

# Cooperation between Children's Museums and National- or City-Museums



Claudia Haas, Elisabeth Menasse

# BORDER BETWEEN TWO CULTURES

- During the 20th century there has been a clear border, dividing children's museums (CMs) and traditional museums (TMs)



- In the museum landscape TMs had a higher esteem than CMs. Generally TMs looked down on CMs



# DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE TWO CULTURES

## Children's Museum:

- Visitors are the focus
- Learning is central
- New learning methods based on needs of visitors
  - Small and flexible organisation
    - Depending on self-earned income



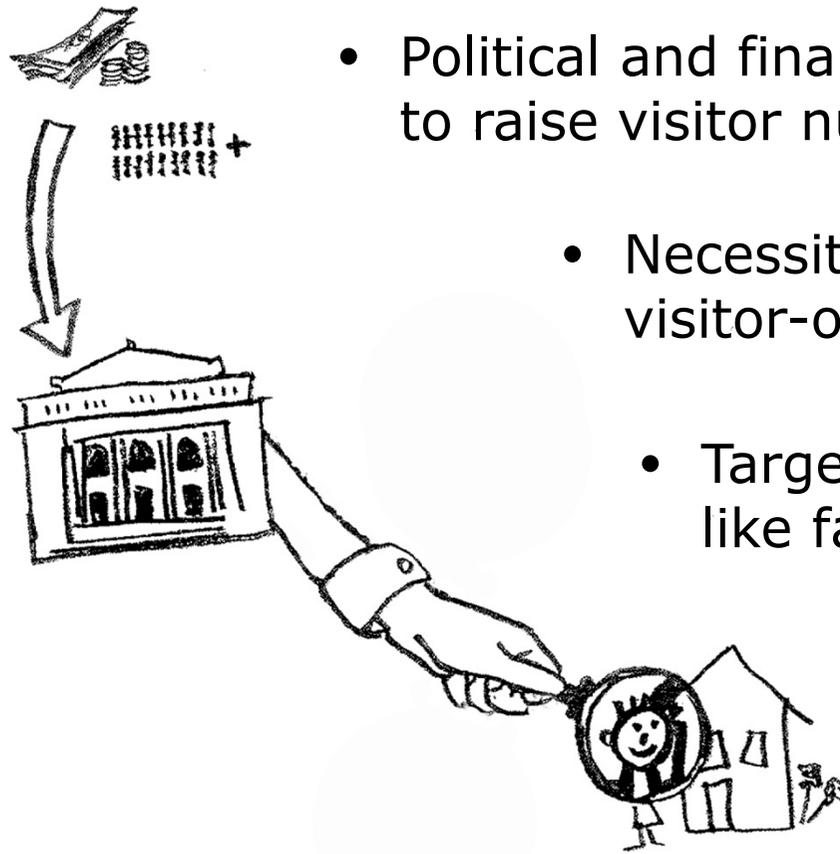
## Traditional Museum:

- Collections are the focus
- Objects are central
- Curator is authority of knowledge
- State or city subsidized
- Hierarchical and inflexible structure



# LOOKING ACROSS THE BORDER

During the last years increasing interest of TMs on CMs caused by



- Political and financial pressure to raise visitor numbers
  - Necessity to be more visitor-oriented
  - Targeting of new potential audiences like families, children, school-groups

# LOOKING ACROSS THE BORDER

- CMs are excellent showcases how to best serve families, children and schools
  - TMs establish educational departments and create their own children's programmes often modelled after CM programmes.
  - TMs change their mission and objectives and start to see themselves as learning institutions

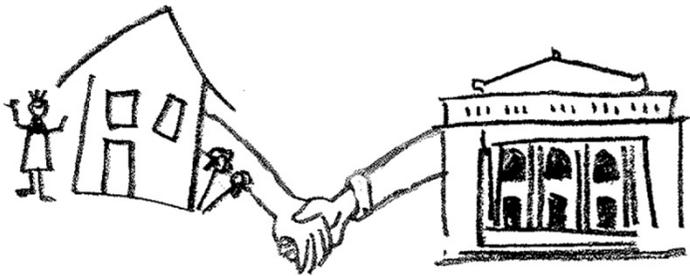


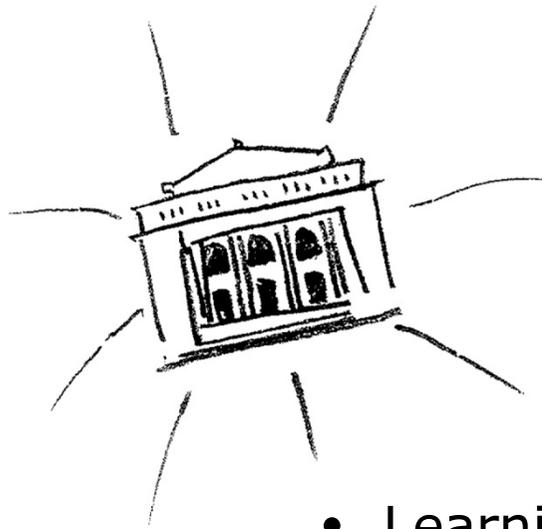
# CROSSING THE BORDER

Interest for cooperation of TMs with CMs increases.

Different ways of cooperation:

- TMs are renting exhibitions and workshops designed by CMs
- CMs offer consulting for TMs
- CM staff members facilitate workshops in TMs
- CMs establish branches in TMs





## TWO CULTURES WORKING TOGETHER

### Benefits for TMs:

- Learning from the expertise on child-adapted content
  - Learning from their methods how to attract their target-audience
  - Using their network of exhibition designers, architects and artists
- Access to the CM audience-databases



## TWO CULTURES WORKING TOGETHER

Benefits for CMs:

- Higher prestige in the museum-field
- Gain of new visitors
- More exhibition space
- Higher visibility
- Winning of new partners and networks
- Using collections and expertise of the TM-curators
  - Strengthening of the brand

# TWO CULTURES WORKING TOGETHER

Drawbacks for CMs:

- Loss of visitors in the original CM
- Loss of monopoly and uniqueness in the eyes of the audience
- Competition between original CM and branch
- Differences in organisational culture leads to clash between the two staffs
- Weakening of the brand



# TWO CULTURES WORKING TOGETHER

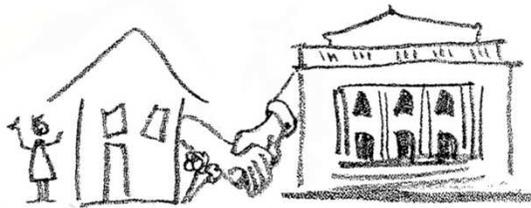
TMs have only benefits and no drawbacks from cooperating with CMs



# HOW WILL THE TWO CULTURES DEVELOP IN THE FUTURE?

Three possibilities:

- Overcoming the obstacles and creating a strong partnership between CMs and TMs on equal terms
  - Cooperation fails – back to start



- Friendly or unfriendly takeover of CMs by TMs

