

# Catalysts for Policy Change?

## The Role of Museums as Intermediary Organisations.

Sarah Dianne Knowles

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## Abstract

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Humanity faces complex environmental, societal, and economic problems. Agenda 2030 articulates a shared ambition for peace and prosperity. Central to this are the Sustainable Development Goals, representing an urgent call to action intentionally structured to encourage participation from governments and societies.

Policy scholarship documents the role of civil society in developing and implementing policy, including contributions to global programmes through local and national actions. Alongside civil society are public sector organisations separate from ministries, which may facilitate connections between civil society and government. Museums, often cited as highly trusted institutions, offer local civic spaces where the public can participate in learning, dialogue, and debate. In this way, museums have the potential to connect civil society to government, catalysing support for national and global objectives through local actions. However, little primary data exists about how museums contribute to policy processes or the role of museums in connecting civil society and government.

This thesis looks to fill this gap by examining the case of New Zealand's Museum sector and how it contributes to Agenda 2030 through its role as a conduit to local action for global change. Specifically, it conceptualises museums as intermediary organisations, exploring stakeholders' perspectives to identify current activities, potential challenges, and future opportunities. The research findings highlight museums as trusted civic spaces with unique abilities to connect knowledge to the public and policymakers, fostering participation and collaboration. Policy scholars have given limited attention to museums as potential change agencies. In addition, the findings also highlight that insufficient resourcing is a significant barrier Museums face to reaching their full potential in this area.

In conclusion, museums are relevant actors within the public policy ecosystem who can catalyse local actions to achieve national and global policy objectives. As inclusive and accessible institutions, museums can be considered an intermediary between civil society and government. They make substantial contributions to Agenda 2030 through direct actions relating to sustainability and wellbeing and indirectly through contributing to social cohesion, capacity, and public understanding. Future research could identify specific mutually beneficial connections between museums, civil society, and government to build this potential.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

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This thesis explores how museums can work in partnership with civil society and government to achieve societal and environmental outcomes. It examines the role of museums within a public policy framework, exploring the current activities, potential challenges, and future opportunities faced by museums within New Zealand and synthesising these to argue that museums are relevant and significant actors within New Zealand's policy ecosystem.

## Context

Humanity faces complex issues that transcend national boundaries. These span inequality, climate change, food security, biodiversity loss, and threats to peace and freedom. Addressing them requires a coordinated and urgent global response focused on cooperation and the common good. Agenda 2030 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established in 2015 set a new platform for global governance and collective action (United Nations, 2015). An integral component of Agenda 2030 is the call to all countries, organisations, and communities to act by identifying how they can contribute to the goals for the future wellbeing of people and the planet. It sets a new global context focused on collective action from the bottom up.

The concept of “connector” or “intermediary” organisations that link government with civil society has been documented within the literature (Albareda, 2018). Museums provide a civic forum that has the potential to connect the public, civil society, and government. Given that the nature of Agenda 2030 is a call to urgent action, it is relevant to ask whether and how museums can contribute to implementing global mechanisms such as Agenda 2030. Much of the existing literature about the role of museums in society relies on international data and focuses primarily on the role of museums as sites of education (e.g. Mujtaba et al., 2018; Uztemur et al., 2019) and visitor experience (e.g. Cappa et al., 2020). Further, studies often use a museological framework (e.g. Bell, 2009; Mariano & Vårheim, 2021; McCarthy, 2020). These approaches are valid and necessary for understanding the contributions museums make to societies; however, to date, there is little research that explores the potential role of museums within the context of public policy or global governance scholarship.

This research topic is relevant because significant progress has yet to be made toward New Zealand's commitments to Agenda 2030 amid a worsening of the societal, environmental, and economic problems that Agenda 2030 is targeting. The New Zealand government has indicated its commitment to Agenda 2030 through actions designed to build sustainable development and strengthen wellbeing (MFAT, 2019; Treasury, 2018). However, making the necessary connections between government policy and civil society will be crucial if these goals are to be met, given that the very design of the SDGs is to create an urgent call to action for all parts of society. Meanwhile, New Zealand has a large and diverse network of museums that collectively house a depth and breadth of expertise across diverse disciplines. Museums have been reported to be some of the most trusted institutions within society (American Alliance of Museums, 2021; Lyons & Bosworth, 2019; Usherwood et al., 2005) and can serve as connection points between civil society and government (Bandelli & Konijn, 2015; Legget, 2017). In

addition, the role of museums within society has been changing over recent years as museums begin to address issues of colonisation and focus on indigenising their practices and collections. Alongside this is the need for museums to ensure they are inclusive and welcoming spaces for all, enabling community participation and contribution. Is it possible that museums can function as intermediary organisations and policy entrepreneurs?

## **Research Questions**

This research seeks to address the following research questions:

- Do museums play an active role in public policy and, if so, how?
- To what extent can museums contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030?

To answer these questions, I established a research framework conceptualising museums as intermediary organisations that can create connections between civil society and government. This conceptual framework also outlines the way museums may interact with components of the policy cycle (Lasswell, 1956) and what connections may exist between local action and global governance mechanisms. The research uses a mixed-method approach, employing stakeholder interviews and a sector-wide survey to develop and empirically assess the conceptual framework.

The aim of this research is twofold. First, the research aims to explore the role of New Zealand Museums in contributing to the public policy processes of agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation. Second, the research aims to identify the current activities, potential challenges, and future opportunities for New Zealand museums to contribute to Agenda 2030.

I achieve these aims through two case studies, employing a sector survey and stakeholder interviews. In the first study, an exploration of the New Zealand Museum sector highlights the activities museums currently undertake and how it might be possible to apply these activities to public policy processes. This analysis gives a broad overview of the potential for the New Zealand Museum sector to contribute to public policy through agenda-setting, policy development and policy implementation. In the second study, I analyse a partnership between Auckland Museum, the University of Auckland, and The Noises Trust to examine the role of a museum in tackling a significant policy problem – marine protection and restoration. This case gives specific examples of a museum's contributions to defining policy problems, raising awareness of issues, building stakeholder support, advocating for solutions, and contributing to policy development and implementation. The conclusions enable new understandings of the role of museums in contemporary society, viewed through a policy lens.

## **Organisation of the Thesis**

The thesis begins with reviewing the scholarship on global governance, highlighting its relevance to public policy, and considering the possible connections between public policy processes and museum practice. It explores humanity's global issues, introduces Agenda 2030, and considers New Zealand's commitments to implementing global governance arrangements. Next, the literature review moves to the role of civil society in global governance before discussing the potential role of museums as intermediary organisations that connect civil society and government. How museums and museum



practices have changed over recent years is also explored. The literature review identifies that primary data articulating how museums may contribute to global governance or exploring the role of museums within a public policy framework, including the potential future opportunities and challenges, is lacking. That gap is a focus of this research, as it highlights an opportunity to consider how museums engage with public policy. The chapter also discusses whether museums have a role in implementing global governance mechanisms such as Agenda 2030. There is scant primary data about the role of museums in public policy processes of agenda-setting, policy formulation, and policy implementation. Based on this gap, this thesis takes a mixed methods research approach, guided by a new conceptual framework, and supported by secondary information analysis, to answer the research questions.

The next part of the thesis explores the potential role of museums as agents of change. First, a picture of the museum sector in New Zealand is established, including the positioning of museums within the New Zealand policy landscape and why this sector is a potential venue for mobilisation leading to citizen participation in social change. The chapter considers the place of museums in New Zealand to contribute to policy implementation of global commitments held by NZ and explores the current policy settings. This discussion leads to a new conceptual framework that considers museums as intermediary organisations, enabling local action for global change. The research questions are explored using this conceptual framework in the subsequent chapters.

I then outline the research methods and briefly explain how the evidence is analysed and presented. This description includes the methods for selecting survey participants and stakeholders, the information sought through the quantitative and qualitative data collection, the ethical dimensions considered, and how data was analysed and interpreted. This section also briefly describes the limitations of the research approach.

Following this, the thesis presents two case studies. The design of each case study relates to the research questions; however, each has a research sub-question expanding the second main research question. The first case study takes a broad overview of the New Zealand Museum sector, exploring the perspectives of survey participants and sector stakeholders about the role of museums in contemporary society. This case study seeks to answer the following research sub-question:

- *What are the current activities, potential challenges, and future opportunities for museums to contribute to Agenda 2030?*

The second case study examines the role of Auckland Museum in a project that sought to establish an appropriate form of marine protection and restoration around the Noises Islands in the Hauraki Gulf, Auckland. This case study seeks to answer the following research sub-question:

- *How can museums contribute to the realisation of goals articulated in Agenda 2030 with specific regard to marine environments?*

The thesis concludes with an analytical discussion that combines the themes of the two case studies, synthesises the findings, and outlines how museums can play the role of intermediary organisations in

the process of policy change. This concluding section also identifies potential future research opportunities that emerge from this research and policy implications for consideration.

The empirical evidence established through this research highlights museums' unique, valuable, and underused role in bridging civil society and government. Analysis and synthesis of the evidence illustrate how museums can operationalise this role across the policy processes of agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation. Each case study uncovers and exemplifies mechanisms that government departments, local government bodies, and museums can use to work in partnership to strengthen the implementation of New Zealand's global governance commitments. Overall, the research finds that museums in New Zealand can have an important role in public policy mechanisms, particularly within sustainability and wellbeing. Further work should address in more detail how to realise this latent potential to support New Zealand's broad goals in global governance.

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## Chapter Two: What Connects Museums and Public Policy?

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This chapter reviews the literature to identify and articulate connections between museums and public policy processes. It begins by setting out the international context, which sees humanity facing increasingly urgent global issues, and delves into the relevance of collective action, collaboration, and participation in solving these issues. The current scholarship associated with implementing global governance objectives is addressed, along with exploring how global governance's goals, formats, and actors connect to domestic public policy processes. Agenda 2030 is introduced as an example format of global governance and a framework for addressing the research questions. Next, the concept of intermediary organisations in public policy is considered, exploring how such organisations may strengthen the ability of domestic public policy to contribute to the implementation of global agendas. Museums are introduced, with specific practices and principles concerning the museum sector discussed through a policy lens before considering the potential role of museums as intermediary organisations in public policy. Finally, the status of current scholarship is summarised, identifying knowledge gaps and defining how the literature review informs the research approach.

### **Humanity is Facing Complex Global Issues**

Humanity faces complex issues with impacts that transcend national boundaries and are a matter of public concern worldwide (Ludwig et al., 2001; Rockström et al., 2009; Snarr & Snarr, 2012). These issues span societal, environmental, and economic domains. They include (but are not limited to) climate change, food security, biodiversity loss, poverty, gender equality, decolonisation, infectious diseases, and threats to freedom (United Nations, n.d.-a; World Economic Forum, 2022). A vital characteristic of these global issues is that none can be addressed alone. Instead, the problems are connected and multidirectional and are caused by human activities. Therefore, our capacity to solve these issues is reliant on our ability to work collectively: the concerns are too significant and too complex for any one nation or community to solve alone (Bevir, 2011; Bowen et al., 2017; Van Enst et al., 2014). Arguably, many of the issues faced by humanity are worsening rapidly and require urgent action to address. The urgency and severity are illustrated through recent World Economic Forum research, which reports that more than 80% of respondents felt "concerned" or "worried" about the outlook for the world, and only 10% reported a positive view (World Economic Forum, 2022). In 2022, this concern is expressed on the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which is continuing to wreak havoc with economies, infrastructure, and communities worldwide. According to this group of surveyed leaders, some of the most severe risks faced on a global scale over the next ten years include a failure to act on climate change, extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and the erosion of social cohesion (World Economic Forum, 2022).

The interconnected nature of these global issues suggests that solutions will be complex and may have unintended consequences on each other. While some problems can be solved with technical solutions, drawing on existing knowledge, skills and resources, issues such as climate change or biodiversity loss require adaptive solutions. This complexity means that they cannot easily be solved within existing knowledge and resources. Instead, adaptive solutions are more complex, requiring collaboration and

innovation – the potential solutions are not yet known. In addition, there is not necessarily agreement or consensus about the boundaries, causes, and problem-solving strategies surrounding each issue, i.e., policy-based consensus does not yet exist. Therefore, new approaches for economic, societal and environmental wellbeing are needed, including a coordinated global response focused on cooperation and the common good. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change highlights this importance by documenting climate change as a “*massive collective action problem*” (United Nations, 1994). In addition, recent scholarship has underlined the need for principles of collaboration and participation to become part of both policy development and implementation, arguing that this approach is necessary for adaptive solutions to be identified and implemented upon the global issues humanity faces (Duit & Galaz, 2008; Fu et al., 2020; Rosa et al., 2021; Sénit, 2020a).

Improving wellbeing is a goal of public policy (Weijers & Morrison, 2018), and there is an expanding field of literature about the role of public policy in improving wellbeing. Central to this literature is the argument that the wellbeing of people should be a fundamental principle for deciding which policies to advance over others (Frijters et al., 2020; Layard, 2022). This principle also emphasises the need for participation and engagement in policy design and implementation since the definitions of wellbeing are varied and are most appropriately self-identified. New Zealand has recently established The Living Standards Framework, a cross-sectoral approach to applying environmental, social, cultural and economic wellbeing measures to policy development and budget allocation (King et al., 2018; Treasury, 2018). The framework relies on accurate and timely indicators so that measurements of wellbeing can be determined but also enables connections between domestic policy and contribution to global issues (MFAT, 2019).

Understanding how global governance mechanisms intersect with the tools of domestic public policy is needed because, ultimately, actions carried out at a domestic level will drive global change. The ‘butterfly effect’ described within chaos theory illustrates this principle: small changes may sometimes result in significant differences in outcomes (Dantas-Torres, 2015; Skene, 2021). Without connections between global governance and domestic public policy, it would seem unlikely that global governance mechanisms could be appropriately activated. There must be an overlap with the policy cycle at a domestic level to facilitate change and achieve global goals. Previous public policy scholarship has identified the importance of “connector” or “intermediary” organisations that link government with civil society (Neal et al., 2021, 2022; Smits et al., 2020). Political parties and interest groups are examples of intermediary organisations, which drove early theories around the concepts of intermediaries (Sartori, 1967, 2005). There is now substantial research about many other examples of intermediary organisations that support the design and implementation of policy at domestic and international levels. The relevance of intermediary organisations continues to grow due to the increasing importance of effective knowledge transfer, community participation, and sector collaboration within domestic public policy and global governance. The need for cooperation and involvement also highlights the importance of including a diversity of actors across the policy cycle and the need for mechanisms to facilitate strong connections between civil society and government to achieve progress on global issues.

## **Global Governance and Domestic Public Policy are Interdependent**

Increases in globalisation, communication, and migration, along with the increasingly urgent global problems (Benedict, 2015a), have elevated the significance of global governance formats and tools for policy outcomes. Theories of global governance are a topic of active research, and many definitions of global governance exist. One definition of global governance is '*combination of intentional and patterned human interactions that regulate action worldwide for the common good*' (Benedict, 2015 p155). A range of tools are used to carry out global governance, including international agreements, international regimes, harmonising laws, agreements on the interpretation of international law, agreements between private sector organisations, global issue networks, and public-private partnerships. A diverse range of formats and tools make up the formal legal arrangements and the informal codes of conduct, incentives, and practices that define global governance. Ultimately, global governance mechanisms must be built on shared expectations about legitimate action (Benedict, 2015). Within this context, Agenda 2030 is an example of one such tool, which I explore in the next section.

Extensive networks of actors, including individuals, state agencies, civil society, businesses, and non-government organisations, participate in global governance. Recent years have seen a proliferation of actors within global governance, including the expansion of agency for non-government actors and individuals (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009; Snarr & Snarr, 2012), reiterating the relevance of collaboration, participation, and local action in achieving global goals. In addition, interest in the concept of global governance has risen dramatically, growing from a few thousand internet references in 1997 to hundreds of thousands in 2008 (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009). Jang (2016) argues that individual empowerment combined with an increasing awareness of institutional complexity will define the future of global governance (Jang et al., 2016), while Rosenau (Rosenau, 1992) proposed a theory based on spheres of authority, large numbers of actors, and diverse mechanisms of governance. Overall, there is increasing recognition that effective global governance requires the inclusion of a range of actors from different sectors (Berten & Kranke, 2022; Haas, 2008; Monkelbaan, 2019a), including both governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Indeed, Ansell and Gash (Ansell & Gash, 2008) argue that collaborative governance is emerging as a new form of governance to bring together public and private stakeholders in collective forums. An important aspect of enabling global governance is recognising and understanding that global impacts arise from local actions (Fenton & Gustafsson, 2017). Recent scholarship shows that current approaches to global governance favour flexibility, voluntary measures, and partnerships (Berdej & Armitage, 2016; Jang et al., 2016). International organisations facilitating cooperation and partnership are valuable for enabling collaborative governance and harnessing local actions' impacts.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that supports global governance through enabling multi-disciplinary knowledge building and development of policy alternatives for nation-states to utilise. The OECD's activities support inclusive policy dialogues, built on joint learning and adaptable for local contexts (OECD, 2015). Likewise, the United Nations also contributes to global governance (Snarr & Snarr, 2012). Such international organisations can enhance collective action by enabling communities to be better equipped to reach

common goals (Mahon & McBride, 2009) through coordination of national policies, identification of shared norms and values, and initiating joint action (Bernstein & Cashore, 2012).

The United Nations' Agenda 2030 is an example of a recent global governance mechanism aimed at developing solidarity around complex and unstructured global problems. The Agenda seeks consensus around the most critical priorities within each of these problems that, if achieved, would enable progress toward solving the problems (Monkelbaan, 2019b; Pärli & Fischer, 2020; United Nations, 2015). This example highlights a key desired outcome from global governance: cooperation and exchanges between governmental and non-governmental organisations to achieve coordinated action globally. The influence of global governance on domestic policy can occur directly and indirectly. Direct effects include recommendations, reports on current activity and status, and establishing goals at an international level. In contrast, indirect influence may come through the publication of ratings and indicators (Biermann et al., 2017). A significant recent shift has been moving away from compliance-focused mechanisms to mechanisms that rely on creating action through influence (Bernstein & Cashore, 2012).

However, while the goals may be set at a global level, achieving the goals relies on commitments and actions at domestic or local levels. Historically, global governance has been a concept held within international relations and political economy. However, over recent decades, domestic policy scholars are increasingly paying attention to the international realm. The reason for this shift is that so many important policy issues no longer fit within domestic concerns (Barnett & Sikkink, 2009). Instead, they transcend state borders and concern populations worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2022). This shift has led to a growing focus within the literature on global governance as an influencer of domestic public policy. Consequently, international organisations such as the OECD now provide more opportunities to share best practices, give advice, assemble knowledge, bring stakeholders together, make data available, and evaluate data and programmes. These activities are intended to enhance international cooperation and drive policy changes to actionable levels (Monkelbaan, 2019b; Morita et al., 2020).

Agenda 2030 highlights the nature of contemporary issues faced in public policy, many of which are global and cannot be confined to more traditional domestic mechanisms. While the Agenda is set at a global level and highlights the importance of addressing contemporary issues within the international realm, the implementation is acknowledged as ultimately dependent on domestic and local actions. It highlights the need to pool resources and knowledge, articulating opportunities for multiple and diverse actors to contribute to shared outcomes and benefits. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that domestic policy and local communities have an increasingly important role in realising global governance goals.

## **Agenda 2030 as an Instrument of Global Governance**

As described earlier, several entities are focused on identifying adaptive solutions for global issues. Among them are the OECD and the United Nations. The United Nations' Agenda 2030, adopted by Member States in 2015, exemplifies a global governance arrangement focused on stimulating local action for global change. It is seen as a new approach toward economic, environmental, and societal wellbeing influencing policy at international, domestic, and local levels. Agenda 2030 aims to achieve

sustainable development for people and the planet. The agenda provides a shared vision and roadmap for peace and prosperity (United Nations, 2015).

This shared vision is operationalised through 17 goals, 169 targets, and 232 indicators and is a framework upon which governments can implement policies and actions toward achieving these goals. Agenda 2030 represents the best available blueprint across nations and sectors for identifying adaptive solutions to global issues – a roadmap for how people and nature can thrive together (McGhie, 2019). The goals have been described as universal, transformative and integrative (Bowen et al., 2017) and are considered a public policy mechanism (Biermann et al., 2017). The goals and targets can contribute to shaping policies, strategies, funding, and actions of local- and national-level governments. While previous approaches have relied on top-down regulation or market-based approaches, Agenda 2030 is characterised by several novel aspects, making it a distinct institutional arrangement (Benedict, 2015). I discuss these characteristics below.

First, Agenda 2030 relies on non-binding goals and is not part of the international legal system. Member states are not required to consider Agenda 2030 in their policy approaches. This principle allows individual countries to interpret and implement the goals in the best way for their nation. However, the goals and targets intend to incentivise governments to act within their jurisdictions and to voluntarily provide reports to the High-Level Policy Forum, which monitors progress at a global level.

Secondly, Agenda 2030 does not rely on formal institutional arrangements. It focuses on a bottom-up approach, with each country responsible for deciding its direction and policy approaches. This approach encourages collaborative and partnership processes, creating an environment where innovation and adaptive solutions can arise. As described in the previous section, this is now known to be an integral enabler of achieving global governance goals. A premise for Agenda 2030 is that reaching sustainable development requires strong institutions and good governance (Blind, 2020). For this reason, one of the Agenda 2030 goals is to develop strong institutions (SDG16). This goal is relevant to the implementation of all other SDGs.

A third characteristic that sets Agenda 2030 apart from other global governance arrangements is the comprehensive and inclusive goal-setting approach used to determine the goals, targets, and indicators. This public process involved governments and civil society from industrialised and developing countries (Biermann et al., 2017), highlighting the diversity of actors involved in solving global issues. Agenda 2030 is intended for all sectors of society. Any organisation or sector should be able to contribute toward achieving the goals using their specific capacity and skills, bringing unique resources to create new ways of working together (McGhie, 2019).

While the participatory and non-binding nature of Agenda 2030 is considered an enabler, this characteristic is also a potential barrier to implementation. The targets and indicators, many of which are non-specific or qualitative, may be interpreted differently by different actors, potentially weakening the effectiveness with which they are implemented. To overcome this, the targets within each goal must have formal and agreed-on indicators, enabling formal commitments and processes for benchmarking.

Achieving this may require review mechanisms beyond the current voluntary national review system and new data sources.

Likewise, the global governance arrangements themselves are also a potential barrier. These are purposefully weak within Agenda 2030 to enable flexibility and agency at a local level. However, this also means that effective implementation may require high-level political forums to strengthen links between national governments and allow the effective forming of partnerships. Networks that leverage civil society may also be a tool that would support overcoming this barrier by enabling problem-solving through active partnerships throughout society.

The importance of these approaches is highlighted explicitly in one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG16), which emphasises the importance of institutions and partnerships in achieving Agenda 2030 (Bäckstrand, 2006; K. R. Hope, 2020). Biermann et al. (2017) describe the need to remove silos across disciplinary knowledge and develop approaches that combine specialist and stakeholder expertise. An active and efficient knowledge-policy interface is needed to ensure that policy can draw on research for a more effective implementation of Agenda 2030. This need is especially relevant given the interconnectedness of SDGs, where progress made toward one goal may inhibit or undo the progress made toward other goals. As such, policy approaches need to be adaptive: the inability to be dynamic and flexible would limit the implementation of Agenda 2030. Allen (2018) suggests that critical gaps in the implementation of SDGs include identifying interactions, interlinkages, trade-offs, and synergies between targets. Other gaps are evident in the difficulties of adopting systems thinking and integrated analytical approaches (Allen et al., 2018).

The characteristics of Agenda 2030 discussed here highlight the importance of domestic governments and domestic actors in the process of policy development and policy implementation. Collective success relies on institutional factors, including how states formalise commitments, translate goals into national ambitions and local contexts, and develop domestic policies that contribute to achieving the goals. Realising this means identifying ways to establish effective knowledge exchange, draw on multiple knowledge systems, and stimulate collective action. In a recent analysis, Skene (2021) argues that applying a systems theory approach to achieving the SDGs is required. Further, the importance of understanding indigenous governance models has also been documented (Parsons & Fisher, 2020). This work emphasises the need to ensure that Indigenous knowledge, practices, and authorities are integral to advancing the goals of Agenda 2030.

In summary, multi-level governance mechanisms are needed to stimulate action across many levels of society, bringing together diverse actors and sectors (Fenton & Gustafsson, 2017). Local action is required to achieve global and regional interests, and local action is a crucial aspect of implementing Agenda 2030 (Fenton & Gustafsson, 2017). Consequently, national and local governments are expected to play a leading role in contributing to the SDGs (Bexell & Jönsson, 2020; Masuda et al., 2022). Implementation must be multi-level across scales, stakeholders, sectors, and societies and requires international, national, and local collaboration. Recently, the importance of using an evidence-informed policy design and implementation has been emphasised (Gluckman, 2013). Using evidence-



informed policy approaches can strengthen the links between global goals and domestic policy processes because the evidence drawn to inform policy must be relevant to local contexts. Therefore, domestic actors and governments are integral to implementing new ways of delivering policy and programmes. They are best placed to assess local situations, identify needs and resources, develop partnerships, and implement policies and projects (Masuda 2020). This idea will be explored in the following sections.

## **The Contribution of Civil Society to Global Programmes**

A substantial body of literature defines civil society and explores its origins and functions. A range of definitions exist, encompassing relational, societal and economic perspectives. One description put forward by Charles Taylor in 1990 describes civil society as *"a web of autonomous associations independent of the state, which bind citizens together in matters of common concern, and by their existence or actions could have an effect on public policy"* (Taylor, 1990). Contemporary civil society encompasses various organisations, including community groups, non-governmental organisations, labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, and professional associations (World Economic Forum, 2013). As described in previous sections, the requirement to include partnership, collaboration, and knowledge exchange as active components of policy development and implementation is reliant on effective linkages between civil society and government. Achieving such connections between civil society and government can make public policy processes more inclusive, broadening the reach and participation of a more representative proportion of citizens (Lundåsen, 2020; Sénit, 2020a; Storeng & Puyvallée, 2018).

The contributions of civil society to public policy can occur through various activities. For example, civil society organisations may focus on activism or reform, creating beneficial tension in the public policy process and holding government institutions accountable. Civil society can increase the transparency of public policy through activities that increase participation and can build awareness of societal issues through experts or knowledge holders with the necessary expertise and experience to help shape policy. An important aspect of civil society is the ability to bring voice to people or population groups who may be marginalised: a thriving civil society encourages active citizenship through involvement in communities and democracy. In recent years, new methodologies have been developed to facilitate contributions of civil society to domestic public policy and global governance. For example, design thinking enables policy to be co-developed with communities, ensuring that policies are developed within the context of what citizens want (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2016). Design thinking processes emphasise the importance of problem definition at the beginning of the policy process, including citizen and end-user perspectives, undertaken with empathy as a fundamental principle. Other research identifies crowdsourcing as a method for connecting civil society to policymaking (Gellers, 2016). Some authors argue the importance of feedback as an essential civil society role within public policy. For example, Goss et al. (2019) describe the value of feedback between organisations and individuals, developing a theory for how policy works through organisations to influence individuals' political engagement. In another example, Albareda (2018) argues that civil society organisations can connect citizens and policymakers by filtering societal preferences, subsequently improving policy effectiveness.

Civil society is more likely to influence the implementation of global governance within informal participatory spaces. Opportunities for influencing in this way may need to be in the early stages of policy processes so civil society actors can engage effectively and with equitable representation (Sénit, 2020). There is increasing interest in the role and influence of civil society actors in global policymaking. Civil society representatives are increasingly present at intergovernmental negotiations (Sénit, 2020). In a recent study, Lundâsen and colleagues surveyed 760 organisations to explore the ability of civil organisations to influence local politicians. The study concluded that the most important factor for influencing local government was collaborating with governments (Lundâsen, 2020), suggesting that opportunities to increase such collaboration would be beneficial. Another survey of civil society organisations identified that approximately one-third of those organisations were undertaking functions that involved transmission functions between civil society and government (Albareda, 2018). If governments are nonresponsive to civil input, actors will turn to local advocacy, protests, campaigning, and media to raise awareness and influence the public (Sénit, 2020). One possible framework for enabling civil society to influence global governance is to consider issue-framing, position-shifting, goal formulation, and influence on future procedures (Sénit, 2020).

As mentioned previously, Agenda 2030 is designed as an urgent call to action, encouraging participation and collaboration across all aspects of societies. Therefore, civil society has an important role to play in the implementation of Agenda 2030. The remainder of this section reviews that role. Production of data through citizen science (Ballard et al., 2017; Fritz et al., 2019) can accelerate knowledge production, generate new data sources, and improve the quality of reporting against Agenda 2030 goals. Data about Agenda 2030 goals enables accurate monitoring of progress toward the goals and allows measurement of change to social, economic, and environmental wellbeing (Fraisl et al., 2020). Traditional data sources are insufficient to monitor progress against all the indicators identified in Agenda 2030. In addition, some of the indicators currently lack any data, suggesting that opportunities exist for civil society to support the development of data toward indicators. One example of data produced through civil society is the community of practice called *We Observe*, expressly set up to support citizen science contributions to Agenda 2030 (Fraisl et al., 2020; Fritz et al., 2019) through public participation, volunteering, and production of new knowledge.

Another critical aspect of Agenda 2030 implementation related to civil society is public awareness. A recent study found that although less than half of people worldwide are aware of Agenda 2030 (Frank & Cort, 2020), most agree that all sectors have a role to play in promoting sustainable development (Frank & Cort, 2020). Other research suggests that relevant implementation enablers through civil society include participation, policy coherence, adaptation, and democratic institutions (Glass & Newig, 2019; Waage et al., 2015).

However, it is not always straightforward for citizens to engage with global institutions. A recent report argues that citizens may not be able to prioritise global issues amongst issues affecting them at an individual level. Further, they may not make connections between global issues and their everyday lives (Global Challenges Foundation, 2017). These barriers could be overcome by improving public awareness, creating new opportunities to enable citizens to participate meaningfully in Agenda 2030,

and enhancing communication between global institutions and civil society (Global Challenges Foundation, 2017) .

Non-governmental organisations are important for catalysing action toward the SDGs through intermediary activities. These organisations can facilitate diverse views and interests in decision-making (Monkelbaan, 2019b). They have distinct abilities to convene, collate knowledge, and communicate with the public and government stakeholders. Through this, unique opportunities to establish support from society and advocate within government frameworks arise, leading to a more informed public debate and effective collaboration. Furthermore, non-governmental organisations are often grounded in human rights and are motivated by a desire to improve outcomes for marginalised population groups (Monkelbaan, 2019b). In this manner, non-governmental organisations can amplify the perspectives of those who may otherwise be overlooked.

Consequently, the inclusion of civil society within global governance is needed to ensure a diverse range of voices is heard and considered, increasing meaningful participation, and enhancing the transparency and legitimacy of global institutions. In summary, the literature highlights civil society actors' significant contribution to global programmes through national-level, domestic actions. Governments must therefore focus on ensuring policy processes are transparent and inclusive, enabling genuine participation from civil society. The following section explores the role of intermediary organisations in connecting government with civil society.

## **Intermediary Organisations as Policy Actors**

The concept of intermediary organisations as connectors of civil society and government has been documented throughout policy literature. An early conceptualisation of intermediary organisations emerged from research about political parties and interest groups, with these groups recognised as connectors of the public to government (Sartori, 1967). In parallel, scholarship focused on sustainability innovation has also conceptualised the importance of intermediaries in accelerating transitions (Kanda et al., 2020; Kivimaa et al., 2019). The role of intermediary organisations in enhancing cooperation has also been documented (Crona & Parker, 2012). A range of terms is used throughout the literature to describe organisations that connect civil society and government, including boundary-spanning organisations, go-betweens, knowledge-brokers, intermediary organisations, and interest groups. Despite this variation in descriptive terminology, the collection of terms is generally understood to refer to organisations that “*transport ideas between different parties, disseminate information, form connections between disparate actors, and also work as policy entrepreneurs*” (Bushouse & Mosley, 2018;p292; Douglas et al., 2015; Mintrom, 2000). Intermediary organizations help meet the need to identify adaptive solutions for global issues and showcase the critical role of domestic policy actors contributing to global agendas through policy development and implementation. Agenda 2030 highlights the need for localisation and multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve the SDGs (Masuda, 2020). Within this context, intermediaries can facilitate partnerships by making new links between local and domestic actors and supporting the exchange of knowledge that underpins evidence-informed policymaking. As such, the concept of intermediary organisations has been the subject of recent policy

scholarship, with particular attention paid to the functions and impacts of intermediary organisations and the definitions and typologies.

Agenda 2030 highlights the importance of collaboration and partnership and articulates the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships (Masuda 2020). Kivimaa et al. (2020) suggest a role for intermediaries in advocating for a particular vision and implementing policy, partly through their ability to facilitate collaboration and partnerships. Alongside this function, intermediary organisations can participate in research and education (Sovacool et al., 2020), expanding collective understanding and awareness of policy issues and contributing new knowledge to support policy development. Through networking and brokering, intermediary organisations may also support policy innovation and diffusion by building support for policy alternatives. Therefore, including intermediary organisations within policy processes can help overcome the challenges associated with progressing global agendas.

Recent scholarship has focused on clarifying the different types of organisations that perform intermediary-style functions, with a recent paper exploring the definitions of brokers, intermediaries and boundary-spanning organisations (Kivimaa et al., 2019; Mignon & Kanda, 2018). The research found that terms used to describe such organisations vary across sectors, and consequently, a schematic of names and definitions was proposed. Of relevance is the increasing body of literature exploring the functions of intermediary organisations, highlighting both their importance in solving global issues and the need to elucidate the mechanisms by which such organisations can influence policy processes.

Mignon and Kanda (2018) consider the scope and impact of intermediary organisations, distinguishing intermediaries that work at a systemic level from those that solely support the objectives of individual organisations. Their research recognised that intermediary organisations might work strategically to facilitate partnerships and networks, bring together different types of actors, and gather and disseminate information to create awareness and build legitimacy for a policy problem. Highlighting the range of organisations that can act in an intermediary capacity, Bushouse (2018) explored how foundations act across elements of the policy process, reporting that foundations do indeed work as intermediary organisations by contributing to policy formation, diffusion, and implementation. Gluckman et al. (2021) argue for the importance of the knowledge broker in evidence-informed policymaking, ensuring evidence is available for policymakers and the public in a manner that values diverse knowledge systems and builds trust, transparency, and legitimacy. Finally, Neal et al. (2021) highlight intermediary organisations' strategies, skills, and outcomes, concluding that facilitating relationships and disseminating evidence are key strategies that intermediaries use. To do this well, intermediary organisations should be skilled in communication and research. This skillset can include increased research uptake and impact, better awareness of policy issues, and more efficient knowledge exchange. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that, although intermediary organisations are diverse in their structures and activities, common features are the ability to bring stakeholders together, facilitate new connections or partnerships, and synthesise and disseminate knowledge relevant to policy issues.

Consequently, intermediary organisations impact policy processes by raising awareness and agenda-setting, supporting policy development, and facilitating policy diffusion. This idea suggests an

increasingly pivotal role of intermediary organisations across policy processes, especially for multidisciplinary policy problems that require adaptive solutions such as those represented by Agenda 2030. Accordingly, it is relevant to identify the kinds of organisations acting as intermediaries and understand what contributory activities they undertake across policy processes. Since museums are public institutions with expertise in research, education, and public engagement, it is conceivable that they are also intermediary organisations that contribute to the policy agenda, development and implementation. The following section explores this possibility.

## **Museums as Potential Intermediary Organisations**

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) defines a museum as: “*a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment*” (ICOM, 2007). A review of this definition began in 2019, a process which has generated meaningful dialogue and debate: almost three years and four rounds of consultation later, there is no agreed re-definition. The debate has focused on the role of museums in political and social issues and whether the definition should include reference to social justice and human dignity. (Adams, 2021; Marshall, 2020). The fact that the debate is still ongoing highlights a current lack of consensus about the role of museums in society.

Historically, museums have been seen as trusted providers of information and knowledge, engaging audiences in a one-way, top-down model that tended to assume that the public lacked knowledge and that the museum could fill this gap (Bandelli and Konijn 2021). In this model, the power of knowledge sat within the institution. Doering (1999) describes this mode of engagement as a “*baby bird model*”, likening visitors to a baby bird passively waiting for food. In recent years, museums have moved from this deficit focus to a strengths-based approach, implementing models of engagement that involve the public in dialogue and debate (Bandelli and Konijn, 2021). This evolution in practice highlights that the role of museums is changing, from a positionality of teaching the public to one focused on supporting the public to use knowledge to make informed choices. As a result, museums are now frequently active participants in society (Jensen 2006, Bell 2008), being seen as forums for discussion and with the potential to convey the ideas and opinions of the public. Many museums consider themselves to have social responsibility through education, audience engagement and citizen participation, rather than simply measuring their outputs on ticket sales and visitor numbers (Lanzinger & Garlandini, 2019). Through this approach, museums are becoming more inclusive spaces, with an opportunity to participate in strengthening citizenship, building social and geographic equality, and empowering citizens to reflect on the challenges facing humanity. Museums are also research institutions generating knowledge about society, the natural environment, and places for social interaction – they are a source of creativity and innovation.

The invitation set out by Agenda 2030 includes museums (Lanzinger & Garlandini, 2019). In addition, the museum practice literature has identified that museums have a key role in educating and empowering citizens to make a difference in their communities for climate action and sustainable development (Sutton & Robinson, 2020). Consequently, museums have much to offer toward Agenda

2030 (McGhie, 2019), and some sustainable development goals could not be achieved without museums. Lanzinger and Garlandini (2019) argue that society needs museums to help find ethical solutions for future generations. Indeed, the idea of museums developing social responsibility agendas is documented within the literature (for example, Janes, 2007). In 2018, the ICOM established a working group on sustainability, intending to develop how museums could respond to Agenda 2030 and the Paris agreement. A key finding of this working group was that museums are an existing global infrastructure, uniquely placed to facilitate collective action through building networks, raising awareness, supporting research, and empowering communities. This finding is supported by the ICOM code of ethics, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of Museums in society. One opportunity is for museums to link the global perspective of Agenda 2030 to the need for local development to facilitate policy development and implementation – bringing effect to the idea of “*think global, act local*”. For example, the Museo delle Scienze museum in Italy uses a framework to measure its activities against the sustainable development goals (Lanzinger & Garlandini, 2019).

A recent UNESCO publication (UNESCO, 2015) explored the connections between museums and sustainable development, highlighting that the protection and promotion of cultural and natural diversity is a global challenge for the 21st century and that museums are an essential means to safeguard tangible and intangible heritage. In addition, the recommendations noted that museums are a civil space for cultural transmission, dialogue, learning, discussion, and training and have a role to play in education, social cohesion, and sustainable development. Museums can reach large numbers of people, support cultural participation, and are generally well-trusted institutions. The OECD has also recognised the role of museums in addressing societal issues by applying principles of restorative justice, facilitating intercultural and intergenerational dialogue, and engaging in cultural diplomacy (ICOM & OECD, 2019). Other literature demonstrates that museums can also be conduits of foreign policy and international relations (Mariano & Vårheim, 2021). Building on these capacities of museums, ICOM and OECD documented the role of museums as local government actors and drivers of change (ICOM & OECD, 2019), proposing five main mechanisms by which museums have the potential to act: the ability of museums to stimulate economic development; the role of museums in supporting urban development; the power of museums to catalyse culturally aware and creative societies; the opportunity for museums to be seen as public spaces for inclusion, health and wellbeing, and the role of museums in supporting local development (ICOM & OECD, 2019). The relationship between culture and local development is important within the context of Agenda 2030 because it recognises a unique role for museums as agents of social and economic change (ICOM & OECD, 2019).

In addition, museums have been considered within a public policy lens. For example, a recent article (Legget, 2017) highlights examples of protest art and political activism within the museum community, urging museums to take risks to fulfil their missions despite challenging political contexts. In another study, Cameron and Deslandes (2011) undertook empirical research, concluding that museums have the opportunity to contribute to policy by being a place where information is available for citizens to explore, equipping people to choose between policy alternatives. Museum visitors appear to support this role. A recent study documented that museum visitors support a future role for museums in policy,

with study participants reporting they perceive museums as accessible and innovative organisations (Bandelli and Konijn, 2021). This idea touches on museums as a physical space, with some authors conceptualising museums as hybrid spaces and a focal point for communities, enhancing inclusion (Barnes and McPherson, 2019). Despite this research, the mechanisms by which museums may contribute to global governance within a public policy framework are not fully understood. Given the current understanding of intermediaries in the processes of domestic public policy, the development of adaptive solutions for global issues, and the documented roles of museums within society, it is appropriate to ask whether museums can be conceptualised as intermediaries between civil society and government. As intermediaries, it may be possible for museums to enhance the implementation of global governance mechanisms such as Agenda 2030 by operating locally in ways that support national-level public policy and global goals.

Turning to the case of New Zealand, we see that the museum sector comprises four major museums, all originating in the mid-to-late 1800s. Auckland Museum is the oldest, with Otago and Canterbury following soon after. These museums continue today as major metropolitan museums. Te Papa, New Zealand's National Museum, had its origins in the late 1800s, first as The Colonial Museum, before becoming the Dominion Museum, and then the National Museum before becoming Te Papa in 1998. Alongside these organisations, New Zealand has hundreds of smaller museums, ranging from significant local museums such as Whanganui Museum and the Waitangi Tiriti Grounds to museums run entirely by volunteers. Globally, New Zealand has one of the highest numbers of museums per capita (McCarthy, 2020) with more than 400 museums (Museums Aotearoa, 2005). According to McCarthy (2020), New Zealand museums have often been at the forefront of museum practice, reflecting international trends but being shaped by local contexts. Therefore, museums are a significant potential resource for addressing public policy problems, especially through the concept of *'think global, act local'*, as museums can be considered a forum at local, national, and international levels.

The local context for New Zealand is Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which requires the government to work in partnership with iwi Māori. This responsibility extends to civil society and individuals. All governance approaches need to recognise the importance of iwi plans and actions, identifying opportunities to connect these at all levels of governance and implementation in a framework that is founded on Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles (Carroll et al., 2020; Le Heron et al., 2020; Te Puni Kāhiri, 2001). This is a fundamental component of global governance in New Zealand and an opportunity to lead in terms of incorporating indigenous knowledge and worldviews into solving global problems. New Zealand has active commitments to various international organisations and agreements, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate change, Paris Agreement, Agenda 2030, Kyoto Protocol, and Convention on Biological Diversity. New Zealand produced its first Voluntary National Review of progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals in 2019 (MFAT, 2019). In addition, in 2018, New Zealand established the Living Standard Framework (Treasury, 2018) to strengthen human, social, natural, and financial capital and facilitate New Zealand's ability to report on contributions to Agenda 2030. This framework is used to implement commitments and assess government policies' impact on New Zealanders' intergenerational, place-based wellbeing (Treasury, 2018).

To date, New Zealand's approach to implementing Agenda 2030 has been through '*domestic action, international leadership on global issues, and support for developing countries*' (MFAT, 2019). These initiatives consider New Zealand's contextual elements, primarily Tiriti o Waitangi partnerships. The Living Standards Framework and the range of indicators developed to support it are integral to New Zealand's response to the SDGs. An additional view of New Zealand's progress toward SDGs is the "People's Report" published in 2019 (Greer & Morris, 2019). This report offers a range of recommendations for strengthening New Zealand's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including that central and local govt should recognise the value of involving civil society (Greer & Morris, 2019).

The remainder of this thesis draws on the arguments about and evidence of the role of global governance in public policy, especially within the context of increasingly complex economic, societal, and environmental problems that transcend nation-state boundaries. It takes as given that rapid changes globalisation, communication, and human migration, the realisation of human impacts and the increasingly urgent need to solve global problems have contributed to evolution of global governance. Also vital is recognising the role of civil society as actors within these areas of global governance. New Zealand is also developing its implementation plans for Agenda 2030 to enable contributions and leadership in each of these spaces. It is possible to connect evidence to support thinking about museums as intermediaries between civil society and government and to demonstrate the changing role of museums within society, as documented within the published literature. Although the evolving practice of museums has been well studied within the literature, the role of museums within a public policy framework has been less frequently studied. There has been limited attention to the possibility that museums, a key component of civil society, could contribute to global governance through Agenda 2030. In particular, the literature lacks cohesive primary data that explore the opportunities and barriers for museums to contribute to sustainable development within a public policy framework. This thesis aims to explore museums' current activities, future opportunities, and potential challenges to contribute to the global governance issues articulated by Agenda 2030.



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## Chapter 3: Museums as Intermediaries

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The need for increasingly diverse actors within the policy cycle is emerging as an increasingly important aspect of public policy, especially concerning the need to identify innovative solutions to complex global issues. These issues mean that the range of current policy problems is increasingly complex. At the same time, the public's expectations that appropriate solutions for these problems can be identified are also increasing (Wu et al 2015). The United Nations SDGs highlight the urgency and complexity of these issues whilst also providing a framework for institutions and organisations to contribute to the goals. Further, the goals have highlighted the need for collaboration and participation and have sparked interest amongst various organisations to consider how they might contribute. As identified through the literature review, there is limited primary data to enable a precise analysis of the characteristics of museums as public policy actors. This chapter will build on the literature review by exploring the potential role of museums in public policy, outlining a conceptual framework for museums as intermediaries between civil society and government. The research approach taken to explore the conceptual framework is described, constructing an intellectual rationale that connects a range of evidence and highlights gaps in current understanding and schools of thought.

### Museums in Practice

Although the term 'museum' is most likely to have originated from the ancient Greek term "muse", there is general agreement amongst the literature that the basis of contemporary museums is in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. During this time, buildings were set aside for collecting, cataloguing, and displaying objects from both the natural and social worlds (McCarthy, 2020). Museums have their origins in Europe but proliferated around the globe alongside the expansion of trade in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (McCarthy, 2020). Consequently, museums are colonial constructs, accentuated by the fact that many museums were initially held in private buildings and were not publicly accessible. Traditionally, museum collections are held long-term, giving museums a sense of permanence and responsibilities around stewardship, safeguarding, and access (Legget, 2017). In this way, museums tend to appear authoritative and historically have had the power of knowledge (McCarthy 2020). Some scholars consider museums to be socially and historically constructed entities only – that cultural heritage itself is built on notions of social discourse rather than being tangible. However, another perspective is that museums can be considered "*spaces of representation and keepers of collective memory*" (Anderson, 2020; p488). Abungu (2019; p64) shares the view that "*museums are about people and for people*", arguing that museums have overcome their original constructs and are now "*part of human landscapes that shape and are shaped by current and ongoing realities*".

Museum practice, and the interpretation of the potential role of museums, have continued to evolve. McCarthy argues that museums were and are a forum for the community, city and nation and that, despite a reputation of being static, they are organisations that are about change and transformation (McCarthy, 2020). In line with this, a growing proportion of museum professionals consider that museums have an increasingly important and relevant social role within their communities. Accordingly, the contemporising of museum practice has been an essential element of museums over recent years,

with museums proactively considering their role in society and how they should respond to local contexts and global challenges. Whilst this journey remains an active process, it serves to demonstrate a shift that has occurred in museum practice: whereas the historical perception of museums was of colonial institutions and perceived knowledge holders, modern museums focus on being active sites of investigation, engagement, and inclusion, working towards the democratisation of knowledge and dedication to a guardianship of collections that is accessible and inclusive.

In addition, museums have begun to focus on processes of decolonisation and indigenisation (Abungu, 2019; Aikio, 2018; McCarthy, 2018; Paquette, 2012). Decolonisation is about recognising indigenous people through challenging the colonial system's assumptions, privileges and practices. Within a museum context, this must include direct involvement of indigenous people and communities in all aspects of museum practice. It should enable the sharing of authority (Aikio, 2018; Janes, 2010), the inclusion of multiple knowledge systems (Lee et al., 2020, 2020), and the restorying of narratives and histories (Kawalilak & Groen, 2016; Ragoonaden et al., 2020; Sentance, 2021). Decolonisation also challenges the concepts of neutrality (Evans et al., 2020; Shiraiwa, 2021). From one perspective, museums can be considered neutral spaces, but many scholars and professionals would argue that the museum is far from neutral (Coffee, 2006). Collection policies and approaches to exhibitions, public programming, and education may reflect personal or institutional views, biases, and identities. Further, museums historically have perpetuated the interpretation of histories and social contexts that have excluded or marginalised indigenous people (Anderson 2020) and, at times, been influential actors within the colonial system. Museums are increasingly aware of this non-neutrality and are actively working toward decolonisation and indigenisation across all museum practices, including collecting, cataloguing, displaying, researching and interpretation. In New Zealand, the context for this is Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as well as the concepts highlighted by WAI262 (*The Wai 262 Claim*, 1991), the most significant and most wide-sweeping claim ever put to the Waitangi Tribunal.

It is possible to conclude that the historical perception of museums has evolved significantly in recent years and will continue to do so as museums explore how they can contribute to society. Contemporary museums are located within the contexts of their local communities, often with governance structures founded on biculturalism principles, including representatives from communities. The museum's role has shifted over time from exhibiting collections and bestowing knowledge onto visitors to one that enables the elevation of indigenous knowledge systems, generation of dialogue and multi-directional knowledge sharing. Given this, museums today are well placed to contribute to local, national and international communities in various ways, including through participation in solving global issues through the processes of public policy.

Museums can deliver a range of benefits and outcomes to their constituents at local, national and international levels by contributing to wellbeing and social cohesion, enabling connection to the past, facilitating education and learning, fostering knowledge and understanding, and supporting relationships between communities and governments. Museums make these contributions in unique ways. They are generally free to the public and provide an accessible civil space with appeal and interest across a wide range of age groups and communities. Museums are home to expert staff with a

breadth and depth of knowledge across cultural, social, historical, and natural domains. Through the collections held and cared for by museums, connections to past and present are also facilitated, enabling museums to make important contributions to developing identities and a sense of self for communities and individuals. Interpretation of museum collections through research increases our understanding of the world by documenting change over time and contextualising contemporary issues. Through museums, the public can engage with issues and potential solutions, and museums can provide hope and optimism and space for dialogue. These aspects of museum practice provide an opportunity to build understanding with communities on important issues and a potential connection point linking civil society and government.

## **Museums Across the Policy Cycle**

Most scholars define the policy cycle as a five-stage process that includes agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Initially proposed by Laswell (1956) as a way of organising the complexity of policymaking, the policy cycle provides a conceptual tool that highlights the main elements of the policy process (Capano & Pritoni, 2019). Whilst the policy cycle is considered by some scholars to be an oversimplification of an iterative and overlapping process (Bridgman & Davis, 2003; Cairney & Kwiatkowski, 2017; Howlett & Giest, 2015), there is general agreement that it remains a valuable heuristic that allows policy processes to be segmented. In a recent study, Wu et al. (2015) used the policy cycle as a framework to examine the policy capacity of organizations and individuals, arguing that it has become harder for governments to create effective policies as the complexity of public policy problems increases. In another study, Mark & Hagen (2020) highlighted the importance of human-centred design and co-design in each aspect of the policy process as a mechanism to design better policy, strengthen policy implementation, and create more robust feedback loops between research and policy (Mark & Hagen, 2020). These examples illustrate the policy cycle's utility in understanding how actors may contribute to public policy.

This section expands on the literature by conceptualising the activities undertaken by museums, mapping these across to stages of the policy process where they may offer the most significant novel contribution and demonstrating how it might be possible for museums to serve as intermediaries, linking civil society and government. In particular, the conceptual framework highlights how museums can contribute to agenda-setting in areas within which they have expertise and experience, support the development and diffusion across policy contexts, and build opportunities and communities for supporting policy implementation. Several characteristics of museum practice lend themselves to conceptualising museums as actors within the policy process. Drawing on the ICOM definition, museums are non-profit organisations in the service of society, which collect, research, and communicate the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment. Often funded by local or national government bodies, they have active research interests, both undertaking research and facilitating it within their communities. Museums work closely with many aspects of communities, building research partnerships, undertaking formal and informal education, caring for collection items that have strong links back to community groups, and creating exhibitions and other visitor engagement opportunities. Museum experts are often called upon to provide technical advice and contribute to

research and development. Visitation to museums includes (in non-pandemic times) visitors from local, national and global regions, meaning that museums can reach a broad range of communities.

Given the broad range of activities that museums undertake, along with the reach to local, national, and international audiences, museums have potential as policy actors. Examples in the literature also document the capacity of museums to contribute to policy processes. For example, some museums consider themselves activists (Wajid & Minott, 2019), and others contribute to elements of foreign policy (Mariano & Vårheim, 2021). Although museums can contribute to aspects of policymaking and influence policy outcomes, museums have not often been theorised as intermediaries across policy processes. The conceptual framework described below considers how museums could contribute to agenda-setting, policy development and policy implementation as intermediary organisations. These three elements of the policy cycle were selected as the most tractable opportunities for museums to contribute to policymaking; fewer examples in the literature identify roles for intermediary organisations in decision-making and evaluation.

Agenda-setting consists of defining policy problems and then elevating these problems to receive attention from policymakers. It is an important stage of the policy cycle because many issues are competing for attention, only a few of which policymakers can consider. During this phase, the scope and nature of the policy problem will be defined, and a range of policy alternatives may be promoted. Intermediary organisations contribute to agenda-setting by linking actors, forming coalitions of interest and advocacy, and generating or collating research. These activities promote the policy issue beyond the interested stakeholders so that it can reach the public and the formal government agendas. Within this context, museums are equipped to act as intermediary organisations to support agenda-setting. Their expression of activities in this aspect of the policy cycle could include providing safe spaces for stakeholders to meet, brokering relationships across a policy problem and representing groups or interest areas to establish new understandings. They may also contribute research that provides policy-relevant evidence, and advocating issues through dissemination and public engagement.

The policy development phase includes setting objectives for policy alternatives, identifying the potential costs and impacts of policy alternatives and identifying the most appropriate policy solutions. Policy development will frequently include testing specific policy options and may eliminate other options, narrowing the choice of eventual alternatives. Work may be undertaken to rank or prioritise policy options. The role of intermediaries may include facilitating the interaction of stakeholders and policy actors to refine policy options, often at this stage focusing on actors that have specific knowledge and expertise about the policy problem and associated options. Intermediaries may also contribute research or act as knowledge brokers at this stage to ensure the development of evidence-informed policy options. Accordingly, museums have great potential to contribute to policy development as intermediary organisations by sharing expertise, research and evidence and bringing together stakeholders. Museums may also contribute to policy development by connecting their communities with new ideas, narratives, and technologies to highlight potential ideas and possible solutions for problems relevant to the communities they serve. They also provide a forum where museum visitors can share ideas.

Policy implementation occurs when a decision has been made to advance a specific policy alternative. At this stage, resources and budgets may be allocated, and organisations are delegated with responsibility for implementing the policy. Intermediary organisations may contribute to policy implementation by bringing together stakeholders or collating evidence to ensure the policy is carried out to a high standard. Museums are able to contribute to policy implementation in this way also – bringing together stakeholders and experts and generating research to establish policy-relevant evidence.

Table 1 summarises the conceptual framework, describing the typical activities of intermediary organisations in agenda-setting, policy development and policy implementation and articulating how museums might express these activities.

*Table 1: Conceptual framework summarising how museums may contribute to elements of the policy cycle through actions as intermediary organisations.*

<b>Policy cycle element</b>	<b>Intermediary characteristics</b>	<b>Museum expression</b>
Agenda-setting	<p>Bringing together to generate a shared understanding of policy alternatives</p> <p>Facilitating networks to promote policy alternatives</p> <p>Advocating for issues</p>	<p>Bringing together diverse stakeholders, facilitating partnerships, or establishing collaborations within civic spaces that are non-partisan and non-governmental</p> <p>Representing groups or interest areas to establish new understandings and shared perspectives</p> <p>Acting as advocates for issues and topics aligned to areas of expertise</p>
Policy Development	<p>Providing evidence to inform policy</p> <p>Sharing evidence and alternatives with the public, creating a feedback loop</p> <p>Articulating possible solutions</p> <p>Advocating for alternatives</p>	<p>Undertaking research, building research partnerships and research communities, and facilitating research dissemination and impact</p> <p>Connecting the public with new ideas, narratives, and technologies</p> <p>Providing a forum where museum visitors can also share ideas</p> <p>Highlighting potential ideas and articulating possible solutions for problems relevant to the community they serve</p>

Policy Implementation	<p>Contributing to consultations and hearings</p> <p>Bringing together stakeholders to ensure the policy is carried out well</p>	<p>Contributing expertise to specific areas of policy to support effective implementation</p> <p>Providing a forum for stakeholders to meet and collaborate</p> <p>Facilitating partnerships and networks</p> <p>Connecting the public with the principles of the policy that is being implemented</p>
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The conclusions of the literature review were that a) humanity is facing increasingly urgent and complex global issues; b) intermediary organisations are significant actors in the policy cycle for identifying solutions for complex issues; c) the role of museums in society is evolving, and d) a dearth of primary data describing museums as intermediary organisations. Weaving these conclusions with the conceptual framework (Table 1) showing the potential role of museums as intermediary organisations within the policy cycle establishes a rationale for the research questions documented at the beginning of the thesis:

- Do museums play an active role in public policy, and if so, how?
- To what extent can museums contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030?

To answer these questions, I chose a research approach to generate primary data (including examples) describing how museums behave as potential intermediary organisations within agenda-setting, policy development and policy implementation. The approach utilises mixed methods of survey and interview tools to collect comprehensive quantitative data across the New Zealand Museum sector and a depth of qualitative data from key stakeholders. The data are synthesised to argue that museums are relevant and important actors within New Zealand’s policy ecosystem. The research approach and methods are described in the following section.

## Research Approach

The origins of this research come from my professional role within the New Zealand Museum sector. My positionality is from the perspective of a research practitioner, having completed previous degrees within the biological sciences and having practised scientific research in New Zealand before moving to roles that focused on research management. In my role as Research Manager for Auckland Museum, I have seen the potential within the museum sector to support the translation of research into policy and contribute to improved wellbeing and equity outcomes for New Zealand. I have long been interested in understanding how research can be translated into policy outcomes. This interest, combined with a growing understanding and interest in the culture and heritage sector, has led me to undertake this research. I also acknowledge my positionality as a Pākehā researcher, attempting to work within a sector still on its journey toward decolonisation and indigenisation. I am conscious of the privilege this

affords me and the limitations this puts on me in terms of fully understanding the experiences of Māori in New Zealand and the museum sector.

A survey tool was designed for staff and volunteers in the New Zealand Museum sector anticipating a wide range of experiences and perspectives. The questions probed the role of museums in civil society, SDGs and museums, attitudes toward SDGs, and perceived opportunities and barriers for museums to contribute to SDGs. The survey was distributed through ICOM NZ, which included a survey link in their newsletter, to approximately 50 recipients. In addition, I sent a link for the survey to the “contact us” email address for 12 New Zealand museums, inviting them to circulate the survey to their staff and volunteers. These 12 museums were chosen to encompass geographical regions across the North and South Islands of New Zealand. A total of 110 survey responses were received. Of these, 67 respondents completed every question in the survey. The remaining 43 respondents completed some, but not all, of the questions in the survey. Survey data were analysed using Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). Survey data are reported as percentages of the total respondents who answered that question, with both the number and the percentage reported in each case. Cross-tabulations or breakdown of survey data by demographic categories is not provided, as the sample size was not large enough to allow this analysis.

Alongside the survey, and to provide deeper insight into the vision, strategy, and operations of museums within New Zealand, stakeholder interviews were conducted with six senior executives of NZ museums. The stakeholders included people from a range of national or significant metropolitan museums and smaller regional museums. The group of stakeholders broadly encompassed Chief Executive Officers and Directors. The sample of stakeholders was purposive, with stakeholders selected to provide viewpoints from museums that varied in size, funding models, and geographic locations. After a brief time for whanaungatanga, interviews probed for views on museums' role in solving global social or environmental issues as well as perspectives of what their organisations were doing in this space. The questions also explored the stakeholders' views of SDGs concerning their organisation's operational strategy, what they saw as the main barriers to museums contributing to sustainability agendas, and what role they saw for museums in enabling this. The interviews and the survey data established the dataset for the first case study, which focused on identifying New Zealand museums' current activities, potential challenges, and future opportunities to contribute to Agenda 2030. Synthesis of the data in alignment with the conceptual framework also enabled the identification of intermediary activities being undertaken by museums.

I then examined a single SDG in-depth to understand how the potential intermediary activities of museums are put into practice when working on a specific policy problem. This assessment was achieved through a case study examining The Noises Marine Restoration Project, a partnership established in 2019 between Auckland Museum, the University of Auckland and the Noises Trust. This project set out to establish appropriate forms of marine protection around The Noises Islands in the Hauraki Gulf and relates specifically to SDG14, Life Below Water, summarized as “conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”. The case study was undertaken through interviews with project partners and external stakeholders. The primary information source for this case study was a series of five interviews with stakeholders from within (four

stakeholders) and external (two stakeholders) of the project team. The stakeholders comprised ocean advocates, subject matter experts, and community leaders. The sample of stakeholders was purposive, with stakeholders selected based on their involvement in or understanding of the project and their role. The interview questions focused on understanding each stakeholder’s perspectives of what The Noises Marine Restoration Project had set out to do, what it had achieved, and what it meant to have the museum as a project partner. The questions also explore the stakeholders’ views of the UN SDGs concerning marine protection, what they saw as the main barriers to advancing ocean policy, and what role they saw for museums in enabling this.

Stakeholder interviews were used to surface the factors behind decision-making whilst also centring the participant's views. This approach enables the collection of rich narrative-based data that would answer the research questions and help fill the knowledge gaps identified in the literature review. I took a semi-structured approach to interviews, using an interview guide to enable comparison across interviews whilst also allowing the flow of each conversation to evolve differently depending on the topics and issues raised by the participant. Previous literature suggests this is an appropriate approach for topics such as the research: policy interface (Young et al., 2018). Interview guides were peer-reviewed to ensure that the interview guides fit the purpose of the research questions. Meltzer and Schwartz (2018) also informed the development of an interview guide.

Interviews took place in person or virtually, depending on the participant's preference. Following transcription of the interviews, participants had the opportunity to review their transcript if they wished. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 120 minutes in duration. I used thematic analysis to synthesise the interviews following previously published methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Briefly, interview transcripts were read repeatedly, looking for patterns and meaning. This process also ensured good familiarity with the data. Using nVivo (QSR Software, 2020), transcripts were coded into an initial list of codes. These codes were assessed and sorted into themes based on their importance and relevance to the research questions. A summary of the information used for analysis is provided in Table 2.

*Table 2: Summary of information used for analysis*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Relevance</b>	<b>Chapter where source is used</b>
Stakeholder interviews	Six stakeholders were interviewed to gauge a range of perspectives on the role of museums in contributing to global social and environmental issues	New Zealand Museums
Stakeholder interviews	Five stakeholders were interviewed to gauge a range of perspectives on the role of Auckland Museum within The Noises Marine Restoration Project	Noises Marine Restoration Project



Museum sector survey	A survey exploring the role of museums in sustainability and wellbeing was used to identify perspectives relating to the role of museums in environmental policy	New Zealand Museums
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Ethics approval was granted by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (Approval number UAHPEC23626). Informed consent for each participant in interviews and the survey ensured that participants were aware of the aims of the project, how the data would be used, confidentiality, and anonymity.

I also identified some limitations of the research. Firstly, a relatively small group of survey respondents completed the survey. Whilst a total of 110 survey responses (61% of which answered every question) was sufficient to build a comprehensive picture of how museum staff and volunteers think about their organisations, the survey sample was too small to allow cross-tabulations of demographic data. In particular, the survey responses were underrepresented by Māori and Pacific participants. Secondly, the completion rate of the survey was lower than expected, with 43 participants not answering every question in the survey. A more extensive survey sample would be an interesting way of identifying how experiences and perspectives differ across demographic subgroups. Thirdly, I did not attempt to capture the perspectives of the public in this study. This would be a possible next research step to allow a cross-comparison of views from outside and within the museum sector.

This chapter has set out a conceptual framework and research approach for the thesis. It does so by exploring changing practices in museums, highlighting the evolution of museums away from their colonial past, through decolonisation and into a future focused on indigenisation. Scholarly evidence for museums as institutions of change and transformation, located within their communities but with global reach, provides a foundation for exploring the benefits museums may bring to local, national and international stages. Extending this, the unique characteristics of museums are described as a basis for understanding the place museums may be able to occupy across policy processes. Examination of the policy cycle, focusing on agenda-setting, policy development and policy implementation, within the context of intermediary organisations highlights the kinds of activities undertaken by intermediaries to contribute to policy processes. From this, the conceptual framework is set out, identifying possible ways in which museums may be conceptualised as intermediaries and the mechanisms by which they may contribute to agenda-setting, policy development and policy implementation. The following two chapters will summarise the research findings.

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## Chapter 4: Case Study of New Zealand Museums

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### Introduction

This case study aims to understand the potential role of the New Zealand Museum sector as intermediary organisations in contributing to New Zealand's commitments to Agenda 2030. Museums are well known for their roles in collecting and caring for taonga that are of cultural, historical, or scientific importance. Museums are also well known for their role in making such taonga accessible to the public, often through permanent or temporary exhibitions, but also through community engagement events or other forms, including online formats. In addition to these roles, museums are also well known for their work in education – often engaging with formal education such as school groups and universities – and for their research contributions, either through undertaking research or by enabling the research of others. The evidence of these activities is documented through collection acquisition data, visitor information, engagement with education audiences, and research outputs such as publications and collaborations. Museums are also usually embedded within local communities, often funded through local funding mechanisms and visited primarily by local citizens. Accordingly, and as highlighted in previous chapters, museums identify as places for civic engagement, sites of interrogation and dialogue, and contributors to contemporary debates. Because museums sit between civil society and government, they have unique opportunities to contribute to important policy problems in ways distinct from other sectors of society. This case study focuses on understanding what features of museums enable them to contribute as policy actors and how these features are translated into practice for museums in New Zealand. This research is expanded by exploring how museums contribute to Agenda 2030.

### Connection to Agenda 2030

One measure of progress the United Nations has put in place for Agenda 2030 is country-led Voluntary National Reviews. This voluntary reporting mechanism encourages member states to undertake regular and inclusive reviews of their contributions to advancing Agenda 2030 and achieving the SDGs (United Nations, n.d.-b, 2015). The reviews provide opportunities for countries to share their experiences of working towards the Agenda, identifying successes and challenges and sharing approaches. The hope is that sharing experiences will strengthen policies and enable collaboration, accelerating SDG achievement.

New Zealand published its first (and only, thus far) Voluntary Review in 2019. *He Waka Eke Noa Towards a Better Future, Together* reports how New Zealand approaches each of the 17 SDGs (MFAT, 2019), focusing on delivering outcomes most relevant to New Zealand. The review was presented to the United Nations in 2019 (MFAT, n.d.) and documented contributions made so far toward the goals, as well as signalling the intent to encourage all aspects of society to become involved with efforts toward the SDGs. In 2021, the Auditor-General reviewed the New Zealand Government's actions toward the Agenda (Office of the Auditor General, 2021). While the review acknowledges that a range of policies and activities were underway to contribute to the SDGs, it sets out several recommendations. These

include that Government set out a clear commitment to the SDGs, including the targets it will use for each of the SDGs, the actions that will be taken to achieve these, and how it will measure progress.

A fundamental aspect of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs is the ability of each country to define how it will make its contributions, with the expectation that contributions will be specific to the context of countries and their communities. Accordingly, the New Zealand response to Agenda 2030 must uphold and reflect Te Tiriti o Waitangi, include te ao Māori perspectives, be undertaken in partnership with Māori, and deliver equitable outcomes for Māori. An additional recommendation made by the Auditor General's report was the need to strengthen these elements of New Zealand's response to SDGs.

Further, engagement with the public is also highlighted as an essential aspect of implementing Agenda 2030. The Agenda acknowledges that government cannot achieve SDGs alone – instead, participation from all sectors of society is required. To this effect, New Zealand's 2019 Voluntary Review highlighted a range of work undertaken by NZ individuals, community groups and businesses. However, to a large extent, the New Zealand public remains unfamiliar with the SDGs (Office of the Auditor General, 2021).

## **Relevance of Museums as Intermediary Organisations**

There are two key strands of evidence that provide a basis for hypothesising that New Zealand museums could contribute to New Zealand's efforts on Agenda 2030 as intermediary organisations. First, as discussed above, there is an opportunity for New Zealand to strengthen its response to Agenda 2030 and to take a more structured and coordinated approach to achieve the SDGs. The intention of Agenda 2030 is for all aspects of society to contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030; there is an opportunity for New Zealand to increase public awareness of Agenda 2030 and how New Zealand will achieve SDG targets. Second, previous literature has highlighted several activities undertaken by museums that could contribute to achieving the SDGs. These activities could include public programming and education, research and research dissemination, and community engagement (reviewed in more detail in Chapter 2; (Cameron & Deslandes, 2011; Legget, 2017; Lyons & Bosworth, 2019)). Given that New Zealand has several large and many smaller museums, it seems plausible that museums could significantly contribute to New Zealand's implementation of Agenda 2030.

The conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3 outlined how museums may act as intermediary organisations within three elements of the policy cycle: agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation. Each of these elements is important for New Zealand's progress on Agenda 2030. Achieving the targets set out within the SDGs requires identifying and recognising specific policy problems, including raising awareness of these problems. Hence, they must reach the awareness of the public as well as the Government's formal agenda, proposing potential solutions to the policy problems and then putting the policy solutions into action. As outlined in Chapter 3, museums undertake a range of activities that could contribute to each of these elements of the policy cycle by acting as intermediary organisations. However, there is little primary evidence that documents the activities of museums within this context and regarding Agenda 2030.

This case study aims to analyse how the New Zealand Museum sector may contribute to solving global issues and seeks to answer the following Research Sub-question:

- *What are the current activities, potential challenges, and future opportunities for museums to contribute to Agenda 2030?*

## Research Findings

*“...there's a real opportunity for museums to be part of the social cohesion, agenda of communities, the wellbeing agendas, environmental wellbeing, social wellbeing, cultural wellbeing”*

*~ Stakeholder*

Thematic analysis of the stakeholder interviews and the sector survey identified three fundamental features of museums that may enable them to operate as intermediaries within policy processes (Table 4). These features are trust, perceived objectivity, and expertise. They enable museums to participate in agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation by fostering social cohesion, connecting local contexts to global issues, and providing an expert interpretation of evidence.

*Table 3: Features of museums that enable a role as intermediaries within policy processes*

<b>Museum feature</b>	<b>Description</b>
Trust	Museums are institutions that are highly trusted by their communities. There is an opportunity for museums to foster social cohesion, contributing to policy processes through policy diffusion and implementation.
Perceived Objectivity	Museums are institutions that bring a perception of objectivity to an issue, debate, or dialogue. This enables museums to connect local contexts and global issues, contributing to policy processes through agenda-setting and policy implementation.
Expertise	Museums are research generators and enablers and are home to a breadth and depth of expertise. This expertise enables museums to generate, collate and interpret evidence, contributing to policy processes through agenda-setting and policy development.

Each of these themes is explored in the discussion below. In addition, the research findings also highlighted stakeholder perspectives on the role of the SDGs in guiding museum practice and the opportunities and barriers faced in solving important societal and environmental issues. These are also discussed below, drawing connections to the opportunities for the New Zealand Museum sector to support the implementation of Agenda 2030 through their actions as intermediary organisations.

Multiple stakeholders and survey respondents discussed the concept of trust. Their views acknowledged that museums tend to hold a position of trust within their communities, mainly earned through being seen as sources of reliable information, knowledge, and expertise. For some people, the perception of museums as neutral organisations was also considered an important element of citizens' trust in museums:

*Museums are highly trusted by the public, because we're seen as neutral, we're seen as reliable places that tell 'the truth'...: (Stakeholder #1)*

Multiple stakeholders reflected on the responsibility that comes with being a trusted institution. To some stakeholders, this meant carefully understanding the concept of trust and what this means for societies. For example, there was recognition that trust in museums should not be a 'blind' trust that seeks acceptance without question. Instead, trust in museums should translate to enabling people to feel safe and equipped to enter contemporary debates or critique public institutions. For stakeholders, this meant enabling the public to visit museums to explore multiple perspectives and interpretations. However, this exploration needs to be facilitated in a way that does not create ambiguity or confusion.

*...there's a principle of trust that actually underpins the whole thing. And if we do something that erodes that trust and that respect that we have been afforded, then you can quickly, you know, it can unravel quite badly. And you start to lose your authority. And by authority, I'm not meaning the 'and you must think this' authority, but your licence, your licence to exist... (Stakeholder #2)*

Within this context, the role of museums in contributing to social wellbeing also emerged from the interview and survey data. There was a sense that, from the perspectives of some stakeholders, societies have witnessed a loss of social cohesion over recent decades, due in part to the proliferation of social media and news sources, resulting in a profusion of information of uncertain quality. It is increasingly difficult for citizens to identify which information is trustworthy. Building on this, a theme that emerged from the stakeholder perspectives and survey data was the opportunity for museums to contribute to social cohesion. This appeared to be possible because of the trust between museums and their communities. The contributions to social cohesion could include museums being a place for citizens to become well informed, expanding their capacity to participate in society and contributing to their sense of belonging and identity.

*Museums and art galleries are in a similar, you know, we all specialize in slightly different things, but I think we're essentially part of the civil infrastructure but provides ballast and foundation to building participatory citizens well informed and well, not just well informed. So it's not just about knowing stuff, but it's about being comfortable with your place in the world and then that leads into the whole sense of belonging, confidence to be creative, confidence to have a bright idea and earn some money from it (Stakeholder #2)*

Another important aspect that emerged was the ability of museums to facilitate a better understanding of multiple knowledge systems. Stakeholders and survey respondents referred to the unique place New Zealand museums hold to offer safe opportunities for exploring bicultural ways of seeing the world. This opportunity could occur through a range of practices – valuing and upholding mātauranga Māori, honouring indigenous knowledge systems, and enabling visitors to become experienced with indigenous world views.

*...and that, glam, the galleries, libraries, archives and museums together as part of an overall ecosystem of creativity, participation, identity, citizenship, critical thinking about multiple views,*

*discernment around how to spot dodgy information sources, the ability to read, being numerate... (Stakeholder #2)*

Overall, data from interviews and the survey highlighted the importance of trust as a fundamental characteristic of museums. How museums recognise and act on this trust has important policy implications, particularly when conceptualising museums as intermediaries. For example, museums have the opportunity as trusted institutions to support citizens in their understanding of the world around them, the issues faced, and the possible ways of thinking about and solving them.

The concept of objectivity emerged as a theme. For some stakeholders, this was articulated as neutrality – museums are spaces free of any particular ideology:

*I see museums as being a bit more politically neutral because we are serving all of society and there are different perspectives (Stakeholder #3)*

In contrast, other stakeholders rejected the notion of neutrality for museums. They spoke of museums having inherent biases that influence strategic direction and operations. An element that emerged from the thematic analysis was the importance of museums recognising their positionality and being aware of the influence museums can have on society. Stakeholders talked about how positionality influenced the daily practices undertaken in their organisations. For example:

*... museums are not neutral. They are driving society in particular directions; we need to be really aware of our bias in doing that. We have to acknowledge that we are activist, and the decisions we make about what to collect, what to research, what kind of research to do, what we present, who we partner with, all of these are active decisions about elevating certain narratives or knowledges or communities, and then their right to be represented over others. (Stakeholder #1)*

and

*You make choices about what you are going to collect. You make choices about which ones get described. You make choices about the kinds of vocabularies that are in the descriptive schema that enable collections to be described. Those are all choices, and they're all choices that are influenced by your own education and background and wealth, and so actually it's more healthy to think of ourselves as objective. We are never neutral. (Stakeholder #2).*

As implied by the quotes, the concepts of neutrality and objectivity in museums and what these mean for museum practice are nuanced and layered. Analysis of the information collected in this research through stakeholder interviews and survey suggests that one intended meaning of the term 'objective' is akin to that of the broader public sector. I.e., museums provide a public service in a non-partisan way that is consequently perceived by stakeholders or policy actors as objective. However, this does not mean that museums are neutral in their stance or views or non-political in their practice. Evans et al. (Evans et al., 2020) define neutrality as not being engaged, or decided, on either side of an issue and argue that museums should not be neutral in this context. Scholars also argue that in a world that is challenged by such urgent and complex issues, museums have a responsibility to

engage with society in purposeful and political ways (Ünsal, 2019) and to give a point of view, including making suggestions for how societal issues might be solved (Evans et al., 2020). Along these lines, stakeholders I interviewed spoke of the importance of museums 'taking a viewpoint' in their practice, particularly in subject areas or issues that challenge people to think differently about the world. In this context, it is potentially possible to think of museums as objective rather than as neutral, with the term *objective* referring to the fact that public museums are not formally affiliated with specific interest groups (such as Greenpeace, or WWF, World Wide Fund for Nature). They may therefore be perceived as objective organisations. Furthermore, objectivity in this context can also include advocacy and critical thinking (Hall, 2018), particularly in areas where museums have expert knowledge and assemblage of relevant evidence and promulgating challenging ideas and actions. This definition of objectivity is similar to the notion of scientific objectivity, in which the goal is not a neutral one where all views are equal but to arrive at a defensible view based on dispassionate expertise uninfluenced by opinions. Stakeholder perspectives supported this. For example, one stakeholder talked about the importance of museums taking a stance on issues. While the stakeholder acknowledged that in some cases taking an objective stance provides an opportunity for multiple perspectives, in other cases, they felt it is essential for museums to engage in the issue, forming a view and ensuring their ability to leverage results in influence. The ability to take a stance in this way was considered especially important when working with community or iwi groups:

*...when it gets hard, it is not the enemies that you remember; it is the silence of your friends that you remember. (Stakeholder #6).*

The role of museums in solving societal issues was highlighted by survey respondents, with 84% (n=64 out of 76 respondents who answered this question) agreeing that museums have a role to play in society by being agents of change and 79% (n=60 out of 76 respondents) agreeing that museums have an important role to play in society by solving important social, cultural, environmental, or economic issues. These views align readily with the intent that museums should represent their communities and their relative independence from local or central government. On the other hand, a prevailing public view of museum objectivity may be that museums present non-controversial information or provide multiple perspectives of a topic neutrally. A worthwhile future research direction could use a policy lens to explore the public perspectives and expectations of museums within the context of neutrality, advocacy, and societal issues.

Alongside this, museums are continuing to learn how to operate within the context of indigenous knowledges and indigenous practices. Museums have their formations in colonial structures, behaviours and traditions. Part of being objective also requires museums to consider their framing to ensure they are addressing historical concerns. For example:

*...museums themselves are a Western construct, and in our case, here in a colonised country, they're a colonial tool. They're wonderful, wonderful things but they've also done a lot of damage and repressed a lot of people and a lot of knowledge. So we grapple with that*

*legacy, in our daily practice and also in terms of reconciliation, in healing and rebalancing...  
(Stakeholder #1)*

These perspectives suggest that museums are well-placed to contribute to policy processes as intermediaries, from a perspective that museums are non-partisan and independent from executive government and political party politics. This activity may include connecting local contexts and global issues or facilitating the bringing together of diverse policy actors. Some stakeholders referred to the importance of advocacy by museums, considering this an essential part of the functions of museums and an important aspect of contributing to society and working with community and iwi groups. Advocacy naturally requires moving away from a stance of neutrality or complete objectivity into a space that includes engaging with issues and taking a stance. However, stakeholders identified that advocacy undertaken by museums should be based on evidence they are perceived to be knowledgeable in.

*I think museums are advocates, whether they like it or not. So, they can either be passive advocates by simply perpetuating the view of their policies and their funders and their boards, and because choices are made every day. But there are some museums who consciously make themselves advocates as well, where they will take a view on something that is important and promulgate it as a particular view. (Stakeholder #2)*

The importance of museums as research institutions and places with a depth and breadth of subject expertise also emerged as a theme. Stakeholders spoke of the responsibility of museums to ensure both collection and analysis of evidence, positioning museums to share their interpretation of evidence with their communities.

*...we are actually doing our job by shining a torchlight on this evidence and it's not just the evidence, but it's also the analysis of the evidence (Stakeholder #2)*

For some stakeholders and survey participants, an important role for museums is contributing to capacity building within communities, freely giving their knowledge and expertise to build practice and knowledge.

To explore how museums might apply the principles of trust, perceived objectivity, and expertise to improve wellbeing and sustainability in New Zealand, an analysis of the current activities, future opportunities, and potential barriers for museums to contribute to Agenda 2030 was undertaken. Almost all stakeholders referred to the importance of museums contributing to contemporary debates and solving issues such as the climate crisis or the loss of social cohesion within the context of their local communities. For example, one stakeholder referred to the ability of museums to enable people to gain a better understanding of themselves and the world around them:

*...the ability for people to understand who they are, for people to understand some skills they need to get to participate in their communities some skills they need to understand the whole globe as well as the globe to the end of their street (Stakeholder #2)*



Another stakeholder talked about the role of museums in supporting communities to consider opportunities for alternative ways of living:

*we are ideally positioned to provoke and support those conversations about how we live and make decisions responsibly and sustainably within this environment. I think museums face very interesting choices about which of the endless contemporary debates should we enter into. And where can we make the most impact and where we have the most expertise to support a good conversation (Stakeholder #1)*

Most participants (80%, n=60 out of 75 respondents who answered this question) also agreed that museums have a responsibility to act on climate change. Survey participants also believed museums have a responsibility to contribute to the wellbeing of New Zealanders (91%, n=70 out of 77 respondents), promote sustainability (95%, n=73 out of 77 respondents), and operate sustainably (92%, n=71 out of 77 respondents). Several stakeholders also spoke about the importance of improving their organisational practices to be more sustainable, for example:

*...on an operational level, museums should be thinking, as all industries should, about where their resources come from, how their staff travel and commute to work, these sorts of things. (Stakeholder #4)*

At an operational level, approximately three-quarters of survey respondents agreed that their organisation was taking active steps toward improving sustainability (72%, n=46 out of 64 respondents who answered this question) and wellbeing (78%, n=55 out of 70 respondents who answered this question). However, this highlighted a gap between what survey respondents thought museums have a responsibility to do compared to their perception of what was actively being undertaken in their organisation. Multiple stakeholders acknowledged that more needs to be done within their organisations. Much of the effort so far was considered by stakeholders to be informal and not coordinated at an institutional level. For example:

*...it tends to come from people, sort of personal overlaid with professional motivations and goals, whether that's around reducing food wastage or using more recycled and recyclable materials in exhibition design (Stakeholder 1)*

However, three organisations were also actively working toward sustainability strategies or operations that would enable them to 'get their house in order' (Stakeholder #5), reflecting the growing range of activities being undertaken by museums in this space. This activity included having specific organisational goals around becoming carbon zero or improving procurement to include ethical investments or suppliers with sustainability principles:

*...made a decision to go on to ethical investments where we can. (Stakeholder #3)*

A range of views were expressed about Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Out of 68 respondents who answered this question, a substantial number (39%, n=27) had not heard of the SDGs prior to the survey, and a further 37% (n=26) had heard of the SDGs but did not really know what they were – only one in five survey respondents knew what the SDGs were (22%; n=15). A similar

picture emerged from the stakeholder interviews. Some stakeholders had a comprehensive understanding of the SDGs, and one organisation was currently developing a sustainability plan based on the SDGs within their organisation. However, from an organisational point of view, most organisations studied were not actively aligning their organizational strategy or practice to contribute to Agenda 2030.

*...they're a way of informing our thinking and articulating our goals and our impact so using them like a research input rather than directly taking them and transplanting them...(Stakeholder #1)*

Interestingly, survey respondents indicated a desire to see museums do more in this space, with 91% (n=62 of 68 respondents who answered this question) agreeing that museums should actively seek ways to contribute to the SDGs, 89% (n=60 out of 67 respondents) agreeing that in doing so, museums could increase the impact they have in local communities, and 72% (n=46 out of 64 respondents) agreeing that the SDGs were relevant to the work they do within the NZ museum sector. Approximately two-thirds of survey participants agreed that more attention should be paid to the SDGs within their organisation. Regarding current activities, only 45% of survey respondents (24 out of 53) agreed that the SDGs were a visible part of their organisation's vision, mission or strategic priorities, and just 25% of respondents (n=12 out of 49) reported that their organisation actively measured how their work contributes to the SDGs. These findings suggest an opportunity to build awareness of how the museum sector could contribute to advancing Agenda 2030.

Stakeholders and survey respondents expressed a range of concerns about barriers to contributing to the SDGs and developing more sustainable operating practices. For some stakeholders, a relevant barrier to the operationalisation of a sustainability strategy aligned with the SDGs was identifying the tangible and realistic aspects. Being able to do this would allow the development of an achievable plan relevant to the work of the museum but which does not overwhelm staff and leadership. For example:

*...and having a recycle waste than your office, you know there's actually more to it than that and understanding your entire carbon footprint and around emissions and those of your suppliers as well. And all of those can be quite overwhelming (Stakeholder #5)*

This sentiment was echoed by survey respondents, with approximately a quarter of respondents reporting a lack of clear connection between the role of museums and SDGs. Similarly, respondents noted that the existence of other more critical priorities and a lack of clear direction or policy from local government are challenges for museums if they are to contribute to the SDGs. These comments highlight the importance of supporting museums in becoming sustainably run organisations to be as effective as possible as intermediary organisations. Resourcing was another barrier reported by stakeholders and survey respondents alike, with 35% (n=38) of survey respondents reporting insufficient resources to undertake work relevant to the SDGs. Stakeholders reflected on the challenges associated with resources in terms of both financial and human resource limitations. For example:

*Operationally, whether you're a big organization or a small one or in between, it requires investment and resource and having champions as well. I would say those are the main barriers. (Stakeholder #4)*

The evidence presented here suggests a growing interest within museums to establish more sustainable operations with multiple organisations having (or developing) sustainability strategies or operational plans. The research findings also indicate an emerging interest in the SDGs, alongside a dawning recognition that museums have a role in contributing to the SDGs and in enabling communities to become involved or to understand more about climate change issues, sustainability, and wellbeing. Alongside this growing interest is a growing sense of urgency to actively participate in local and national conversations around climate change and wellbeing and to work together across the museum sector to support and enhance this effort.

*...there could be much more collaboration between museums to share resources, to plan long-term and to achieve ambitiously on a national scale (Survey respondent)*

In summary, the research findings suggest an emerging role for museums in supporting New Zealand's commitments to the SDGs both in terms of leading the way as sustainably operated organisations, as well as through supporting communities in their understanding of the context and purpose of the SDGs.

## **Policy Implications**

This case study aimed to explore New Zealand museums' current activities, future opportunities and potential challenges to contribute to Agenda 2030 and in doing so, to identify attributes of the New Zealand Museum sector that could allow museums to act as intermediary organisations across the policy cycle elements of agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation. The case study draws together a range of stakeholder perspectives that document museums' activities that map to previously published activities of intermediary organisations (Bushouse & Mosley, 2018; Mignon & Kanda, 2018; Sovacool et al., 2020). These are discussed below.

The research findings highlight three fundamental features of museums that support a rationale for museums contributing to policy processes as intermediary organisations. Museums are highly trusted organisations and, as such, can work alongside communities to make connections between local contexts and global issues. Further, that museums are trusted sources of information appears to strengthen social cohesion in a world crowded with misinformation. In addition to being trusted organisations, museums have a degree of objectivity – they are removed from local and central governments in terms of their vision, strategies and operations, and they are not seen to be aligned to any particular ideology. Instead, museums represent the communities that they serve. Thirdly, museums have a breadth and depth of expertise. They generate and enable research, working with their collections to analyse and interpret evidence.

Regarding agenda-setting, the research findings suggested a valuable role for the New Zealand Museum sector to contribute to framing policy problems and building awareness of important issues.

This contribution was evidenced through stakeholder interviews and the sector survey results that described the work museums undertake to share their expertise, make information available to visitors, and engage with the communities they serve. In combination with the trust of their communities, the perceived objectivity of museums strengthens their ability to contribute to agenda-setting as intermediary organisations because they are perceived as independent organisations that are non-partisan and non-governmental. This objectivity allows museums to advocate for particular agendas and policy alternatives aligned to their areas of expertise in a way that is seen to be free of conflicts or vested interests (notwithstanding the comments by stakeholders that museums must get their own house in order on certain issues e.g., operationalising sustainability). Several stakeholders spoke of the importance of advocacy undertaken by museums, increasing awareness of issues and contributing evidence for potential policy solutions. The New Zealand Museum sector is also in a unique position to contribute to agenda-setting through the work being undertaken to indigenise museum practices. While an ongoing journey, this work could support the New Zealand Government's approach to Agenda 2030 by bringing communities together and facilitating partnerships within civic spaces. The public-facing activities of museums can also contribute to agenda-setting by establishing new understandings and shared perspectives of issues faced by communities.

Evidence gathered from interviews, and the survey also identified opportunities for museums to contribute to policy development through several activities aligned to those previously attributed to intermediary organisations. A vital component of this within the New Zealand Museum sector is research. Museums are research institutions, with many museums undertaking primary research in a range of disciplinary areas across the humanities and the sciences. As well as generating research, they enable and facilitate research activities for those outside their organisation by making available collections, archives, and other research resources. The dissemination of research can contribute to policy development by providing evidence that informs policy.

Further, the research evidence also highlighted museums' importance as organisations connecting the public with new ideas, narratives and technologies. Importantly, creating a feedback loop within a museum setting is also possible by providing a forum where museum visitors can share ideas. These activities can highlight potential policy solutions and explore the relevance of these for the communities within which the museum is situated. Turning to policy implementation, the research evidence indicated that museums could support this element of the policy process through the contribution of expertise and by providing a forum for stakeholders to meet and collaborate. Further, museums can connect the public with the principles of the policy being implemented.

Drawing together the findings, New Zealand Museums engage in a range of activities that characterise intermediary organisations. In the next chapter, a case study will provide a detailed analysis of how the features of museums have enabled Auckland Museum to contribute to a specific policy problem: marine protection, captured in Agenda 2030 as SDG14 Life Below Water. Together, these two case studies show the range of policy-related activities in which museums can engage relating to New Zealand's commitments to Agenda 2030. An in-depth analytical discussion of these findings will appear in the conclusion of this thesis.

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## Chapter 5: Case Study of The Noises Marine Restoration Project

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### Introduction

This case study aims to understand the role of a museum working in partnership toward a specific policy problem aligned to one SDG within Agenda 2030. By taking an in-depth look at the role of a single institution working within a project partnership, additional perspectives of museums as potential intermediary organisations can be identified. This case complements the broader case study of the New Zealand Museum sector presented in Chapter 4. The project chosen for analysis in this case study was The Noises Marine Restoration Project, an initiative focused on establishing marine protection around The Noises Islands<sup>1</sup> in the Hauraki Gulf, Auckland. The Noises Marine Restoration Project was formed in 2019 as a partnership between The Noises Trust, Auckland Museum, and The University of Auckland to identify appropriate mechanisms of marine protection, including mechanisms that could be community-led. In September 2021, the project reached the milestone of submitting a proposal to the Department of Conservation for a new High Protection Area to be established in the marine environment around The Noises. The Department of Conservation invited The Noises Project to submit the proposal for consideration within the Government's legislation package for the Hauraki Gulf. This case study focuses on the period of 2019-2021, following the role of Auckland Museum as a project partner.

### Connection to Agenda 2030

Oceans are crucial to the survival of life on Earth. The ocean supplies every second breath we take, regulates the climate by absorbing carbon (Laffoley et al., 2020), and offsets global warming by absorbing excess heat. It also supports a vast amount of biodiversity: covering more than 70% of the world's surface, it is home to 80% of all life on Earth (Hammond & Jones, 2020). In addition, oceans are a source of food provision throughout the world: the sea is a significant protein producer (Gephart et al., 2014; Tacon & Metian, 2013), and 3 billion people are dependent on seafood for survival (Hobday et al., 2016). Furthermore, oceans facilitate transport, trade, and communication (Dundas et al., 2020) and generate incomes that support economies (Laffoley et al., 2020). Since 1967 when the first photos of Earth from space allowed humanity to visualise the extent of oceans on Earth, this has become known as the "Blue Planet" (Laffoley et al., 2020). It is no surprise then that ocean policy and marine protection feature in Agenda 2030. SDG14, Life Below Water is dedicated to marine conservation. The causes of marine biodiversity loss and decline in ocean health are well documented: fishing and seabed mining, pollution, and climate change (Claudet et al., 2021; Hammond & Jones, 2020; Laffoley et al., 2020).

New Zealand is responsible for one of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones in the world (Ministry for the Environment & Stats NZ, 2019). The marine environment under our care is 15 times larger than our

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<https://www.thenoises.nz/marine-restoration/#:~:text=The%20ambition%20for%20The%20Noises,about%20the%20revitalisation%20of%20mauri.>

landmass and contains an estimated 85% of our nation's total wildlife (Department of Conservation, 2020). New Zealanders have close connections with marine environments, with 65% of our population living within 5km of the sea (Ministry for the Environment & Stats NZ, 2019). However, while one-third of New Zealand's land is protected – more than any other OECD country (Ruru et al., 2017) – less than 1% of our marine environment is currently protected from extractive or destructive practices (Eddy, 2014; Office of the Auditor-General, 2019). Marine protection policy is becoming increasingly urgent with increasing demands on marine resources (Maxwell et al., 2020) and rapidly declining biodiversity and ecosystems. While it has been challenging for marine protection to move up the political agenda in an environment crowded with urgent issues of affordable housing, child poverty, and transport, the reality is that oceans sustain us, and our marine environments are on the brink of collapse.

The New Zealand government has made explicit commitments through the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy and the Convention on Biological Diversity (United Nations, 1992) to preserve natural heritage and biodiversity within our marine jurisdiction (Department of Conservation, 2020). These commitments align with Agenda 2030 and the targets outlined in SDG14, Life Below Water. New Zealand reported its progress toward SDG14 through the 2019 Voluntary National Review, acknowledging a lack of data and progress concerning the conservation and restoration of marine spaces in New Zealand (MFAT, 2019). The goals of The Noises Marine Restoration Project align to the targets within SDG14, Life Below Water. This SDG is especially relevant as The United Nations World Ocean Decade began in 2021, offering additional encouragement to strengthen policies for ocean management and marine protection (Claudet et al., 2021).

## **Museums as Intermediary Organisations**

Auckland Museum, formed in 1852, is New Zealand's oldest research institution (Auckland Museum, 2018) and has had a longstanding interest and active role in marine and land conservation in the historical Auckland province. The museum has been involved in research and conservation at the Noises Islands for many years, supporting the restoration of native bush, the removal of weed species, and a deeper understanding of the terrestrial flora and fauna present on the islands. The Natural Science collections at Auckland Museum contain hundreds of flora and fauna specimens collected from The Noises Islands and the surrounding marine environments, creating a unique baseline that allows measurement of how environments have changed over time. In particular, the collections combined with current scientific fieldwork provide evidence for understanding biodiversity loss. Several Auckland Museum staff are active in research on and around the Noises Islands, with expertise covering marine ecology, fish taxonomy, seabird conservation, archaeology, and terrestrial botany. For example, Auckland Museum, in partnership with The Noises Trust and Mana Whenua, has recently been involved in researching the archaeology of Ōtata island, with an excavation in 2020 revealing human occupation of the island prior to the Rangitoto eruption (Ash, 2021).

Furthermore, Auckland Museum has an active relationship with the Hauraki Gulf Forum, regularly hosting the Hauraki Gulf Symposium, at which The Noises Islands are a regular topic of discussion. Given the connections made between Auckland Museum and The Noises Islands through collections, research, collaboration, and facilitation, it is possible to conceptualise Auckland Museum in an

intermediary role within the context of The Noises Islands. Therefore, this case study aims to analyse the role of Auckland Museum as a project partner to the Noises Marine Restoration Project. The case study is situated within the context of the conceptual framework and seeks to answer the following question:

- *How can museums contribute to the realisation of goals articulated in Agenda 2030 relating to marine environments in a way that connects with the policy process?*

## **Background to the Case Study**

A pressing and visible example of the urgency of marine protection and restoration is the Hauraki Gulf / Tikapa Moana / Te Moananui-ā-toi (Hauraki Gulf hereafter). The Hauraki Gulf holds historic cultural and spiritual significance for tangata whenua and is a site of economic importance to the Auckland and Waikato regions. The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park was formed in 2000 to establish a mechanism for protecting the natural and historical features of the Hauraki Gulf. However, there are currently just six areas of full marine protection covering 0.3% of the Hauraki Gulf. Commercial and recreational fishing pressures remain critical issues, along with the impacts of urban land use. The Hauraki Gulf has experienced such a rapid decline in marine biodiversity that the crayfish is now considered functionally extinct (Hauraki Gulf Forum, 2020; S. Hope, 2021).

Over recent years, the Government has been undertaking a process of marine spatial planning through a process known as Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari. The focus of this work, led by DOC and MPI, is to identify policy mechanisms for restoring the health of the Hauraki Gulf. In June 2021, the government released its intentions for the Gulf (Department of Conservation, 2021). The strategy includes a range of new measures to improve the health of the Gulf, including a series of new marine protected areas, which will offer the highest level of marine protection while still allowing for customary practices by iwi. New legislation, currently being prepared for consultation, will formalize the marine protected areas.

The Noises Islands, consisting of a group of islands, rock stacks, and reefs, are located within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, at the intersection between the inner and outer Gulf. Mana Whenua for The Noises islands is recognised as Ngāi Tai and Ngāti Paoa, both documented in 1866 and 1867 land records (The Noises Trust, n.d.). In 1995, the Neureuter family, custodians of the Noises Islands since the 1950s, formed The Noises Trust, to ensure the long-term protection of the islands. The islands are known to have outstanding conservation values, with indigenous vegetation, pristine bush, and a range of native species such as wētāpunga and gecko. The islands are also home to numerous seabird species, many currently either at risk or threatened (Hauraki Gulf Forum, 2020). The islands are significant breeding grounds for seabirds within the Hauraki Gulf. These breeding grounds are also at risk because they are dependent on intact connections between land and sea to provide sufficient nutrients for the birds. These connections have been disrupted through a deterioration of the surrounding marine environments, meaning that food for seabird colonies is becoming scarce. A diverse range of marine habitats surrounds the Noises Islands, including biodiversity hotspots and regionally significant habitats. However, marine biodiversity is declining, a decline described in the State of the Gulf report (2020) and through personal observations made by the Neureuter family over time. To

explore the role of Auckland Museum within The Noises Project, and how this role connected to elements of the policy cycle, I interviewed stakeholders and carried out a thematic analysis. For more details on the research approach and methods, see Chapter 3.

## Research Findings

*“The Sea Change Plan proposal for a Noises MPA [marine protected area] is being developed by a community-led project, which was cited by several stakeholders during our engagement discussion as an outstanding example of what can be achieved through co-operation and participation.”*

*~ Revitalising the Gulf – Government Action on the Sea Change Plan*

Five main themes relating to the role of Auckland Museum within the Noises Marine Restoration Project were identified (Table 4Table 1Table 1), highlighting several characteristics and activities of Auckland Museum that are commonly attributed to intermediary organisations. These included bringing stakeholders together, advocating for issues aligned to expertise, representing groups to build new understanding, undertaking research, collating evidence, providing a forum for sharing ideas, communicating possible policy solutions, working alongside communities, and facilitating partnerships and networks.

*Table 4: Themes identified through thematic analysis of stakeholder interviews*

Theme	Description
Advocacy	This theme is about advocacy and influence, capturing the characteristics of museums as organisations with a credible reputation, the capacity to walk alongside iwi and community groups, and as a trusted institute that can connect evidence to global issues
Physical Space	This theme captures the ability of museums to share their physical space, creating safe, neutral, and inclusive places for stakeholders to meet
Relationships	This theme refers to the ability of museums to build relationships across communities, stakeholders, and interest groups. It refers to the ability of museums to engage communities, catalysing participation, and collaboration
Research	This theme captures the museum as a research institution and a place of expertise and experts. It includes the ability of museums to draw on natural history collections to interpret how the environment has changed over time, the depth of subject expertise, and the ability of museum experts to collate and communicate evidence to inform policy
Tiriti o Waitangi	This theme articulates the museum as an organisation that gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This includes working in partnership with iwi and mana whenua, valuing indigenous knowledge and



	worldviews, building relationships, and promoting a values- and rights-based approach to conservation
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Each theme is explored in the discussion below. The findings are subsequently synthesised to consider how this role aligns with the functions of an intermediary organisation in terms of agenda-setting, policy development and policy implementation. In addition, stakeholder interviews also provided insights into the complexity of ocean and marine policy in New Zealand, including specific references to the current issues faced by the Hauraki Gulf. Within this context, stakeholders also shared perspectives on the role of the SDG14 Life Below Water in guiding policy development and implementation in this area. I discuss these below, emphasising the role of intermediary organisations in ocean policy and reaching the targets set by SDG14.

The role of Auckland Museum as an advocate within The Noises Project was one important theme. It emerged from stakeholder perspectives that the museum is an institution that is knowledgeable about the current state of the marine environment in the Hauraki Gulf and carries a credible, authoritative reputation within local communities and amongst marine policy stakeholders. In addition, stakeholders commented on the reputation of Auckland Museum, enabling the museum to support The Noises Project to walk alongside iwi and community groups, often through research activities and connection to the public. There were reflections that advocacy could also occur at the level of government by forming relationships with individuals within government departments. This was evidenced in the Noises Marine Restoration Project. Multiple stakeholders shared the importance of meeting with government ministers and officials to inform them of evidence about the state of the marine environment around the Noises Islands, and to bring their attention to possible policy solutions for the problem of marine protection. Advocacy could also occur with the public, facilitating a shifting of public perceptions and a better understanding of scientific evidence. An element considered relevant in terms of advocacy was the perception that museums are seen as neutral actors within government, non-partisan and without any bias toward commercial interests or interest group agendas.

*...the other thing that the museum brings to any partnership is neutrality. That's really, really helpful, and you know if the museums saying something, it carries great weight... (Stakeholder #7)*

Alongside the theme of neutrality was the concept of trust. Multiple stakeholders spoke about the ability of museums to present information to the public, stakeholders, and government in a credible manner. In the case of The Noises Project, this stemmed from Auckland Museum's longstanding presence in society and its ability to assemble and interpret evidence. This aligned with the ability of museums to connect to global contexts and issues while remaining an institution for local communities. Within The Noises Restoration Project, this was demonstrated through the work undertaken to highlight both the local and global importance of restoring healthy marine ecosystems.

*They have an ability to be globalists even in a domestic context, from their ability to share information, to educate their patrons, to inspire them, to motivate them. I think it's hugely important. (Stakeholder #8)*

Interestingly, no stakeholders mentioned the concept of activism as part of the museum's role. The theme was more closely aligned with sharing evidence and bringing people and interests together. However, multiple stakeholders commented on the responsibility museums have to their local constituencies, including the trust that resides in that context – if the museum is prepared to speak out on an issue, then it must be important.

*...the mere fact that the museum was involved said a lot. (Stakeholder #7)*

Most stakeholders highlighted the importance of Auckland Museum's physical space. An example of this was hosting the Hauraki Gulf Forum conference, from which conference participants have an extensive view of the Hauraki Gulf and its islands. Within the context of The Noises Marine Restoration Project, the Hauraki Gulf Forum conference became the mechanism through which several project partners met, forging new relationships based on shared interests in restoring the health and mauri of the Hauraki Gulf. The museum's physical space catalysed the bringing together of individuals and parties who would subsequently form The Noises Project. Another aspect of the museum as a physical space touched on by interviewees was the ability of museums to assemble those with varied interests, experiences, and knowledges.

*...ability to convene different stakeholders with different perspectives, you can bring them together and you can encourage safe debate and conversation that is informed, that is credible, that is grounded in the values of a museum which is about responsibility to the public and to the people that you serve, but the ability to convene as a non-threatening party is really valuable and the museum can do that in a way that I think very few other entities can. (Stakeholder #8).*

In this way, the museum was seen as a safe, non-threatening, and credible space which was considered an important aspect of navigating the varied interests surrounding marine policy, enabling the agenda to be advanced.

The third theme to emerge from the thematic analysis was the ability of museums to build strong relationships across communities, stakeholders, and interest groups. As highlighted in the previous section, The Noises Marine Restoration Project's initial formation occurred due to relationships formed through collaboration, shared interests, and shared values. The project likely would not have come together this way and almost certainly would not have achieved what it did if those relationships were not formed. While Auckland Museum was not the only mechanism for these relationships to form, it played a significant role, which several stakeholders discussed. Another aspect of relationships that emerged was the ability of the Auckland Museum to support the development of, and participate in, relationships across a range of stakeholders, including government ministers and policy advisors. The participation of the museum in these relationships pointed toward a role in bringing people along in their journeys, as implied in the following perspective:

*This is really relationships at the individual level within the agencies. And also, it's almost not taking too big a step because we have to bring them along with us and being aware that where they are on the journey and how we can fit in to help them take the next step towards that journey to an outcome... (Stakeholder #9)*

The stakeholders frequently discussed the importance of the museum as a research institution and a place of subject expertise and experts. Therefore, research was the fourth theme identified. Within The Noises Marine Restoration Project, Auckland Museum led at least two elements of research. The first was an archaeological excavation of the Otata midden, which increased understanding of human occupation at The Noises. The second was the development of an ecological monitoring plan, which set in place a series of indicators that will be used in the future to measure the restoration and wellbeing of the marine environment. Stakeholders described the value of Auckland Museum's contributions to assembling necessary evidence to demonstrate the current state of the marine environment and how this environment has deteriorated over time.

*Who else is out there that can come and tell you what happened 600 years ago on your island and can also advise you on you know how to restore the marine environment around it? (Stakeholder #7)*

The breadth of expertise contributed by Auckland Museum was also acknowledged as a vital part of The Noises Marine Restoration Project, as shared by the following stakeholder:

*The knowledge contribution, I don't want to underestimate that. There's a whole list of museum staff that have contributed knowledge. There's a breadth of knowledge that you brought – we could label as science knowledge. (Stakeholder #10)*

The setting for research at museums appears to be relevant, with museums having a reputation that is both free of commercial interests and agendas and the pursuits of academic research, which can be perceived as less altruistic. The undertaking of research within a museum setting appeared to align with the civic responsibility with which stakeholders imbued museums, enhancing the trust held in the museum and enabling the public to access trusted research evidence.

*I think it's really important that the museum takes that influential role in shifting public perception and public opinion because the consequence of not doing it is actually a bad outcome for everyone (Stakeholder #9)*

The final theme that emerged was the importance of museums in giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This theme's components included partnership concepts, valuing indigenous knowledge and worldviews, working with iwi and mana whenua, building relationships, and taking a values- and rights-based approach to conservation.

*...you're walking in partnership with iwi in these projects, in a way that government doesn't seem to be able to do. You're creating space for that partnership and that's really valuable, government should be doing that, but I don't see that being done, and perhaps they're too constrained by things that we can't easily see where we sit, but I think the example of partnership with our indigenous community is really valuable (Stakeholder #10)*

Several stakeholders cited the long-standing relationship between Auckland Museum and Ngāti Kuri as precedent-setting. A recent article documented this relationship as a model that other organisations and sectors should consider as an example (Gibson, 2019).

In addition to the role of Auckland Museum within The Noises Marine Restoration Project, stakeholders shared their perspectives about marine protection and ocean advocacy, both in a global sense and in the context of New Zealand. These perspectives were relevant to the policy context for marine protection in New Zealand, including the significance this has for agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation. Some stakeholders discussed how ocean policy agendas are framed in New Zealand, with the narrative being driven from the perspective of extractive economies rather than from a perspective of caring for a natural resource:

*We've forgotten healthy and safe, we've moved forcibly into extraction, and that's written the narrative...* (Stakeholder #8).

As this implies, fishing and fishing rights are integral components of ocean policy in New Zealand. Multiple stakeholders discussed this as a barrier to advancing the agenda for marine conservation. Stakeholders felt that the balance of influence at the government level was skewed too much towards fishing interests, muting the voices from conservation perspectives. The complexity of fishing rights as a Tiriti o Waitangi issue was also emphasised by stakeholders, highlighting the importance of understanding local contexts and working alongside communities to advance marine conservation. As part of this, stakeholders often referred to the importance of respectful and genuine relationships with mana whenua and mana moana as essential components of advancing policy priorities for marine environments. At a government level, there was concern from stakeholders that there was a lack of political will, a failure to ensure a whole-of-government commitment, and an absence of a champion within the government who could progress the ocean agenda:

*...it's not that we don't have enough evidence to create good policy, it is that we don't have courageous policymakers or politicians to create that policy* (Stakeholder #11)

New Zealand currently has less than 6% of its marine environment under some form of protection (Office of the Auditor-General, 2019), well below current global targets to achieve 30% protection by 2030 (Dinerstein et al., 2019). Taken together with the perspectives shared by stakeholders in this research, marine conservation remains a significant policy problem in New Zealand, especially in comparison to global goals. There is, therefore, a role for intermediary organisations with credibility in advocacy, physical space, relationships, research, and Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

Considering global goals, stakeholders generally agreed that the SDGs, specifically SDG14 Life Below Water, was not particularly visible or active within the New Zealand government. This lack of visibility was especially prominent in comparison to experiences at least one stakeholder had with governments of European countries, who are actively working toward targets set out within the SDGs, including SDG14. From a more local perspective, some stakeholders explained how valuable the SDGs have been in articulating the rationale for and urgency of marine protection and restoration to government officials. A common theme expressed by stakeholders was the value of the SDGs in articulating a shared vision of the future and the importance of goal setting as part of solving policy problems – if governments are committed to implementing the goals.

*...that is really powerful when you have governments that are committed to the implementation of that vision, and it's less powerful when you have governments that are not committed to the implementation of that vision (Stakeholder #7)*

Expanding this, it was also clear that the SDGs are applicable as a call to action, with a risk that SDGs can be used as a tool for monitoring existing activities rather than as catalysts for change. Auckland Museum has recently developed a sustainability action plan based on the SDGs to increase awareness of what the museum is doing in this space and to catalyse its activities toward sustainable outcomes (Auckland Museum, 2022). An important priority for Auckland Museum, as noted in Annual Plan documents (Auckland Museum, 2021) and the Research Strategy (Auckland Museum, 2018), is marine conservation, especially within the Hauraki Gulf. This priority highlights the strategic intent of Auckland Museum to contribute through its activities to realize global goals. As a point of historical note, Auckland Museum has a long legacy of being an active partner in conservation agendas. It was instrumental in petitioning the Government to gazette Hauturu/Little Barrier Island (also located in the Hauraki Gulf) as a nature reserve in 1895 (Rayner, 2019) and subsequently became the formal custodian for Hauturu until 1905 (Wade & Veitch, 2019).

## **Policy Implications**

This case study aimed to explore whether museums can contribute to realizing goals articulated in Agenda 2030 relating to marine environments. In doing so, I sought to identify whether there is sufficient evidence to argue that museums act as intermediary organisations across the policy cycle elements of agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation. The case study draws together a range of stakeholder perspectives that document multiple contributions made by Auckland Museum to The Noises Marine Restoration Project. Many of these contributions map to recognized activities of intermediary organisations (Bushouse & Mosley, 2018; Mignon & Kanda, 2018; Sovacool et al., 2020), as discussed below.

In terms of agenda-setting, the research findings pointed to a role for museums in supporting the framing of policy problems and potential policy solutions. This role was evidenced through the ability of Auckland Museum to convene diverse stakeholders and facilitate relationships. In the case of The Noises Marine Restoration Project, this was an essential part of developing a shared understanding of the policy problem. In some cases, this also enabled stakeholders to meet for the first time. The physical space of museums was another critical aspect as it allowed stakeholders to gather in a non-partisan and non-governmental space. The research findings also suggested a role for museums as advocates, particularly for topics aligned to their areas of expertise. In the case of The Noises Marine Restoration Project, the ability of Auckland Museum to assemble the evidence needed to document how the marine environment has deteriorated over time helped bring attention to the need for marine protection around The Noises. The ability of museums to walk alongside community groups and stakeholders is another element that could contribute to agenda-setting by increasing public awareness of policy issues and shifting public perceptions. Multiple stakeholders referred to the value of Auckland Museum being able

to work with community groups in this way. This activity helped bring awareness to policymakers about the need for marine restoration, advancing the policy agenda.

In addition, the case study demonstrated evidence for museums playing a role in policy development, primarily through their ability to undertake and disseminate research relevant to the policy problem and to identify potential policy solutions through their expertise. Within this case study, this role was evidenced through Auckland Museum undertaking research about The Noises over several decades, establishing a detailed understanding of terrestrial and marine environments. This evidence was then able to inform the path The Noises Marine Restoration Project took toward identifying appropriate forms of marine protection and restoration around The Noises. Furthermore, the range of subject expertise within Auckland Museum meant that important knowledge connections could be made across subject disciplines, including archaeology, marine biology, and terrestrial ecology. Auckland Museum also supported the project in making this knowledge available to communities and stakeholders, which informed community-led discussions about the possible policy approaches. This was an important contribution toward identifying possible solutions for restoring the marine environment around The Noises and demonstrates the relevance of museums as intermediary organizations in policy development.

Finally, the case study also revealed a possible role for museums as intermediary organisations in contributing to policy implementation. An example of this in The Noises case study was Auckland Museum establishing a 50-year ecological monitoring plan for The Noises Islands. This monitoring plan creates a baseline of the current understanding of species and ecological habitats across the land and sea of The Noises. Regular monitoring activities will support the implementation of marine protection policies.

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## Chapter 6: Analytical Conclusion

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Humanity is grappling with complex and global issues that span society, environmental, and economic domains that are increasingly urgent. Identifying appropriate solutions requires a collective effort, as the issues are complex, interconnected, and not confined to any one nation. Given this, understanding how each sector of society can contribute to identifying solutions, including through implementing global goals, is essential in harnessing collective effort across all organisations and communities. The literature presented in this thesis records that the role of museums in today's societies has expanded and changed since the proliferation of museums in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas the early role of museums focused on being a place where tangible cultural, societal, and natural heritage were collected and displayed for education and exhibition, modern museums seek to be active within their communities, including considering how they might contribute to wellbeing and sustainability (Cameron & Deslandes, 2011; McGhie, 2020; Sutton & Robinson, 2020; UNESCO, 2015). Scholars describe this shift in roles and expectations by analysing how museums and museum practices have evolved to respond to societal and environmental needs such as equity, climate crisis, and decolonisation (Abungu, 2019; Anderson, 2020; Bandelli & Konijn, 2021; McCarthy, 2018). These studies recognise museums' work in community engagement, education, collaboration, and facilitation. Therefore, the literature describes a range of evidence alluding to new responsibilities for museums in today's global contexts, especially given that museums tend to be highly trusted civic spaces that house a depth of expertise across a broad range of disciplines.

This thesis builds on that body of literature by identifying a possible role for museums as significant actors within the policy ecosystem, particularly as intermediaries between civil society and government, that complements the responsibilities museums have to their communities and stakeholders. The conceptualisation of museums as intermediary organisations across policy processes has received limited attention compared to other aspects of museum practice and other types of intermediary organisations. Consequently, beyond the data in this thesis we know relatively little about the ability of museums to function as intermediaries within policy processes and the kinds of activities museums might undertake to fulfil this function. Understanding how to realise this role is crucial because it will help identify new opportunities for museums to support New Zealand's policy goals, including implementing Agenda 2030.

More specifically, the focus of this thesis has been to understand further the importance of museums in contributing to solving important societal and environmental issues. The thesis deepens how we can conceptualise and measure museums' roles as actors within policy processes and identify how New Zealand museums may contribute to mechanisms such as Agenda 2030. This chapter concludes the thesis by drawing together the research findings to synthesise how the New Zealand Museum sector may contribute to policy processes. In short, the research reported herein found that museums play valuable, often overlooked and underrecognized, roles within agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation. They can do this because they are highly trusted community institutions and are

home to a breadth and depth of expertise. They are intermediary organisations. The remainder of this chapter elaborates on these roles and the characteristics of museums that make this possible.

## **Contributions of this Study**

Intermediary organisations play significant roles in the public policy processes by enhancing collaboration and knowledge exchange to inform policy development, diffusion, and implementation. Given the increasing complexity and urgency of global societal and environmental issues and the recognition through Agenda 2030 that all organisations and communities have a role to play in identifying solutions, intermediary organisations are increasingly relevant. Therefore, understanding how museums can contribute to public policy processes could benefit local and central governments with their commitments to global governance mechanisms. This thesis expands our understanding of museums as policy actors by identifying the characteristics of museums that enable them to participate in public policy processes. Scholars studying sustainability transitions have identified a typology of intermediary organisations and highlight the importance of the intermediary role in accelerating innovation (Mignon & Kanda, 2018). Policy scholars use different terminology to capture intermediary organisations as actors but recognise their role in enabling evidence-informed policymaking and innovative policy change (Bushouse & Mosley, 2018; Gluckman et al., 2021; Neal et al., 2022). This literature draws together research from several fields, with the work of political scientists emphasising the role of intermediary organisations in policy processes and the work of innovation scientists articulating the need for intermediaries in catalysing transitions to more sustainable societies.

In this thesis, I have synthesised a range of cross-disciplinary scholarship to examine the possibility of conceptualising and operationalising museums as intermediary organisations engaging in the policy process. I sought to investigate this possibility empirically in terms of (i) sector interest in viewing museums this way and (ii) the features and activities of museums that lend themselves to this view. I also explored how the unique positionality of museums, as civil institutions that are highly trusted by communities, might expand their capacity as policy actors. In doing so, the thesis builds on existing literature by conceptualizing museums as policy intermediaries and identifying specific features and actions that link to agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation.

The data presented identify three crucial attributes of museums that position them as intermediary organisations: trust, objectivity, and expertise. As a result of these fundamental attributes, museums can undertake activities such as bringing stakeholders and communities together, assembling and disseminating policy-relevant evidence, and putting forward policy alternatives. An in-depth examination of a project relating to the policy problem of marine protection identified examples of a museum undertaking each of these activities, ultimately contributing to achieving a favourable policy outcome (measured in this case as submission of a marine protection proposal to the Government). The research results align the features and activities of museums to previously published understandings of intermediary organisation actions across policy processes (Bushouse & Mosley, 2018; Mignon & Kanda, 2018; Sovacool et al., 2020). These results suggest that museums can operate as intermediaries and are influential policy actors in this role, making valuable connections between communities and policymakers.



Specifically, my two case studies highlight the unique characteristics of museums that enable them to participate actively in policy processes. The first examined a range of perspectives from a range of New Zealand museums about the ability of these institutions to contribute to Agenda 2030, while the second case study looked in-depth at the role of one museum's contributions to marine protection and restoration, a significant policy problem. I demonstrate that museums have specific attributes that give them the potential to be positioned as effective intermediaries across several parts of the policy cycle.

The case studies suggest that museums achieve this activity through fostering social cohesion and community wellbeing, generating research and knowledge transfer, and via advocacy, facilitation, and coordination of action. The research evidence demonstrates that museums are strategic and impactful actors within policy ecosystems. Furthermore, the data shows that museums work as policy actors by being intermediary organisations and should be treated as such. The results of this research expand public policy theories of intermediary organisations to include museums. In this way, museums are institutions that can create novel opportunities for local and central governments to advance Agenda 2030 and achieve the SDGs.

## **Museums as Intermediary Organisations**

My thesis established a research approach to identify the features of museums that enable them to undertake the activities typically carried out by intermediary organisations. Museums occupy a unique place in society, serving as guardians for cultural, scientific, and historical taonga. They generally enjoy high levels of trust from their constituents, are often considered objective, and are seen as knowledgeable and expert across a wide range of subject areas and disciplines. The evidence generated and analysed in this thesis suggests that museums work closely with communities and have a beneficial role in fostering social cohesion. For example, museums can create safe spaces allowing citizens to encounter multiple knowledge systems and ways of knowing. In this way, and within the context of a new understanding of their positions as intermediary organisations, museums help shape communities equipped to challenge and critique institutions and make sense of the world. Second, museums can ensure that their citizens feel seen, valued, and understood by representing their communities. Each characteristic uniquely influences how to frame policy problems, develop policy alternatives, and implement policy, keeping community engagement integral. This thesis sets out a conceptual framework to describe the potential relationships between museums and the policy processes of agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

Agenda-setting is a policy process that raises awareness of policy problems to the point that they reach both the public and formal agendas (Capano & Pritoni, 2019). Defining the policy problem is a component of agenda-setting, alongside considering various policy alternatives. In parallel with defining the policy problem, framing issues may also be necessary during this stage – achieved through developing a shared understanding of issues across multiple and diverse perspectives. Within this policy process, intermediary organisations bring together stakeholders or interested parties to facilitate a greater understanding of policy alternatives (Bushouse & Mosley, 2018; Gluckman et al., 2021; Sovacool et al., 2020). They may also facilitate networks to promote a specific policy alternative. In

some cases, intermediary organisations may advocate for issues to be recognised as policy problems or for policy solutions.

This thesis provides empirical evidence of museums undertaking activities aligned to these previously identified characteristics of intermediary organisations. Through stakeholder interviews and survey data, I identified examples of museums acting to bring together diverse stakeholders and facilitate partnerships, with the data highlighting the importance of museums as a trusted, non-partisan public space. In this place, people and groups can be brought together for conversations that require navigating varied views and interests. The survey data highlighted that the museum sector's staff and volunteers consider museums have a role to play as conduits between civil society and government policymaking.

Interestingly, some stakeholders referred to the 'weight' museums carry within society. A valid, future research question could ask whether the very act of a museum being part of an issue-framing conversation is significant enough to push the issue onto the public and the government agenda and if it is possible or desirable to support museums in this role. In addition, the research evidence highlighted examples of museums acting as advocates, often through the depth of expertise within specialised subject areas. Multiple strands of evidence spoke to the relevance of museums as research organisations and as subject experts in enabling them to contribute to framing policy problems, raising awareness of issues through both public and formal audiences, and identifying potential policy alternatives.

Particularly relevant for museums is their ability to "walk alongside" communities and stakeholders, creating space for developing shared perspectives. Multiple stakeholders saw advocacy as an integral part of the role of museums, taking the perspective that communities trust them to assemble and interpret evidence. A smaller subset of stakeholders viewed museums as activists – in some cases, stakeholders considered museums as activist by nature in terms of progressing social agendas of inclusivity, equality, and accessibility. Other stakeholders argued that while museums can advocate for issues within their areas of expertise, activism is not part of the museum's remit as it requires too close an alignment with specialised interest groups. Importantly, the research identified how nuanced the concepts of neutrality, objectivity, and advocacy are – for museums but also for intermediary organisations more broadly. These concepts are intertwined with trust and museums must find ways to advocate and influence without squandering the trust their communities place in them.

Once policy problems have surfaced on the government agenda, policy development becomes an important focus. Identifying appropriate policy alternatives and weighing up the costs and benefits of each are central elements. Previous studies have shown that intermediary organizations contribute to policy development by providing evidence informing policy alternatives, articulating possible policy solutions, and sharing evidence and alternatives with the public, creating a feedback loop. The research in this thesis documents that museums also operate in this manner.

Stakeholders spoke of museums' significant role in undertaking research, building partnerships, and facilitating research impact. These activities are essential for policy development, particularly in an

evidence-informed policy context. The research data also indicated a role for museums in articulating possible solutions for policy issues. For example, within The Noises Marine Restoration Project, Auckland Museum's contribution of evidence and expertise helped the project identify policy alternatives that would foster marine restoration while also meeting the needs of the government process. Stakeholders also referred to the role of museums in connecting new ideas (i.e., contained within policy alternatives) to the public and the importance of museums as connectors to community and local context. The survey results also reflected this role, with respondents across the New Zealand Museum sector highlighting education and learning opportunities and facilitating community engagement as the most critical opportunities for museums to contribute to the SDGs.

Finally, the conceptual framework articulated a role for museums as an intermediary organisation within the context of policy implementation. The most striking example of this within the research evidence presented in this thesis is the contribution of expertise by the Auckland Museum to support The Noises Marine Restoration Project to identify environmental baselines. This work will support policy implementation, equipping the local community and policymakers with evidence-informed markers of ecological restoration. In some ways, it is possible to think of museums as knowledge brokers. An additional important role of museums in policy development includes bringing stakeholders and community groups together. This facilitation role, while often overlooked, is critical to implementing policies well.

The research findings presented in this thesis suggest that the characteristics of museums described above allow them to behave as intermediary organizations within policy processes. In both case studies, museum activities highlighted them as relevant policy actors, enabling increased visibility of policy problems and advocating for policy change. These activities align with previously identified characteristics of intermediary organisations. Some stakeholders suggested this is an area where museums could be more visible; otherwise, some sectors or the public might see museums merely as places to visit for education and enjoyment. There was a sense that research undertaken by museums and the impact or potential this research has for advancing policy goals may not be visible enough and, therefore, is underestimated. Through the research presented in this thesis, it became evident that museums can play a more prominent role in public policy than previously imagined or commonly understood. By expanding our view of museums to conceptualise them as intermediary organisations, it becomes possible to understand new ways in which they may be able to support New Zealand's implementation of Agenda 2030.

## **New Understandings of Intermediary Organisations**

Expanding our conceptual understanding of intermediary organisations to include museums is valuable because the complexity of policy issues facing society requires us to understand how policy may be advanced in new ways. A wide variety of organisations and communities are needed to define policy problems and identify and implement solutions. Notably, despite the most pressing policy issues being of a global nature, local contexts are important, with the United Nations recognising through Agenda 2030 the need for country-led implementation. Identifying organisations that can make connections between local communities and global issues and understanding how these organisations might

contribute to policy processes, is therefore a relevant and important research topic. Drawing on existing literature about intermediary organisations taken from both policy and sustainability scholarship and placing this within museology scholarship, I have re-conceptualised museums as intermediary organisations.

The conceptual framework was operationalised using a research approach that generated empirical data from across the New Zealand Museum sector. While one focus of this research was SDG14, Life Below Water, the conceptual framework could be applied across other policy issue areas. For example, the role of museums in advancing SDG3, Good Health and Wellbeing or SDG11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, could be explored. Previous research has documented the health benefits of museums (Ander et al., 2013; Camic & Chatterjee, 2013; Mastandrea et al., 2019), and museums are important contributors to their cities (Grincheva, 2022), suggesting that museums can be intermediary organizations in policymaking for these areas. More broadly, it is relevant to consider the role of museums as institutions that can support the implementation of Agenda 2030 through SDG16, Peace Justice and Strong Institutions. This goal aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. Identifying opportunities for museums to contribute to multiple components of Agenda 2030 through their actions as strong institutions may provide further support and impetus for museums as policy actors.

In addition to expanding our understanding of the role museums play in agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation, the research in this thesis also contributes to our understanding of intermediary organisations and the role they play across policy processes. Previously, literature has focused on the role of intermediary organisations in the processes of innovation and sustainability transitions. The findings of this thesis broaden the concept of intermediary organisations to include museums, strengthening the ability to connect the public and communities in agenda-setting, policy development, and policy implementation beyond innovation and sustainability transitions.

This thesis provides new empirical data about museums' role across public policy processes, particularly how museums contribute to implementing global governance arrangements such as Agenda 2030. The datasets generated in this research include both qualitative (12 stakeholder interviews across two case studies) and quantitative (survey issued across the New Zealand Museum sector). A range of publicly available documents supported the interpretation of these primary datasets that provided helpful context and background. The data used in this thesis narrows a gap in the literature where only limited attention has been given to the potential role of museums across policy processes. An additional strength of the study is the use of two case studies, enabling a sector-wide overview of how to conceptualize the New Zealand Museum sector as intermediary organisations and a deep dive into how a single museum has contributed to advancing a specific policy issue. I interviewed a wide range of stakeholders from both within and external to the Museum sector. Stakeholders were selected to facilitate a range of views and perspectives, ensuring a balanced view of the current activities, future opportunities, and potential challenges for museums to contribute to as intermediary organisations across policy processes. While the thesis could address only two case studies, it provides a basis for future research. It identifies directions for future research. In terms of methodology, future research

could expand stakeholder perspectives to include central government and increase the number of survey participants to include a more extensive and diverse sample. In addition, research focused on the public perceptions and expectations of museums as Intermediary Organisations would be valuable. In terms of the conceptual framework, future research could examine other aspects of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs or turn to other international commitments that New Zealand is working towards. It would also be interesting to undertake a cross-national comparison of museum practice to understand whether museums in other parts of the world operate as intermediary organisations. New Zealand Museums are uniquely positioned as they continue their journey of indigenisation, and it would be valuable to explore this further.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, this research argues that museums are valuable intermediaries for public policy processes. Furthermore, museums have specific and unique characteristics that enable them to undertake this role, unlike any other intermediary organisation. The results suggest that museums are highly trusted, objective, and expert. These attributes enable them to facilitate social cohesion, advocate for policy alternatives, act as knowledge brokers to connect evidence to policy processes and bring diverse stakeholders together. Building on these findings, significant opportunities exist for museums to contribute to solving global issues, as articulated by Agenda 2030. Likewise, an opportunity exists for local and central governments to recognise the intermediary role played by museums and to harness this to support the implementation of global commitments. The research shows how museums can advocate for policy alternatives, contribute evidence to policy context, and facilitate connections between the public and government. Therefore, it is possible to argue that museums can have significant influence by playing an intermediary role within their communities. It was not possible within the research to determine the direct influences of museums on policy outcomes. However, the collected evidence indicates that museums play an essential role in contributing to policy outcomes. Future research should identify examples of policy change that has occurred through museums' contributions to understanding how museums contribute to policy.

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## Appendix 1: List of Research Documentation Used

The following documents were used to develop the sector survey and stakeholder interviews. The table summarises the document type and the purpose of this document in the research methods.

Document	Document overview
Participant Information Sheet for Sector Survey	This document set out information about the sector survey for participants
Participant Information Sheet for Museums Case Study Stakeholder Interviews	This document set out information about the sector survey for stakeholders in the New Zealand Museum Sector case study
Participant Information Sheet for Noises Marine Restoration Stakeholder Interviews	This document set out information about the sector survey for stakeholders in the Noises Marine Restoration case study
Consent Form	This form was used to record informed consent to participate, for stakeholder interviews. The online survey included a consent form within the survey
Sector Survey	This document outlined the questions used in the survey. These were entered into Qualtrics to generate an online survey
Stakeholder Interview Guide for the New Zealand Museums case study	This document outlined the overall question topics and prompts for stakeholders in the New Zealand Museums case study.
Stakeholder Interview Guide for Noises Marine Restoration Case	This document outlined the overall question topics and prompts for stakeholders in the Noises Marine Restoration case study