institutional museum contexts.

For current and potential vernacular museum makers, this study demonstrates that the creation of individual, personal museums foregrounding personal perspectives are a valid and worthwhile endeavor. Vernacular museums provide their makers with a potential entrée into existing tourism circuits. These museums provide perspectives on place that can supplement and augment established narratives and provide tourists with a reason to stop and to make individual connections with museum makers, fostering understanding on the person-to-person level. The visibility gleaned by RECOMESPAR museums through their work as a civil society organization, while perhaps not immediately sustainable on the national level, suggests that vernacular museum makers could form associations at regional or community levels, maintaining more sustained direct contact with other makers in order to capitalize on funding and support and to advocate for the contribution of these individual endeavors at scale.

Finally, this study also suggests how and why visitors and travelers might seek out vernacular museums because of how they contrast with more commodified travel or institutional museum experiences. This study has provided examples of how to identify and locate such hidden museums and demonstrates their potential value to travelers and other visitors as formative knowledge-making endeavors.

9.3. Limitations

The major limitation of this study may be the same criticism that is leveled against vernacular museums themselves: that it is too personal and too centered around the experiences of its author. My research experiences as a cultural outsider who has visited vernacular museums and traveled through Romania have been combined with document analysis and other visitors' testimonials analyzed within a specific methodology presented in this dissertation to obviate this limitation. Other research approaches would certainly reveal additional aspects of the phenomenon and add much-needed perspectives to the growing literature on vernacular museums.

Another limitation is that this study focuses on the museums as cases, highlighting particularity over generalization. It foregrounds in-person visits to four museums, while also aggregating information about other museums that are part of RECOMESPAR who could provide different perspectives of their various makers. It also excludes examples of these kinds of museums that exist in other parts of Romania that do not participate in the RECOMESPAR association. More research is needed to understand the breadth of this phenomenon both within and outside the activities of the Village Collections Program and the RECOMESPAR association.

The current study is also focused on examples of vernacular museums in Romania. Future research should adopt a comparative approach that considers the development and functioning of vernacular museums within Romania to those found in other countries to better understand the implications of these knowledge institutions beyond the local and national scale emphasized here.

Because the focus of this study has been to collect a rich sample of a variety of visitor's experiences at vernacular museums, a third limitation of this study is that it includes

only a small visitor sample supplemented with a selection of guestbook commentary and Facebook reviews related to the four museums selected as research sites. More research is needed to explore the experiences of an even wider selection of visitors to a wider number of museums.

Finally, while this study has relied on ethnographic and autoethnographic methods foregrounding the personal nature of research more generally, ethnography and autoethnography are inherently incomplete, capturing only one interpretation within the development of this or any cultural phenomenon. More research is needed to understand the roles and purposes of vernacular museums as grassroots initiatives, including the problems of preservation and of heritage that is not “for all time.” This research should come from Romanians and Europeans as cultural insiders as well as from this outsider.

9.4. Future research

The phenomenon of vernacular museums foregrounds one aspect of personal and individual endeavors of museum-making. During fieldwork in 2018, I encountered nearly a dozen additional personal museums in addition to those visited for this study, many of which have virtual as well as physical presences. These museums featured traditional artisanal practices (e.g. woodworking; traditional costumes; amateur cinematography) as well as different aspects of history (e.g. the communist past; the history of Romanian computing). These additional museums were created by artists, professionals and hobbyists and exist in analog as well as virtual formats. More research is needed to understand the relationship between the vernacular museums studied here and these emergent unofficial counterparts, which could be studied in the context of cultural policy and national identity and in the context of grassroots museum-making as a form of cultural activism and participatory culture.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Village Collections of Program (2008-2013) summary of activities

Year	Project	Partners/Participants	Goals/Objectives	Outcomes
2008	LOCAL HERITAGE AND IDENTITY. Identifying and promoting collections village in Romania (pilot project) (funded in part by AFCN) Resources cited: http://www.muzeulruralului.roman.ro/acasa/prograrul-cultural-colectii-satesti-din-romania.html	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eight collectors: • Aurel Flutur • Kéni Gaspar • Maria and Nicolae Pipas • Elena Mălinesc & Petru Gălăţan • Doina Doborean • Anton Socaciu • Constantin Niţu • Serlia Menseit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fieldwork in rural localities to identify suitable collections/collectors interested in participating in the program (Counties: Bihor, Constanta, Harghita, Hunedoara, Maramures) • Train collectors re: heritage management • Stimulate development of collections • Promote collections both locally and in the context of heritage tourism • Increase visibility of private collections on the national level and bring them to the attention of policy makers, civil society workers and NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition at MNTR in Bucharest “ in order to promote private initiatives at the national level” • Edited publication “ Slaves to the Beautiful” available at: http://muze-rurale.cimecro/biblioteca-digitala/3-robii-frumosului-muze-si-colectii-satesti-din-romania • Training workshop at MNTR for collectors in five areas: Cultural heritage; Legislation; Museums and Collections; The Fundamentals of Preservation; General Museology; Museum Promotion and Marketing; Cultural Projects Funding • Partnership with CIMEC to incorporate private collections into the official list of museums and collections in Romania: http://ghidulmuzeelor.cimecro/
2009	VILLAGE COLLECTIONS OF ROMANIA. Heritage and local identity (funded in part by AFCN)	(Specific collectors not identified in program documents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring 14 ethnographic collections in regions (Bihor, Bistriţa, Constanţa, Hunedoara, Harghita, Galaş, Maramureş, Olt, Sibiu and Vrancea counties) • Training initiatives for new collectors (Counties of Bistriţa-Nasaud, Constanţa, Galaş, Harghita, Sibiu, Vrancea) • Workshops/roundtables focusing on needs of collectors – dialogues between specialists and collectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition at MNTR in Bucharest <i>Village Museums and Collections in Romania</i> • Edition of Martor, Journal of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review: <i>Patrimony and Local Identity</i> (2009), Vol. 14. • Training (as above) for six new collectors • Workshop with theme: Private Village Collections: The case for a national network

Year	Project	Partners/Participants	Goals/Objectives	Outcomes
2010	THE FOOTSTEPS OF TIME. Museums and collections village in Romania	<p>Museum partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complexul Muzeal Național ASTRA Sibiu Muzeul Țării Crișurilor Muzeul Județean Olț Complexul Muzeal Național ASTRA Muzeul Național al Carpaților Răsăriteni, Muzeul de Artă din Constanța, Centrul cultural „Dunărea de Jos” Galați 	Increase exposure to fourteen collections by promoting exhibitions in nearby cities (Oradea, Sibiu, Miercurea-Ciuc, Slatina in 2010; Constanta and Galați in 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Conference (Local Collections and Heritage) at MNTR Exhibitions in cities near local museums “raise awareness of local administrative and cultural institutions” – connecting private museums and local public development
2011	VILLAGE COLLECTIONS OF ROMANIA. A future for heritage, a heritage for the future (funded in part by AFCN)	(Need to identify) five additional collectors (interns): focus was on young people (aged 19-30) with their own collections or who will inherit family collections	Training program for young collectors (19-30) – their own collections or taking over from parents	Formation of RECOMESPAR (recomespar.ro) “The opportunity to become part of/join a national network that will represent their interests and help them find efficient solutions to their real needs is one of the major stakes of the programme.” (Mihalache, 2009, 129)
2012	Expoziție de Etnografie: Recuperari, Restituiri, Restaurari (Ethnography exhibition: Recover, Return, Restore) (funded in part by AFCN) http://www.muzeulanahuitroman.ro/books/recuperari-restituii-restaurari-en.html	<p>Museum/University partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muzeul Național al Țăranului Român – București RECOMESPAR members (24) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of objects Exhibition of restored objects along with detailed descriptions of restoration process Catalog

Appendix B: RECOMESPAR Association (2010-2013) summary of activities

Year	Project (RECOMESPAR as sponsor)	Partners/Participants	Goals/Objectives	Outcomes
2012	<p>Colecții etnografice particulare din România. Restaurarea patrimoniului cultural material, o cale spre dezvoltarea durabilă</p> <p>Private ethnographic collections in Romania. Restoration of material cultural heritage, a path to sustainable development</p> <p>http://recomespar.ro/proiect_1.html</p>	<p>Museum/University partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muzeul Național al Țăranului Român – București Complexul Național Muzeal ASTRA – Sibiu Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” – Sibiu Universitatea Națională de Arte – 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of select objects from each collection Foster partnerships between RECOMESPAR and “prestigious” cultural institutions and universities “Public legitimization” of RECOMESPAR as group with ability to effectively conserve, manage and promote heritage collections of members. Increase awareness of value of objects; empower collectors to better understand how to conserve, restore and promote their collections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of objects Exhibition of restored objects along with detailed descriptions of restoration process at MRP Exhibition catalog
2012	<p>Semnălizarea colecțiilor și muzeelor etnografice săsești particulare din România</p> <p>(Signage for Private Collections and Museums in Romania)</p> <p>http://recomespar.ro/proiect_2.html</p> <p>(Funded by AFECN)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rețeaua Națională a Muzeelor din România (RNMIR)[National Network of Museums in Romania] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring attention to the activities of local museum makers and their activities in the communities where they are located. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of “tourist signposts” in 13 counties where RECOMESPAR museums are located. Bringing “increased visibility” and additional visitors to RECOMESPAR museums by “connecting [them] to the tourist circuit of information and by facilitating public access.”

Year	Project (RECOMESPAR as partner)	Partners /Participants	Goals /Objectives	Outcomes
2010	Rural Museum Collections: Between Reality and Aspirations – I (funded in part by AFCN) http://muzee-rurale.cimtec.ro/proiect-2010/prezentarea-proiectului-cultural-colectiile-muzeale-rurale-intre-realitate-si-aspiratii-i-2010	Collectors in counties: Suceava, Neamt, Timiș, Sibiu, Cluj, Prahova, Giurgiu, Dolj and Tulcea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Centre for Professional Training in Culture</i> (Vasile Emanuel Costoiu) <i>Institute for Cultural Memory - CIMEC</i> (Aurelia Dăru) <i>Institute of Education Sciences</i> (Angelica Mihailescu) <i>Association of Museums and Collections School of Romania</i> (Ovidiu Coca) 	“ the program is intended to protect and promote heritage museums and addresses teachers or other people in the countryside who work with local museum collections”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training sessions (knowledge and skills necessary to organize proper exhibitions and optimal conditions for preservation, promotion of collections, how to use museum collections as educational resources in local schools; increasing interest in cultural value of collections locally. Published <i>Guide to Good Practice in Protecting and Promoting Local Public Collections</i> Roundtable: <i>Museum Collections: A reality that we are building together</i> (fostered dialogue on protection and promotion of heritage; possibility for new collaborations (specialists, teachers, local collectors, local government)
2012	Rural Museum Collections: Between Reality and Aspirations – II (funded in part by AFCN) http://muzee-rurale.cimtec.ro/proiect-2012/prezentarea-proiectului-cultural-colectiile-muzeale-rurale-intre-realitate-si-aspiratii-ii-2012	Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Heritage Institute RECOMESPAR 	“ The project is intended to protect and promote local cultural heritage (museum heritage, monuments and folk traditions) and addresses custodians museums / museum collections in rural areas (these can be private museums or in schools, community centers and town halls).”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training sessions (knowledge and skills necessary to organize proper exhibitions and optimal conditions for preservation, promotion of collections, how to use museum collections as educational resources in local schools; increasing interest in cultural value of collections locally. Published <i>Guide to Good Practice in Protecting and Promoting Local Public Collections</i> Roundtable: <i>Museum Collections: A reality that we are building together</i> (fostered dialogue on protection and promotion of heritage; possibility for new collaborations (specialists, teachers, local collectors, local government)

Appendix C: Table of RECOMESPAR museums

ID	Name (Romanian)	Name (English)	Founding date	Ethnicity	Locality	Commune	County	Category	General Profile
MUS_01	Colecția de Etnografie Galoșpetreu	Ethnographic Collection	2002	Hungarian, Émmelék	Galoșpetreu	Tarcea	Bihor		Ethnography
MUS_02	Colecția etnografică Maris Marei	Maris Mare Ethnographic Collection	2007	Romanian, Hungarian, German, Roma	Gioc	Gioc	Tamș	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_03	Punct muzeal Victor Tatu	Museum Collection of Victor Tatu	after 1998	Maybe some German?	Sasca Montana	Sasca Montana	Carș Severin	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_04	Casa Muzeu Ligia Bodea	House-Museum of Ligia Bodea	2003	Romanian, Hungarian, Slovak	Iaz	Plopiș	Sălaj	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_05	Muzeul de Etnografie "Horea și Aurel Păun"	"Horea și Aurel Păun" Ethnographic Museum	1981; 2005		Clujșan	Petrossa	Bihor		Ethnography
MUS_06	Muzeul Sămbuț Hăgeșan	Hăgeș Village Museum	2009		Petșana	Densuș	Hunedoara	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_07	Muzeul Montaniilor	The "Montani" Ethnographic Museum	2005	Montan	Petroșani		Hunedoara	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_08	Muzeul Etnografic și Religios	Ethnographic and Religious Museum	2000		Bucurda Vinosaș	Ighin	Alba	Muzeu în subordinea Consiliului Județean Alba și Muzeului Național al Unității - Alba Iulia	Ethnography
MUS_09	Muzeul Pastoral Iulia	Pastoral Museum	2006		Iulia	Iulia	Sibiu	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_10*	Colecția etnografică Csanáde	Ethnographic Collection of Vasil Pogor (CSANÉ)	1990	Romanian, Saxon	Csanáde		Sibiu	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_11	Colecția Etnografică "Anuța și Aurel Achim"	"Anuța and Aurel Achim" Ethnographic Collection	2003	Romanian, Saxon, Hungarian	Ocna Șibinului		Sibiu	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_12	Muzeul interetnic al Văii Hărbăciului	Interethnic Museum of Hărbăciului Valley		Saxon	Albina	Albina	Sibiu	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_13	Colecția etnografică Constantin Năpu	Ethnographic Collection of Constantin Năpu			Cornești	Poborn	Olt	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_14	Colecția etnografică Ionel Constantin-Iele	Ethnographic Collection of Ionel Constantin-Iele			Izvoarele	Izvoarele	Olt	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_15	Colecția etnografică George Nichit	George Nichit Ethnographic Collection	2005		Feldu	Feldu	Bistrița-Năsăud		Ethnography
MUS_16	Colecția privată "Tordălescu George Adrian"	"Tordălescu George Adrian" Private Collection			Berevoești	Berevoești	Argeș	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography and Local History
MUS_17	Muzeul Păianilor de Păie	Museum of Straw Hats	2001	Hungarian			Harghita	Muzeu comunal	Ethnography
MUS_18	Colecția etnografică "Casa cu amintiri" - Doina Dobrea	Ethnographic Collection "House of Memories" - Doina Dobrea	ca. 2005	Hungarians, Székely	Subcetate	Subcetate	Harghita	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography and Local History
MUS_19	Colecția Etnografică Bucuresteană "Ioan Grămadă"	"Ioan Grămadă" Bukovinean Ethnographic Collection	1999	Jews, Romanians, Germans	Câmpulung Moldovenesc		Suceava		
MUS_20	Colecția etnografică Dionisie Olteni	"Dionisie Olteni" Museum	2003		Horodnic de Jos	Horodnic de Jos	Suceava	Muzeu comunal	Ethnography
MUS_21	Colecția etnografică privată "Zestreț"	Private Ethnographic Collection	2003		Rucăr	Soreja	Vrancea	Muzeu comunal	Ethnography
MUS_22	Casa-muzeu "Rădăcinile Vrancei"	Roots of Vrancea House-Museum	2004		Băsești	Băsești	Vrancea	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography and Local History
MUS_23	Muzeul-său "Vatra cu Dor"	Vatra cu Dor'Ecomuseum		"no specific ethnography"	Șișia	Tulucești	Galați	Muzeu / colecție locală	Ethnography
MUS_24	Casa tăvănească "Zăbile Toay"	Zăbile Toay Tartar House	2006	Tatar	Cobadin	Cobadin	Constanța	Muzeu comunal	Ethnography

Appendix D: Table of RECOMESPAR museum makers

ID	Proprietor Name	Position	Gender	Occupation (RECOMESPAR description)
MUS_01	Kéri Gáspár		M	Dentist/retired
MUS_02	Matei Marius**	Proprietor	M	Museum curator and journalist (?)
MUS_03	Victor Tăutu		M	Geologist/retired
MUS_04	Ligia Bodea**	Proprietor	F	Student in kinesiology at Cluj
MUS_05	Aurel Flutur	Proprietors	M/F	Truck and taxi driver; self-taught collector
MUS_06	Anton Socaciu	Proprietor	M	technician/photographer and photojournalist
MUS_07	Elena Mălinesc și Petru Gălățan	Proprietors	M/F	Mine worker and took care of animals
MUS_08	Pr. Bolea Nicolae, Grigoruț Anamaria		M	Priest
MUS_09	Ileana Morariu	Proprietor	F	Teacher and association "Maj-Jina"
MUS_10*	Vasile Polgar	Proprietor	M	Businessman
MUS_11	Anuța și Aurel Achim	Proprietors	M/F	Machine shop and repair
MUS_12	Eugen Vaida**	Proprietor	m	
MUS_13	Constantin Nițu	Proprietor	M	Weaver and teacher
MUS_14	Ionel Constantin	Proprietor	M	Editor
MUS_15	George Nechiti		M	Policeman
MUS_16	George Iordăchescu	Proprietor	M	Family of intellectuals and merchants
MUS_17	Szocs Lajos jun. or Szocs Ludovic	Director	M	Maker of straw hats (family business)
MUS_18	Doina Dobrean	Proprietor	F	Teacher (retired) and author
MUS_19	Ioan Grămadă		M	Teacher of carpentry; worked for county in 1980s
MUS_20	Dionizie Olenici	Proprietor	M	Work at paint factory
MUS_21	Chiriță Mariana	Proprietor	F	Professor of Romanian
MUS_22	Costică Beș	Proprietor	M	Shepherd and driver (?)
MUS_23	Paul Buța	Proprietor	M	
MUS_24	Prof. Zeidali Zulfie	Director	F	Kindergarten teacher

* Museum listed as closed.

** Young proprietors aged 19-30.

Data compiled from: ghidulmuzeelor.cimec.ro and recomespar.ro

Appendix E: Documents and images analyzed

1. RECOMESPAR website:

Descriptions and images of each museum (24 in total) found at the RECOMESPAR association website: www.recomespar.ro

ID	Museum Name from RECOMESPAR website	Link to website description
MUS_01	<i>Casa-Muzeu GALOȘPETREU</i>	http://recomespar.ro/galospetreu.html
MUS_02	<i>Colecția Etnografică Marius Matei</i>	http://recomespar.ro/marius_matei.html
MUS_03	<i>Punctul Muzeal Victor Tatau</i>	http://recomespar.ro/victor_tatau.html
MUS_04	<i>Casa-Muzeu LAZ</i>	http://recomespar.ro/iaz.html
MUS_05	<i>Muzeul de Etnografie Aurel și Horea Flutur</i>	http://recomespar.ro/horea_flutur.html
MUS_06	<i>Muzeul Satului HATEGAN</i>	http://recomespar.ro/hategan.html
MUS_07	<i>Muzeul MOMĂRLANULUI</i>	http://recomespar.ro/momarlanului.html
MUS_08	<i>Muzeul etnografic și religios Bucerdea Vînoasă</i>	http://recomespar.ro/burcedea.html
MUS_09	<i>Muzeul PASTORAL</i>	http://recomespar.ro/pastoral.html
MUS_10	<i>Colecția Etnografică CÎSNĂDIE</i>	http://recomespar.ro/cisnadie.html
MUS_11	<i>Colecția Etnografică ANUȚA ȘI AUREL ACHIM</i>	http://recomespar.ro/achim.html
MUS_12	<i>Muzeul Interetnic al Văii Hărtibaciului</i>	http://recomespar.ro/hartibaciului.html
MUS_13	<i>Colecția Etnografică Constantin Nițu</i>	http://recomespar.ro/constantin_nitu.html
MUS_14	<i>Colecția Etnografică Ionel Constantin-Lele</i>	http://recomespar.ro/ionel_constantin.html
MUS_15	<i>Colecția Etnografică George Nechiti</i>	http://recomespar.ro/george_nechiti.html
MUS_16	<i>Muzeul de la Raspantie</i>	http://recomespar.ro/raspantie.html
MUS_17	<i>Muzeul Pălăriilor de Paie</i>	http://recomespar.ro/muzeul_palariilor_de_paie.html
MUS_18	<i>Colecția Etnografică Casa cu Amintiri</i>	http://recomespar.ro/casa_cu_amintiri.html
MUS_19	<i>Muzeul Etnografic Ioan Gramada</i>	http://recomespar.ro/ioan_gramada.html
MUS_20	<i>Colecția Etnografică Felicia și Dionizie Olenici</i>	http://recomespar.ro/dionizie_olenici.html
MUS_21	<i>Colecția Etnografică ZESTREA</i>	http://recomespar.ro/zestrea.html
MUS_22	<i>Muzeul RĂDĂCINA VRANCEI</i>	http://recomespar.ro/radacina_vrancei.html
MUS_23	<i>Muzeul-Vin Vatra cu Dor</i>	http://recomespar.ro/vatra_cu_dor.html
MUS_24	<i>Casa Tătărească Zulfie Totay</i>	http://recomespar.ro/zulfie_totay.html

2. Village Collections Program Documents:

Publications documenting the activities of the Village Collections Program

- Online reports documenting Village Collections Program outcomes:
 - Colecții și patrimoniu local « Conferințele de la Șosea. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/conferinte/?p=113>
 - Colecții etnografice particulare din România. Restaurarea patrimoniului cultural material, o cale spre dezvoltarea durabilă. (n.d.). Retrieved February 29, 2016, from <http://www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/acasa/colectii-etnografice-particulare-din-romania-ro.html>
 - Mihalache, C. (n.d.). Patrimoniu și identitate locală [2009]. Retrieved February 23, 2016, from <http://www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/acasa/patrimoniu-si-identitate-locala-pagina-unu.html>
 - Programul cultural COLECȚII SĂTEȘTI DIN ROMÂNIA (2008 – 2013). (n.d.). Retrieved February 23, 2016, from <http://www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/acasa/programul-cultural-colectii-satesti-din-romania.html>
- **Program literature documenting the activities of the Village Collections Program in published form:**
 - Mihalache, C. (Ed.). (2012). *Robii frumosului: Colecții etnografice particulare sătești din România* (Ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită). București: Editura Martor. (Introduction)
 - Mihalache, C. (2009). Museums and Village Collections of Romania. A Pleading for Initiative. *Martor*, 14, 123–130.
 - Mihăilescu, V. (2009). Local Museums? Village Collections in Recent Romania. *Martor*, 14, 11–18.

3. European Union and Romanian cultural policy and related legislative documents

The core policy documents to be reviewed for this study relate to the European Commission's Culture Programme 2007-2013 and to Romania's accession into the EU will include:

- European Commission Cultural Heritage webpage:
<https://ec.europa.eu/culture/>
- European Commission, EACEA: Culture Programme 2007-2013 web page:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/culture/programme/about_culture_en.php
- Key policy documents:
 - Barbu, D.C. (2013). *Norme 2013 Cultura 2007-2013*. București: România Ministerul Culturii. Retrieved from www.cultura.ro/page/251
 - DECISION No. 1855/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 establishing the Culture Program (2007 to 2013). Retrieved from www.kmu.gov.ua/document/244798228/Culture_Programme.pdf
 - Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No 1855/2006/EC establishing the Culture Programme (2007 to 2013).
 - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe - COM(2007) 242 final.
- Key documents related to Romania's accession into the EU, including:
 - Romanian Constitution of 1991 with amendments through 2003:
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Romania_2003?lang=en
 - European Commission Communications on Action Plans, Road maps and monitoring of accession negotiations from the period 2000-2007 found at ec.europa.eu (e.g. COM(2002) 256 final; COM(2002) 624 final; COM(2002) 700 final; COM (2005) 534 final; COM(2006) 214 final; COM(2006) 549 final; and others)

Appendix F: Mediated presentations of RECOMESPAR museum sites

Museum ID	Museum Name (RECOMESPAR)	RECOMESPAR website	CIMEC database entry	Self-produced website	Facebook page	YouTube	Journalistic coverage (articles or blog posts)	DVD (self-produced)	Tourism Websites	Flickr	On Google Maps
MUS_01	<i>Casa-Muzeu GALOȘPETREU</i>	x	x				1				
MUS_02	<i>Colecția Etnografică Marius Matei</i>	x	x	x	x		2				
MUS_03	<i>Punctul Muzeal Victor Tatân</i>	x	x			x					
MUS_04	<i>Casa-Muzeu LAZ</i>	x	x		x	x	2				
MUS_05	<i>Muzeul de Etnografie Aurel și Horea Flutur</i>	x	x	x	x	x	3		x		
MUS_06	<i>Muzeul Satului HAȚEGAN</i>	x	x		x		4			x	
MUS_07	<i>Muzeul MOMĂRLANULUI</i>	x	x			x				x	x
MUS_08	<i>Muzeul etnografic și religios Bucerdea Vinoasă</i>	x	x		x		1				
MUS_09	<i>Muzeul PASTORAL</i>	x	x			x	3	x	x		x
MUS_10	<i>Colecția Etnografică CISNĂDIE</i>	x	x								
MUS_11	<i>Colecția Etnografică ANUȚA ȘI AUREL ACHIM</i>	x	x								
MUS_12	<i>Muzeul Interetnic al Văii Hârtibaciului</i>	x	x				5+				
MUS_13	<i>Colecția Etnografică Constantin Nițu</i>	x	x	x							
MUS_14	<i>Colecția Etnografică Ionel Constantin-Lele</i>	x	x								
MUS_15	<i>Colecția Etnografică George Nechiti</i>	x	x		x						
MUS_16	<i>Muzeul de la Raspantie</i>	x	x								x
MUS_17	<i>Muzeul Pălăriilor de Paie</i>	x	x				3				x
MUS_18	<i>Colecția Etnografică Casa cu Amintiri</i>	x	x		x		2	x			
MUS_19	<i>Muzeul Etnografic Ioan Gramada</i>	x	x				1				
MUS_20	<i>Colecția Etnografică Felicia și Dionizie Olenici</i>	x	x	x	x	x					x
MUS_21	<i>Colecția Etnografică ZESTREA</i>	x	x								
MUS_22	<i>Muzeul RĂDĂCINA VRANCEI</i>	x	x		x		1				
MUS_23	<i>Muzeul-Vin Vatra cu Dor</i>	x	x		x						
MUS_24	<i>Casa Tătărească Zulfie Totay</i>	x	x				2				

Data based on searches of Romanian museum names as listed on the RECOMESPAR website using Google and Bing search engines in May 2017.

Appendix G: Recruitment email (English version)

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

Principal Investigator: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Project Title: An ethnographic study of Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making and their institutional legitimation

E-mail recruitment

Dear (name of potential research participant):

I am contacting you because I have seen your [insert name of video, blog post, etc.] that I found at [insert link]. I am interested in interviewing you to learn more about your experiences visiting [insert name of museum] as part of my research project for my dissertation. This project is entitled: *An ethnographic study of Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making and their institutional legitimation*. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Library and Information Science at Rutgers University, in New Jersey, USA. My research aims to learn more about the different kinds of experiences people can have when visiting these unique self-made museums that are found in Romanian villages. What I learn through this study may be beneficial to other museum-makers but also to museum and library professionals around the world as they work to preserve local history and heritage in their own communities. Studying the experience of visiting and making these personal museums also has the potential to inform traditional museums about new ways to make their museums more appealing to different kinds of visitors.

If you would like to be interviewed for my study, I will ask you to participate in an interview during which I ask questions about your experiences visiting a local museum or village collection in Romania, where and when you visited, and how you felt about this experience. The interview will last approximately one hour and will be audio recorded. It will be scheduled at a place and time that is convenient for you. Some of this research may be published, however, any information that I collect during this study will remain confidential. This means that any information you give to me will be presented in such a way that your responses will not be able to be connected back to you personally.

If you are interested in learning more about participating in my research study, I would be happy to provide more information, including the kinds of questions I will ask and more about the logistics of the interview process.

I appreciate your time and I hope that you will consider participating in my study.

With good wishes,
Cheryl Klimaszewski

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201



Appendix H: Recruitment email (Romanian version)

Rutgers, Universitatea de Stat din New Jersey

COMISIA DE CONTROL PENTRU PROTECȚIA SUBIECȚILOR UMANI ÎN CERCETARE

Cercetător Științific: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Titlul Proiectului: Un studiu etnografic al muzeelor locale din România ca spații generatoare de cunoaștere și al legitimitatea lor instituțională

E-mail pentru Recrutare

Dragă (numele potențialului participant la cercetare)

Vă contactez pentru că am văzut **[inserează numele clipului video, postării de blog, etc.]** pe care l-am găsit la **[inserează link-ul]**. Sunt interesată să vă interviewez pentru a învăța mai multe despre experiențele trăite de dumneavoastră în timpul vizitei la **[inserează numele muzeului]**, ca parte din proiectul meu de cercetare pentru doctorat. Acest proiect are titlul: *Un studiu etnografic al muzeelor locale din România ca spații generatoare de cunoaștere și legitimitatea lor instituțională*. Sunt doctorandă la Departamentul de Biblioteconomie și Științe Informaționale din cadrul Universității "Rutgers" din New Jersey, Statele Unite. Obiectivul cercetării mele este de a înțelege mai multe despre tipurile de experiențe ale celor care vizitează aceste muzee unice, create prin eforturi proprii, care se găsesc în satele din România. Ceea ce învăț prin intermediul acestui studiu le-ar putea fi de folos altor realizatori de muzeu, dar și funcționarilor din muzee și bibliotecarilor profesioniști din biblioteci din întreaga lume, în munca lor de conservare a istoriei locale și a patrimoniilor din comunitățile lor. Studiarea experiențelor de vizitare dar și de creare a acestor muzee personale are potențialul de a informa muzeele tradiționale despre noi modalități de a deveni mai atractive unor game mai variate de vizitatori.

Dacă ați dori să fiți interviuat/ă pentru studiul meu, vă voi ruga să participați la un interviu pe parcursul căruia vă voi pune întrebări legate de experiențele trăite în timpul vizitei la un muzeu local sau colecție rurală din România, unde și când le-ați vizitat și părerea dumneavoastră despre experiența trăită. Interviuul va dura aproximativ o oră și va fi înregistrat audio. Vom stabili un loc și o oră care vă convin. O parte din această cercetare ar putea fi publicată, dar orice informație pe care o voi recolta în timpul studiului va rămâne confidențială. Acest fapt înseamnă că orice informație îmi oferiți va fi prezentată în așa fel încât răspunsurile dumneavoastră nu vor putea fi asociate cu identitatea dumneavoastră.

Dacă sunteți interesat/ă să aflați mai multe despre participarea la studiul meu de cercetare, vă stau la dispoziție pentru mai multe informații, inclusiv în legătură cu întrebările care vă vor fi puse și cu logistica procesului de intervieware.

Vă mulțumesc pentru timpul acordat și sper că veți lua în considerare participarea la studiul meu.

Cu gânduri bune,
Cheryl Klimaszewski

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201



Appendix I: Oral Consent Form – Museum Makers (English version)

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

Principal Investigator: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Project Title: An ethnographic study of Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making and their institutional legitimation

Oral Consent to Participate in Research Study for Museum-makers

I am Cheryl Klimaszewski, a doctoral student in the department of Library and Information Science at Rutgers University, and I would like to request your participation in my study of local museums and village collections in Romania. You were selected to participate in this study because you have created your own museum. My research aims to learn more about the different kinds of experiences people can have when visiting these unique self-made museums. What I learn through this study may be beneficial to other museum-makers but also to museum and library professionals around the world as they work to preserve local history and heritage in their own communities. Studying the experience of visiting and making these personal museums also has the potential to inform traditional museums about new ways to make their museums more appealing to different kinds of visitors.

If you would like to participate in this study, I will ask you to give me a tour of your museum so that I can audio record what you tell me about your museum and take photographs as you show me your museum. I would also like to ask you some questions about how you made your museum, such as how you got the idea to start the museum and how and why you decided to collect and arrange the objects in the museum. With your consent, the interview will also be audio recorded and will not last longer than one hour. Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty and will in no way jeopardize your position. If, at any time and for any reason you would like to end the interview, you can just let me know and we can stop the interview. If you decide after the interview takes place that you would prefer to not be included in this research study, you may contact me using the Researcher contact information provided on the reverse side of this sheet. However, requests to withdraw as a study participant should be received on or before September 30, 2018 because after this time, some study results may have been published and it may not be possible to remove your responses from publications.

Some of this research may be published, however, any information that I collect during this study will remain confidential. This means that any information you give to me will be presented in such a way that your responses will not be able to be connected back to you personally. Only I and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University will have access to your responses and I will keep all the data that I collect today secure and confidential. However, if you would prefer, I would also be happy to feature details from the interview and photographs of your museum on my research-related website in order to help publicize your museum if you feel that would be beneficial to you.

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180108

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APPROVED
IRB ID: Pro20170001855
Approval Date: 12/14/2017
Expiration Date: 12/13/2018

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact me or my faculty advisor at:

<p>Researcher: Cheryl Klimaszewski Department of Library and Information Science School of Communication and Information Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey 4 Huntington Street New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1071 ck482@rutgers.edu 01 215 696 3790</p>	<p>Faculty advisor: Dr. Marija Dalbello Associate Professor of Library and Information Science School of Communication and Information Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey 4 Huntington Street New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1071 dalbello@rutgers.edu 01 848 932 8785</p>
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If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers (which is a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants).

Institutional Review Board
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200
335 George Street, 3rd Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone: 732-235-2866
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be offered a copy of this oral consent statement that you may keep for your own reference.

If you understand these procedures and if you do not have any questions, do you agree to be a study subject?

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180108



AUDIO/VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO ORAL CONSENT FORM

Principal Investigator: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Project Title: An ethnographic study of Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making and their institutional legitimization

You have already agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Cheryl Klimaszewski. I am asking for your permission to allow me to audiotape and photograph your museum tour and interview as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the study. The recording will be used for analysis by the researcher and photographs will be used mainly to document different aspects of the museum's appearance. Recording of personal identifiers will be kept to a minimum. The recordings will be stored in a secured, password protected file on my computer. These recordings will be retained indefinitely. Your oral consent grants the researcher named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The researcher will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than those stated in the consent form without your permission.

Do you agree for your interview and museum site visit to be recorded and photographed by the researcher?

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180108



Appendix J: Oral Consent Form – Museum Makers (Romanian version)

Rutgers, Universitatea de Stat din New Jersey

COMISIA DE CONTROL PENTRU PROTECȚIA SUBIECȚILOR UMANI ÎN CERCETARE

Cercetător Științific: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Titlul Proiectului: Un studiu etnografic al muzeelor locale din România ca spații generatoare de cunoaștere și al legitimitatea lor instituțională

Consimțământ verbal de Participare într-un Studiu de Cercetare pentru Realizatorii de muzee

Mă numesc Cheryl Klimaszewski și sunt doctorandă în Departamentul de Biblioteconomie și Științe Informaționale din cadrul Universității Rutgers și aș dori să solicit participarea dumneavoastră în studiul meu despre muzee locale și colecții rurale din România. Ați fost selectat(ă) să participați la acest studiu întrucât v-ați creat propriul muzeu. Obiectivul cercetării mele este de a învăța mai multe despre diferitele tipuri de experiențe pe care le pot trăi cei care vizitează aceste muzee unice, create prin eforturi proprii. Ceea ce învăț prin intermediul acestui studiu le-ar putea fi de folos altor realizatori de muzee, dar și funcționarilor din muzee și bibliotecarilor din întreaga lume, în munca lor de conservare a istoriei locale și a patrimoniilor din comunitățile lor. Studiarea experiențelor atât de vizitare cât și de creare a acestor muzee personale pot ajuta muzeele tradiționale să devină mai atractive unor game mai variate de vizitatori.

Dacă doriți să participați la acest studiu, vă voi ruga să-mi oferiți un tur al muzeului, ca să pot înregistra audio ceea ce îmi povestiți despre muzeu și să fac fotografii în timp ce îmi arătați muzeul. De asemenea, aș dori să vă pun câteva întrebări cu privire la modul în care ați creat muzeul, mai precis cum v-a venit ideea să-l creați și cum/ de ce v-ați decis să colecționați și să aranjați obiectele din muzeu. Cu acordul dumneavoastră, interviul va fi înregistrat audio și nu va dura mai mult de o oră. Decizia dumneavoastră de a participa la acest studiu este complet voluntară. Refuzul de a participa nu va implica nicio sancțiune și nu vă va periclita situația în nici un fel. În cazul în care, indiferent de moment sau motiv, ați prefera ca interviul să ia sfârșit, îmi puteți spune și vom încheia interviul. Dacă hotărâți, după ce interviul s-a sfârșit, că nu doriți să fiți incluși în acest studiu mă puteți contacta folosind datele de contact ale Cercetătorului, prevăzute pe verso. Cu toate acestea, cererea dumneavoastră de a vă retrage din funcția de participant la studiu ar trebui să fie primită până pe 30 Septembrie, 2018, deoarece, după această dată, unele rezultate ale studiului ar putea fi deja publicate, iar eliminarea răspunsurilor dumneavoastră din materialul publicat ar putea fi imposibilă.

O parte din această cercetare ar putea fi publicată, însă datele de cercetare pe care le recoltez în timpul acestui studiu vor rămâne confidențiale. Acest fapt înseamnă că orice informație pe care mi-o oferiți va fi prezentată în așa fel încât răspunsurile dumneavoastră nu vor putea fi asociate cu identitatea dumneavoastră. Doar eu și Comisia pentru Controlul Cercetării din cadrul Universității Rutgers vom avea acces la răspunsurile dumneavoastră și vom păstra datele obținute de către mine astăzi în siguranță și confidențiale. Totuși, dacă preferați, aș fi dispusă să public detalii din interviu și fotografii cu muzeul dumneavoastră pe website-ul meu dedicat subiectului cercetării pentru a face publicitate muzeului, în cazul în care simțiți că acest fapt v-ar putea fi de folos.

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201

 **RUTGERS** | eIRB
APPROVED
IRB ID: Pro20170001855
Approval Date: 12/14/2017
Expiration Date: 12/13/2018

Dacă aveți întrebări în legătură cu studiul sau cu metodologia acestuia, mă puteți contacta fie pe mine, fie pe profesoara mea coordonatoare:

<p>Cercetător: Cheryl Klimaszewski Department of Library and Information Science School of Communication and Information Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey 4 Huntington Street New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1071 ck482@rutgers.edu 01 215 696 3790</p>	<p>Profesor Coordonator: Dr. Marija Dalbello Associate Professor of Library and Information Science School of Communication and Information Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey 4 Huntington Street New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1071 dalbello@rutgers.edu 01 848 932 8785</p>
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Dacă aveți întrebări legate de drepturile dumneavoastră ca participant la cercetare, puteți lua legătura cu Comisia de Control al Cercetării din cadrul Universității Rutgers (acesta este un comitet care se asigură că participanții din cadrul studiilor de cercetare sunt protejați).

Institutional Review Board
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza/ Suite 3200
335 George Street, 3rd Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Telefon: 732-235-2866
E-mail: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Veți primi o copie a acestui consimțământ verbal pe care o puteți păstra.

Dacă înțelegeți aceste proceduri și nu aveți alte întrebări, sunteți de acord să participați la studiu?

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201



ANEXĂ ÎNREGISTRARE AUDIO/VIDEO LA FORMULARUL PENTRU CONSIMȚĂMÂNT VERBAL

Cercetător Științific: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Titlul Proiectului: Un studiu etnografic al muzeelor locale din România ca spații generatoare de cultură și legitimitatea lor instituțională

V-ați exprimat acordul de a participa la studiul de cercetare condus de Cheryl Klimaszewski. Vă cer permisiunea să înregistrez audio și să fac fotografii în timpul turului de muzeu și al interviului, ca parte din studiul de cercetare. Nu trebuie să fiți de acord să fiți înregistrat(ă) pentru a putea participa la acest studiu. Înregistrarea audio va fi folosită în analiza subiectului de către cercetător, iar fotografiile vor fi folosite cu precădere pentru a documenta diferite aspecte ale esteticii muzeului. Înregistrarea audio a identificatorilor personali va fi ținută la un nivel minim. Înregistrările vor fi păstrate într-un fișier securizat și protejat cu parolă pe computerul meu. Aceste înregistrări vor fi păstrate pe termen nelimitat. Consimțământul dumneavoastră verbal îi oferă cercetătorului numit mai sus permisiunea de a vă înregistra potrivit prevederilor specificate în sunitul studiu. Cercetătorul nu va folosi înregistrarea/înregistrările pentru alte motive în afară de cele stabilite în formularul de consimțământ fără permisiunea dumneavoastră.

Sunteți de acord ca interviul și vizita muzeului dumneavoastră să fie înregistrate audio și fotografiate de către cercetător?

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201



Appendix K: Museum maker interviews protocol (English version)

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

Principal Investigator: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Project Title: An ethnographic study of Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making and their institutional legitimization

Interview Protocol for Museum-makers

Museum-makers will be asked the following questions related to the making of their museum either during or immediately after the museum tour through a process of known as emergent interviewing. Because this is an ethnographic study, questions may deviate somewhat from those listed below.

Questions:

1. Could you talk to me about how you came up with the idea of establishing this Museum?
2. Tell me about the first object or group of things you collected.
3. What prompted you to organize the museum in this way?
4. What has changed in the museum since you founded it?
5. When exactly did the museum open?
6. Tell me about your favorite object in the museum.
7. Tell me about your favorite area of the museum.
8. What do you feel like you are trying to save with your collection and your museum?
9. What kinds of things are not in the museum that you would like to have?
10. How do you imagine the future of your museum?
11. How do you try to involve others in the community in your museum?

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201



Appendix L: Museum maker interviews protocol (Romanian version)

Rutgers, Universitatea de Stat din New Jersey

COMISIA DE CONTROL PENTRU PROTECȚIA SUBIECȚILOR UMANI ÎN CERCETARE

Cercetător Științific: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Titlul Proiectului: Un studiu etnografic al muzeelor locale din România ca spații generatoare de cunoaștere și al legitimitatea lor instituțională

Protocol de Intervievare pentru realizatorii de muzeu

Realizatorilor/proprietarilor de muzeu li se vor pune următoarele întrebări generale cu privire la crearea muzeului dumnealor în timpul turului de muzeu sau imediat după încheierea acestuia printr-un proces cunoscut ca ”intervievare emergentă”. Dat fiind faptul că acesta este un studiu etnografic, întrebările ar putea devia puțin de la cele listate mai jos.

Întrebări:

1. Ați putea să-mi spuneți cum v-a venit ideea să creați acest muzeu?
2. Vorbiți-mi despre primul obiect sau primul grup de obiecte pe care l-ați colecționat.
3. Ce anume v-a determinat să organizați muzeul în acest fel?
4. Ce s-a schimbat în muzeu de când l-ați fondat?
5. Când anume s-a deschis muzeul publicului?
6. Povestiți-mi despre obiectul dumneavoastră preferat din muzeu.
7. Povestiți-mi despre zona dumneavoastră preferată din muzeu.
8. Ce simțiți că încercați să salvați prin intermediul colecției și muzeului dumneavoastră?
9. Ce tip de obiecte nu aveți în muzeu dar v-ați dori să adăugați colecției?
10. Cum vă imaginați viitorul muzeului dumneavoastră?
11. Cum anume încercați să implicați alte persoane din comunitate în muzeul dumneavoastră?

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201

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IRB ID: Pro20170001855
Approval Date: 4/25/2018
Expiration Date: 12/13/2018

Appendix M: Museum visitor interviews protocol (English version)

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

Principal Investigator: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Project Title: An ethnographic study of Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making and their institutional legitimization

Interview Protocol for Museum Visitors

Interview participants will be asked the following open-ended questions in order to encourage recall of the experience of their vernacular museum visit(s). When possible, participants will receive a copy of the questions in advance of the interview and will also be asked to gather and discuss photographs and other memories of their experiences. Interviews will be in-person or video conference (e.g. Skype).

Questions:

1. Tell me about your experience visiting (x) museum (based on knowledge of previous visit from evidence such as a news article, blog post, photographs, video, etc.).
2. When did you visit the museum and why?
3. Describe what you remember most about your visit to [insert name of] museum.
4. Can you show me some of the pictures that you took during your museum visit? Tell me about them.
5. Do you feel like you learned anything at this museum? If so, tell me about what you learned.
6. How would you describe one of these museums to someone who had never visited one?
7. How often do you visit museums?
8. Was your experience visiting (x) museum different from other museum visits? How?
9. Do you know anyone else who has visited this kind of museum? Do you think that I can contact them to talk about their experience?
10. Basic demographic information from research participants will also be collected, including:
 - o Age
 - o Profession
 - o How often they travel.
 - o Where they were born (village or city) or where their family is from.
 - o Where they live now and whether it is rural or urban.
 - o How often they visit the Romanian countryside.

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201



Appendix N: Museum visitor interviews protocol (Romanian version)

Rutgers, Universitatea de Stat din New Jersey

COMISIA DE CONTROL PENTRU PROTECȚIA SUBIECȚILOR UMANI ÎN CERCETARE

Cercetător Științific: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Titlul Proiectului: Un studiu etnografic al muzeelor locale din România ca spații generatoare de cunoaștere și al legitimitatea lor instituțională

Protocol de Intervievare pentru Vizitatorii Muzeelor

Participanților la interviu li se vor pune următoarele întrebări deschise pentru a-i încuraja să-și reamintească experiența trăită în timpul vizitării muzeelor locale. Atunci când este posibil, participanții vor primi o copie a întrebărilor înaintea interviului și vor fi rugați să se adune și să discute pe marginea fotografiilor și a altor amintiri legate de experiențele avute. Interviuurile vor fi luate în persoană sau în cadrul unor conferințe video (Skype, spre exemplu).

Întrebări:

1. Povestiți-mi despre experiența pe care ați avut-o vizitând muzeul (x) (în comparație cu vizite anterioare sau știri, postări de blog, fotografii, clipuri video, etc.).
2. Când ați vizitat muzeul și de ce ați făcut-o?
3. Descrieți-mi ce anume v-a rămas întipărit în memorie în urma vizitării muzeului [numele muzeului]
4. Îmi puteți arăta câteva din fotografiile pe care le-ați făcut în timpul vizitei? Povestiți-mi despre ele.
5. Simțiți că ați învățat ceva în acest muzeu? Dacă da, povestiți-mi despre ce ați învățat.
6. Cum ați descrie unul din aceste muzee cuiva care nu a vizitat niciodată vreunul?
7. Cât de des vizitați muzee?
8. A fost experiența trăită în timpul vizitării muzeului (x) diferită față de cea trăită în timpul vizitării altor muzee? În ce fel?
9. Cunoașteți alte persoane care au vizitat un astfel de muzeu? Credeți că le-aș putea contacta pentru a-mi povesti despre experiențele lor?
10. Date demografice vor fi colectate de la participanții la interviu. Acestea vor include:
 - Vârsta
 - Profesia
 - Cât de des călătoresc
 - Unde s-au născut (sat sau oraș) sau de unde sunt familiile lor
 - Unde locuiesc acum și dacă e mediu rural sau urban
 - Cât de des vizitează mediul rural

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201

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APPROVED
 IRB ID: Pro20170001855
 Approval Date: 12/14/2017
 Expiration Date: 12/13/2018

Appendix O: Museum visitor interviews oral consent (English version)

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

Principal Investigator: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Project Title: An ethnographic study of Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making and their institutional legitimization

Oral Consent to Participate in Research Study for Museum Visitors

I am Cheryl Klimaszewski, a doctoral student in the Department of Library and Information Science at Rutgers University, and I would like to request your participation in my study of local museums and village collections in Romania. You were selected to participate in this study because you have visited one of these museums. My research aims to learn more about the different kinds of experiences people can have when visiting these unique self-made museums. What I learn through this study may be beneficial to other museum-makers but also to museum and library professionals around the world as they work to preserve local history and heritage in their own communities. Studying the experience of visiting and making these personal museums also has the potential to inform traditional museums about new ways to make their museums more appealing to different kinds of visitors.

If you would like to participate in this study, I will ask you to participate in an interview during which I ask questions about your experiences visiting a local museum or village collection in Romania, where and when you visited, and how you felt about this experience. The interview will last approximately one hour. With your additional consent, the interview will also be audio recorded. You are aware that your participation in this interview is voluntary. You understand the inherent purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, you wish to stop the interview, you may do so without having to give an explanation. If you decide after the interview takes place that you would prefer to not be included in this research study, you may contact me using the Researcher contact information provided on the reverse side of this sheet. However, requests to withdraw as a study participant should be received on or before September 30, 2018 because after this time, some study results may have been published and it may not be possible to remove your responses from publications.

Some of this research may be published, however, any information that I collect during this study will remain confidential. This means that any information you give to me will be presented in such a way that your responses will not be able to be connected back to you personally. Only I and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University will have access to your responses and I will keep all the data that I collect today secure and confidential.

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201

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APPROVED
IRB ID: Pro20170001855
Approval Date: 12/14/2017
Expiration Date: 12/13/2018

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact me or my faculty advisor at:

<p>Researcher: Cheryl Klimaszewski Department of Library and Information Science School of Communication and Information Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey 4 Huntington Street New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1071 ck482@rutgers.edu 01 215 696 3790</p>	<p>Faculty advisor: Dr. Marija Dalbello Associate Professor of Library and Information Science School of Communication and Information Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey 4 Huntington Street New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1071 dalbello@rutgers.edu 01 848 932 8785</p>
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If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers (which is a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants).

Institutional Review Board
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200
335 George Street, 3rd Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone: 732-235-2866
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be offered a copy of this oral consent statement that you may keep for your own reference.

If you understand these procedures and if you do not have any questions, do you agree to be a study subject?

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201



AUDIO/VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO ORAL CONSENT FORM

Principal Investigator: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Project Title: An ethnographic study of Romanian vernacular museums as spaces of knowledge-making and their institutional legitimization

You have already agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Cheryl Klimaszewski. I am asking for your permission to allow me to audiotape your interview as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the study. The recording will be used for analysis. Personal identifiers will not be recorded. The recordings will be stored in a secured, password protected file on my computer. These recordings will be retained indefinitely. Your oral consent grants the researcher named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The researcher will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than those stated in the consent form without your permission.

Do you agree for your interview to be recorded by the researcher?

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201



Appendix P: Museum visitor interviews oral consent (Romanian version)

Rutgers, Universitatea de Stat din New Jersey

COMISIA DE CONTROL PENTRU PROTECȚIA SUBIECȚILOR UMANI ÎN CERCETARE

Cercetător Științific: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Titlul Proiectului: Un studiu etnografic al muzeelor locale din România ca spații generatoare de cunoaștere și al legitimitatea lor instituțională

Consimțământ Verbal de Participare într-un Studiu de Cercetare pentru Vizitatorii de Muzeu

Mă numesc Cheryl Klimaszewski, sunt doctorandă în Departamentul de Biblioteconomie și Științe Informaționale din cadrul Universității Rutgers și aș dori să solicit participarea dumneavoastră la studiul meu despre muzeele locale și colecțiile rurale din România. Ați fost selectat/ă să participați la acest studiu întrucât ați vizitat unul dintre muzee. Obiectivul cercetării mele este acela de a învăța mai multe despre diferitele experiențe trăite de către cei care vizitează aceste muzee create prin forțe proprii. Ceea ce învăț prin intermediul acestui studiu le-ar putea fi de folos altor realizatori de muzee, dar și funcționarilor din muzee și bibliotecarilor din întreaga lume, în munca lor de conservare a istoriei locale și a patrimoniilor din comunitățile lor. Studiarea experiențelor de vizitare dar și de creare a acestor muzee personale are potențialul de a informa muzeele tradiționale despre noi modalități de a deveni mai atractive unor game mai variate de vizitatori.

Dacă ați dori să participați la acest studiu, vă voi cere luați parte la un interviu pe parcursul căruia vă voi pune întrebări legate de experiențele trăite atunci când ați vizitat un muzeu local sau o colecție rurală din România, unde și când le-ați vizitat și cum v-ați simțit în timpul vizitei. Interviul va dura aproximativ o oră. Cu acordul dumneavoastră, interviul va fi înregistrat audio. Sunteți conștient de faptul că participarea dumneavoastră la acest interviu este complet voluntară. Înțelegeți obiectivul fundamental al acestei cercetări. Dacă doriți ca interviul să ia sfârșit, indiferent de moment sau motiv, o puteți face fără a da explicații. Dacă hotărâți, după ce interviul s-a sfârșit, că nu doriți să fiți incluși în acest studiu, mă puteți contacta folosind datele de contact ale Cercetătorului, prevăzute pe verso. Cu toate acestea, cererea dumneavoastră de a vă retrage din funcția de participant la studiu ar trebui să fie primită până pe 30 Septembrie, 2018, deoarece după această dată, unele rezultate ale studiului ar putea fi deja publicate, iar eliminarea răspunsurilor dumneavoastră din materialul publicat ar putea fi imposibilă.

O parte din această cercetare ar putea fi publicată, însă datele de cercetare pe care le recoltez în timpul acestui studiu vor rămâne confidențiale. Acest fapt înseamnă că orice informație pe care mi-o oferiți va fi prezentată în așa fel încât răspunsurile dumneavoastră nu vor putea fi asociate cu identitatea dumneavoastră. Doar eu și Comisia de Controlul Cercetării din cadrul Universității Rutgers vom avea acces la răspunsurile dumneavoastră și vom păstra datele obținute de către mine astăzi în siguranță și confidențiale.

Dacă aveți întrebări în legătură cu studiul sau cu metodologia acestuia, mă puteți contacta fie pe mine, fie pe profesoara mea coordonatoare:

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Approval Date: 4/25/2018
Expiration Date: 12/13/2018

<p>Cercetător: Cheryl Klimaszewski Department of Library and Information Science School of Communication and Information Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey 4 Huntington Street New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1071 ck482@rutgers.edu 01 215 696 3790</p>	<p>Profesor Coordonator: Dr. Marija Dalbello Associate Professor of Library and Information Science School of Communication and Information Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey 4 Huntington Street New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1071 dalbello@rutgers.edu 01 848 932 8785</p>
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Dacă aveți întrebări legate de drepturile dumneavoastră ca participant la cercetare, puteți lua legătura cu Comisia de Control al Cercetării din cadrul Universității Rutgers (acesta este un comitet care se asigură că participanții din cadrul studiilor de cercetare sunt protejați).

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Veți primi o copie a acestui consimțământ verbal pe care o puteți păstra pentru propria dumneavoastră referință.

Dacă înțelegeți aceste proceduri și nu aveți alte întrebări, sunteți de acord să participați la studiu?

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ANEXĂ ÎNREGISTRARE AUDIO/VIDEO LA FORMULARUL PENTRU CONSIMȚĂMÂNT VERBAL

Cercetător Științific: Cheryl Klimaszewski

Titlul Proiectului: Un studiu etnografic al muzeelor locale din România ca spații generatoare de cunoaștere și al legitimitatea lor instituțională

V-ați exprimat acordul de a participa la studiul de cercetare condus de Cheryl Klimaszewski. Vă cer permisiunea să înregistrez audio interviului, ca parte din studiul de cercetare. Nu trebuie să fiți de acord să fiți înregistrat(ă) pentru a putea participa la acest studiu. Înregistrarea audio va fi folosită în analiza subiectului de către cercetător. Identificatorii personali nu vor fi înregistrați. Înregistrările vor fi păstrate într-un fișier securizat și protejat cu parolă pe computerul meu. Aceste înregistrări vor fi păstrate pe termen nelimitat. Consimțământul dumneavoastră verbal îi oferă cercetătorului numit mai sus permisiunea de a vă înregistra potrivit prevederilor specificate în sus-numitul studiu. Cercetătorul nu va folosi înregistrarea/înregistrările pentru alte motive în afară de cele stabilite în formularul de consimțământ fără permisiunea dumneavoastră.

Sunteți de acord ca interviul dumneavoastră să fie înregistrat audio de către cercetător?

Protocol Number: [Pro20170001855](#) V. 20180201



Appendix Q: Translations of website description quotes cited in Chapter 5

No.	Original Quotation	English Translation
1	Oamenii povestesc că meșteșugul împletirii paielor a fost adus în sat de o învățătoare din Ungaria, care s-a căsătorit cu un localnic. Acum aproape toată lumea din sat știe să împletească. Familia lui Szocs Lajos se ocupă de patru generații cu acest meșteșug.	People recount how this custom was brought into the village by a Hungarian teacher who married a local. Now almost any local can braid. Szocs Lajos's family has been known for this craft for four generations.
2	Și-a dorit ca expoziția să redea imaginea unei gospodării tradiționale locale	envision(ing) the exhibition to mirror a local traditional household
3	și dorind să sublinieze frumusețile unei culturi locale de mare vechime	wishing to highlight the beauty of an old, local culture
4	este renumită pentru frumusețile naturale, istoria veche și viața păstorească a locuitorilor săi, atât de asemănătoare cu cea a generațiilor trecute, care își duceau oile în transumanță	famous for its natural beauty, old history and pastoral life of its inhabitants, so similar to that of past generations who migrated seasonally with their sheep
5	pasiunea pentru tradițiile populare	passion for folk traditions
6	Într-o zonă încărcată cu istorie și în care meșteșugurile populare sunt încă vii,	area(s) heavy with history, where crafts are still practiced
7	dar până atunci prezintă zestrea culturală a jinarilor (aka the dwarves!)	present the cultural endowment of (the local people)
8	Și cu mare bucurie își întâmpină oaspeții Anuța și Aurel Achim, la muzeul particular pe care l-au făcut cu pasiune, pe care acum vor să o împărtășească și altora.	It is with great joy that (the Achims) welcome guests at their museum, which they built with great passion, and now wish to share with others.
9	Dar cui îi aparține toată această bogăție spirituală? Cine altcineva putea să reînvie tradițiile etniei tătarăști, dacă nu o tătăroaică ce debordează de optimism, ai cărei ochi emană bucuria de a aparține acestei etnii. Autoarea acestei lumi de basm este Zulfie Seidali.	And yet, to whom does all this spiritual richness belong? Who else could have revived the Tatar traditions, if not a Tatar woman who radiates optimism, whose eyes spark with the joy of belonging to this ethnic group? The author of this fairytale world is Zulfie Seidali.
10	Anton Socaciu este pasionat de istorie, dar și de tradițiile locului, pe care le cunoaște ca nimeni altul, căci niciun localnic nu și-a petrecut ca el ore în șir cercetând arhivele, crucile din cimitir, pietrele din râu, în căutarea urmelor istoriei omenești și a celei geologice.	Antonin Socaciu is passionate about history but also about local traditions, which he knows better than anyone else because no other local spent so many hours doing research in the archives, researching crosses in the cemetery, the stones in the river, in search of human and geological histories.
11	Observând cum satul își pierde „comorile” civilizației vechi, care trezeau în sufletul lui un sentiment de nostalgie, deși era numai un adolescent, Marius Matei s-a hotărât să-și facă o colecție de obiecte etnografice. Sunt mai bine de zece ani de atunci, timp în care a bătut satele cu răbdare, a cercetat cu pasiune, devenind un bun cunoscător al culturii tradiționale bănățene.	Seeing how the village loses its treasures woke a nostalgia in his soul. Although he was nothing more than a teenager, Marius Matei decided to compile a collection of ethnographic objects. More than ten years have passed since then, time in which he's rummaged through villages with patience and he's done passionate research, becoming a connoisseur of the traditional culture of the Banat.
12	Curiozitatea pentru obiectul vechi a dus și la pasiunea cunoașterii. Autodidact, Aurel Flutur a cercetat mult, ca să afle totul despre obiectele sale.	The interest in old objects led to a passion for knowledge. Being self-taught, Aurel Flutur researched for a long time to unearth every piece of information concerning his objects.
13	A început să colecționeze de timpuriu, transmitându-i patima și soției sale, Lucreția. Nu le-a fost ușor, căci banii erau puțini, dar Lucreția Flutur poartă și astăzi, de mai bine de 40 de ani, fără întrerupere, un colier de mărgelă de sticlă, primul obiect colecționat de la care a simțit cu adevărat frumusețea acestei pasiuni.	[Aurel Flutur] started to collect early, passing the passion on to his wife, Lucretia. It was not easy, as money was scarce, yet Lucretia Flutur has been wearing the same bead necklace for more than 40 years, the first collected item, that made her truly feel the beauty of this passion.

No.	Original Quotation	English Translation
14	Odată cu cercetările, adună obiecte și, susținută de familie, colecționează de mai bine de 40 de ani. Ba i-a mai îmbolnăvit și pe alții de această pasiune. Prietenă cu Paul Buța la Tecuci, i-a povestit acestuia dorința ei de a-și face un muzeu etnografic. Destinul a făcut ca amândoi, și Maria Chiriță, și Paul Buța, să realizeze același vis . . .	Together with her research and supported by her family, she has been collecting objects for over 40 years. Her contagious passion soon affected other. She told Paul Buța, her friend in Tecuci of her wish to start an ethnographic museum. Fate made it that both of them fulfilled the same dream . . .
15	Pasiunea pentru colecționarea obiectelor etnografice l-a cuprins și pe fiul său, care a umblat și el prin toate satele în căutarea obiectelor.	His son similarly developed a hobby for collecting ethnographic objects, and started roaming the villages, looking for them.
16	Munca a pasionat-o, greutățile întâmpinate și mai ales nepăsarea unor consăteni au îndârjit-o și Doina Dobrea a cumpărat și a cules, din casă în casă, din poduri, piese pe care le-a curățat și le-a restaurat, redându-le strălucirea de odinioară.	She has always been an avid worker, and became even more determined by her hardships and the ignorance of some of her fellow locals; she started buying and gathering pieces that she cleaned up and restored, giving them back their radiance.
17	Anton Socaciu a știut de la început ce vrea: să reconstituie o gospodărie hațegeană.	Anton Socaciu knew from the very start what he wanted: to rebuild a household from Hațeg.
18	Paul Buța a conceput un muzeu sub forma unei „gospodării funcționale tradiționale”	Paul Buța created a hands-on museum, organized as a functional traditional household.
19	Ileana Morariu și-a dorit să sugereze gospodăria jinărească de odinioară . . .	Ileana Morariu wanted to envision a traditional Jina home of the past . . .
20	Și-a dorit ca expoziția să redea imaginea unei gospodării tradiționale locale, dar a amenajat-o cu libertate, o libertate datorată studiilor de etnologie, văzând cultura locală în fluiditatea ei, în influențe și asemănări, mai degrabă decât într-un specific restrictiv.	[Maria Chiriță] wanted her exhibition to mirror the image of a local traditional home, but took the liberty of furnishing the house according to her own instincts – instincts owed to her studies of ethnology, meaning she could understand local culture in all of its fluidity, together with its influences and resemblances, rather than in a limiting way.
21	Ionel Constantin își amintește și acum primul obiect colecționat: o furcă, primită de la un profesor de limba română, împreună cu o cămașă. A devenit pasionat de textile și a strâns multă vreme cămași, marame, poale, ștergere, țesături, prosoape etc. După aceea a început să strângă ceramică și tot așa, ajungând astăzi să expună toate obiectele pe care le-au folosit localnicii în viața lor de zi cu zi:	[Ionel Constantin]'s passion with textiles grew as he collected shirts, towels, scarves (and other textiles). He later started collecting ceramics and so on . . . managing to exhibit all the objects that the locals would use in their everyday life.
22	iar în curte uneltele de lucru, care nu lipseau până de curând din nicio gospodărie . . .	working tools [are displayed] in the courtyard, tools that would have been available in any household until not too long ago . . .
23	A crescut într-o familie de oameni înstăriți, foarte harnici, care țineau să aibă tot ce trebuie în gospodărie, să nu le lipsească nicio unealtă. Această concepție l-a marcat profund și de aceea ține ca din colecția lui să nu lipsească nimic.	[He grew] up in a rich and industrious family, who always made sure they had everything a household needs. This idea marked him, which is why he makes sure his own collection never lacks anything.
24	Ambiția colecționarului a fost să prezinte o gospodărie tradițională bucovineană. Și, cum câmpulungenii se mândreau să aibă tot ce le trebuie în casă, și Ioan Grămadă se străduiește să nu lase niciun aspect al vieții tradiționale locale nereprezentat.	His ambition was to depict a traditional household from Bucovina. Seeing how locals took great pride in having everything their houses needed, the collector himself makes sure no aspect of the local traditional life is left unrepresented.

No.	Original Quotation	English Translation
25	În demersurile sale, Kéri Gáspár a fost condus multă vreme de dorința de a demonstra etnografilor care considerau că nu există cultură locală pe Valea Ierului că se înșală. Este nemulțumit și de faptul că, în perioada comunistă, culturile minorităților erau aproape ignorate.	In his efforts, Dr. Kéri Gaspar was long-driven by the desire of proving the ethnographers that considered the Ier Valley as an area without a culture of its own wrong. He is also displeased by the fact during the communist period, the cultures of the minorities were almost altogether ignored.
26	De aceea, mulți ani s-a documentat, a citit cărți de istorie, religie și etnografie, a adunat informații din arhive și de la bătrâni și obiecte cu specific local. Dar abia mulți ani mai târziu, în 2002, când simte că are la temelie o argumentație puternică, deschide, în casa bunicilor din partea mamei, primul muzeu particular din zonă, care demonstrează vizitatorilor că pe Valea Ierului au trăit oameni care au avut o cultură aparte, frumoasă, veche și bogată.	... for many years, he researched, he read history, religion, and ethnography books, he gathered information from archives and elders for several years, as well as objects specific to the region ... when he feels that he has a strong foundation, he opens the first private museum in the area, in [his maternal grandparents' house].
27	I-a influențat profund pasiunea pentru tradițiile populare faptul că specialiștii de la Iași, unde a urmat Filologia, considerau că nu există fapte folclorice importante mai jos de Bârlad. Aceasta a hotărât-o să cerceteze cultura locală a zonei Covurlui și până în prezent, prin tot ceea ce face, demonstrează că folcloriștii s-au înșelat.	[Maria Chiriță's] passion for popular traditions was deeply influenced by the fact that the specialists from Iași – where she studied philology – would always say there were no important folkloric traditions south of Bârlad. She became determined to research the Covurlui local culture, and she continues to prove that the folklorists were wrong.
28	Originar din satul Rai (comuna Murgeni) din județul Vaslui, Paul Buța a locuit multă vreme la Tecuci. Acolo, în anii optzeci, cercetând cultura locală, a descoperit cu surprindere că specialiștii consideră că județul Galați nu are specific etnografic. Prin cercetări proprii de amator pasionat, susținute ulterior, după Revoluție, prin studii superioare în domeniul etnologiei, Paul Buța a infirmat această părere, redescoperind mai întâi măștile de înmormântare, apoi dansuri și obiceiuri vechi, pe scurt, o întreagă cultură locală.	A local of the village of Rai (Murgeni commune), from Vaslui county, Paul [Buța] lived in Tecuci for a long time. As he was studying local culture there in the 80s, he was surprised to discover that folklorists don't consider Galați county to have particular ethnographic elements. He started studying the topic as personal research, and continued his research after the revolution, as a graduate student in ethnology. He first unearthed local funeral masks, then dances and old traditions – in a nutshell, an entire local culture.
29	După pensionare, s-a hotărât să înceapă o viață nouă și s-a mutat la Ocna Sibiului, unde și-a cumpărat o casă de la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea, pe strada Mihai Viteazul, nr. 24, în care hotărăște să facă un muzeu, pentru a arăta celor de astăzi trecutul, considerând că cei ce nu-și cunosc trecutul, nu se pot bucura de prezent.	After he retired, he decided to start a new life and moved to Ocna Sibiului, where he bought an old, 19th century home ... in which he decided to start a museum, where those living today can experience the past, as he strongly believes people who do not know their past cannot enjoy their present.
30	Îngrijorat de faptul că sistemul actual de învățământ le oferă copiilor cunoștințe și competențe numai pentru viitor, preocupat de rapiditatea cu care trecutul, care stă la temelie identității noastre etnice, dispare, Paul Buța a conceput un muzeu sub forma unei „gospodării funcționale tradiționale” . . .	Worried that the school system provides students solely knowledge and skills for the future, and concerned with the rapidity with which the past - the foundation of our ethnic identity - is vanishing, he created a hands-on museum, organized as a functional traditional household . . .
31	Marius Matei a ales să lupte împotriva uitării colecționând ultimele piese de port local.	Marius Matei chose to fight against (cultural) erasure/forgetting by collecting the last pieces of local attire.
32	Totuși, modernizarea are ca revers schimbarea rapidă a mentalităților și renunțarea la valorile culturii locale vechi, în care agricultura era ocupația de bază, iar sărbătorile și obiceiurile erau sufletul vieții comunitare.	Modernization, however, has the rapid change of mentalities and the abandonment of the values of the old local culture, where agriculture was the basic occupation, and celebrations and customs were the soul of community life.

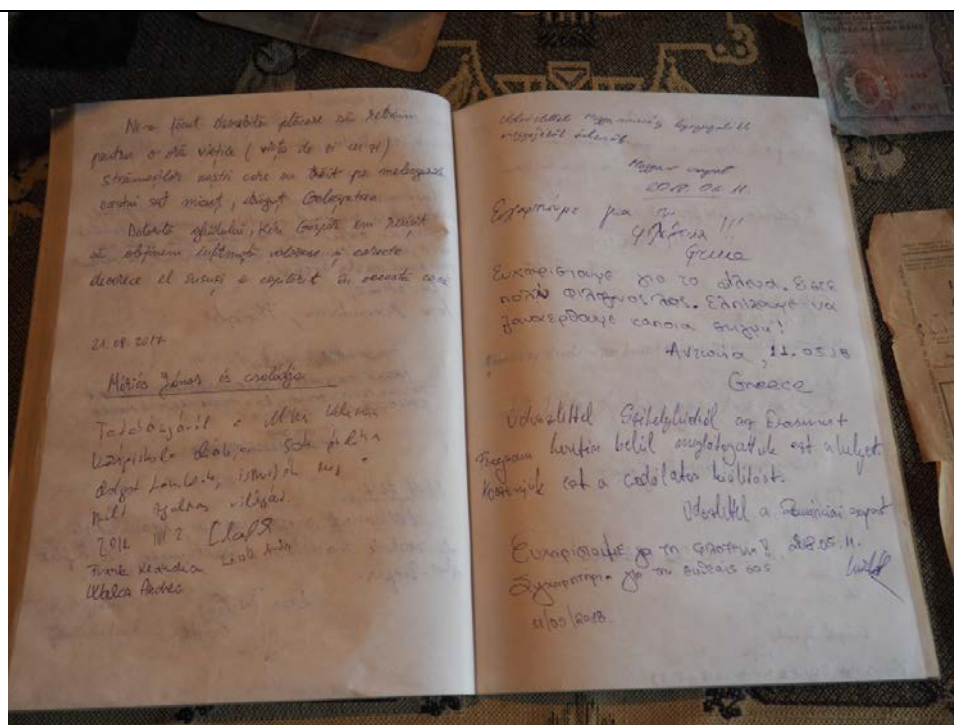
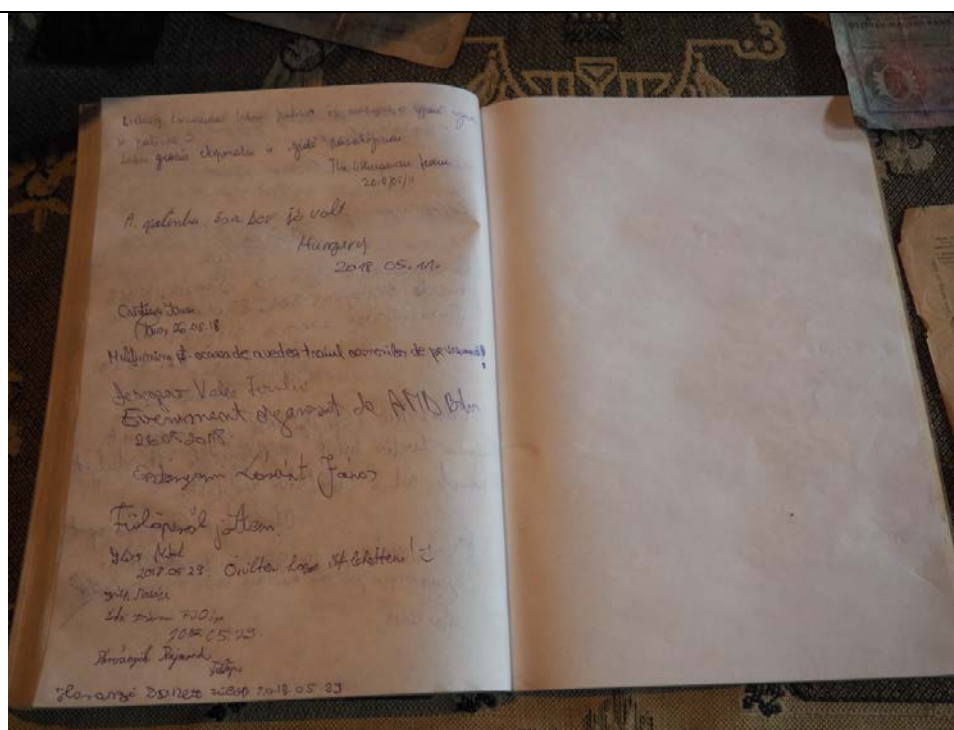
No.	Original Quotation	English Translation
33	Îndurerăți de faptul momârlanii renunță cu atâta ușurință la tradiție în favoarea modernității, au hotărât să salveze urmele proprii culturi, cumpărând, deseori cu bani grei, obiecte pe care altfel foștii proprietari le-ar fi aruncat.	Pained by the fact the Momarlan would so easily renounce their traditions in favor of modernity, they decided to save the remains of their culture, buying, often at hefty prices, objects that would have otherwise been thrown away by their owners.
34	În zilele noastre, când modernismul e la mare căutare și promovat în exces uneori, din păcate, tradițiile își mai găsesc cu greu locul. Dacă treci însă pragul Casei tradiționale „Zulfie Totay” amenajată în gospodăria unei familii de tătari din Cobadin uiți definitiv de tot ce înseamnă modă și modernism și te lași purtat într-o lume mirifică, de poveștile de odinioară spuse cu răbdare de gazdă.	Nowadays, when modernism is in vogue and excessively promoted, traditions seldom find their place. Still, while you find yourself inside the Zulfie Totay traditional house, furnished in the style of a Tatar family from Cobadin, you completely forget about fashion and modernity, and you let yourself be carried away into amazing stories, told patiently by the host.
35	Colecționarul a adunat obiectele pentru frumusețea și vechimea lor, a recuperat tot ce s-a putut din poduri, a salvat de la pieire sigură fragmente de obiecte aruncate.	He collected items for their beauty and history; he retrieved everything he could from attics, rescued fragments of discarded objects.
36	Treptat, pasiunea pentru sculptură îi deschide ochii către frumusețea altor obiecte și începe să colecționeze mai întâi trofee de vânătoare, obținute la schimb cu tăblii sculptate, apoi obiecte vechi, care l-au înconjurat în copilărie și pe care acum le vede dispărând, de cele mai multe ori aruncate pur și simplu.	Steadily, the passion for sculpting gets him interested in the beauty of other objects, and he first starts to collect hunting trophies . . . then old objects, familiar to him from his childhood, that people nowadays simply throw away.
37	Tot de aceea, colecția cuprinde și numeroase eșantioane cu cusături, multe tăiate din țesături prea degradate pentru a mai putea fi restaurate. Căci multe piese au fost găsite roase de șoareci, mucegăite, folosite ca spălătoare de vase. În aceste condiții, munca de recuperare a Doinei Dobreaan reprezintă, ea însăși, o valoare.	. . . the collection also includes numerous embroidered samples, many cut out of textile fragments too damaged to be restored. Many of them were damaged by mice, by mold or even used as dishcloths. Considering this, Doina Dobreaan's restoration itself becomes a value in itself.
38	Eugen Vaida dorește să dea obiectelor o viață nouă. Pentru el, obiectele capătă valoare prin utilizare și de aceea își imaginează un ecomuzeu într-un sat din apropiere, cu pensiuni în care obiectele vechi să fie din nou folosite. Iar pentru obiectele de preț dorește ca, împreună cu Ștefan, să amenajeze un muzeu interetnic, în care să rămână mărturiile vechii lumi hârtibăcene.	Eugen Vaida wants to give the objects a new life. To him, objects become valuable through use and that is why he imagines an eco-museum in a neighboring village, with guesthouses where the old objects could be used again. He also wishes to build . . . an interethnic museum for the most precious objects, that could host the history of Hârtibaciu.
39	Cele peste 2500 de obiecte spun toate povestea unei culturi locale de o nebănuită frumusețe și cu o lungă istorie. Niciun aspect al ei nu a fost uitat, nici ocupațiile tradiționale, nici cele aparținând zilelor noastre. Parcurgând încăperile și curțile, parcă străbați mai bine de o sută de ani de istorie, în toate amănuntele vieții localnicilor.	The over 2500 items tell the story of a local culture of unprecedented beauty and history. No aspect of it has been forgotten, neither traditional occupations, nor those of today. Walking through the rooms and courtyards is like going back through 100 years of history, sharing in the details of people's lives.
40	Ligia-Alexandra Bodea prezintă vizitatorilor cultura locală, într-un muzeu etnografic plin de amintiri.	Ligia-Alexandra Bodea present[s] local culture to the visitors, contained in an ethnographic museum that is filled with memories
41	Primele obiecte le-a adunat la 11 ani, după moartea unei bunici iubite, a cărei amintire și-a dorit-o perpetuată și prin păstrarea neschimbată a interiorului casei în care locuise toată viața.	She collected her first items at age eleven, after the passing of her beloved grandmother, whose memory she wanted to perpetuate by keeping the inside of the house she lived in all of her life unaltered.

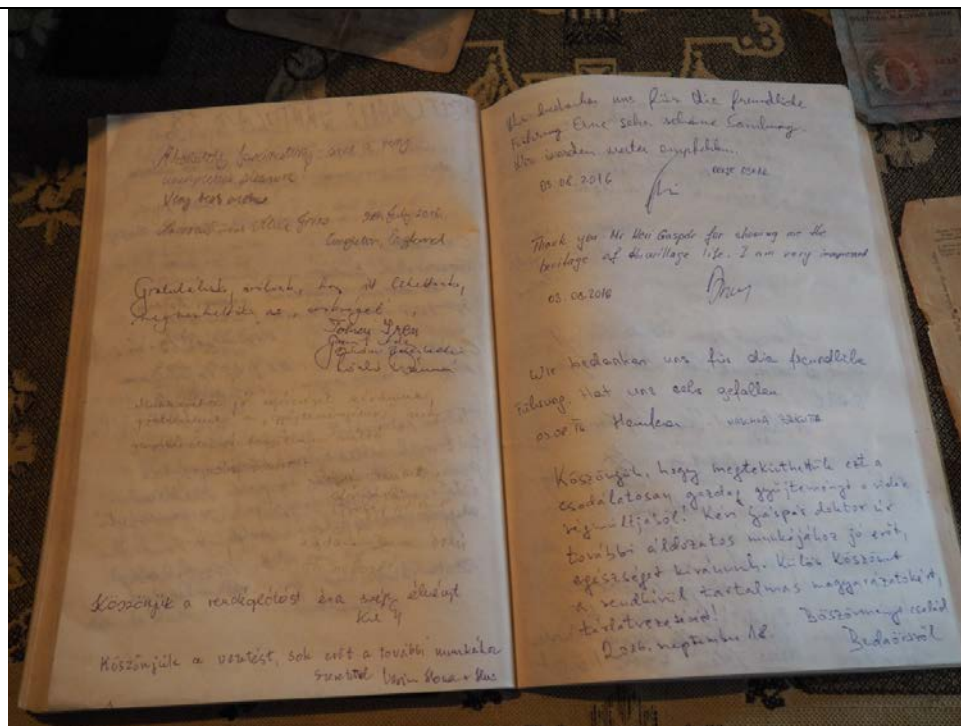
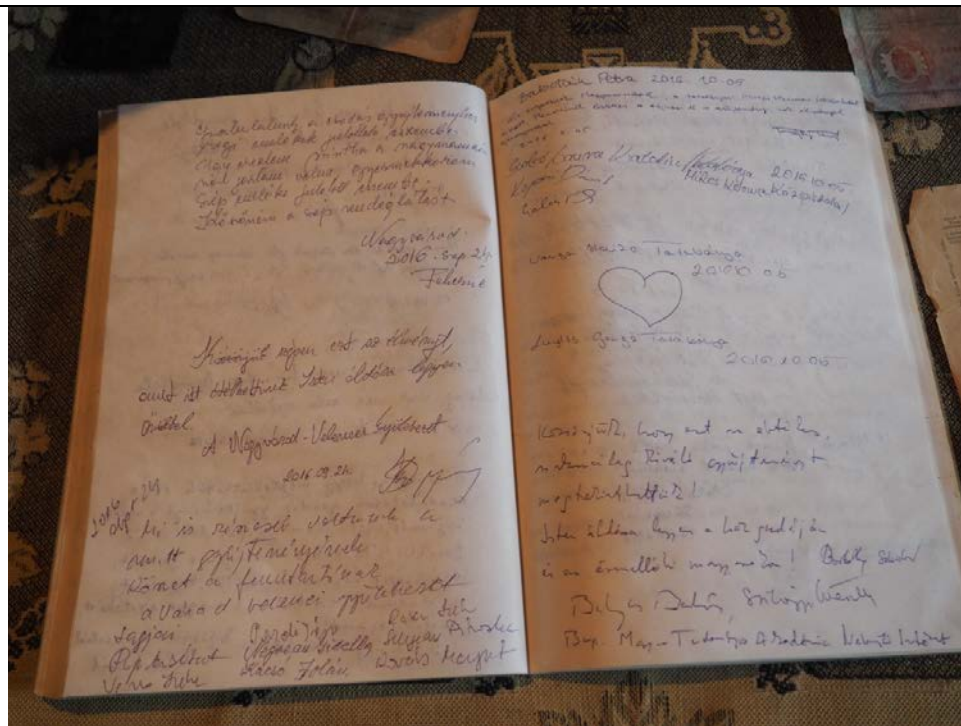
Appendix R: Summary of visitor research participants

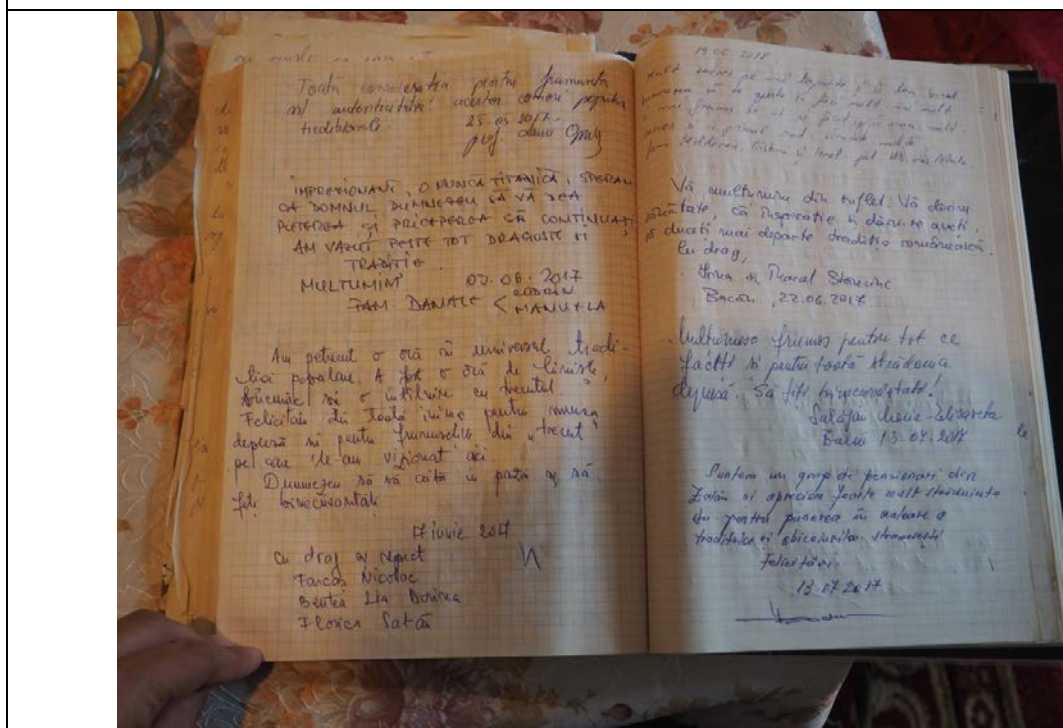
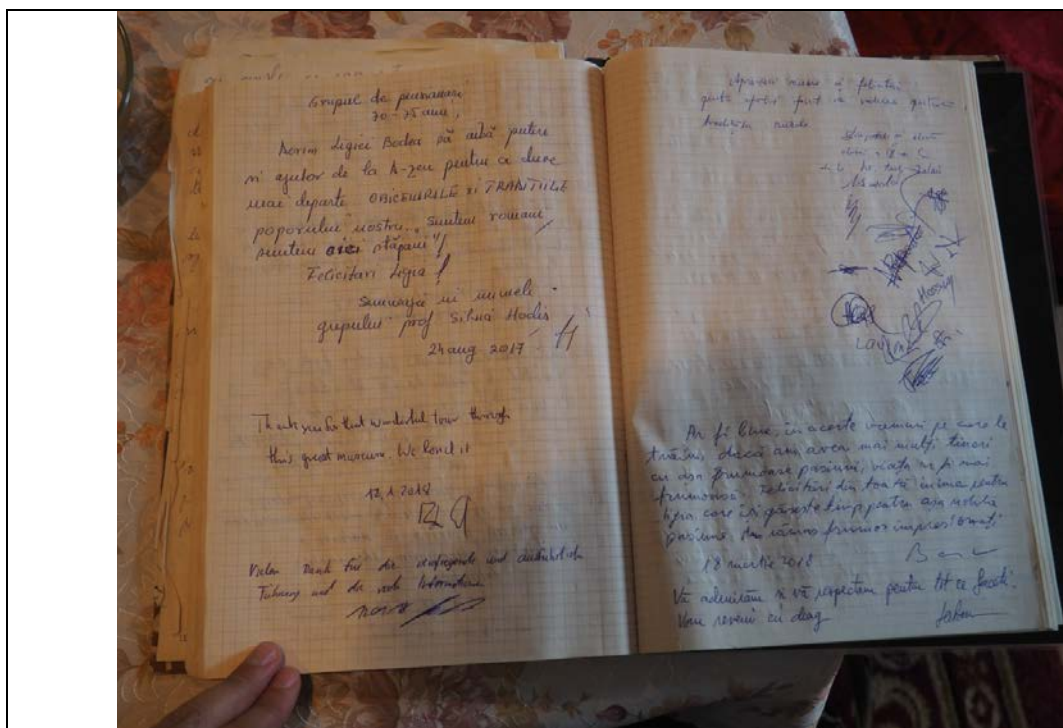
	Gender	Interview Mode	Nationality	Age group	Traveler type:	How recruited:	No. vernacular museums visited (and kind) [no. visited with researcher]
Participant 1	Male	In-person	US	35-50	Tourist	Contacted after reading written account of their “personal journey” published in a local newspaper	3 (non-RECOMESPAR)
Participant 2	Female	In-person	US	35-50	Tourist	Contacted after reading written account of their “personal journey” published in a local newspaper	3 (non-RECOMESPAR)
Participant 3	Male	In-person	RO	45-65	Tourist	Encountered at vernacular museum	1 (RECOMESPAR)
Participant 4	Female	In-person	RO	45-65	Tourist	Encountered at vernacular museum	1 (RECOMESPAR)
Participant 5	Female	In-person	RO	18-25	Tourist	Encountered at vernacular museum	1 (RECOMESPAR)
Participant 6	Male	In-person	US	25-45	Researcher/ tourist	Colleague of AC (translator)	2 (non-RECOMESPAR); [1 visited with researcher]
Participant 7	Female	In-person	US	25-45	Researcher/ tourist	Colleague of AC (translator)	2 (non-RECOMESPAR); [1 visited with researcher]
Participant 8	Female	Skype	US	25-45	Researcher/ tourist	My colleague	5 (4 RECOMESPAR; 1 non-RECOMESPAR); [4 visited with researcher]

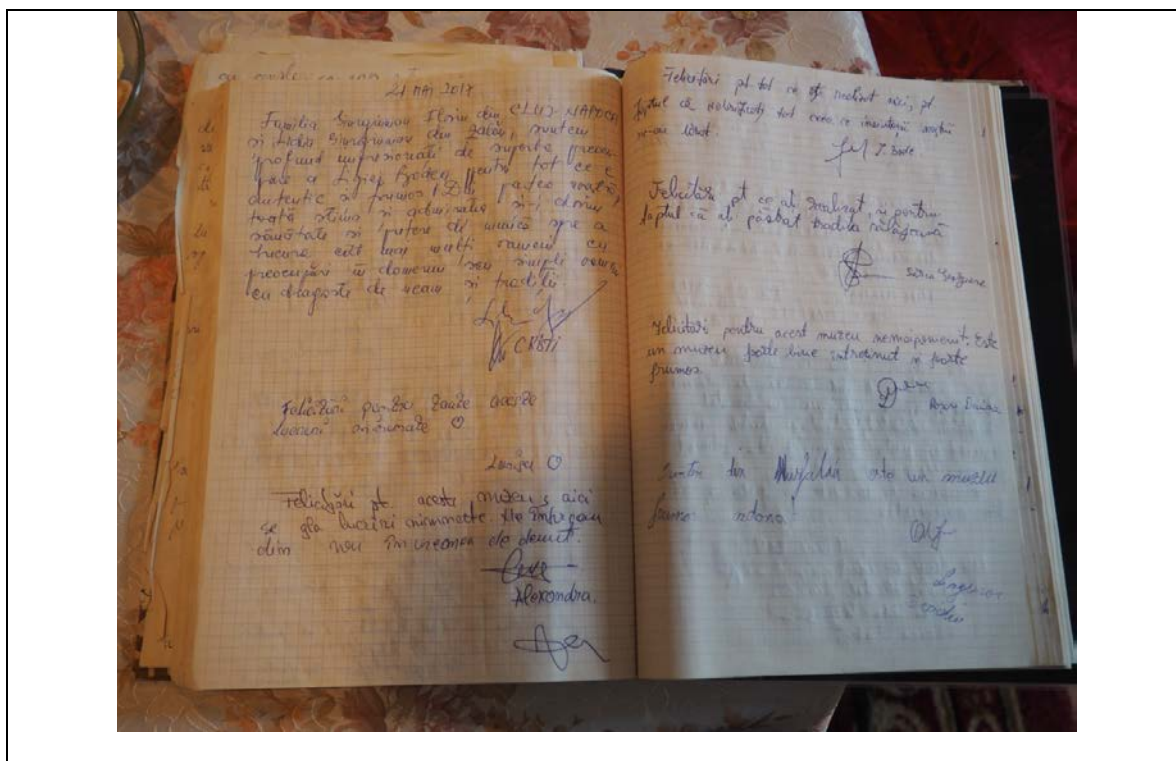
Appendix S: Images of guestbook pages analyzed

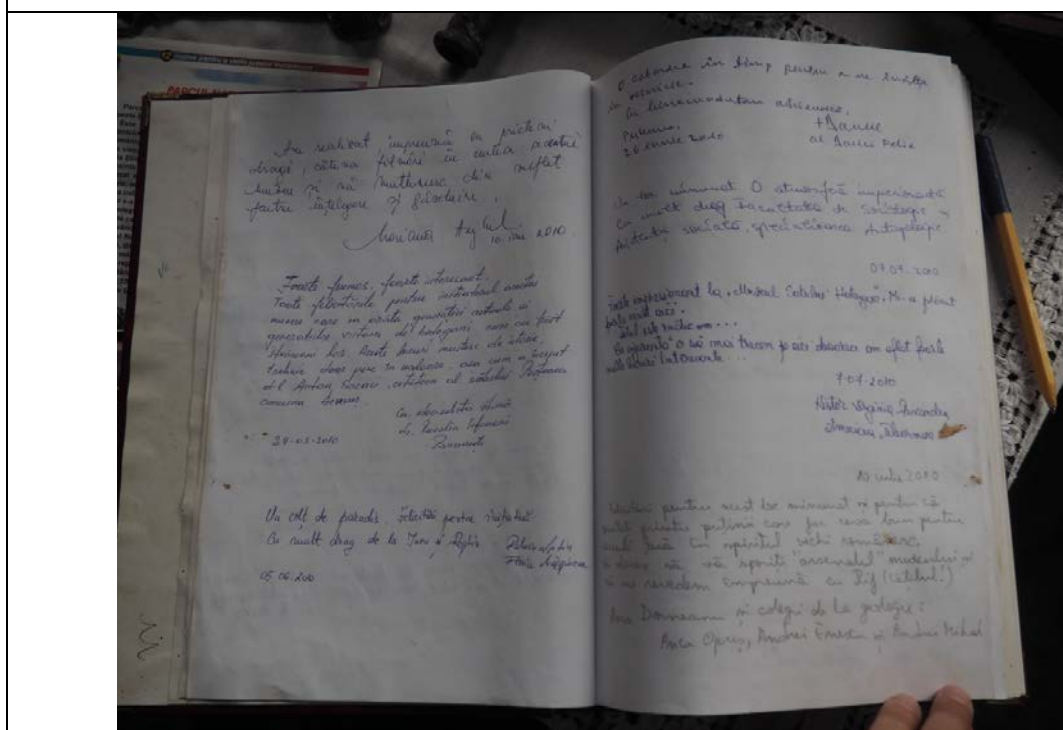
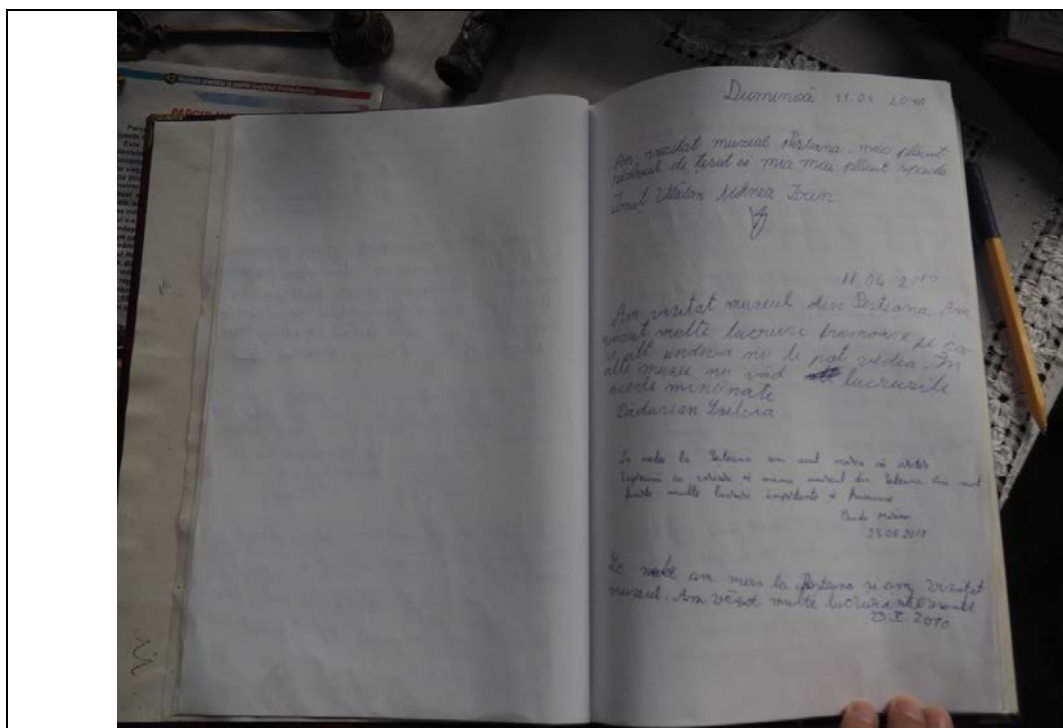
MUS_01 Guestbook Pages [Galoşpetreu]

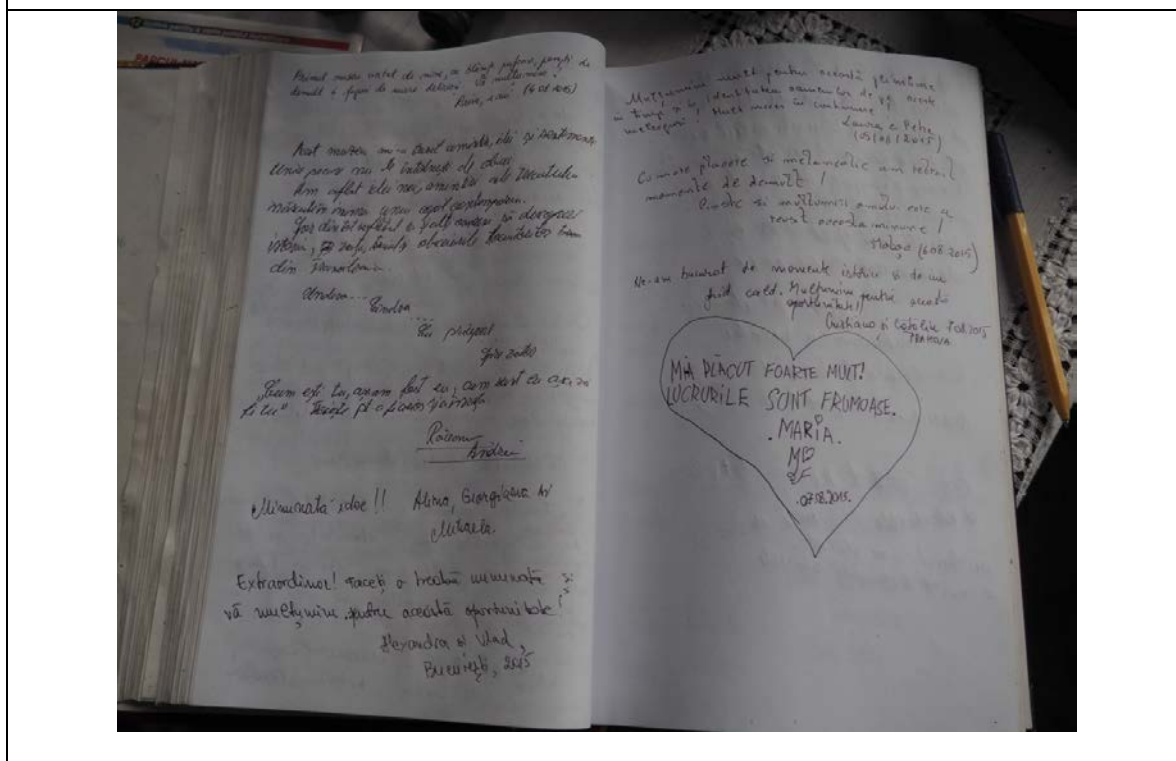
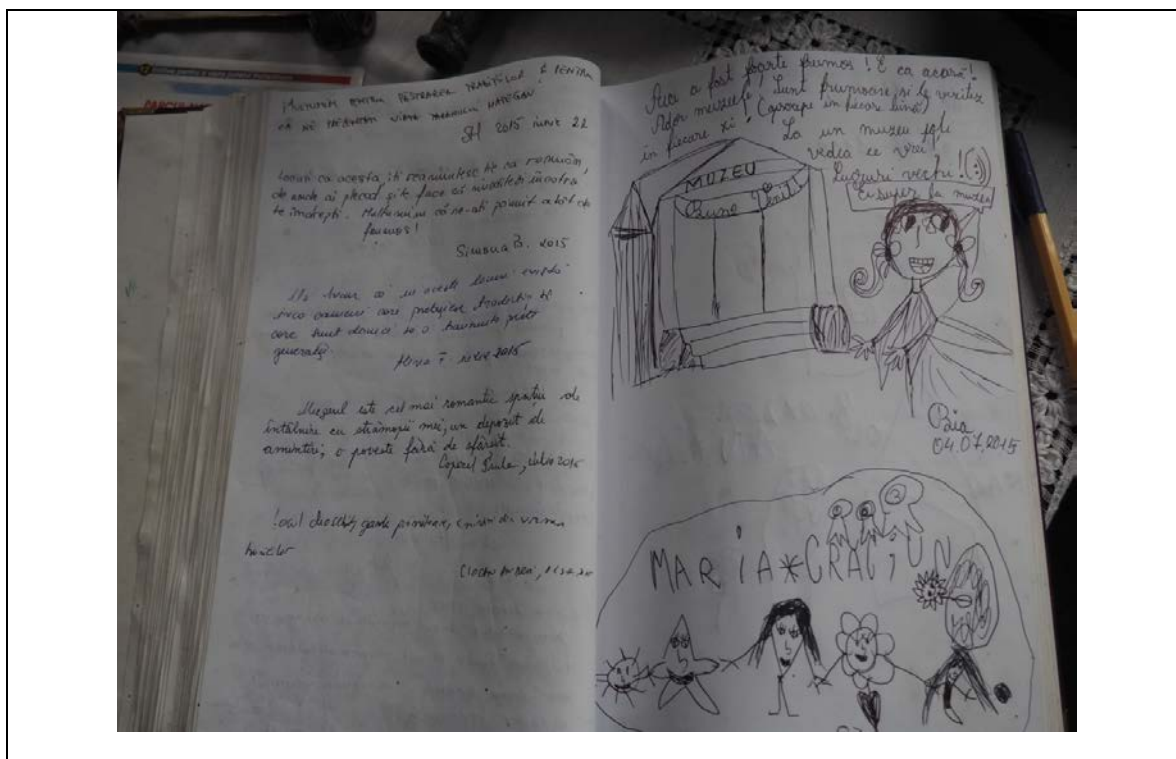


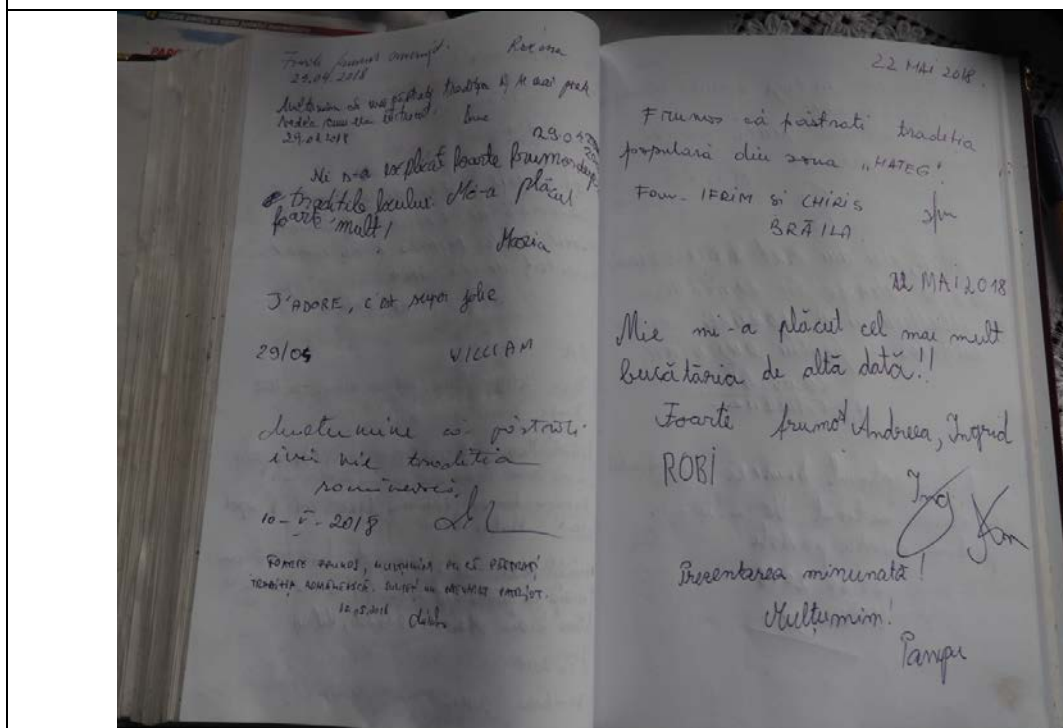
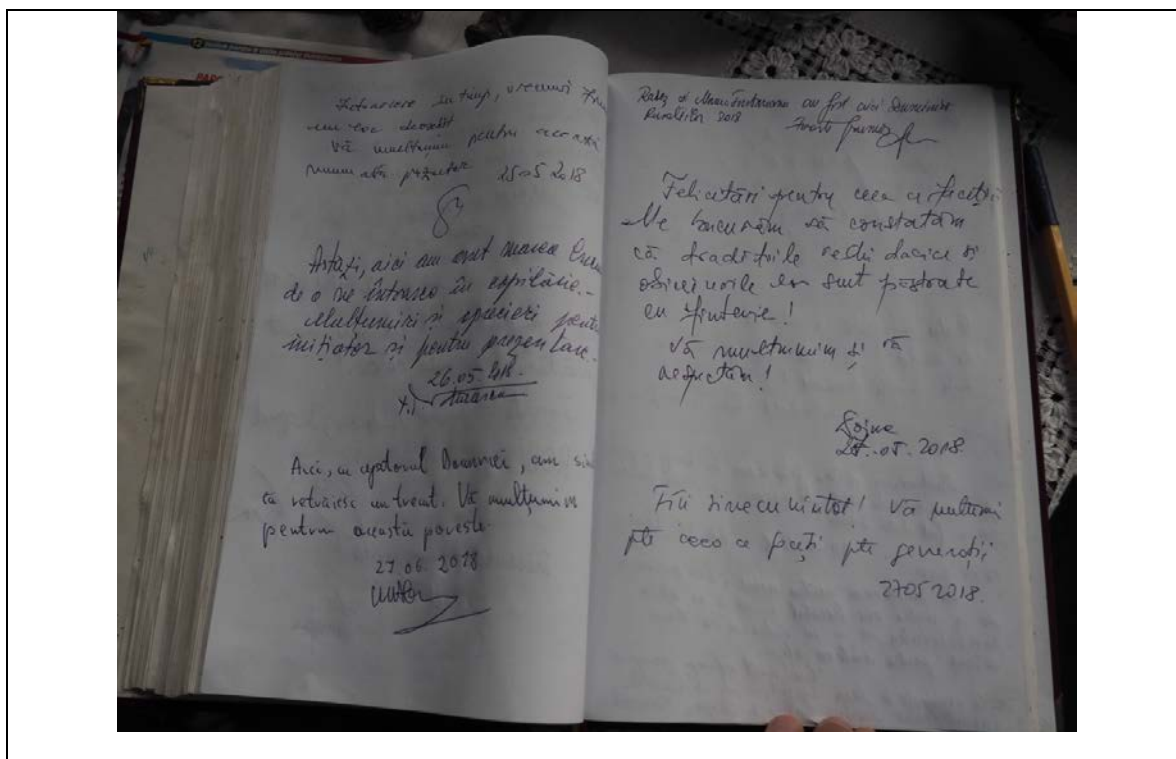


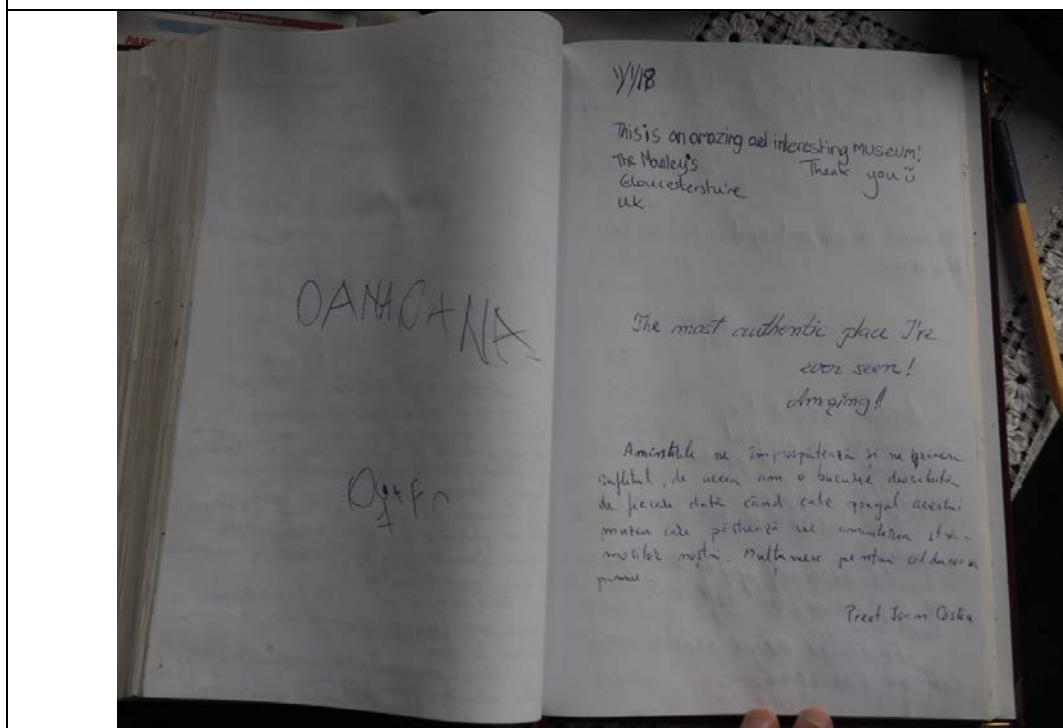
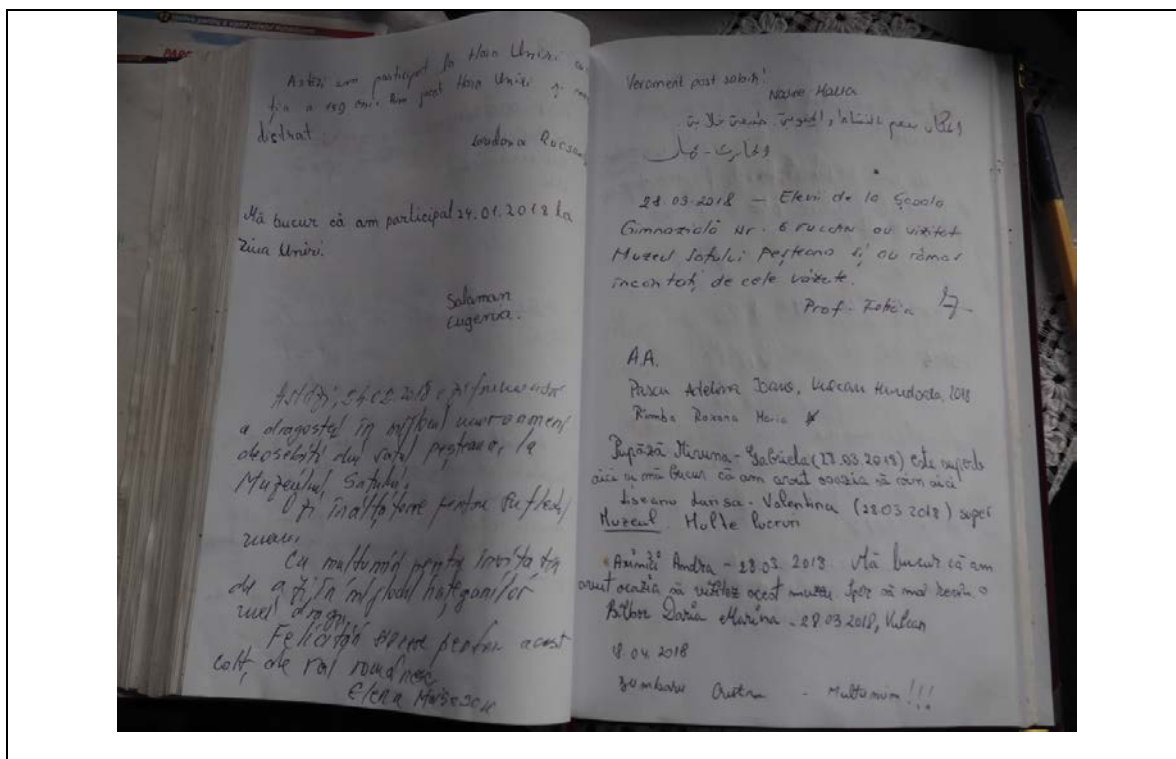












Felicitati pentru succesele de clasa pe care
aveti dreptul. Totul este posibil pentru
Tata, Tanta, Tati si Tata
Mama, Mama, Tata si Mama

Votre lettre m'a été lue, avec
une ardeur que je ne puis vous
décrire. Je vous en remercie, mais elle
peut en avoir rejoint une autre
et me l'a peut-être fait perdre.
Je vous prie de m'en dire
quelques mots. Je vous prie
de m'en dire quelques mots.
Je vous prie de m'en dire
quelques mots.

Vous serez en place, in alt
croquis

Famille Roca, Bucarest)
(Aucun, Florentine in Rivray)

13 09 2014

Testes - post strain dehydrated
ovules, were impregnated in wood blocks
Foliar tissue - air-dried, collected on slide

Vice-Lieutenant

A5

May 2014

Mettiamo dei Drammici e a loro
per dramma Italiano, bene, puniscono e
l'hanno, dramma Italiano, non sono di questa
no, che se la si desidera, l'hanno, dramma
e il nostro Italiano, e dramma italiano
l'hanno Italiano.

Revocarea cu plăcere de ființe elate, de
câte un gustare a razei se va înlocui cu
lucrurile frumoase, de ne îndrăgim cu simțurile
de ne bucurăm noiștri.

Trăim a fost a sate un sat cu
Mărește, în satul din, care va
devenea la țară.

Filială pentru propagația
 pentru lucrarea din domeniul
 Elevi, d. 20. 1. 1968

Appendix T: Guestbook comments: Museum-as-labor

Museum_ID	Year	Language	Comment
MUS_01	2016	Hungarian	"What you have done is very beautiful and worthwhile."
MUS_01	2016	Hungarian	"We thank you that we could look at this worthwhile and professionally outstanding collection. God's blessings be upon you . . ."
MUS_01	2016	Hungarian	"May 16, 2017 we visited the fruits of [the maker's] decades of [labor] – together we ate a pleasant and atmospheric lunch, he was not stingy with his palinca or his wine. So we leave this 'taj haz' and its kind community with acknowledgement (gratitude)." Names – "was a blessed and enjoyable day. We wish the doctor and his family further blessings and strength for the work that they have done to the and honor of our people."
MUS_01	2017	Hungarian	"With greetings from (Hungarian part of Transylvania) visitors from the Erasmus program come to this – we thank you for this marvelous exhibition . . ."
MUS_01	2017	Hungarian	"We thank you for putting together this interesting collection so we wish you good health and strength in your self-sacrificing labor."
MUS_01	2017	Hungarian	"We were also (pleased) by these collections. And thank you for maintaining it."
MUS_01	2017	Hungarian	"We wish you much success and beautiful results in developing your <i>taj ház</i> and the remodeling of the great buildings that belong to it. All the best . . ."
MUS_01	2017	Romanian	"Thank you for the visit and for being able to visit the village museum"
MUS_01	2017	Romanian	"We visited the museum with great pleasure and we were left deeply impressed because what we visited here is unique."
MUS_01	2018	Hungarian	"We thank you for this marvelous and special experience we took part in."
MUS_06	2009	Romanian	"Laudable initiative and with extraordinary efforts to [the owner]. What a shame that it is not understood as such and supported by the officials. Thank you for the occasion offered of seeing ignored, forgotten objects."
MUS_06	2010	Romanian	"At the museum in Peșteana, I had the opportunity to visit with my cousins and my mom the museum in Peșteana. Here there are very many things that are important and beautiful."
MUS_06	2010	Romanian	"A corner of paradise. Thank you for your initiative. With great love . . ."
MUS_06	2010	Romanian	"A great place. An impressive atmosphere. With great love . . ."
MUS_06	2010	Romanian	"Very impressive at the 'Museum of Hațeg village' – everything is rustic. Certainly we will come back here for we found out many interesting things . . ."
MUS_06	2010	Romanian	"I visited the museum in Peșteana. I saw more beautiful things that I could not see anywhere else in other museums I don't see these wonderful things."
MUS_06	2010	Romanian	"We went to Peșteana, we saw the museum, we saw many interesting things."
MUS_06	2010	Romanian	"We thank you for your hospitality and for the fact that you've done such a great amount of work to start a museum of the area of Hațeg. With respect and thanks"
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"Extraordinary. You're doing a great job and we thank you for this opportunity."
MUS_06	2017	Romanian	"We were impressed by everything that was gathered throughout the years. Honest congratulations to the collector."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"Congrats for everything you've done. I feel lucky to have been able to see this museum and to learn something of the traditions of this area."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"May you be blessed. Thank you for everything you do for the generations."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"Very beautifully organized."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"He explained to us in a very beautiful manner the traditions of the place. I liked it very much!"
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"Thank you for conserving the popular tradition of the 'Hațeg' area."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"Great museum – many things."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"I'm glad I had the opportunity to visit this museum. I hope to come back again."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"Congratulations for everything you've built here. For the fact that you valorize everything that your forefathers left for us."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"We admire you and we respect you for everything you are doing. We will come back with love."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"Impressing, intensive (titanic) work. We hope our good Lord gives you the power and the know-how to continue. We saw everywhere love and tradition. Thank you."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"Great success moving forward and may the good lord help you to do much more and create much more beautiful things for what you've done. (illegible). Good luck and first of all a lot of health." Signed
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"Thank you very much for everyrthng you do and for all the effort you've put into this. May you be blessed."

MUS_04	2017	Romanian	“Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the warm welcome eyou gave to us . . . may you be blessed by the good lord. Teacher signs (Hungarian) on one side and students on the other
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	“Congratulations for this great museum. It is a well preserved museum and very beautiful.”
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	“We are from Nufalau this is a very orderly museum.”
MUS_04	2018	Romanian	“Good luck in the future. May you manage to fulfil all your dreams. Good job Ligia.”
MUS_04	2018	Romanian	“Congratulations! To [the maker] for the initiative and for supporting his family to her father . . . for these beautiful museums . . .”
MUS_04	2018	Romanian	“Thank you for the wonderful tour through this great museum. We loved it.”
MUS_04	2018	Romanian	“Enormous appreciation and congratulations for your effort to maintain rural traditions . . .”
MUS_04	2018	Romanian	“It would be good in these times that we live in if we would have more young people with such beautiful passions – life would be more beautiful. Congrats from all my heart for [the maker] who finds time for such noble passion. We were left beautifully impressed.”
MUS_04	2018	Romanian	“The passion with which you have taken care of everything brought us joy and enlightenment and the growth and respect for this population. Thank you.”

Appendix U: Guestbook comments: Engaging with temporality

Museum_ID	Year	Language	Comment
MUS_01	2017	Romanian	"We respectfully thank you to those who discovered, restored and maintained this beautiful peasant household in such a way that we can find out how the people of these places lived, worked and spent their time many years ago. With respect, "
MUS_01	2018	Hungarian	"We thank you very much for the opportunity to go back into our grandparents' rooms."
MUS_01	2018	Hungarian	"We thank you kindly for this experience that we could spend a few minutes flying back into the past and into recreate the way our ancestors lived. We couldn't have wished for a better reception (welcoming)."
MUS_01	2018	Hungarian	"We congratulate you for this marvelous collection of old - I felt as if I was at my grandmother's house in my childhood. Beautiful memories came to mind – thank you for your beautiful hospitality . . ."
MUS_01	2018	Hungarian	"Thank you for the time travel – the journey through time which we could participate . . ."
MUS_01	2018	Romanian	"Thank you for the opportunity for seeing the way the people from a long time ago used to live."
MUS_01	2018	Romanian	"It was with great pleasure that we relived for an hour the lives – the everyday lives – of our ancestors who lived on the lands of this very tiny cute village of Galoşpetreu. Thanks to our guide . . . we managed to get valuable and correct information for he himself lived in this house."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"We spent an hour in the universe of popular tradition. It was an hour of quiet and joy and of meeting our past – congratulations . . . for all the labor and for the beauty of "the past" that we have visited here. May god have you in his care and may you be blessed."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"Congratulations for this museum – here there are wonderful things. We go back again in the past."
MUS_04	2018	Romanian	"We came here with an open heart, we went back in time, we saw, we observed and we wondered (were in awe). We wish that for our future visits we will be even more impressed. Thank you . . ."
MUS_04	2018	Romanian	"With emotion and joy in the same time, we lay down these lines in this 'book of honor' . . . we experienced great pleasure to be 'teleported in the past' (as the children said) discovering and finding out things that are extremely interesting about our forefathers. Things that smell of history, as a child mentioned. We will come back to these places where popular art is kept with sanctity every time when we will have the occasion. Congratulations (underlined) for everything you do in transmitting the things and the popular Romanian customs Ms. Ligia."
MUS_06	2010	Romanian	"Very beautiful. Very interesting. All my congratulations to the initiator of this museums who will show current and future generations of this area how their ancestors lived. These places are filled with history. They must just be valorized just like Mr. Socaci said. This citizen of the village of Peşteana in the Commune of Densus. With great appreciation . . ."
MUS_06	2010	Romanian	"A descent in time that will allow us to rise to eternity."
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"It was very beautiful here! It's just like home! I love museums! They are beautiful and I visit them (almost every month). At a museum, you can see whatever you want. Old things!"
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"The museum is the most romantic space where I can meet my forefathers. A deposit of memories, a story without ending."
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"Very special place very welcoming host, memories from of the time of our grandparents."
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"The first museum I visited with fluffy furs, stories from a while ago and delicious honeycombs. Thank you."
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"We took great joy in historical moments and enjoyed a very warm host/guide. Thank you for this opportunity."
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"This museum awakened unique memories, ideas and feelings that one does not come across very often. I found out new ideas, memories of the past, born in the child of a contemporary child. I hope with all my heart that other people discover the [lives and living habits] of the inhabitants of Transylvania. Summer . . . sometime . . . with know-how . . . towards the future."
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"With great pleasure and melancholy, we have relived the moments from long ago. Glory to you and thank you to the man who managed to create this miracle or wonder."
MUS_06	2017	Romanian	"The memories refresh us and nurture our soul. That is why every time I step into this museum, I am filled with great joy, for this museum keeps the memory of our ancestors. Thank you for the warm welcome."
MUS_06	2017	Romanian	signed by students theoretically – praises the teacher they went with – "[From] the students of the primary school of Peşteana . . . we come back with great pleasure every time, however many times we can, and we want to take joy in all these beautiful things to enrich our knowledge of our past. Peşteana was and is a village of historical resonance with very special people a village that will live throughout time. Congratulations for the presentation and how passionate you are."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	". . . a beautiful day of love in the middle of special people from the village of Peşteana at the village museum. – an uplifting day for the human soul. With great thanks . . . for having taught us

			during a day how to live in the middle of my dear people from Hațeg. Congratulations for this corner of Romanian heaven.”
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	“Thank you for this great idea for keeping the past alive and for offering us the possibility of turning in time at least for a few moments.”
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	“Here with your help, sir, I felt I’m reliving the past. Thank you for the story.”
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	“A great travel through the past and through history. I appreciated it and am grateful for having the opportunity to see these things.”
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	“A return in time. Beautiful times in a special place. Thank you for this beautiful presentation.”
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	“Today here we had the great joy of returning to our childhood. Thank you and appreciations to the initiator of this project and thank you for the presentation.”
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	“Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for a travel in time which filled our souls with happiness and made us nostalgic for a past more beautiful time – time before time. Great success and health upon you.”
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	“A great idea. A travel in time that is unforgettable. Thank you for all of your beautiful stories.”
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	“Thank you for allowing us to return in time and for the beautiful history lesson. We are happy our history was not forgotten.”
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	“Congratulations for the multitude of objects you kept from the darkest of times. The explanations of the host were very beautiful.”

Appendix V: Guestbook comments: Connecting to identity

Museum ID	Year	Language	Comment
MUS_01	2016	Romanian	"Thank you . . . for showing me the heritage of the village life."
MUS_01	2017	Romanian	"This museum is great. Reminds us of the old traditions . . .thank you so much . . ."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"We are a group of pensioners from Zalău and we truly appreciate the effort for valorizing traditions and customs of our ancestors."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"My entire consideration for the beauty and authenticity of these traditional popular treasures."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"Thank you from the bottom of our hearts – we wish you health for you already have inspiration and passion. May you preserve the Romanian tradition for a long time, lovingly . . ."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"We are deeply impressed by the superb preoccupation of [the maker] for everything that is authentic and beautiful. From us to you and all our respect and admiration. We wish her health and strength to work in order to give joy to as many people as possible. People who have preoccupations in this field are simple people with love for their nation and their traditions."
MUS_04	2017	Romanian	"Congratulations for what you've done here – and for the fact that you preserve the tradition of the county."
MUS_04	2018	Romanian	"We wish for [the maker] to have strength and help from god to take forward move forward preserve for the future THE CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS of our people. We are Romanians. We are masters of this land!!"
MUS_04	2018	Romanian	"We were left impressed. You are worthy of all the admiration (the family) – We went back in time and saw the beauty the simplicity and the warmth of the Romanian people. Thank you for what you've done for future generations."
MUS_06	2009	Romanian	"Our entire admiration and our profound respect for the effort and the passion that you lean over traditions that define the popular tradition and culture in the region."
MUS_06	2009	Romanian	"A truly great idea for keeping millennial traditions of the holy Romanian people. May god bless you."
MUS_06	2010	Romanian	"Congratulations for this wonderful place and for being among the few that do something good for this country in the old Romanian spirit. I wish that you increase the arsenal of the museum and that we see you together with 'Piff' the dog!"
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"Thank you for keeping the traditions and for presenting the life of the Hătegan peasant to us."
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"I'm glad that in such places there are still people who value tradition and who are willing to transmit it to other generations."
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"Places like this remind you as a Romanian where you left form and make you meditate about the direction you're headed in. Thank you very much for receiving us so kindly."
MUS_06	2015	Romanian	"Thank you for this walk in the past and in the identity of people on these lands. Great success moving on."
MUS_06	2017	Romanian	"The life in a country home shown in a way that you cannot truly see any more these days. A very special experience especially because we found ourselves in some of the objects we saw as they were used by our grandparents and our parents. And because we saw the look on our daughter's face as she saw new things. We will come back here with great pleasure in another season."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"Congratulations for everything you did. We are most glad to conclude that the traditions of the old Dacians and their customs are preserved with holiness. Thank you and we respect you."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"Today I participated in the dance of the union. With the occasion of 159 years we danced the dance of the union and we had fun."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"On January 24 – day when two of the three Romanian regions united – [the maker] made us dance the dance of the union."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"I'm glad I was able to take part in the dance of the union."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"Thank you for still keeping traditions alive so that we can still see how people used to live in the past."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"Very beautiful. Thank you for preserving the Romanian traditions. You're a true patriot."
MUS_06	2018	Romanian	"Thank you for keeping the Romanian tradition alive."

Appendix W: Facebook reviews

Accessed at: https://www.facebook.com/pg/casafeteidiniaz/reviews/?ref=page_internal

Date	Comment
2018-01-28	"Wonderful and very interesting. I had a very good time there."
2017-11-07	"I love you my beloved people from the Salaj county. I am glad for everything you do. Success [heart emoji]"
2017-10-11	"What you do there is absolutely extraordinary because it comes from the heart. Congratulations for having the courage of having invetsed in your passion. It's on my list of future places to go."
2017-07-09	"I recently had the opportunity to visit the museum of Iaz – Congratulations Ligia for everything you managed to do Congratulations to your parents as well for the support of your parents. I will come back to listen with great love to the stories told with so much passion and to see your dreams become reality."
[n.d.]	"I already saw the museum a second time. I'm left with the best impressions."
2017-05-23	"Exceptional congratulations for your nationalism and you love of tradition, culture and the beautiful."
2017-04-27	"I liked the museum extraordinarily much. And I am glad you made this museum one that is full of life. I truly appreciate the effort that you've made at such a young age and that you conserve the traditions and local customs with so much love. I highly recommend it."
2017-04-14	"I would like to congratulate you for your tenacity and your passion. This summer I will go visit from the gate to the back of the yard." Signed a citizen of Iaz from the European capital (lives elsewhere now)
2017-04-14	"... everything is special ...can't wait to visit ... maker is our true born woman from Salaj – she's the pride of Transylvania"
2017-03-27	"I think everything is lovely in our (home village)."
2017-01-19	First I would like to know where it is and second I like and appreciate you for everything that you do."
[n.d.]	"I've been to this museum multiple times. I have also told others to go. Of course, [the maker] always comes up with something new."
2017-01-06	"Come see something that will give joy to your hearts." [Maker's father]

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