

On various topics

Ethnographic Exhibition as a Mirror of the Community: How Did Local Contributions Shape the Ethnographic Heritage of Ludbreg?

The paper analyzes the practical aspects of constituting ethnographic collections within the Ludbreg Town Museum, based on the active work of individuals, associations and institutions. More than six decades of systematic collection and conservation of tangible cultural heritage objects have resulted in an ethnographic exhibition inspired by the traditional Ludbreg house with household items from the 19th and 20th centuries. At the same time, elements of intangible heritage - customs, oral tradition and local narrative - have been documented through collaborative practices. The example of Ludbreg points to the importance of joint action between institutions and citizens in the preservation and interpretation of heritage, as well as regarding the potential for developing diverse holdings in small urban areas.

Keywords: heritage, museum, local community, ethnographic exhibition, Ludbreg

INTRODUCTION

More than sixty years ago, in 1964, a teacher from Ludbreg, Stjepan Belović, began collecting objects of tangible cultural heritage, motivated by the need to preserve them from decay (Muzej grada Ludbrega [s. a.].a). The reasons for such an activity were related to the development of industrial production because of which traditional household, viticultural and agricultural objects were gradually replaced by modern models (Vađunec, ed. 2020a). Belović also points out that the style of construction and interior design of residential spaces changed, with a tendency to throw away old furniture, which often ended up destroyed or inadequately stored by their owners. Initially, the collected objects were exhibited in a display case in the hallway of the “Dragica

Kancijan” Elementary School in Ludbreg, then moved to the Batthyany Castle, and later to the premises of the then Folk University Ludbreg, but after the permanent exhibition was disbanded in 2005, the collection was returned to the basement of the Batthyany Castle, where a storage room was formed¹ (Muzej grada Ludbrega [s. a.]a). A new impetus in the continuity of collecting heritage objects was given by the members of the association “Women from the Center of the World”, who have been actively participating in the preservation of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Ludbreg region for almost two decades. The cooperation between the current Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak” and the Town of Ludbreg in 2021 resulted in the establishment of the Ludbreg Town Museum, which has since developed systematic cooperation with members of the association on documenting, preserving and interpreting ethnographic objects. In addition to the members of the association, many individuals have joined the initiative with the aim of contributing to the preservation of Ludbreg’s cultural heritage. By donating objects, but also by oral testimonies about traditional customs and practices, they actively participate in the transfer of knowledge and local memory, often expressing concern that these traditions will be forgotten. A wide range of local community members has gradually become involved in the work of the Museum, which today brings together numerous collaborators guided by the common goal of preserving cultural heritage. On the foundations of what began as a modest school initiative, today the museum’s holdings include almost thirteen thousand objects.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Stjepan Belović, a teacher from Veliki Bukovec, came to Ludbreg in the 1964/1965 school year as a graduate teacher of history and geography, after graduating from the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb (Vađunec, ed. 2020b). His love for cultural, tangible and intangible heritage and the development path of the Local History Collection of the Ludbreg Town Museum that he initiated are documented in the two-part short film *Ususret Muzeju grada Ludbrega*, produced by the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”. In the film, he explains how, in addition to regular classes, he also led a group of about a dozen students with a strong interest in history. Belović stated that, in order to arouse students’ interest in collecting objects, he used grades as a stimulus. Given that the history grade included several elements, including interest in the subject, students brought objects from their own homes or neighborhoods. A student who brought a better, more valuable object would receive a high grade, while those with a lower value object would receive a lower grade. Although such a method would be considered questionable in today’s education system, it proved effective at the time and encouraged students to actively participate. Since the “Dragica Kancijan” Elementary School covered a wide area, objects arrived from numerous settlements in the Ludbreg area. Before being stored, each item underwent a basic registration procedure, which in today’s museum practice would correspond to the initial phase of inventorying. In 1973, Ludbreg Elementary School allocated five thousand dinars from its funds intended for culture to purchase items that could not be donated. Belović added that, given the growing number of items collected at the school, there was a need for a larger team of students to take care of them, and the space for their storage became insufficient. This resulted in the relocation of the collection in 1974 to the Batthyany Castle in Ludbreg. The collection was stored in the area behind the chapel choir, accessible only through the boiler room of the then

1 The place where objects are stored is also called a museum depot, a storage.

company “Varteks”. There were no shelves, so the objects were stored on the floor and sorted according to the material they were made of. Wooden objects were coated with linseed oil to protect them from decay, while other items were not protected in any way, not even by basic security measures such as locking. Over the next fifteen years, the collection remained stored in this space without adequate protection. In 1983, collection activities ceased, and by 1989 the collection was exposed to vandalism, including burglaries (Muzej grada Ludbrega [s. a.]a). The consequence of these events was the theft of documentation and the numismatic collection, while some objects were intentionally damaged (Vađunec, ed. 2020b). Belović pointed out that in two cases the perpetrators were not found, while in the third burglary, on March 19, 1986, a group of workers from “Varteks” was identified, and the objects were returned thanks to the quick intervention of the police. The last burglary, in 1989, resulted in severe damage to the ceramic objects, which prompted the director of the Folk University Ludbreg, Branko Dijanošić, to initiate the relocation of the collection to their premises (Muzej grada Ludbrega [s. a.]a). He established cooperation with the Varaždin Town Museum and ethnologist Ljerka Albus, who, as a professor and senior curator, professionally processed the objects, recording basic information in a notebook, and then entering them into the collection inventory book (Vađunec, ed. 2020b). Director Dijanošić began creating photo documentation and photographed the objects that employee Katarina Gomaz cleaned of dust and stains, and then wrapped in cardboard and stored in wooden boxes. After processing 301 objects, in 1992, on the occasion of the Days of the Ludbreg Holy Sunday², an exhibition of selected objects from the collection, authored by Ljerka Albus, was organized in the hall of the Folk University Ludbreg, and the photographs for the accompanying catalogue were made by Davor Puttar, a photographer of the Varaždin Town Museum. Due to great public interest, on December 17, 1997, the permanent exhibition of the Local History Collection was opened on the first floor of the building of Folk University Ludbreg, along with a printed catalogue (Muzej grada Ludbrega [s. a.]a). Stjepan Belović continued to collect objects and collaborate with Albus and Dijanošić. However, some of the objects could not be accepted as donations due to their size or inadequate storage conditions, so some specimens had to be rejected and thus irretrievably lost, while acceptable objects were placed in the basement of the building of Folk University Ludbreg, today renamed the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”. In later years, the care of the Local History Collection was taken over by professor Venija Bobnjarić-Vučković, who initiated the restoration of objects, and in 2018 and 2019, all objects collected to that point – more than 700 of them – were professionally processed and categorized with the aim of being entered into the List of Protected Cultural Property. The collection was officially entered into the Register of Cultural Property of the Republic of Croatia in 2019, and then, at the beginning of 2020, it was relocated again from the Center’s boiler room to a renovated temporary museum storage room in the basement of Batthyany Castle (Vađunec, ed. 2020b). Today, the Local History Collection within the Ludbreg Town Museum includes more than a thousand objects, making it a significant segment of local heritage and a testament to decades of dedicated community work.

2 The Days of the Ludbreg Holy Sunday are a religious event that takes place in Ludbreg on the first Sunday in September.

GUARDIANS OF HERITAGE

The Local History Collection marked the beginning of ethnographic documentation of the Ludbreg region, but the real impetus for heritage preservation came with the founding of the association “Women from the Center of the World” on Ludbrega’s³ birthday, April 1, 2006. The initiator was Ludbreg teacher Franciska Schubert. The association was founded with the aim of bringing together creative individuals focused on fostering local cultural heritage, personal expression, tolerance and quality leisure time through artistic and educational activities (Žene iz Centra svijeta [s. a.]). Since November 21, 2007, association was allocated a space for use at Ivan Gundulića Street 23, known as “Bakina hiža i dedekov dvor”⁴. Over the decades, the space has served various purposes – from a private residence to a dental office, union premises and a driving school – before becoming the center of the association’s cultural and heritage activities. In 2008, a lease agreement signed with the Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia formalized the use of the space. During almost two decades of activity, the association’s members have collected more than two thousand ethnographic objects. The collection was based on donations from their own homes and surroundings, as well as donations from fellow citizens who recognized their role as “guardians of heritage”. In cases where objects could not be donated, the association purchased them from its own budget. Ana Katana became the president of the association in 2018, and continues to lead the association in an active direction. In the central room of “Bakina hiža”, they often exhibited the collected objects, designed permanent and occasional exhibitions, as well as workshops, making the collected objects available to the public. Over the years, they have established numerous collaborations with kindergartens, associations and institutions from the Ludbreg area, and have also conceptualized their own cultural events such as *Tikvijada*⁵, the celebration of St. Martin’s Day and Christmas at “Bakina hiža”. The association also regularly participates in the programs of other associations and institutions. They recorded all donated items, along with basic information, in a special notebook, and some were assigned internal inventory numbers, which indicates a developed awareness of the need for systematization and responsible management of collections. Despite limited resources, the members insisted on orderliness, proper storage and protection of the collected items. The key solution for the further development of heritage preservation was provided with the amendments to the Museums Act, which enabled the founding of museums in towns with fewer than ten thousand inhabitants, thus the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”, which already managed the Local History Collection, initiated the procedure for founding the Ludbreg Town Museum in 2018 (Muzej grada Ludbrega [s. a.]b).

3 The Legend of Ludbrega is one of the legends about how Ludbreg got its name. Ludbrega was a woman who grew grapes, and the Devil tried to seduce her. After several rejections, during his final courtship, Ludbrega hit the ground with a wooden cross with such force that on the opposite side of the world, next to New Zealand, a small island called Antipodravina, now called Antipodes, was created. More at: Turistička zajednica grada Ludbrega [s.a.].

4 Translated: Grandma’s house and grandpa’s yard.

5 *Tikvijada* is an event organized by the association “Women from the Center of the World” that pays tribute to pumpkins and the customs associated with them. The event involves various associations, family farms, art and cultural groups that organize various activities as part of festival, such as educational lectures, workshops, exhibitions and cultural and artistic programs.

LUDBREG TOWN MUSEUM

The process of founding the Ludbreg Town Museum lasted three years. On June 2, 2021, after meeting all legal requirements and receiving a decision from the Ministry of Culture and Media, the Ludbreg Town Museum was officially opened as a separate organizational unit the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”. A general, regional museum of a local and complex type that collects, researches, interprets and presents the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Ludbreg area, and in addition to valid documentation, it was necessary to follow legal regulations and ensure all conditions prescribed by law: museum holdings, relevant museum documentation, means and equipment for work, protection of museum holdings and documentation, space for carrying out activities, a security system, a museum development plan and professional staff (Muzej grada Ludbrega [s. a.]b). At the time of its founding, the museum holdings included the already existing Local History Collection, as well as the Collection of Sacred Art, housed in Batthyany Castle since 1998. Immediately after its founding in September 2021, a new museum collection was created – “Bakina hiža i dedekov dvor”, the result of collaboration between the association “Women from the Center of the World”, the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak” and the Town of Ludbreg. The signing of the cooperation agreement marks the beginning of the process of professional processing and inventorying of the collected material. The objects were successively moved from the association’s premises to the building of the Iovia Archaeological Park – the museum’s headquarters – where they were catalogued, cleaned and adequately stored. Larger objects, such as closets, tables, and tools, were processed at the source since it was not convenient to transport them. In the first phase, the focus was on textile materials which were the most numerous. These were mainly *vilani*⁶, cloths, clothing, *zidnjaci*⁷, sheets, tablecloths, table runners, towels, tapestries and bales of homemade linen or yarn. The members of the association, with the best of intentions, tried to protect the objects they had collected, so they washed the textile items in the washing machine, which resulted in the dye bleeding and soiling other objects, and they painted the agricultural tools displayed in the yard. This indicates that handling the objects requires the knowledge of not one, but several experts, or interdisciplinary collaboration between ethnologists, conservators, restorers and related professions. Therefore, the textile items, after being vacuumed through a protective mesh, were wrapped in acid-free paper and stored in boxes or vacuum bags, and each item received an inventory number and entered into a database (Figure 1).

The processing of textile items was followed by the processing of wooden, and then glass, ceramic and metal objects. Textiles and wooden objects, as well as those made of fur, leather and paper, undergo a disinfestation in a disinfestation chamber⁸, that is, a process of destroying pests

6 *Vilani* or *vihlani* are bedspreads woven from homemade linen with various red linear and geometric decorations that were usually woven only on one part of the bedspread, but sometimes on the entire bedspread. Such bedspreads were often given to daughters when they got married as a dowry.

7 *Zidnjaci* are wall hangings with a decorative but also a protective function. They were mostly white with various motifs and text embroidered in different colors. They were embroidered by women in the evenings after finishing all the work in the house and yard, especially in winter when there was not as much work and it got dark very early. They were attached to the wall with nails as part of household furnishings, while the protective function referred to the wall hangings above the stove placed there to prevent food from splashing on the walls during cooking.

8 “Such a chamber or closet must have a hermetically sealed iron door, the walls must be covered with sheet metal, as well as the ceiling and floor. It must have a built-in system for supplying gas and for harmless ventilation or releasing gases from the chamber.” (Klarić 1999: 200).



Figure 1. Stored and inventoried textile items (photo by the author, August 2, 2024)

Figure 2. Objects in the disinfestation chamber (photo by the author, June 27, 2025)





Figure 3. Closing of “Bakina hiža” due to disinfestation (photo by Matea Maltarić, April 2023)

using a chamber supplied by gas under a certain pressure. The objects are kept in the disinfestation chamber, in this case the one within the Restoration Center – Ludbreg department, for three months, and only a certain number of objects can fit in it since it is small-sized and the door is not wide enough for certain objects to pass through. Objects can be stored in boxes and bags; for disinfestation, it is only important that the boxes and bags are open (Figure 2).

Due to the space limitations of the chamber, the entire “Bakina hiža” was temporarily converted into a disinfestation room in April 2023 – all openings were hermetically sealed, and the space was treated with gas and sealed for a month (Figure 3). After ventilation, the space was ready for storage and exhibition of materials.

Part of the house was converted into a space for seasonal exhibitions, while the former souvenir shop became a space for gatherings of association members. Besides exhibitions, part of the room will be partitioned to become a storage room for objects that have been disinfested, and next to this room there is also a smaller room that houses two looms for weaving workshops. Objects made of materials that do not require disinfestation are cleaned manually using mild agents, in compliance with museological protocols. After disinfestation and preventive protection, objects are no longer mixed with other objects to prevent recontamination. After the opening of the Museum, collaboration with the local community has expanded significantly. Citizens are increasingly donating objects to the association or directly to the Museum that they previously intended to throw away, which testifies to the growing awareness of the value of cultural heritage. Of course, not all objects can be accepted – for example, newer replicas, objects without local context, those that cannot be placed in a Museum, or have an unacceptable purchase price. The Museum and the association also actively collaborate in educational activities, especially workshops. In collaboration with members of the association, curators organize



Figure 4. Example of a workshop – decorating Easter eggs using the technique of cooking in onion skins (photo by Ian Novak, March 2025)



Figure 5. The central room of “Bakina hiža” before the works (photo by the author, June 2024)



Figure 6. The central room of “Bakina hiža” after completing the works (photo by the author, July 2024)



Figure 7. Transportation of old wagon to the new museum storage room (photo by the author, February 2025)

various museum workshops such as making Christmas chains from crepe paper, a candy salon⁹, decorating Easter eggs using the technique of cooking in onion skins (Figure 4) or drawing with wax, as well as weaving workshops on improvised looms.

Although since 2021, “Bakina hiža i dedekov dvor” were closed to visitors due to inventorying and interior design works, but the members continued to produce their exhibitions, now in collaboration with museum staff and employees of the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”. Some of them are the *Retro Fashion Design Exhibition*, presenting to interested visitors the clothes they designed and tailored, then the exhibition *Old ways of treatment* about folk medicine and medicines that were used in times when there were very few or no doctors at all, as well as exhibitions based on wedding customs, oral tradition, and a fashion show based on the legend of Ludberga for which the costumes were designed by Ludbreg designer Eva Vučković. The exhibitions related to customs were based on ethnographic research that collected relevant narratives, photographs, and documentation related to the researched topics.

OPENING OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

“Bakina hiža i dedekov dvor” is the name that refers to the grandma’s house which includes a central room for exhibitions and a storage room, a room for weaving workshops, and a room for gatherings of association members. In the room intended for exhibitions and the storage

9 Candies wrapped in colorful, shiny paper, often with white fringes at the ends. They were used as decorations on the Christmas trees, and children were allowed to eat them when the decorations were taken down. Of course, children sometimes ate them before, wrapping nuts, stones, or twigs in paper instead of candy.

room, as well as in the corridor, the walls have been smoothed and painted, and there are plans to install rails for hanging frames and objects, as well as the installation of exhibition showcases and pedestals (Figures 5 and 6).

Also, part of the room will be converted into a storage room for the remaining objects using a plasterboard partition. In the courtyard there is another smaller building that served as a tool shed and storage area, and today it is the space that houses the ethnographic exhibition, souvenir shop and space for pottery workshops. The walls have been also smoothed and painted, as well as partitioned using plasterboard in order to separate the souvenir shop and the space for pottery workshops into two separate rooms. The space was cleaned by employees of the Ludbreg Town Museum, the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”, and members of the association, with the help of employees of the “Lukom” utility company who transported large objects – such as a farm wagon (Figure 7), closets and other furniture – to the new museum storage room located in the premises of the Community Center in Selnik.

With this, the Ludbreg Town Museum has expanded its storage facilities to four locations in the Ludbreg area: Batthyany Castle, the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”, the Iovia Archaeological Park, and the Community Center in Selnik. Furthermore, a wooden plank ceiling in the ethnographic exhibition space was lowered to create the impression of a traditional Podravina house from the 19th and 20th centuries, which was very low and cooking, dining, and sleeping often took place in one room. New lighting was installed, windows were restored, and the floor was painted brown to imitate the clay floor of the past, which was later replaced with wooden planks. The construction work was followed by the development of the exhibition concept and the selection of objects from the museum’s two ethnographic collections – the Local History Collection and the “Bakina hiža i dedekov dvor” Collection. The exhibition shows various functional parts of the household: a space for cooking, washing, storing dishes, preparing food, dining, sleeping, and an entrance area where shoes and work clothes were taken off. For additional protection, wooden objects were coated with wood preservative and then waxed to fill holes and prevent woodworm. The wall hangings were framed to prevent dust accumulation, and the windows are protected by curtains made of homemade linen that block natural light and prevent fading and damage to the exhibited objects (Figures 8 and 9).

Work on the exhibition is a long-term process that requires careful selection of exhibits, good spatial layout and knowledge of museum, conservation and restoration standards. The final exhibition layout differed significantly from the initial draft due to changes, additions, and adjustments made during the process. At same time was created a catalogue containing a list and description of 103 objects, available in both printed and digital form via a QR code at the entrance. In the process of creating the exhibition, we identified a need for certain objects that were not in the holdings, so the local community got involved again. Thanks to their contribution, as well as donations from employees, the exhibition included objects such as a chamber pot, a poppy seed grinder, dishes, water buckets and others. Several smaller objects were purchased with the Museum’s funds. Souvenirs for sale were made by members of the association “Women from the Center of the World”, sewing and tailoring items such as scented sachets, canvas bags, bottle ties, pillows and other decorative items. Finally, on April 16, 2025, the ethnographic exhibition in Ludbreg was officially opened, almost thirty years after the permanent exhibition from 1997. The Museum was opened by the mayor of Ludbreg, Dubravko Bilić, and given that the event took place during Holy Week, the space was appropriately decorated. On the table were Easter eggs dyed with onion skins, ham, spring onions, horseradish, salt and pussy willow branches.



Figure 8. The ethnographic exhibition space before the renovation (photo by the author, July 2024)

The food was removed immediately after the opening ceremony, while the other festive elements were removed after the holiday. The display is planned to change seasonally – for example, at Christmas – to show how the house was once decorated for special occasions.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

In addition to the fact that the local population actively participates in the preservation of tangible cultural heritage through collaboration with the Ludbreg Town Museum, it is important to highlight their increasingly engaged role in documenting and revitalizing intangible cultural heritage, especially folk customs, beliefs, oral traditions and everyday practices that have shaped the identity of the Ludbreg region for generations. First and foremost, there are the active members of the association “Women from the Center of the World” who not only participate in

research, but also actively seek out tellers – most often older members of the community – who are bearers and witnesses of traditional knowledge. Just like museum employees, they find tellers in Ludbreg, but also in surrounding municipalities and villages, as they strive to record differences and similarities in customs among different local communities, which contributes to a more precise understanding of the specificities of the microregion. So far, wedding customs of the Ludbreg region, elements of folk medicine, Easter customs, as well as oral traditions that are often intertwined with local specificities and religious motifs have been researched and documented. Conversations with the tellers are often emotional – especially when they recall breakfast on Easter, sleeping on straw on Christmas Eve, gatherings around the fireplace, or telling fairy tales by candlelight. Many of them sadly remember that the people with whom these memories are connected have already passed away, which further increases the sense of urgency in recording and preserving these fragments of the past. Furthermore, all tellers at some point draw a parallel with the situation in today's world, expressing regret over the pervasive Americanization and globalization of customs – for example, replacing the making of carnival masks with purchased ones, less and less gardening, the dying out of village parties, and fewer and fewer people who know how to weave, knit, or prepare traditional dishes. For them, recording, writing down and archiving these stories is a kind of act of respect and recognition of the value of tradition, but also a way to pass on at least a part of it to future generations. Of course, globalization and digitalization have their advantages, and modern technology is now implemented in almost every museum, including the Ludbreg Town Museum. Although the ethnographic exhibition itself avoids the use of digital solutions so as not to disturb the authentic ambience of a traditional Podravina house from the 19th and 20th centuries, technology is still present in a discreet and functional way. Namely, as mentioned, the exhibition guide is also available in digital form via QR code, which allows easy access to information for visitors of all generations. Moreover, videos showing activities of everyday life in the past, which are very rare today, for example, milking cows, planting and harvesting pumpkins, producing pumpkin oil, weaving homemade linen, dyeing Easter eggs in onion skins and many others, will soon be available. The videos will be shown on an educational screen that will be installed in the courtyard of “Bakina hiža” in the coming years, thus further reviving and interpreting traditional practices. The results of the research are not only videos and museum exhibitions, but also publications – so far, three books have been published by the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”, which focus on wedding customs, Easter customs and folk medicine of the Ludbreg region. All three books represent a valuable contribution to the regional ethnographic bibliography, and also serve as educational material for workshops and lectures organized in collaboration with elementary schools, kindergartens and other associations. We are planning further research and expanding the thematic framework with a focus on customs and practices related to Christmas, funerals, harvest, Midsummer, St. George's Day, traditional pig slaughter, weaving, carnival, All Saints' Day, mowing, as well as numerous other seasonal and family practices. The ultimate goal of this long-term project is to create a comprehensive ethnographic monograph of the folk customs of the Ludbreg region, which will unite all collected and analyzed data and serve as a permanent record of a way of life that is rapidly disappearing.



Figure 9. Work on the new ethnographic exhibition (photo by the author, March 2025)

CONCLUSION

The collaboration of all stakeholders mentioned in the text clearly demonstrates that the preservation of cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible – is a complex, dynamic and deeply participatory process. The example of the long-term collaboration between the Ludbreg Town Museum and the association “Women from the Center of the World” testifies to how a community, when involved, can become an agent of change and an active guardian of its own history. The model developed in Ludbreg shows that heritage can be collected, interpreted and transmitted in an innovative, inclusive and sustainable way, while not only preserving the past, but also actively building and strengthening local identity.

The entire process began in 1964 with the enthusiasm of an individual, Stjepan Belović, and the establishment of the Local History Collection, and then expanded through the institutional

support of the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”, the Town of Ludbreg and, finally, the Ludbreg Town Museum. The association “Women from the Center of the World” made a special contribution – although without professional knowledge, but with great passion and dedication, the members of the association initiated a spontaneous process of collecting and preserving objects that would otherwise have been lost forever. This extremely valuable work was later supplemented by the knowledge of ethnologists, conservators and restorers, which guaranteed professional evaluation, long-term protection and accessibility of the collected material.

Professional processing of the holdings, appropriate storage conditions and digitalization of the collection and accompanying documentation ensure the preservation of the objects for future generations. Collaboration with the community is the foundation of the ethnographic story of Ludbreg. By involving tellers from Ludbreg and surrounding towns, organizing workshops, signing agreements on the transfer of collections, collecting donations, but also through everyday conversations with fellow-townsmen, a horizontal structure of participation has been created in which all actors are equally important. Tellers, donors, curators, members of associations, volunteers, employees and directors of related institutions, local government – they all form a chain that enables the preservation and transfer of knowledge.

Ludbreg’s practice of gathering and interpreting heritage is based on a series of participatory models – from workshops on weaving, decorating Easter eggs and making souvenirs to designing ethnographic displays and incorporating local knowledge into its content. Fieldwork allows tellers to tell their stories, which then become museum exhibitions, publications and video materials. By recording videos of traditional activities (milking cows, making oil, painting Easter eggs), we are trying to bring heritage closer to younger generations digitally. In this case, the community is not only a user of cultural content, but also an active creator – the processes of collecting and interpreting heritage have strengthened intergenerational connections and united persons of all ages in a common purpose. The elderly population recognizes the importance of their experience and proudly passes it on, while the younger generations recognize the value of cultural heritage in a contemporary context through workshops, volunteer work and digital content. Other examples of good practice include the transformation of an association’s collection into museum holdings through collaboration agreements and the transfer of material, which can also apply to private collections. Then, community participation in the interpretation of intangible heritage, such as wedding and Easter customs, through storytelling and workshops. The ethnographic exhibition which changes depending on the season, occasions and holidays, achieves authenticity and openness towards new content, possible changes, new donations and additions to the exhibition, and the digital availability of the current catalogue, which does not undermine the authenticity of the space, certainly contributes to that.

The Ludbreg Town Museum currently has two employees: Jelena Koprek, curator, archaeologist and Head of the Museum, and Robert Kapeš, ethnologist and curator. The director of the Ludbreg Town Museum, which operates as a separate organizational unit of the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”, is Branko Dijanošić. The museum database currently contains 12,571 museum objects classified by departments and collections, and located at three locations in the Town of Ludbreg: The Iovia Archaeological Park, Batthyany Castle, and the “Bakina hiža i dedekov dvor”. The Museum also uses two additional storage rooms – one in the premises of the Culture and Information Center “Dragutin Novak”, and the other in the Community Center in Selnik. The Ethnographic Department consists of two collections: The Local History Collection

and the “Bakina hiža i dedekov dvor” Collection, while the Archaeological Department includes five collections: The Geology and Paleontology Collection, the Prehistory Collection, the Antique Collection, the Middle Ages Collection, and the Numismatics Collection. In addition, the Museum also houses Historical and Art Collections consisting of several subcollections. The Historical Collections include seven subcollections: The Collection of Photographs, Postcards, Negatives and Photography Equipment, the Marija Winter Collection, the Music Collection, the Dolovski Collection, the Industrial Heritage Collection, and the Collection of Cinema Posters and Equipment. The Art Collections include the Rešetar Collection and the Collection of Sacred Art.

Ultimately, the Ludbreg example confirms that museums are no longer places of silence and closed exhibition showcases, but spaces for dialogue, collaboration and discovery that lead to social cohesion. This participatory practice of collecting and interpreting objects and customs can be an inspiration to other communities on a similar path. Ludbreg is not only the center of the world, but also the center of a rich cultural life with three museum exhibitions in three different locations, a rich cultural program throughout the year, workshops, exhibitions, performances and concerts, and at the center of every cultural story, it retains and brings together its own local community.

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